

# **THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

BY

GEORGE HARRIS

# THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

BY GEORGE HARRIS.

		PAGE
CHAPTER 1	GOD IS LOVE	3
CHAPTER 2	GOD'S MARVELLOUS MERCY	6
CHAPTER 3	GOD'S GENEROUS GRACE	10
CHAPTER 4	THE GOD OF PERPETUAL PROVIDENCE	13
CHAPTER 5	CHRIST-ALL AUTHORITY	16
CHAPTER 6	CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITY IN HIS WORD	20
CHAPTER 7	CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITATIVE WORD TO THE APOSTLES	23
CHAPTER 8	CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITATIVE WRITTEN WORD IS ALL SUFFICIENT	29
CHAPTER 9	RESPECT FOR GOD'S WORD DEMANDED	32
CHAPTER 10	CHRIST'S LAW EFFECTED AFTER HIS DEATH	42
CHAPTER 11	CHRIST'S WILL PROBATE	45
CHAPTER 12	THE CONFIRMATION	48

## CHAPTER 1

# GOD IS LOVE

## INTRODUCTION

God is described as holy (Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:16), Spirit (John 4:24), light (1 John 1:5), and a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29); but God is also love (1 John 4:8,16). The greatest and most wonderful news for man to receive is that God is love.

In trying to understand God, man often discusses the various attributes of God. God is eternal. But if He is not concerned with man, who is a creature of time, a created being who has not existed eternally, then man can have no real lasting hope.

God is all-powerful. But if God does not love man, the power of God becomes a source of terror to us. God is holy. But if God does not love us, the holiness of God must repel us from God, for we are unholy. God is just, but we have sinned. Unless there is compassion from God, there is only fear in the heart of man when he thinks upon the holiness of God and his own sinfulness.

Therefore, without the truth that God is love, the other truths about God would work for our condemnation rather than for our salvation.

When we say that God is love, we are not merely describing an attribute of God which He displays; love is something God is. The very essence of God is that of love. All His activity is loving activity.

## I. JOHN DESCRIBES GOD'S LOVE

In 1 John 4:7-21 is one of the greatest teachings in the whole of the Bible. John states "*God is love.*" The word for love is *agape*, a word he uses 28 times in the chapter. Here John discusses *agape* that is both human and divine.

Barclay lists seven specific things about love found in these verses; (1) Love has its origin in God. (2) Love has a double relationship to God. (3) It is by love that God is known. (4) God's love is demonstrated in Jesus Christ. (5) Human love is a response to divine love. (6) When love comes, fear goes. (7) Love of God and love of man are indissolubly connected. (*The Letters of John and Jude*, Rev. Ed. p. 97-98).

**Verse 7.** In his opening comment on this section, John used a form of *agape* regarding his readers. He refers to them as the "*beloved.*" It is one of John's favourite words and is found 10 times in the epistle.

The love of which John writes is *agape*. It is the kind of love which involves a passion for the well-being of others. Love such as this involves our will. The meaning is clear; love has its

origin in God. Since love is of God, if we are children of God, we will love. Those who truly love one another show they are the children of God.

**Verse 8.** The negative is now stated, *“He that loves not, knows not God.”* The verb here, *“loves”* is translated from the present active participle of *agapao*. He who does not continue to love does not know and is not an acquaintance of God.

**Verses 9,10.** God’s love is a love of action. God’s true nature (of love) is shown in a way that man can understand and appreciate. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16). Love, for John, is what God has done in our behalf.

The purpose of God sending His Son is that we might have life through Him (John 10:10). Jesus claimed, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6).

**Verses 11,12.** God’s love is a motivating power. Those who receive such love have no choice as to their response. Their sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ. God has loved them in such a way they cannot do anything else but show love to one another (John 13:34,35).

*“No man has beheld God at any time”* is a phrase that has puzzled many. There is no article for the word God. Therefore, it has reference to the nature and character of God. While no one has seen God, He may be seen in His children when they love one another.

**Verses 13-15.** The way we may know we abide in Him and He in us is that He has given us His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The question is asked, *“How does the presence of the Spirit in us supply evidence of this abiding presence?”* The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22,23). We may know the Spirit dwells in our heart because we love God and one another. This love is *“shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us”* (Rom 5:5).

Besides the internal witness of the Spirit (v. 13), there is also the external witness of those who saw the Lord. They were eyewitnesses of the Christ.

John had just stated if we love one another, God abides in us (v.12). Now he says if we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, then God abides in us. The confession here is not just the historical fact of the incarnation (though that is certainly involved), but contemplates an obedient trust in Christ as the Son of God.

**Verse 16.** In this verse we have the repeat of the phrase of verse 8, *“God is love.”* Love is presented here as a condition of fellowship with God. Love is not just a condition for a knowledge of God.

**Verses 17,18.** The perfection of love grants boldness to the child of God in the day of judgement. Because God loves us, we love God and one another. There is no fear. The Christian has boldness in approaching God (1 John 3:21) in prayer (1 John 5:14), in the day of judgement (1 John 4:17), and in the second coming (1 John 2:28).

Love is the essence of God, manifested in Christ and evidence of our new birth. When love comes, boldness comes (v. 17). When love comes, fear leaves (v. 18). When love comes, we love the brethren (v.19,20). When love comes, we fulfill God's commands (v. 21).

As a child of God, one does not stand before his heavenly Father afraid of condemnation. God's love and our love are confined in such a manner as to dispel any fear. This fear is terror or dread, not the reverential fear which we each should have. The only fear the Christian is to have is the attitude of respect or reverence toward God (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:12).

**Verses 19,21.** Verse 19 is easily understood. Our love for God is based upon God's prior love for us (Romans 5:8). The more we realise the love God has for us in sending His Son to die on the cross, the more we will realise how much we should return that love. Our life of love is to be patterned after God's love for us.

**Verses 20,21.** These verses are practical in applying love. Our Lord taught the importance of love to God and to our fellowman. *"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second commandment is like, namely this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is none other commandments greater than these"* (Mark 12:29-31). The mark of true discipleship is how we love one another (John 13:34,35).

"A person may deceive other men by declaring that he loves God, but since God cannot be seen, there is no direct way of telling whether he truly loves God. Even if he goes through the outward motions of devotion to God, prayer, attendance at worship, and so on, it may still be all empty show. But a person cannot so easily deceive others regarding his love for his fellow Christians: since they can be seen, the person's relation with them is also visible. (Admittedly, there is still the possibility of deception, since apparently loving acts may arise from false motives, but the possibility is not so great as in the case of love for the unseen God.) It follows that if a person is not seen to love his brothers, it is unlikely that he loves God. Indeed, he cannot love God, since one part of love for God is love for one's brothers." (Marshall, pp. 225-6).

**1 John 3:1.** *"Behold"* is a word which means to take notice of or be impressed with something. The design of the word (John 1:29; 19:5; Mark 13:1) was to fix the attention of the readers on the manner of love revealed on their behalf. The phrase *"what manner"* is from one word in the original and generally is used to express surprise, often of some admirable character (Matt. 8:27; Luke 1:29; 7:39).

The manner of love which God bestowed on us is the privilege to be called *"children of God."* It is not simply our being children, but the right we now have to call God "Father" that is important. By naming us children, God is acknowledging His fatherhood over us. This shows the great assurance the believer has in his standing in God's sight.

## **CONCLUSION**

No subject is more significant for study than the love of God. Love is the motivating force behind God's work in the world. Love answers questions regarding creation, free-will, providence, redemption, and future life. God's love is manifested for us in the Christ on the cross. Without such love, salvation would be impossible.

## CHAPTER 2

# GOD'S MARVELLOUS MERCY

## INTRODUCTION

In God's word, we learn that God's holiness and justice move Him to hate sin and condemn the sinner (Rom. 3:9,23; 1:18). How is it possible, therefore, for God to save sinful man? Based upon the principle of justice, salvation for man is an impossibility. Man has sinned and is guilty. If sinners are saved, it will be by the grace and mercy of God.

Mercy is a communicable attribute of God which expresses God's goodness and love for the guilty and the miserable. It includes such words as pity, compassion, gentleness and forbearance. One writer has said "God's mercy is His tender-hearted loving compassion for His people. It is His tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates man as sinful, guilty and condemned, mercy sees him as miserable and needy."

The Hebrew word for mercy is *chesed*. It means mercy, pity, kindness or lovingkindness. The Greek equivalent is *eleos*, meaning mercy or pity. It has been suggested that mercy is best understood when seen in light of grace, or when compared to grace. Mercy is not rendering to the sinner what he fully deserves, but is granting love, salvation, life and happiness beyond the realm of what one deserves. When a person on death row is given a stay of execution, that's mercy: if he were to be set completely free that would be grace.

In the Old Testament the mercy of God is showing the way "*He keeps covenant*" (Deut. 7:9) with Israel, even when Israel was slow in keeping His commandments and became wayward.

God is a God of mercy. Mercy is an essential attribute of God just as much as holiness, love and grace. There is abundant evidence of this found in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the phrase "*His mercy*," sometimes translated lovingkindness or love, is found over and over again in Psa. 136:1-26. The psalmist declares in Psa. 89:2 that God's mercy shall be built up forever.

In 2 Cor. 1:3, God is called the Father of mercies. Eph. 2:4 speaks of God being rich in mercy. Heb. 8:12 states that God will be merciful to man's iniquities and remember their sins no more. Titus 3:5 refers to God's mercy saving us. Rom. 11:32 speaks of how God has shut up all unto disobedience that He might have mercy upon all. The point being stressed is that God saves sinners based upon the principle of His mercy.

As a part of the character of God, mercy is demonstrated most clearly by the qualities of compassion, pity and forbearance. With respect to action, an act of mercy issues from compassion and forbearance. In a legal sense mercy would involve such acts as pardon or forgiveness. In each case mercy is experienced and exercised by a person who has another person in his power, under his authority, or from whom no kindness can be claimed. Therefore, when we read that God shows mercy upon man, we understand that man is ultimately within

His power. Even though he may have no direct claim in terms of what he does to the attitude or action of mercy, man needs and desires mercy from God.

## I. NOAH EXPERIENCES GOD'S MERCY

The context of Gen. 8:20-22 is the story of Noah and the flood. Jehovah looked upon man that He created and was grieved in His heart. Man's sinfulness became great, so God decided to destroy the world by water. Yet Noah found favour in the eyes of Jehovah (Gen. 6:8).

God instructed Noah to build an ark, which he did. Prior to the flood's coming, Noah, his family and specific animals that God directed for him to take, boarded the ark. They were saved from the worldwide destruction. The verses we are about to study tell us what happened after the flood as Noah left the ark.

**Verse 20.** Being a recipient of God's mercy, the first thing Noah did was build an altar unto the Lord. He took of every clean beast and every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar. This is the first mention of an altar in the Bible, and on this altar were sacrifices of both praise and propitiation. Noah gave thanks for deliverance from the corruption of the world and for his preservation through the flood, possibly anticipating preservation for years to come.

The offering that Noah gave was a very generous offering of animals on Noah's part. Henry Morris suggests that the clean animals represented mainly the domesticated animals, the ones for which Noah would have the greatest need and for which he would have had the greatest love and compassion. In effect Noah was giving to God one-seventh of all his flocks. In order to do this, Noah had to be a man of great faith.

**Verses 21,25.** The phrase "*the Lord smelled a sweet savour*" is understood as an anthropomorphism. It is used to describe God's acceptance and approval of Noah's sacrifice. The same root word is used in Ex. 29:18,25,41; Lev. 1:9,13,17; 2:2,9,12; 3:5,16; Num. 15:3,7,9,13,14; 18:17, and other passages. The apostle Paul uses an equivalent imagery in Eph. 5:2 and Phil. 4:18.

God's response to this is "*I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake.*" This is not a nullification of the curse presented in Gen. 3:17-19. It means simply that the curse will not be applied again in the same way as it was in the flood. God had cursed the ground by causing it to bring forth thorns and thistles when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3:17,18), by reducing its yield when Cain sinned, (Gen. 4:11,12), and now by sending a flood because of man's corruption. Here God promises not to send this kind of curse on man again.

While it punished man for his sinfulness, the flood did not change the situation. For the imagination of man's heart is seen to be evil from his youth, from the time he is old enough to be able to discern right and wrong.

The duration of God's promise to Noah will be as long as the earth remains. However, the day of the Lord will come, and at the time the earth and the works that are in it shall burn up (2 Peter 3:10). But until that time, God promises to maintain the rhythm of nature. There will be

seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.

## II. ABRAHAM RECEIVES GOD'S MERCY

In Gen. 18:22-32 is the familiar story of the conversation between God and Abraham, which is a beautiful illustration of the mercy of God. God heard the cry (or outcry) of Sodom and Gomorrah and is going down to the city to visit it. From this, Abraham understands that destruction is to come and intercedes in behalf of the people. This was not the first time Abraham had interceded for the city (14:14). Perhaps Abraham is understanding the import of the promise he had received (12:1-6) that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Or maybe Abraham pleads because Lot and his family lives there.

In this petition we have one of the most beautiful pleadings of one on behalf of another to be found in the Bible. As the two men (or angels, cf. 19:1) went on to the city of Sodom, the Lord remained and talked with Abraham.

As Abraham stands before the Lord, he reasons that it is unjust to destroy a few righteous people with many who are unrighteous. He assumes that a few righteous people are sufficient to sustain the existence of the wicked so that the Lord would look favourably upon the city and spare it. Here Abraham states one of the great truths about God found in the Bible: *"Shall not the Judge of all earth do right?"*

God is not the God of Canaan alone, He is the God of the entire world. He created the world and all the things therein (Acts 17:24), and will always do what is right. God governs the entire world and is fair in His dealings with man, even when man might think otherwise (Deut. 32:4; Rom. 2:6-11). It is interesting that in the context of this statement of God doing what is right is the extension of mercy offered for the sake of a few righteous people.

As Abraham addresses God, he realises that he is standing in the presence of the One who created all things and that he is one of those creatures created in God's image. He speaks, therefore, very humbly to God. Four times during his address he shows his reluctance to speak (v. 27,30,31,32). He is addressing God very carefully realising the one speaking is *"but dust and ashes"* (v. 27).

Abraham begins by asking for the city to be spared for the sake of 50 righteous persons, then 40, then 30, then 20, and finally 10. One wonders why Abraham stopped at 10 and did not go lower, maybe to four or five. Maybe he thought he knew at least 10 righteous persons. There was Lot his wife and two sons (Gen 19:12); two unmarried daughters (Gen 19:8); and two married daughters and their husbands (19:14). This is a total of ten. Abraham would then be pleading in behalf of his kinsmen and asking that the city be spared on their behalf.

Maybe he quit at 10 because he just felt like it would be asking far too much of God to spare the city for fewer. But God's ability to forgive transcends any picture man might have of God (Matt. 18:21-35). While some would say this story pictures Abraham haggling with God, one idea is that Abraham was feeling his way in a spirit of faith.

### III. GOD SHOWS MERCY TO MOSES

In Numbers 14:17-20 Moses pleads for mercy for the people as he had done earlier at Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:6-9). Because the people rebelled, God was going to destroy them. But Moses talks with God and asks Him not to do this.

In his plea he gives two reasons why: (1) If God destroyed them, the people of the land would think God is weak and could not fulfill His promise to bring the people into the land. To keep His own honour, therefore, God must take His people to the Promised Land. (2) In response to what God said in verse 12, Moses reminds the Lord of what He had revealed about Himself, *“The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”* (Ex. 34:6,7).

As usual, God heard Moses' plea and answers, *“I have pardoned according to your word”* (v. 20). This does not mean that Israel will escape all punishment for sin, only that they will not suffer the total destruction they deserve.

### CONCLUSION

In each of these incidents the lesson is the abounding mercy of God toward sinners. Man deserves punishment because of rebellion and sin. But God, *“being rich in mercy,”* forgives. On the basis of Christ's death on the cross, man today receives the mercy of God. *“Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5,6).

Since we have been extended mercy, we must extend mercy, toward others. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”* (Matt. 5:7). James said, *“For judgement is without mercy to him that has shown no mercy: mercy glories against judgement”* (Jas. 2:13). Therefore, since mercy has been extended to us, let us be *“kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you”* (Eph. 4:32). *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (Matt. 5:14). We should always remember that God's *“lovingkindness is great unto the heavens”* (Psa. 57:10).

# GOD'S GENEROUS GRACE

## INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament there are two words used to express the idea of divine grace: *chen* and *chesed*. The word *chen* bears the meaning of favour that is undeserved. The word *chesed* is often translated "lovingkindness" or "mercy." The revised Standard Version translates this as "steadfast love." The basic thought behind this is God's loyalty to His people. He blesses although He doesn't have to.

In the New Testament the common word used is *charis*. Basically this word meant "joyfulness" or to have regard or appreciation for someone or something. It is something unearned, undeserved and given to man through Jesus Christ. Grace is, indeed, the key word for Christianity. God is "*the God of all grace*" (1 Pet. 5:10), the Holy Spirit is "*the Spirit of grace*" (Heb. 10:29), and "*grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). No word is more important to a proper understanding of the New Testament than the word grace.

## I. EXAMPLES OF GOD'S GRACE

**Genesis 6:8.** Genesis 6:5-8 says God looked upon the wickedness of man and was sorry that He created man. He said "*I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heaven; for it repented Me that I have made them.*" God's decision to destroy human life from the earth, however, was not absolute.

Verse 8 states, "*But Noah found favour (grace) in the eyes of the Lord.*" Since God decided to destroy the entire world with the exception of Noah, the inspired writer now turns to give us an account of this man's life. This verse should be understood with verse 9 where we are told Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

Three things are told us about Noah. First, he was righteous. This means that he conformed to the moral standards God required of man. He recognised his responsibilities and lived in a way that God would have him live. This does not mean that Noah lived without sin; there is no sinless quality in anyone's life other than in the life of Jesus Christ. The idea of Noah being righteous indicates that he was a man who lived apart from the universal corruption that otherwise engulfed humanity. From Hebrews 11:7, we learn that it was by faith Noah obeyed God and became the heir of righteousness.

Second, we learn that Noah was blameless among the people of his time, those in his generation. The writer here is informing us that Noah's exemplary life of righteousness was an exception among those with whom he lived. No doubt this helps to better understand what is meant by the word righteous. We are dealing with Noah's position as he lived before his fellow man.

Third, we are told that Noah walked with God. This same expression is used of Enoch in Genesis 5:22-24. This must be seen as living a life in close spiritual communion with God. The terms righteous and blameless refer to his public conduct. Walking with God focuses on his personal relationship with Jehovah. It is no wonder, therefore, the Bible says Noah found favour (grace) in the eyes of the Lord.

**Genesis 18:26.** God's judgement upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was a just and righteous judgement. But in this text we learn of the grace of God being manifested by God's willingness to spare many on behalf of a few. The many who would have been saved would have understood the grace of God, for they would have received what they did not deserve. That is what grace is.

**1 Peter 5:5,10.** In these verses there are two things we learn about God's grace. First, God is the God of all grace. He is the one who called us into eternal glory by Christ Jesus (v.10). The reason God is called the God of all grace is because He is the one who extends grace.

Second, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. In this passage the grace of God is given to some and withheld from others. It seems to be that our attitude plays a part in whether or not we will be recipients of God's grace. This is in keeping with what our Lord said in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14).

Humility, as we stand before God, plays a lot in being a recipient of God's grace. One who tries to stand before God as if to boast and brag about what he has done will stand condemned, for no one can merit salvation. Only those with humility of heart will be able to stand before God.

One additional thought from verse 10 is that the grace of God sustains us in this present world. It will enable us to overcome trials in this life and cause us to escape them in the life that is to come.

**Ephesians 1:6; 2:8.** Paul writes that we should live *"to the praise of the glory of His (God's) grace."* Paul's statement seems to indicate that the life we live, and everything that we do, should be lived to the glory of God. It is by God's grace that we are here and that we are sustained.

Ephesians 2:8 is probably the most quoted and best-known passage regarding the grace of God. Paul, in speaking of salvation, says, *"for by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."* Plainly stated, salvation is based upon the grace of God.

However, this passage does not say that we are saved by the grace of God alone. The passage teaches that we are saved from God's viewpoint according to grace. That is, it was God who freely bestowed salvation on man. Nothing man can do causes him to deserve salvation.

The passage also states that the grace we receive is received through faith. Man's faith does not earn salvation for him; salvation is a free gift, according to the grace of God. But salvation, which is freely given, is received only when man believes. That is why Paul continues to say it is the gift of God. Truly we ought to say, *"thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."*

**Colossians 1:6.** Grace, as used in this passage, has reference to the reception of the gospel that was preached to the brethren at Colosse when they heard, believed and obeyed the truth. It was in the preaching of the gospel that the Colossians learned of the grace of God. This was the message that was preached to all the world. As a result, lives were changed. Paul's prayer here is giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 1:9; 2:1.** Verse 8 closes with God, and verses 9-11 introduce a description of God. It is God who saved us and called us with a holy calling. What is meant by saving us is that God has delivered us from the greatest of all evils and placed us in possession of the greatest of all blessings. His calling was affected through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). He continues to call us to the pursuit of holiness in our living (Heb. 12:14). God called us with a holy calling, for God is holy.

The calling and salvation we receive is not according to our works (we did not do anything to deserve it), but it was according to God's purpose and grace. This thought occurs several times in Paul's writings (Rom. 1:17; 3:20-24; 10:5,9,13; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 3:6,8,9-14; 6:14,15; Eph. 2:9; Tit. 3:5).

One writer has outlined the subject of the grace of God in verses 9,10 in the following way:

The grace of God:

Its origin--in Christ before times eternal

Its manifestation--in the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ

Its operation:

He abolished death

He brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel

In 2 Tim. 2:1 the preacher is exhorted to be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This is the power and effect found in Christ alone.

**Titus 2:11,12.** Donald Guthrie calls this section the theological basis for Christian living. These verses tell us that the grace of God is the reason why every member of the body of Christ can and should live a Christian life. These verses follow the exhortations of verses 1-10. Paul now gives a general statement of the teaching of the gospel in its practical effects in the life of the believer.

Verse 12 presents the grace of God as a wonderful pedagogue. A pedagogue is one who leads a child step by step and provides assistance in the training needed. This grace instructs both negatively (deny ungodliness and worldly lust) and positively (live soberly, righteously and godly). The life of the child of God is to be lived in accordance with the grace received.

## **CONCLUSION**

Because we have received God's grace, we have a responsibility to live in accordance with that which we have received. Any misuse or abuse of God's grace would be cheap grace and would mean Jesus died in vain. Grace is to be accepted for what it is--salvation, freely granted in Jesus Christ.

# THE GOD OF PERPETUAL PROVIDENCE

## INTRODUCTION

Creation refers to God's originating work in bringing about the universe. Providence refers to His continued relationship to it. Providence is a word not found in the Bible, but the concept appears on page after page. The English word "providence" is derived from the Latin word which means "to see ahead," "to see beforehand" or "to foresee." While there is no Hebrew equivalent, the Greek verb *pronoō* is used three times. Each time, however, the reference is to human foresight, not divine foresight (Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Timothy 5:8). This would indicate that the idea of providence is not from one special biblical word or phrase. Understanding the idea of providence comes from a study of the Scripture as a whole.

Many definitions are given for the word providence. There is similarity in each one. For example, Jack Cottrell says, "God's providence is His continuous activity of preserving and governing the whole of creation by His wisdom and goodness and power, for the fulfilment of His eternal purpose, and for the glory of His name." Millard J. Erickson says, "by providence we mean the continuing action of God by which He preserves in existence the creation which He has brought into being, and guides it to His intended purposes for it."

When we analyse the various definitions of providence we see four common elements: (1) The kind of divine activity in view; preserving and governing. (2) The scope of God's preserving and ruling; the whole of creation. (3) The means by which God preserves and rules all things; His omnipotence, goodness, wisdom, mercy, omnipresence and foreknowledge. (4) The purpose of providence; to share this goodness with His creatures for His own eternal glory.

## I. JOSEPH LIVED UNDER GOD'S PROVIDENCE

The story of Joseph is probably one of the most familiar in the Old Testament (Genesis 37-50). Genesis 50:15-21 deals with the reaction of Joseph's brothers after the death of their father.

**Verse 15.** "*When Joseph's brothers saw their father dead*" is a phrase that offers some difficulty to Bible students. Obviously they saw he was dead before the period of mourning and the trip and burial of Jacob in Canaan (v.1-14). Probably the best response given by many scholars is that now, for the first time since they came to Egypt and learned that Joseph was alive, Joseph's brothers began to realise the full implication of their own situation. Their father had served (at least in their minds) as a protection for them. While he was alive they knew Joseph would not do them harm.

Now they understand that they are at the mercy of their brother whom they had mistreated in the past. Guilt arises in them. How would Joseph feel about them, now that their father was gone? This fear, however, was unfounded, for Joseph had told them earlier that he regarded his sale in Egypt as a work of God's providence (Genesis 45:4-11).

**Verses 16,17.** A message is sent to Joseph that before Jacob's death, he commanded that Joseph forgive his brothers for the wrong they committed. Their appeal to Joseph is through his love for his father. No record is given that Jacob actually spoke these words. This has caused some to say all this looks suspicious. After all, if Jacob had wanted to give Joseph a message, he could have given it himself. Others feel that the spirit of the statement was in keeping with Jacob's character.

The statement made to Joseph assumes that Jacob met with one or more of his sons without Joseph's presence, and that they shared with him their fear of retaliation after his death. Added to this is the request by the brothers for forgiveness of their wrongs. In their request they describe themselves as "*the servants of the God of your father.*" The basis of their plea was that they all serve the same God, the God whom their father served.

When the request came to Joseph, he was moved to tears. Either he was deeply hurt to think that his brothers, whom he loved (42:24; 43:30,31; 45:1-15), would think he would hold any animosity against them, or he accepted their request as sincere and was moved to tears by their confession and sincerity. This may have been the first time the brothers acknowledged the wrong they committed.

**Verse 18.** When Joseph's brothers come before him, they fall down before him. Once again we see the fulfilment of Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:7-10). They declare, "*We are your servants.*" They had sent him to Egypt to be a slave, now they recognise themselves as slaves. They are willing to compensate for their wrong by being his slaves the rest of their lives. Such thought involves either deep fear or great humility.

**Verses 19-21.** Joseph now responds to his brothers with a three-fold statement which reflects the greatness of the man. First, all wrongs are to be righted by God (v.19). Joseph asked, "*Am I in the place of God?*" meaning "Can I judge and punish men?" When Jacob asked Rachel this same question (30:2), he meant, "Do I have the power to enable you to conceive and give birth to a child?" The answer is no. Such a judgement as this belongs to God, not man (Romans 12:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 4:19).

Second, he affirms God's providence at work in his life (v.20). This is probably the most familiar verse in this section of Scripture. Even though Joseph's brothers actions were evil, God worked it for good. Joseph saw this from the perspective that God turned evil into good.

Third, Joseph forgives and cares for his brothers in a practical way (v.21). He returns good for evil, "*I will nourish you and your little ones.*" Such action is in keeping with the teaching of Christ (Luke 6:27-38).

## **II. PAUL REALISED GOD'S PROVIDENCE**

**Philippians 1:12-14.** As Paul writes this epistle, he addresses the concerns that the brethren at Philippi have over him. The things which had happened to Paul were different than what he had planned. While travelling through Syria, Crete and Greece, Paul had made plans to take the gospel to Spain, after returning once more to Jerusalem and making a visit to Rome. But

these plans were not fulfilled. Paul now finds himself a prisoner in Rome on trial for his life.

The brethren at Philippi were concerned about Paul's state of affairs. It had been four years since they had seen Paul. They had received rumours about what had happened to him, but they did not know for sure. News had been received about the severe illness of Epaphroditus, a member of the church at Philippi.

And what about Paul? Was he still in chains? Was he sick, also? Would he be condemned or acquitted? Perhaps he had already been martyred for his faith in Christ. And, what about the cause of the gospel? What would happen now? News finally arrived in the sending of this epistle, and Paul addresses their concerns.

**Verse 12.** In Paul's mind the primary question was not, "What is going to happen to me?" It was, "How is the gospel affected by whatever happens to me?" His answer was, "The gospel is advanced by my imprisonment."

The experience in Paul's life caused the gospel to progress in much the same way the work of study engineers has on the progress of an army. Engineers are sent ahead to remove any obstacles for the rest of the army.

The path of the gospel is often filled with obstacles by Satan. How we handle those obstacles affects the power of the gospel in our lives. Sometimes experiences in life hinder us rather than assist us in our work in the gospel. What Satan no doubt thought was a roadblock, Paul saw as a steppingstone for the furtherance of the gospel. Paul was bound, but the Word of God cannot be bound. When Paul went to Rome (even in chains), the gospel went to Rome.

**Verses 13,14.** The progress of the gospel had its effect in two ways. The Praetorian guard heard the gospel and many of the brethren (in Rome) became more and more confident, speaking boldly the Word without fear.

## CONCLUSION

The providential work of God continues today. There may be times we feel like evil is besetting us on every hand, but we should remember that God cares and "*works all things for good*" (Romans 8:28). The examples of Joseph and Paul are only two of many which could be cited to illustrate that God is a God of perpetual providence. While persecuting circumstances may cause you to think you are hindered in your effectiveness, this need not be the cause. It may be that you are being called upon to suffer for the gospel of Christ. But in your suffering, glorify God. Your faithfulness in such a time may be the example needed by others to stand faithfully also.

## CHAPTER 5

# CHRIST HAS ALL AUTHORITY

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been given all, or supreme, authority in matters religious by His Father in heaven.

The first passage to be taken into consideration is Matthew 7:28-29. Jesus began His public ministry on this earth with what is commonly referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount." Some of the greatest teaching ever presented unto man was incorporated into this sermon and offered by Christ on this occasion. As the lesson was brought to a close, the people were astonished. Not only were they stirred by the message of our Lord, but they were also impressed with the fact that here was one who taught them as one having authority.

*"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes". (Matt. 7:28-29)*

Immediately, therefore, at the very beginning of Christ's public work, the people to whom He spoke were awed by the authority with which He spoke.

In Matt. 17:1-5, especially verse 5, we see further confirmation of the fact that Christ has supreme authority in religious matters. Jesus, on this occasion, took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, apart into a high mountain. There He was transfigured, or changed, before them.

With Him appeared Moses (the great lawgiver of the Old Testament) and Elijah (the great prophet: having started, as it is called, the "school of the prophets"). In these two can be seen that summation of the Old Testament that Jesus gave in Matt. 5:17-18, *"The law and the prophets."*

*\*The complete statement of Matt. 5:17-18 is, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."*

A similar classifying of the Old Testament scriptures is seen in Lk. 24:44. *"And He said unto them, 'these are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.'"*

Moses represented *"the law"* and Elijah represented *"the prophets"* - thus, the law and the prophets, the Old Testament as summarised by Christ in the sermon on the mount. With these two great notables appeared Christ, the Son of God. Peter, not knowing what to say (Mk. 9:6; Lk. 9:33), answered, *"'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.'* While he yet spoke behold

*a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; you hear Him.'*" (Matt. 17:4-5) As all will agree, that one speaking out of heaven was God the Father. He was verbally expressing His will unto men. *"This is my beloved Son - you hear Him"*. The plain implication is that no longer are we to hear Moses, or Elijah, or any of the other prophets like unto them - today we are to hear Christ. He is the one who today has authority in matters religious. This is the will - the expressed will of the Father in heaven.

But let us go further in our study. In Acts 3:22-23 we read, *"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people"*.<sup>1</sup> Bear in mind that this statement was made after the ascension of Christ back into heaven. With His return to the Father the gospel is now being preached in His name unto all men everywhere. On this occasion in Acts chapter 3 we find Peter speaking to the Jews on Solomon's porch in the temple at Jerusalem. He is showing the fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies in Jesus Christ, the Son of God - the Saviour of the world. *"For Moses said"* - in other words, Moses, in the long ago, prophesied concerning this man called Jesus saying that He would be a prophet; one raised up by God to be His spokesman unto men.

\*The word *"prophet"* means "spokesman, one who speaks forth". It is a transliteration of the Greek word *prophetes*, a combination of two words: *pro* meaning "forth" and *phemi* "to speak". An example is seen in the relationship sustained by Aaron to Moses. *"...Aaron your brother shall be your prophet"*. (Ex. 7:1) *"And he shall be your spokesman unto the people"*. (Ex. 4:16) Scripturally, therefore (as well as by definition) a prophet is a spokesman.

The phrase *"God raise up unto you"* has specific reference to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that Christ began to speak authoritatively the words of His Father in heaven. This fact shall be developed and fully established in the studies to follow. *"Of your brethren"* refers to His humanity (Heb. 2:) and Jewish lineage.

And when God raises up that prophet *"You are to hear Him."* Moses recorded - *"you are to hear Him in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you."* In other words, no longer are we to listen to Moses; for, when God raises up the prophet Christ, we are to hear Him in all things whatsoever He says unto us. Moses, himself, recognised and prophesied concerning the supremacy and superiority of Christ. Truly, Christ has all authority in matters religious - a position given Him by His Father in heaven.

In Eph. 1:22-23 the inspired apostle Paul speaks of the relationship that exists between God the Father and Christ the Son. *"And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the*

---

<sup>1</sup> The prophecy to which Peter made reference is recorded in Deut. 18:15-14.

*head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all"*

\*If it were not for the questions that naturally arise, it no doubt would be well to also read the verses preceding these two. They pertain to the same subject and possibly are even more emphatic in emphasising the truth that Christ has all authority.

*"Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come". (Eph. 1:20-21)*

So, again, the Father has made Christ His Son to be head over all things in religious matters. This is what we have been emphasising from the very beginning and Eph. 1:22-23 poignantly sets forth that idea.

In Col. 1:18 Paul says, *"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"*

When we speak of Jesus as our Lord, we are saying in essence, "Master, Ruler, Chief" - the one who in all things has the preeminence. Yes, Jesus has been given supreme authority in matters religious.

No doubt one of the most impressive scriptures in the New Testament emphasising the authority of Christ is Matt. 28:18. No other passage, in all probability, sums up quite so well that which we have set out to prove scripturally. At the time of this writing Jesus had been crucified upon the cross, buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, raised victoriously from the dead the third day - and now, He meets with His disciples just before His ascension back into heaven on high where He is to sit at the right hand of the throne of God His Father. To His disciples He said, *"All power ('authority' in most of the older versions) is given unto Me in heaven and on earth."* Then, on the basis of that all authority, Christ sent His disciples forth with the great commission.

In speaking on the subject of authority Jesus said, "I have it all, I have all in heaven and I have all on earth". The extent of His authority therefore is all, it is complete, plenary, full, total, nothing lacking. Again, the scope of His authority is all, all in heaven and all on earth. No celestial authority can equal or supersede the authority of Christ. Nor can any earthly authority, whether it be Abraham, Moses, Elijah, earthly governments, parents, husbands or vocational bosses. None can approach or offset the authority of Christ. When it comes to religious matters Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth.

\*When we speak of Christ having supreme authority in heaven, we certainly are not teaching, or implying, that the Father has placed Himself under the authority of Christ - that Christ rules over the Father. Paul gives us an understanding of his paradox in 1 Cor. 15:27-28. *"For He (the Father) has put all things under His (Christ's) feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that*

*He is excepted, which did put all things under Him."*

One more scripture needs to be taken into consideration, Heb. 1:1-2. *"God, who at sundry (different) times and in divers (various) manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the Worlds"*

\* *"The last days"* refer to the last days of the Jewish dispensation, the law of Moses - that period of time when God spoke unto man by Christ. Jesus Christ was born, lived and died a Jew. The preaching of the good news began with Christ's ministry, after His baptism, and it continued by the Holy Spirit after His ascension until A.D. 70. (See Mic. 7:15) The apostle John says, *"that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the Word of life.... That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."* (1 John 1:1,3) Christ became God's spokesman unto men by being given all authority in heaven and on earth. Peter with the preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, the day that the church of our Lord (the kingdom of God) was established on this earth, in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, referred to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in the last days, as that which was spoken of by the Prophet Joel. (See Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 12:22-23,28.)

God now speaks unto us through His Son. He may have spoken through Moses or Elijah in times past but today He speaks unto man by His Son, a Son that has been made heir of all things. Today we must hear Christ in matters religious.

Refusing to accept Christ as the supreme authority in religious matters is the reason that there are so many divisions and schisms in the religious world. Everyone agrees that Christ has all authority in religious matters, but we fail so miserably to apply that truth in our lives. We will offset what we know Christ to have taught by the teachings of men, by what some church may teach or practice or, by what we ourselves may feel. But, if we are ever to have that for which our Lord prayed, unity among all professed believers in Him, then we will have to not only mentally accept the fact that Christ has supreme authority in religion but also accept it in our lives by embracing unreservedly that which He has taught.

\*Unity among professed believers is solicited by Christ in Jno. 17:20-21. *"Neither pray I for these alone (speaking of the apostles), but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; (speaking of future disciples) that they all may be one; as You Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me"*

Notice that unity will be maintained, not by what I think, not what others think, or even what you think, nor by what some church may teach, rather, the question should be, "What does Christ teach?" Unity in the church can only be *"as the Father and the Son are one,"* and the reason for it is *"that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus Christ."* With all of the

denominational division in the world today, it is small wonder that the world does not believe that the Father sent His Son. All authority has been given to Jesus Christ, we need to listen to Him.

## CHAPTER 6

# CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITY IN HIS WORD

Christ has vested, or placed, that supreme authority, that He received from His Father in heaven, in His word. In other words, Christ in His infinite wisdom has given a word to man that carries the same weight of authority that He Himself possesses. It is one thing to recognise an individual as having authority while he is in our presence, and something else entirely to appreciate and revere his authority while he is absent from us.

We see many examples of this fact just about every day in our business offices, factories, schoolrooms, in the armed forces and other expressions of life in the land. When the boss or teacher is present we pursue our work with gusto, but that same exemplary behaviour is so often lacking with the absence of those who have the rule over us. In one case, the one having authority is honoured in the other, the respect leaves with the one possessing it.

Christ, of course, has now ascended back to His Father in heaven. No longer is He present with us, bodily.

*"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." (Mk. 16:19)*

*"And it came to pass, while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." (Lk. 24:51)*

*"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Heb. 4:14)*

*"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24)*

*"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God..." (1 Pet. 3:22)*

Since He is not now with us (in bodily form that is) the question is whether or not we still recognise Him as having authority, all authority, in heaven and on earth? If we should answer in the affirmative another question must of necessity be raised, "how"? How can He be recognised as having all authority on earth, when He is no longer on earth? The answer of course is "only as we reverence the word He left behind with us."

The Authority of Christ, since He left us, is the word that He left us!

In Jno. 12:48-50 Jesus is recorded as saying, *"He that rejects Me, (the one having all*

*authority) - and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak."*

In Jno. 12:48-50 Jesus affirmed that the word He spoke, and that shall judge man in the last day, He received from His Father in heaven. Touching Heb. 1:1-2 we again stress that God speaks unto us today by His Son, that same Son who by the Father has been given supreme authority in heaven and on earth. In Jno. 12:48-50 Jesus stated that the word He spoke He received from His Father in heaven. Again, it is the Father speaking through Him. He further declared that it is not He (Jesus) but the word which He received from His Father that shall judge men in the day of judgement.

With His departure back into heaven Jesus (that one possessing all authority in heaven and on earth, and who, because of that authority will judge all men in the last day) has left us a word that carries the same authority that He Himself possesses. *"The word that I have spoken,"* said Christ, *"the same shall judge man in the last day."* In that day of judgement therefore, even as the scriptures abundantly teach, we shall be judged by Christ, the Son of God. But, that judgement by Christ shall be by His word. The authority of Christ has been vested or placed in His word.

Many passages in the Bible attest to the fact that in the day of judgement man shall be judged by God the Father, the judge of all.

As Abraham said to the Lord in the long ago, *"...Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"* (Gen. 18:25)

In questioning God as man so often does, Paul writes, *"Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?"* (Rom. 3:5-6)

Again, the inspired Hebrew writer says, *"... to God the Judge of all..."* (Heb. 12:23)

The scriptures also teach that God will execute this judgement upon all men by His Son, Jesus Christ.

*"For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgement unto the Son."* (Jno. 5:22)

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent: because He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead."* (Acts 17:30-31)

Thus, in that great and final day, the scriptures clearly and emphatically teach that the Father will be the judge of all men. But He Himself will not judge anyone, for He has committed all judgement unto His Son. This we would naturally expect since the Father has given to His Son all authority both in heaven and on earth.

Now, in Jno. 12:48 we further learn that in the last day neither the Father or the Son will judge. In that day the Son has made His word the word that He received from His Father in heaven the basis of judgement, The Father shall judge by His Son but the Son shall judge by His word

Paul by the Lord's Spirit, very aptly sums up the teaching of the Bible in regard to the final judgement in (Rom. 2:16). *"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."* (We all recognise of course that the gospel which Paul preached was, and is, the word of Christ. cf. Gal. 1:11-12)

Thus, in the last day, we are not going to be judged by our own feelings, opinions, or personal beliefs in matters religious. We are not going to be judged by what some preacher, teacher or pastor may have taught us, Nor will we be judged by what some church teaches or practices. The standard of judgement will not be according to what some synod, council or assembly has agreed upon, Nor will it matter to us what our parents, families, friends and loved ones before us may have believed and accepted, The creeds, catechisms, manuals and disciplines of men will be to no avail. No, dear friend, in the last day we are going to be judged solely, wholly, and totally by the word of Christ. This, and this alone, shall be the basis of judgement at the end of time,

In that day the word of Christ shall be placed on one side of the balance or scale and man, you and I, shall be placed on the other side. Everyone that does not meet the standards or teachings set forth in that word shall be found wanting. Again Christ's authority is in His word and by that word we shall be judged in the last day.

## CHAPTER 7

# CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITATIVE WORD TO THE APOSTLES.

In that great and notable last day Christ the Lord will be the judge of all men - but, He has seen fit to judge all men by His word!

Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, gave that all authoritative judging word to His apostles. Not only were the apostles commanded to preach that word to every creature throughout the world, but, by the same Holy Spirit, they wrote it down in what is now recognised as the New Testament portion of the Bible. Thus, in the last day, that which has been written the word of Christ will be the basis of judgement of all men living this side of the cross of Christ. In essence, we are establishing the fact that the written word, the New Testament, is the word of Christ.

Virtually everyone speaks of the New Testament as the word of God, or, the word of Christ. But, why is this true? By what line of reasoning can we speak of it as Christ's word? As far as we know, Christ never wrote anything with of course the exception of that one occasion when He wrote on the ground. (Jno. 8:8) But, one thing is absolutely certain, Christ did not literally write the New Testament scriptures! How then can we logically or reasonably refer to the New Testament as the word of Christ?

Bear in mind that this is an idea generally accepted by the religious world of Christendom. However, if the average believer of this truth were called upon to explain why he believed it to be true, he, in all probability, would be at a loss. In fact, many who vigorously contend that the New Testament is the word of Christ have difficulty accepting that truth in application. For example, when confronted with some passage of scripture that is unacceptable to them they will immediately attempt to offset its teaching with the idea that what is being considered was taught by some man, or apostle, rather than by the Lord, (No doubt the red-letter editions of the Bible have helped to foster this delusion.) Paradoxically, however, a few moments after having rejected some passage of scripture as nothing more than the thoughts of some man they will be once again affirming that the New Testament is the word of Christ. Strange, to say the least, is it not?

In the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus prayed a very fervent prayer to His Father in heaven. It was just before His crucifixion on the cross and His work on earth was nearing its completion.

In verses 1-5 Jesus prayed for Himself. In verses 6-19 He prayed for the apostles. The latter verses in the chapter, verses 20-26, contain Christ's petition in behalf of all believers, the church.

In verse 8, in regard to His apostles, Jesus said, *"...For I have given unto them the words*

*which You gave Me.*" Christ received the word which He spoke from the Father in heaven. Now that word that all authoritative word that will judge all men in the last day - that Christ received from His Father in heaven, He gave to His apostles. *"I have given unto them (the apostles) the words which You (the Father) gave Me."* Further emphasis is given by Christ in verse 14 when He added, *"I have given them Your word."* Again, in verse 18, *"As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."* The Father sent Christ into the world with an all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day. Jesus here affirms that He was sending His apostles into the world in exactly the same way as His Father had sent Him. He was sending them forth with the same authoritative word that He has received from His Father, *"For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me I have given them Your word - as You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."*

No wonder our Lord on another occasion could say, *"He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me."* (Matt. 10:40) Or, again, in Lk. 10:16, *"He that hears you hears Me; and he that despises you despises Me; and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me."*

As the Father sent Christ, Christ sent the apostles! How did the Father send Christ? He sent Him with all authority! Where was that authority? It was vested in His word, that same word which Christ had received from His Father in heaven, that word which will judge man in the last day. Speaking of the apostles, and to the Father, Jesus said, *"As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."* Again, how was Christ sent into the world? He was sent with an all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day! How were these apostles sent into the world? They, as Christ were sent with that same all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day!

In Jno. 14:16, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles. He assured them that with His departure they would not be left comfortless, that another Comforter would be sent unto them, the Holy Spirit or Spirit of truth. *"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you, but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* (Jno. 14:25-26) Again to His apostles Jesus said, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come."* (Jno. 16:12-13)

Why was the Holy Spirit given to the apostles? What purpose was He to serve? Jesus, in the passages already considered, said it basically was three-fold. (1) The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into all truths teach them all things. (2) He was to bring to their remembrance all things Christ had taught them. (3) Further, He was to show them things to come.

In receiving the Holy Spirit not only were the apostles guided into all truths, etc., but they were also guided in that which they spoke. Actually, it was the Holy Spirit speaking through them. This fact is abundantly set forth in numerous New Testament scriptures. The apostles, in receiving the Holy Spirit, spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4) *"But when they*

*shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what you shall speak, neither do you premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak, for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit." (Mk, 13:11) "For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." (Matt. 10:20) When, therefore, the Holy Spirit came to the apostles in Acts chapter 2, we find that they "... began to speak .... as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4)*

To recapitulate; from Jno. 12:48-50, and other scriptures, we learned that Christ was sent into the world with an all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day. In Jno, 14:16, Jesus promised His apostles that with His departure the Holy Spirit would be sent unto them. With the arrival of the Holy Spirit they would be guided into all truth, have all things brought to their remembrance that had been taught them by Christ, they would be shown things yet to come and, when they spoke it would not be them speaking, but rather, the Holy Spirit speaking through them. (Jno. 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Mk. 13:11) Finally, in His fervent prayer recorded in Jno. 17, Jesus stated that He had given to His apostles the same word that He had received from His Father in heaven. He further emphasised that He was sending these apostles into the world in exactly the same way that He had been sent by the Father into the world. (Jno. 17:8,14,18) Thus, the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, were sent into the world with an all authoritative word that will be the basis of judgement in the last day.

\*By comparing the following scriptures, additional emphasis can be given to the truth that the word spoken by the apostles was, and is, in reality the word of God. In Jno. 17:8, 14 and especially verse 18, Jesus said that the apostles were being sent into the world with the same word that He had received from His Father in heaven. He then prayed for those (the world) who would believe on Him through their (the apostles') word. (Verse 20) Notice specifically that the world would believe on Christ because of the word spoken by the apostles. However, in Rom. 10:17 we are told, *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

It is by the hearing of the apostle's word that faith comes. It is by hearing the word of God that faith comes. The word of the apostles, therefore, must be the word of God.

To carry this line of discussion and Biblical teaching a step further, we need to recognise that the apostles not only spoke this all authoritative word given them by the Father through Christ, but that they also wrote it down in the books making up the New Testament. Even as they spoke, they wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The apostles wrote that which they spoke, and emphasised that which they wrote was, even as that which they spoke, the word of Christ (the word of God).

**1. 2 Thess. 2:15.** *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."* (Paul here equates the spoken word with the written word, He said that the traditions are to be kept whether presented by word (that spoken) or by epistle (that written)).

The word *"tradition"* literally means *"that which is handed down."* The term is used

in two ways in the Bible.

**A. The traditions of men:** that which religiously has been handed down by man having no higher authority for its existence and practice than man. The religious traditions of men are condemned in the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

**B. The traditions of God:** that which religiously has been handed down or ordained by God. These traditions are extolled in the Bible and are enjoined upon all men.<sup>3</sup> The Father handed down His word to the Son the Son by the Holy Spirit handed down that same word to the apostles the apostles, by the same Holy Spirit, have handed it down to man.

Thus, Paul exhorts us to hold fast that which has been handed down (by the Lord of course) whether it was spoken or written to us. The written word, therefore, carries the same authority as the spoken word.

**2. 2 Thess. 3:6** *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."* Consider now verse 14 which equates the written word to the spoken word. *"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."*

**3. Eph. 3:3-4.** *"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)."*

**4. 1 Cor. 14:37** *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."*

**5. Jno. 20:30-31** *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name."* (Consider these two verses in light of what has already been discussed in reference to how faith comes. From Jno. 17:20 we learn that faith comes by the word spoken by the apostles. Rom. 10:17 teaches that faith comes by the word of God. Now, John in Jno. 20:30-31 tells us that faith comes by that which is written, whether spoken or written it is God's word by which faith comes.)

The above scriptures but touch the hem of the garment but are sufficient to prove to any unbiased mind that the apostles wrote, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that which they spoke,

---

<sup>2</sup> *"But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"* (Matt. 15:3; Consider also verse 9: Mk. 7:1-8; Col. 2:22; Tit. 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18)

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 11:2 (*"Traditions"* in the Greek and other translations) Also 2 Thess. 3:6.

the word of God. The New Testament scriptures (writings) are God's word to men!

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Two other ideas need to be taken into consideration at this time.

**1. The apostleship of Paul.** Many of the scriptures we have been considering have been from writings of the apostle Paul. Yet, Paul was not a part of that original number who were promised the Holy Spirit. (Jno. 14:16)

\*Remember that we have been proving that the apostles wrote even as they spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have been establishing the fact that the New Testament scriptures came into being as a result of the apostles writing by inspiration of the same Holy Spirit by which they spoke. Bear in mind, however that the majority of the New Testament was written by Paul, and, as stated before, he was not a part of that original group to whom the Holy Spirit was promised.

Even though that be true, the promise of being guided into all truth, having all the teachings of Christ brought to remembrance, being shown things to come, and the Holy Spirit speaking through him (Christ's promise of what the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles) applies equally to Paul as to the others, for he too was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The appointment of Paul as an apostle is recorded specifically in Acts, chapters 9, 22, and 26. Paul's affirmation and defence of his apostleship is seen throughout his epistles. (Rom. 1:1,5; 1 Cor. 1:1; 4:9; 9:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:1; 11:5; 12:12; Gal. chapters 1 and 2; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit. 1:1) Thus Paul defended that which he spoke and wrote as being the word of God, inspired of God. *"But I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* (Gal. 1:11-12) *"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."* (1 Cor. 2:13) *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe."* (1 Thess. 2:13) *"If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."* (1 Cor. 14:37)

Paul also met the qualifications of an apostle, found in Acts 1:22, as he was an eye witness to the resurrected Christ, on the road to Damascus, (Acts 9:3-6) and he was taught by the revelation of Christ, as the other apostles. (Gal. 1:11-12) Further, Paul described himself as the last of the apostles, as one born out of due time. (1 Cor. 15:8)

Adding to the above, Peter, unquestionably an inspired apostle, lends support to Paul being inspired when in 2 Pet. 3:15-16 he referred to Paul's writings as scripture.

It must be concluded, therefore, that the promises of Jno. 14:25-26; 16:12-13, and Mk. 13:11, apply to Paul as an apostle even as they apply to the other apostles.

**2. Other New Testament writers.** It is obvious that there were writers of the New Testament books other than the apostles; namely Mark, Luke, James and Jude. What about these men? As was true of Paul they too were not a part of that number to whom Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. How then can their writings be referred to as the word of God?

The inspired apostle Paul gives us the answer! (Bear in mind, as has already been proven, that Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit was guided into all truth his teaching therefore is completely valid,) *"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* (Eph. 3:1-5) Yes, the prophets (spokesmen) also spoke and wrote as guided by God's Holy Spirit. (Consider also Eph. 4:11 where the prophets are listed alongside the apostles in the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body or Christ.)

It has been necessary to spend some time in side discussion but let us not lose sight of the main stream of teaching. In Jno. 17:8, 14 and 18 Jesus, in praying to His heavenly Father, stated that He had given unto His apostles the same word which He had received from God His Father, an all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day. He had promised this word to them by the Holy Spirit. *"When He comes,"* said Christ, *"He will guide you (the apostles) into all truth, bring to your remembrance all things which I (Christ) have taught you, will show you things to come, and, when you speak, it will be the Holy Spirit speaking through you."* (Jno. 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Mk, 13:11) Not only did these apostles speak as the Holy Spirit guided them but they also wrote the words that they spoke into the books making up the New Testament scripture, Thus, the books of the New Testament are the words of the Holy Spirit, Christ the Son, and God the Father.

The word of Christ, that which has been written, the New Testament, will be the basis of judgement in the last day.

In Rev. 20:12, John writes, *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."*

Some have difficulty making a distinction between the book and the books in this verse. *"The books were opened (the books of the Bible)... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books."* The other book opened is the book of life, the dead are not judged out of it. Rather, as stated in verse 15, *"Whosoever was not found written in the book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."* Those not in the book of life are lost, but, judgement is based upon that which is written in the books. (The books of BIBLE)

In the last day, therefore, I and all others are going to be judged according to the things written in the books.

## CHAPTER 8

# CHRIST'S ALL AUTHORITATIVE WRITTEN WORD IS ALL SUFFICIENT

In contrast to the many prevalent theories that today teach a need for progressive or continuous revelation, nothing more is needed in the way of religious instruction than the written word of Christ. It is sufficient to meet all of our spiritual needs.

Though there are numerous scriptures we could call upon, the following two are more than adequate to establish this premise: Christ's all authoritative written word is all sufficient to guide us religiously, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instructions in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Peter concurred with the statement made by Paul when he wrote, *"according as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue."* (2 Pet. 1:3)

Consider the following additional wonderful scriptures representative of many others, all of which emphasise the sufficiency of that which had been written.

*"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name."* (Jno. 20:30-31)

*"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write unto you in order, most excellent Theophilus, that you might know the certainty of those things, wherein you have been instructed."* (Lk. 1:3-4)

*"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."* (Acts. 1:1)

*"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)."* (Eph. 3:3-4)

*"My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (1 Jno. 2:1)

In the first of these two scriptures Paul affirms that, by the scriptures, the man of God has everything needed to make him perfect (complete) and to furnish him completely unto every, or all, good and acceptable works. That being true, what need could anyone have, in religion, for anything other than the scriptures? In the second scripture, Peter, in speaking of that revelation that has been given us, says that we have all that is needed for life, or to be like our

God. (Bear in mind that in the same passage Peter said that those who are partakers of the divine nature, God-like, or godliness escape the corruption that is in this world and in addition are granted an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God. (Verses 4, and 11) By the scriptures, therefore, we have everything that is needed to go to heaven. Truly, Christ's all authoritative written word, the scriptures, is all sufficient to guide us religiously.

## **THE SCRIPTURES.** (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

### **I. Origin:** God

### **II. Purpose:** profitable,

- A. Doctrine.
- B. Reproof.
- C. Correction.
- D. Instruction in righteousness.

### **III. Results:** man of God.

- A. Perfect.
- B. Thoroughly furnished to all good works.

First of all Paul here emphasises that the scriptures (writings) have their origin in God and not, as many today teach, in man. The scriptures are not the outgrowth of man's thinking, wisdom or experience. To the contrary, Paul says the scriptures have their origin in God. (The Father gave His word to the Son by the Holy Spirit, the Son gave that same word to the apostles. The apostles then spoke, and wrote, that word as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Paul could accurately and truthfully say, "*inspiration of God*".) As God is to be revered by man, so also these scriptures, that have their origin in God, should be held in the highest esteem, or revered, by man.

Second, Paul states that the scriptures were given by God for a very definite, specific purpose.

**(1) they are profitable for doctrine** - that which is to be taught. As Peter said in 1 Pet. 4:11 "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.*" When we teach, we are to teach the scriptures, they are given by God for that particular purpose.

Would to God, some of our brethren in the church today would learn this prime lesson of religious life. Far too long we have been plagued by so-called gospel preachers who have repeatedly misused our pulpits. Instead of heralding forth a simple, forthright and uncompromising presentation of the scriptures the pulpits in recent years have been desecrated by the telling of joke after joke, the rehearsal of current events, the reviewing of

outstanding works of literature (Bible related or not), the social platitudes, the seeming need on the part of some to impress their audiences with themselves and how well read they are in the works of men. All these things may have their place, but not in the pulpit! Our pulpits today, as of old, cry for a preservation of the scripture. Our Bible classes today plead for a teaching and studying of the Sacred word. We desperately need to get away from the evaluating and judging of questions and situations according to the opinions of men, so characteristic of our age. Instead of listening to men and what they have to say about religious life we need to once again sit at the feet of Him who is the fount of all life and hear His word. Our plea should be "what says the scripture?" A plea that is as relevant, vital and valid today as it has ever been. May God help us to follow the pattern set by our Lord whose ever defence was, "*it is written.*" (Matt. 4:4,7)

**(2) They are profitable for reproof** - for proving again and again what is right or wrong religiously. (The expression "*reproof*" is not here used as it is so commonly used today. The term does not mean to "*correct, chastise, scold or rebuke.*" Rather, the word means to "*again prove.*") We establish what is right or wrong religiously on the basis of what the scriptures teach.<sup>4</sup>

**(3) They are profitable for correction** - correcting that which has been proven wrong. All such correction is to be pursued on the basis of what the scriptures teach. (The Greek word "*epanorthosis*" is literally defined to mean: a restoration to an upright or right state. Setting right, improvement of life, and character).

**(4) They are profitable for instruction in righteousness** - teaching that which has been proven right or just. Teaching how one may live an acceptable life before God, (Instruction comes from the Greek word "*paideian*" which means chastisement, discipline embracing the whole training and education of an individual).

Finally, Paul gives the results to such scriptural emphasis: that the man of God (that which you, I, and all others should desire to be) may be perfect, complete, lacking nothing, spiritually matured and refined. More, that that man of God may be, by the scriptures thoroughly or completely furnished unto every, or all, good works. Truly, what a glorious treasure what a "*pearl of great price*" the Lord has given us in the scriptures!

If we could but learn, apply, and appreciate this salient lesson of Christianity, how well it would be for all of us. We need nothing more religiously than the Bible. We do not need the creeds, dogmas, catechisms, manuals and disciplines of men. The word of God is within itself, sufficient, all sufficient, to meet our every spiritual need and to guide us into the way of acceptance before our God. For what more could we ask?

---

<sup>4</sup> There is controversy both as to the exact word found in the original text, and, the basic meaning of the term. Some uses applied to the term are censure, correction, convincing, a proof, proving, test, refutation. In light of the context and especially in comparison with "*correction*" I would conclude the word is used as presented in the study.



## RESPECT FOR GOD'S WORD DEMANDED

### GENERAL TEACHING

Even a superficial reading of the scriptures should impress upon our minds the respect that God demands for His word. Consider some of the general teaching given in the New Testament along that line.

In the first four chapters of the 1 Corinthian epistle the inspired apostle Paul is condemning the sin of division among God's people and is, therefore, making a plea for unity. He shows how unity can be brought about and division brought to an end. In fulfilling that purpose he writes, *"and these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."* (1 Cor. 4:6).

Paul, in this scripture, uses himself and Apollos as examples (*"in a figure"*) of the principle of considering all things according to *"that which is written"* (Consider specifically 1 Cor. 3:4-11 in light of the first two chapters of the epistle.) Both Apollos and Paul preached the word by which all men are made free - the gospel of Christ. There was no division between them or their labours! Paul planted and Apollos watered, but it was God that gave the increase. Both worked in behalf of Christ, preaching Christ and His will for men. If there was no division between them and their work, how then could the fruit of their labours (the Corinthians) be divided? Such should not, and actually, could not, be! They both preached the wisdom and power of God - Christ - the word of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, said Paul, *"learn in us not to think above that which is written."* (Again, the written word is equated to the spoken word.)

Paul, of course, is referring to the words given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13), the gospel or the scriptures (1 Cor. 1:17-31), when he speaks of *"that which is written."* In bringing about a cure for religious division, and in promoting unity, Paul says we are to think according to *"that which is written."* In religious matters, therefore, God's demand for respect toward His word is seen in the fact that we are to limit our thinking to that which has been written, the scriptures. If someone were to ask me, "George, what do you think about this?" and the question had reference to a religious subject, I, if right with my God, would immediately delete from my thinking any personal opinion or belief, in order to reflect solely upon what God, by His Holy Spirit, has revealed in the scripture. Here is the beginnings for all religious unity - think scripturally. Put aside thoughts, opinions, personal beliefs, whims, fancies and caprices of men and think according to *"that which is written."*

But, not only does the Lord concern us with how we are to think. He also stipulates how we are to speak. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."* (1 Pet. 4:11). Again, God demands respect for His word to such an extent that when we speak we are limited to speaking

the words of God. Thus, we are to think scripturally and we are to speak scripturally.

Paul gives summary to the principles contained in the two preceding scriptures, when, in writing to the divided Corinthians, he said, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement."* (1 Cor. 1:10) Thus, Paul teaches that we can end division and be united if we would think alike, speak alike, and act alike - according to the scriptures (that given by the Father through His Son, by the Holy Spirit, spoken and written by the apostles).

## **SPECIFIC TEACHING**

**1. No Additions.** Our Lord will not countenance any additions to His all authoritative, all sufficient, written word. The inspired apostle John well expressed the idea when he wrote, *"Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. 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 bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* (2 Jno. 9-11)

Growing up in Farnham, Surrey, in England, I, as others, used to get into fist fights. During recess at school, when we had the opportunity to get out of the classroom and onto the school grounds, arguments soon started that resulted in fights, just about every day, it seems. In preparing for these fights we often would use our shoes to draw a line on the ground, telling the would-be opponent to step across the line. If he did step across the line, the fight was on. If he drew the line and you did not want to fight, then you stayed on your side of the line. But, once that line was crossed there was a fight. In exactly the same way, and as reverently as I can apply the principle, let me suggest that our Lord has drawn a line, the line has been drawn on the playground of life, it has been drawn around the teaching of Christ. If we step across the line, we are in a fight, we are at variance with God, we become His enemy, and it is a fight that can never be won by man. *"Whosoever transgresses (steps across the line), and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God."*

In bringing God's divine record to a close John wrote, *"For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."* (Rev. 22:18). To be sure, John is speaking primarily of the teaching that was then being presented in the book of Revelation. However, he here states a principle, or truth, emphasised throughout the entire Bible.

Add to God's word and God shall add to us the plagues written in the Revelation letter. Those plagues are: eternal separation from God, His heavenly home and the tree of life; and eternal punishment in hell. Again, how serious, how very serious, to trifle with God's word. God means for that word to be revered exactly as He gave it.

**2. No subtractions or substitutions.** The scriptures also teach that our Lord will not accept any subtraction from, or any substitutions for, His word as originally given.

In the very next verse to the passage just considered John further declares, *"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."* (Rev. 22:19). By the Spirit, John emphasises that to add to God's word, or, to take away from it, invites disaster. God wants His word to be revered; He demands that man keep it exactly as it was given.

The Galatian letter was written to those who were on the verge of apostasy as well as to those who had already abandoned the Christian faith for Judaism. To them Paul wrote, *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed."* (Gal. 1:6-9). This passage of scripture deserves additional deliberation.

(1) Paul says that in turning to another gospel (substituting for the gospel of Christ another gospel!) we are removed from God. Consider again 2 Jno. 9, where it is emphasised that the one who is not content to abide in the teaching of Christ has not God. This is exactly the same idea expressed by Paul here in the Galatian letter when he says *"removed from God."*

"Some consideration needs to be given to the word '*another*' as used in the latter part of verse 6 and the first part of verse 7. In verse 6 Paul writes, *"... the grace of Christ unto another gospel."* The Greek word is '*heteron*' meaning 'utterly different - of a different sort.' In verse 7 the statement is 'which is not another.' Here the Greek word '*allo*' meaning 'another of the same sort.'"

(2) The word "*pervert*" means to *"corrupt, distort, alter, change, or misapply."* To in any way alter, change, corrupt or substitute for the gospel of Christ, as originally given to us, is to bring God's sure condemnation upon us. We shall be accursed or anathematised!

Paul effectively shows the folly of tampering with God's word. To substitute another gospel for the gospel of Christ is to be removed from God. To pervert the gospel (corrupt its teachings, either by addition, subtraction or substitution) is to be everlastingly lost, anathematised. No wonder then that Paul said, *"When you think, think according to that which has been written."* It is of little wonder that Peter could write, *"When you speak, speak according to the scriptures."* For if anyone dares to alter, pervert or change that gospel as originally given to man, or anyone should dare to add to it, subtract from it, or substitute for it, that one has not God. He is anathematised, hopelessly cut off and eternally damned from God!

During His sojourn on earth, our Lord gave similar teaching. On one occasion, for example, Jesus was asked by the scribes and the Pharisees why His disciples were not keeping the traditions (that which had been handed down) of the elders. Jesus replied, *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"* He then stresses how the Jews had altered the word of God by their traditions. Finally, He said *"But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matt. 15:3,9). What had these Jews

done? They had substituted the teachings (traditions) of men for the commandments of the Lord! Jesus said that such results in vain worship.

"Notice two of the many key words in these verses; namely, 'transgress' and 'doctrine' and how these words relate so well with the teaching of 2 Jno. 9."

*"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? .... But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matt. 15:3,9). "Whosoever transgresses, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God." (2 Jno. 9).

The Jews had done exactly what these verses indicate; they had transgressed the word of God, they had gone outside of that teaching substituting for it the traditions of men. According to the Lord, therefore, they worship in vain for they had not God.

If so desired, we can now tie in, with the scriptures already studied, the teaching of Matt. 21:23-27

*"And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority do You do these things? and who gave Thee this authority?' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?' And they reasoned with themselves, saying If we shall say, from heaven; He will say unto us, Why did you not believe him? But if we shall say, of men; we fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, 'we cannot tell.' And He said unto them, 'neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.'" (Matt. 21:23:27).*

In these verses Jesus taught that religious instruction has one or the other of two origins: it is either from heaven or it is of men. It is one or the other! If it is from heaven, it is, as has already been studied, that which the Father in heaven, gave unto His Son, who in turn gave it, by the Holy Spirit, to His apostles, which has been written down in the books of the New Testament. If it cannot be found in the books, then it is not from heaven. It must therefore be of men. If it is from heaven, then it will be found in the books, the scriptures. If it is not from heaven, not found in the scriptures, it is of men, and, if of men, then, in religion, it will damn. For, as we have already studied, to go outside of the teaching of Christ to substitute for the commandments of God, the teachings of men, is to be without God and our worship is in vain. God demands respect for His word!

These principles are also seen in a study of the Old Testament. It is even as Paul said in Rom. 15:4, *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

"Paul, in verse three had just quoted an Old Testament passage of scripture (Ps. 69:9) and had shown its fulfilment in Christ. Thus, when in verse four he writes,

*"whatsoever things were written aforetime,"* he undoubtedly had reference to the Old Testament writings.

## THE PRINCIPLES ARE SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Even as the New Testament sets forth the demand of God calling for the respect of His word, so also we see the same being taught and emphasised in the Old Testament. In fact, God has always, in every dispensation of time, and in all His dealings with man, demanded respect for His word, that man keep His word exactly as it was given.

The wise man, Solomon, wrote, *"Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar."* (Prov. 30:6). We today might take lightly the sin of lying, but such is not true of God. All liars are followers of Satan and will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. All liars shall go to hell! (Jno. 8:44; Rev. 21:27; 22:15). He who adds to God's word shall be found a liar, a fit subject for hell. It is a serious thing to trifle with the word of God.

Moses was speaking to the children of Israel when He said, *"You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."* (Deut. 4:2). In the fifth verse Moses affirmed that the teachings, statutes and judgements which he gave to the children of Israel were *"even as the Lord my God commanded me."* According to Moses (and bear in mind that he spoke and wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) the only way in which one can keep the commandments or word of the Lord is by keeping them exactly as the Lord gave them, without addition or subtraction.

Again, the Old Testament, given for our learning, comes to our aid by presenting many examples that well illustrate these principles we have been studying.

**1. Adam and Eve.** (Gen. 3). What brought about the damnation of the human family? What brought about the separation of man from God? What brought the first sin into the world? The answer is quite simple. It was the addition of one word to what God had said. The word was *"not"*. The Devil came unto the woman and asked, *"You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* To which the woman replied, *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die."* The Devil then added but one word to that which God had told the woman *"you shall **not** surely die."* Everything said on that occasion was true with the exception of one small yet most significant word, **not**. However, because of that one word, and man's acceptance of it, the damnation of the whole human family was brought about.

**2. Nadab and Abihu.** (Lev. 10:1,2) *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."*

Nadab and Abihu were the sons of Aaron and were, therefore, priests, the very ones God had

commanded to offer sacrifices unto Him. In offering this sacrifice of burning incense they, as priests, were only doing that which the Lord required of them. In that respect they were right and completely in accord with God's will. These two priests took their censers, they put fire therein, and incense thereon. Had God commanded them to do this? Yes, indeed, so again, they are in complete harmony with God's will. (See, for example, Num. 16:16-18). (1) They are priests, (2) they take their censers, (3) they put fire therein, (4) they put incense thereon, (5) they offer a sacrifice unto the Lord, in each of these items specified they are but doing that which the Lord had commanded. Yet, the Lord sent out fire from heaven that devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Is there any way in which we can account for this action on the part of our God? Why would the doing of God's expressed will bring such a hostile reaction on the part of the Lord? What had they done which warranted such a response? They *"offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not."* There is the answer; they had offered a strange fire! They had offered fire, but it was a strange fire, a fire which the Lord had not commanded. Where Nadab and Abihu had gotten their fire we are unable to say. (Actually, what difference does it make?) One thing we do know, however, it was not the fire which the Lord had commanded. It was a substitution, a strange, foreign or alien fire, for that fire commanded by the Lord. Because of their having taken liberties with the word of God, and because they did not show the respect that God demands toward His word, *"there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."* God means for His word to be respected exactly as He gave it. He will not accept any alteration on the part of anyone, even if he be a priest. Let us learn from the things written aforetime: God demands respect for His word.

**3. Moses** (Num. 20). God, with a mighty hand, had led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage by Moses, His prophet. Of Moses the Lord had said, *"My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently."* (Num. 12:7-8) Moses truly was an exceptional individual in God's economy. After Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness of Sinai it was not long until the people began to murmur. One complaint was that they did not have sufficient to drink. Moses brought the murmurings of the people to the Lord and he was told by the Lord to take his rod and smite a certain rock and it would bring forth water that the people might drink and be filled. (Ex. 17). Some time later the Israelites again began to murmur because, in their minds at least, they did not have sufficient to drink. Again, Moses took the complaints to the Lord and a second time he was told to take his rod and to gather the people before the rock. However, on this occasion the Lord had told Moses to *"speak to the rock before their eyes."* Moses did as the Lord had commanded him, he *"gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, 'hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice."* The water came forth, the people drank and were filled, but *"the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, 'Because you believed me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'"*

Again we see that God wants His word kept exactly as He gave it. He is the all wise, omniscient One. He knows what He wants. Who is the man that would exalt himself above God?

**4. King Saul** (1 Sam. 15). Saul was king of Israel, one who stood head and shoulders above

the other Israelites, a mighty man and a worthy king. The Lord told Saul to go up against the Amalekites and *"utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."* (verse 3). Saul should have known, from past history, that when God gives a command He means for man to obey it exactly as it was given. (We should have that same understanding). Saul moved in accord with the directions given by the Lord and gave him the victory. The Amalekites were defeated and delivered into his hands. But, as it is so often true of man, Saul and the people with him, began to reason according to human standards rather than according to what the Lord had commanded. Agag, the King of Amalek, was taken alive, so also *"the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good."* (Verse 9). Evidently their intentions were sincere for they had saved the best to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal. (Verses 15,20,21). Seemingly there was no attempt on Saul's part to take the honour and glory unto himself. Keep in mind, however, the Lord had said, *"Go and utterly destroy."* (Verse 18). As Saul was returning from the battle Samuel, the prophet, met him on the way. *"Saul said unto him, 'Blessed be you of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.'"* (Verse 13). We then find one of the most graphic, descriptive and interesting statements ever recorded in the Bible. Samuel said, *"What means then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"* (Verse 14). "I hear something, Saul, I hear some sheep and oxen. What does all of this mean if you have obeyed the voice of the Lord?" And Samuel said, *"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* (Verse 22). Finally the edict was announced, *"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king."* (Verse 23). Again, it is *"whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine .... has not God."* That principle was as true in the Old Testament as it is in the New! One other statement from this narrative needs to be considered. In verse 29 Samuel said, *"And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent."* God is not like man, He neither lies nor repents. We may tamper with man's word with impunity, but, not with God's. The Lord will never tolerate a tampering with His word. He demands respect for it, in all details, even as it was delivered.

**5. Uzzah.** (2 Sam. 6) The children of Israel had lost the ark of the covenant to the Philistines. During the days of Eli the Israelites had taken the ark into battle thinking that its presence would assure them of a victory over their enemies. But instead of victory the ark was captured by the Philistines. (1 Sam. 4) However, the Philistines suffered nothing but trouble and affliction all the time the ark was in their midst. Finally, they decided to return the ark to the Israelites. (1 Sam. 5-6). The children of Israel were overjoyed and in the days of David made a new cart to carry the ark back to Nachon's threshing floor. *"Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."* (2 Sam. 6:6-7). The Lord's response to this seemingly sincere act, trying to preserve and protect his holy thing of the Lord, is frightening, is it not? No doubt Uzzah had reasoned as man commonly reasons: God needs to be helped in this matter, the ark is going to fall to the ground and be broken into pieces. Thus, Uzzah put forth his hand, touches the ark in an effort to protect it, and God strikes him dead. So often men are prone to ask. "Is this a just God when He acted as He did toward Uzzah?" How foolish for man to question God! But, to answer the question, "Yes, God it just, truly just!" True justice is doing that which has been promised. The

individual who does not respect God's word has been promised punishment, and it can be described as nothing but just for God to punish that one who does not respect His word. To be just God must do that which He has promised to do. (Of a truth, God is also merciful and compassionate and does tender His justice by grace, but it is even toward those who strive to obey His word exactly as given, yet who through human weakness and frailty are unable to live it as well as they might like). But, even *"David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah."* (Verse 8). Why would the Lord smite this seemingly sincere, serving man named Uzzah? The answer is seen in the following:-

- (1) Only the Levites were to carry the ark (Deut. 10:8);
- (2) More precisely, the family of Kohath (Num. 3:30-31);
- (3) All were forbidden to touch the ark (Num. 4:15);
- (4) the ark was to be carried by staves placed in the rings on the ark (Ex. 25:14-15).

It really did not make any difference what the extenuating circumstances were. God means for His word to be revered. The Lord is not dependent upon man or the help of man. Had He so desired, the Lord could have miraculously raised up another ark in place of the one destroyed. Or, He could have asked for another to have been built. But God does demand that men respect His word. God had said, "Do not touch it!" Uzzah touched it, and God struck him dead. As David later said, *"The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."* (1 Chron. 15:13).

Now let us consider some scriptures that apply what we have been studying together from the Old Testament scriptures and examples.

*"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off."* (Rom. 11:22).

*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"* (Heb. 2:1-4).

Notice how beautifully this passage ties in with all that we have studied so far. When reading *"every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."* Just look at Adam and Even, Nadab and Abihu, Moses, Saul and Uzzah, each of them *"received a just recompense of reward."* (1) *"First spoken by the Lord,"* (2) *"confirmed unto us by them that heard Him"* (the apostles), (3) *"God also bearing them witness."* How wonderfully, truly magnificently, it all ties together. Now, if in the Old Testament God gave a just recompense of reward for every transgression or disobedience, how shall we escape in dishonouring God's word today? Especially in light of the fact that today He speaks through His Son! The answer

is obvious, there is no escape.

*"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 20:28-31).*

*"See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:25-29).*

## **THE GODHEAD, ANGELS AND APOSTLES**

Strange as it might seem, man will oftentimes presumptuously assume a position that the apostles of Jesus Christ, the angels of heaven, or even the Godhead Itself would not dare adopt. Take the Godhead as a prime example. Neither Christ or the Holy Spirit would have braved an altering of the Father's word.

Jesus, while on this earth, continually affirmed His respect for the Father's expressed will. His avowed course was never to presume upon it or trifle with its sacred contents. (Jno. 4:34; 5:19; 30:6; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49-50).

*"Jesus says unto them, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'" (Jno. 4:34).*

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son likewise." (Jno. 5:19).*

*"I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgement is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me." (Jno. 5:30).*

*"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will be the will of Him that sent Me." (Jno. 6:38).*

*"When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am He, and*

*that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things."* (Jno. 8:28).

*"For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak."* (Jno. 12:49-50).

If Jesus, who is Himself God, felt the need for accepting the word of His Father exactly as it had been given to Him, how much more should we recognise that need on our part. His unwillingness to do anything on His own but only that which the Father had commanded should be a pattern for, and a restriction upon, us today.

So also the Holy Spirit in His work was limited to that which the Father had given. Though He too is God, He could not take upon Himself the right to speak according to Himself. (Jno. 14:26; 16:13).

*"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* (Jno. 14:26).

*"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come."* (Jno. 16:13).

If the Holy Spirit was so bound to the respecting of God's word as originally given by His Son, then truly, how presumptuous is man in his efforts to alter, change, add to, subtract from, and substitute for, that which God has given.

Man, we are told, has been made just a little lower than the angels. (Heb. 2:7). Yet man, who is lower than the angels, will oftentimes assume a position that the angels would not dare pursue. Brazenly he will offset what he knows God to have said by what he, or some other man, think, feel, desire or opinion. However, the inspired Paul tells us that if an angel were to do so he would be lost. *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* (Gal. 1:8).

In the same passage (Gal. 1:8) Paul teaches that the apostles also, who in the regeneration occupy thrones of judgement (Matt. 19:28) do not have the authority to in any way alter God's word as originally given. Were they to do so, they, as well as any angel that might dare tread upon this holy restriction, would be eternally damned and separated from God.

Yes, God demands respect of all (His Son, the Holy Spirit, the angels of heaven, the apostles, and all men) for His all authoritative, all sufficient, written word. A lack of respect, manifested in any way, will eternally damn our souls. As Jesus Himself said, *"Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in*

*Your name? and in Your name have cast out devils? and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23). Let us fear lest in the last day we too be rejected because we have not done the will of the Father in heaven. (Verses 24-27 plainly show that the Father's will is a hearing and doing of the sayings of Christ). "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." (Verses 28-29).*

## CHRIST'S LAW EFFECTED AFTER HIS DEATH

“Christ's Law Did Not Go Into Effect Until After His Death On The Cross”. Many scriptures can be called upon to establish and substantiate this fact, but in this study we shall be considering two, primarily. Both are taken from the Hebrew epistle.

*"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) There are three key words in this passage of scripture that need to be considered further: (1) suffered, (2) perfect, and (3) author.

(1) The word *"suffered"* scripturally has reference to the suffering endured by Christ in His death on the cross.<sup>5</sup> *"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day".* (Lk. 24:46) It is apparent, in a deliberate reading, that the word *"suffer"* as used in this verse refers to Christ's death, It was necessary that He suffer (i.e. die) and that He should be raised from the dead the third day.

(2) The word *"perfect"* means *"complete"* or words similar in meaning. (Full-grown, of age, mature are some of the other meanings of the word).

The word *"perfect"* is a translation of the Greek work *"teleioo"*, Man often uses the term to mean sinless, flawless, or without error, however, the Bible does not so use the term. Consider: Matt. 19:21; Eph. 4:13-14; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 3:14; 4:12; Heb. 5:14 (*"full age"*); 6:1; Jas. 1:4,17,25; 1 Jno. 4:18.

It was not until Christ suffered (died upon the cross) that He was made perfect (complete) as the Saviour of the world, and with that perfection, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

(3) *"Author"* is a term meaning *"to cause, commence, instigate, begin, bring forth, originate."*

The Greek word is *"aitios"* meaning literally *"that in which the cause of anything resides; causation, causing, the author."*

Bearing in mind that this authoring came as a result of Christ having been made complete as the world's one Saviour by His suffering and death upon the cross.

An accurate paraphrasing of Heb. 5:8-4, therefore, could be as follows. "Even though Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He nevertheless learned obedience by His death: and through that

---

<sup>5</sup> Consider the following scriptures. Lk. 22:15; 24:46; Acts 3:18 (cf. verses 14-15); 17:3; 26:23; Heb. 9:26; 13:12; I Pet. 3:18. The term will also embrace His trials as well as the death itself. Cf. Matt. 16:21.

suffering He became complete as the Saviour of the world, bringing forth for the first time eternal life unto all them that obey Him". To express it in yet another way, Christ's law that offers salvation unto all men did not go into effect until after His death upon the cross.

The second passage to be considered in the Hebrew letter is found in the ninth chapter of that epistle. *"And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives"*. (Heb. 9:15-17) This same teaching as that presented in Heb. 5:8-9.

A testament is a will. All of us, to some extent, are familiar with wills, or testaments. It could be that all of us who are now engaged in this study have wills. The only need, therefore, will be for a comparison to be drawn between human wills and the will or testament of Jesus Christ. The principles that apply to the one apply to the other. Further, if we can understand the one we should have no difficulty understanding the other.

In writing a will, I endeavour, upon my death, to leave certain possession to my heirs. In fact, one of the main reasons for having a will is that my loved ones might receive the possessions I might have acquired during my life. When will my heirs, according to my will, be able to receive those possessions? The answer is obvious, when I die! Upon my death, my testament goes into effect and my heirs become the recipients of my will as they meet the terms and stipulations set forth therein. What about that period of time before my death? The will, of course, is not in effect. A will is of force after men are dead; it is of no strength at all while the testator lives.

Christ, the scriptures teach, is the mediator of a new testament. He is the mediator of a new will. But that will or testament, as is true of all wills or testaments, could not go into effect until after He had died. In other words, I must look to this side of the cross for that will or law that governs me today. I must appeal to that period since Christ's death for the will that offers to me and to all men eternal life that is, if the conditions set forth within that will are met.

**SPECIAL NOTE.** Establishing the truth that Christ's law did not go into effect until after His death should immediately answer some of the questions disturbing people today. Often we are asked, "What about the thief on the cross, or Zacchaeus, and others who evidently were saved by Christ, yet were never baptised?" But, how simple and understandable is the answer when we recognise that Christ's law is a will. Since a will becomes effective only after the testator dies there was absolutely no need for the examples given to have been baptised. (It is only in Christ's will that the demand for baptism in order to be saved is enjoined upon men).

But let us pursue yet another avenue of thought in regard to testaments. Even though I might have already prepared and recorded a will it remains true that while still alive I can dispose of my possessions in any way desired. In fact, should it be my desire to dispose of all my possessions before my death such is within my prerogative. By way of illustration let us

suppose that I have assets totalling one hundred thousand dollars. Feeling both a desire and obligation to provide for the needs of my loved ones after my death, I therefore draw up a will. In that testament I bequeath my possessions to the church, my family, and to certain dear friends. After my death and the probating of my will, these heirs will then and only then be able to receive their portion of the inheritance. In fact, not one of them can lay claim to one penny of that inheritance until my death. But what about that period of time before my death? Is my will in effect? The answer is obvious. Before my death the will is not in effect and what's more before my death I can dispose of my possessions in any way I see fit. Though it might be foolish for me to do so I could, before my death, give away all my assets to total strangers thereby leaving the church, my family and friends without any inheritance whatsoever. While I am alive it is mine to give, or to refuse, according to any whim or caprice I might want to express. But again, upon my death my testament goes into effect and only those people who meet the standards set forth in that testament will be benefited by it.

The same was true of our Lord. While on earth He, as all testators, exercised the right to use, offer and dispose of His possessions according to His own discretion. (One very great difference in the comparison that is now being made between the Lord and His testament and me is that His possessions are not depletable whereas mine are.) To a Zacchaeus He could say, *"This day is salvation come to this house."* (Lk. 19:9) To a thief on the cross He could declare, *"verily I say unto you, to day shall you be with Me in paradise"*. (Lk. 23:43) Usually, an objection is raised against baptism by asking the question, what about the thief on the cross? How could the thief on the cross or any other person in the world be baptised into Christ's death before He was dead? How could they be buried with Christ before He was buried? How could they be risen with Christ before He was risen? (Rom. 6:3-4) Yes, our Lord, as is true of any testator today, could give His possessions (remission of sins and salvation) in any way He saw fit while He was alive. But, when He died His will went into effect and only those meeting the stipulations set forth in that will can enjoy its provisions. *"For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives"*. In other words, look this side, not before Christ's death upon the cross, for the terms and provisions of salvation governing us today.

Let us notice then the authority of Christ's law immediately after His death.

## CHRIST'S WILL PROBATED

Jesus our Lord occupied a very unique place in the annals of human history in that, being raised from the dead, He was able to probate His own will. Such is not possible for man but was possible for our Lord. When man dies it is all over for him and his will must be probated by another. However, our Lord was raised from the dead! When Christ died upon the cross His will went into effect. But, being raised from the dead He was able to return to His disciples and as His own executor, He probated His own will. This is what we commonly refer to as "the great commission" to such an extent that we have lost sight of what it actually is the authoring, setting forth for the first time, the terms and provisions of Christ's will.

Christ has been given all authority in religious matters in heaven and on earth. One of the scriptures giving emphasis to that fact was Matt. 28:18.

There are three parallel accounts of the great commission that we need to consider in the probating of Christ's will.

Actually there are five passages that record Christ commissioning His disciples. We, however, will be considering but three. The other two are John 20:21-23 and Acts 1:8, neither of which are pertinent to our present study.

Bear in mind that with His death upon the cross Christ is to author eternal life unto all them that obey Him. (Heb. 5:8-9) His testament is going into effect (Heb. 9:15-17). For the first time the blessings of Christ's will and the terms that must be met in order to receive those blessings are being made known. What says the scriptures?

*"And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'" (Matt. 28:18-20).*

Whereas the King James translation says "power", other translations say "authority". Again, whereas the King James version says "teach all nations" others say "make disciples". (If the other versions are used a profitable tie-in can be made with Acts 11:26. True disciples are Christians by New Testament application. Thus, Jesus was saying, "Go make Christians in all the Nations."

Christ has now been given that supreme authority, both in heaven and on earth. On the basis of that authority He sends His disciples into all the world to teach men to observe all things that He has commanded.

Christ has now been given all authority, an all authoritative word that will judge man in the last day. His disciples are now being given that same word and by guidance

of the Holy Spirit they are both to speak, and write, that all-authoritative word that is all-sufficient to our soul's needs. Here is that word to be revered by all that word by which we shall be judged at the second coming of our Lord. It is now being given with the authority of Christ because with His death on the cross, His will now becomes effective to all.

Bear in mind that this is the first time that baptism is set forth by Christ as a requisite for discipleship under His law. It is true that they were required to be baptised (the baptism of John in preparation for the Messiah) before this time but this was under the law, not the testament of Christ. For Christ's law, His testament did not go into effect until after His death. He was not given all authority in heaven and on earth until that time. Whether baptism was required of man before this time or not actually makes very little difference; we are concerned with, and we are under, Christ's law, that testament that went into effect after His death. It was then after His death that He authored eternal life unto all them that obey Him. In that authoring Jesus commanded that we go discipline all nations by baptising in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*"And He said unto them, 'go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.'" (Mk. 16:15-16).* This passage of scripture parallels the account in Matt. 28. Jesus had been crucified on the cross, buried in Joseph's new tomb and raised victoriously from the dead the third day. Now, just before His ascension into heaven, He meets with His apostles and authors His law that was to be preached unto every creature throughout the entire world.

As was said in connection with baptism and Matt. 28:18-20 so it also can be said in regard to belief in this passage of scripture: This is the first time belief is set forth as a requirement under the New Testament law of Jesus Christ. Faith has ever been required of man since the beginning of time. But we should not be concerned with what was required of man in time past. Our concern must be with what Christ requires of us under His law. Jesus, in authoring eternal life unto all them that obey Him said, *"he that believes and is baptised shall be saved."*

Man oftentimes tries to offset the demand for baptism set forth in this scripture by noting that nothing is said concerning baptism in the last phrase. It does not say, for example, "he that believes not, and is not baptised, shall be damned." But, there is no need to add the phrase "and is not baptised", for, if a man does not believe it is impossible for him to be scripturally baptised, The point can be illustrated in the sentence, "he that eats his food and digests it shall live physically, but, he that eats not his food shall die", Again, there is no need to emphasise that if a man does not digest his food he shall die for it is impossible to digest food not eaten. Without faith one will be damned, but it takes faith and baptism for one to be saved.

Actually, the co-ordinating conjunction *"and"* joins together *"belief"* and *"baptism."* The purpose of the co-ordinating conjunction is to link elements of the same value. And so with the promise, *"shall be saved"* both *"belief"* and *"baptism"* stand together being of equal value. It is just as important to be baptised to be saved as it is to believe to be saved. Without either of these two elements one cannot be saved.

The third parallel scripture pertaining to Christ probating His will is in the gospel according to Luke. Jesus met with His disciples *“and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved 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.”* (Lk. 24:46-47). Why was it necessary for Christ to suffer (to die) and to be raised from the dead the third day? The answer, of course, is that He could not author eternal Life unto all them that obey Him until that time. His testament, or will, could not take effect until He had died. True, repentance was required of man long before this time, but under a different law not under the law of Christ not under the law which Christ authored by His death on the cross. Notice again that the co-ordinating conjunction *“and”* makes *“repentance”* and *“remission of sins”* of equal value.

What then have we found in our study? (1) He that believes, (2) he that repents, and (3) he that is baptised shall (1) be one of Christ's disciples, (2) have the remission of sins, and (3) be saved. This is what Christ authored immediately after His death when His will went into effect. If man today is going to receive the provisions and blessings of Christ's testament then these stipulations must be met.

We do not presume to say that man earns salvation by meritorious works. We are saved because God loves us and does not what any person to receive His wrath. It is as a result of God's mercy that we have found favour in His eyes. We are also saved by God's grace (a free gift not deserved by us) through faith which leads us to obey Him in all things, including meeting the stipulations probated by Christ in His will in order to be saved and become a child of God.

## CHAPTER 12

# CONFIRMATION

Every case of conversion recorded in the New Testament after Christ died upon the cross harmonizes with that which He authored in the probating of His will. It is generally accepted in so-called Christendom that there are nine cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles. It will be noted that in each of these cases those who were converted to Christ and became members of His church did exactly that which Christ authored immediately after His death.

In Acts 2:1-47 we find the conversion of the Jews on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The gospel of Christ was being preached as a reality for the first time. Jesus had said *"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"* (Lk. 24:47). Here in Acts 2, in the city of Jerusalem, we find that beginning.

Acts 8:5-12 presents the conversion of the Samaritans, Later in this chapter, verses 26-40 we find the conversion of the Ethiopian.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, is found in Acts 9:1-18 and in its parallel, Acts 22:1-16,

In Acts 10:1-48 the gospel message is preached for the first time to people other than the Jews (or part Jews). Cornelius, his family and friends, in obedience to the gospel, became members of the Lord's church according to the record given in this chapter.

Acts 16 records two different cases of conversion. In verses 13-15 we learn of the conversion of Lydia and her family. Verses 25-34 sets forth the conversions of the jailor of Philippi and his family.

The establishment of the Lord's church in Corinth their conversion to Christ is the record of Acts 18:1-17.

Finally, Acts 19:1-7 presents the response of the Ephesians to the gospel of Christ.

Nine separate cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts; and in each case they who were converted to Christ did exactly without any alteration, deviation or change that which Jesus authored immediately after His death upon the cross. Without exception, they believed, repented, and were baptised, in order to have the remission of sins; and in being saved, became a disciple of Christ,

Repentance, usually is not specifically mentioned in these cases of conversion, but neither is there a need to do so. Repentance is an about face involving a change of heart, a change of mind, or attitude. These ideas are inherent in each of the passages we have called upon. Their change of heart is seen in the fact that they

who were in rebellion to God became obedient to His will, being baptised into Christ.

Let us look a little more intimately into the narrative of Acts 2. Jesus, you recall, had promised that with His departure the Holy Spirit would come to His apostles, The reception of the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, bring to their remembrance all things that Christ had taught them, show them things to come, and when they spoke it would not be them speaking but the Holy Spirit speaking through them. Jesus also stressed that when the apostles received this promise of the Father they were to preach to every creature throughout the world that law which He authored with His death on the cross. That preaching was to begin with the Jews in the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 24:46-49; Acts 1:8).

In Acts chapter 2 we find the apostles in the city of Jerusalem waiting for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, to come to them. (Since this is the beginning, and so very important in the setting forth of New Testament Christianity, a breakdown of the chapter is imperative.)

**1. The Apostles Receive The Promise of The Father** (Verses 1-4). The Holy Spirit came to the apostles even as Jesus had promised. And, as promised, the apostles began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Verse 4)

Actually the verse says that they *"began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* Tongues, scripturally, are languages, (See verses 6-8) It makes little difference to our study, however, whether the apostles spoke in different languages or in their own language. The point is that they spoke as the Holy Spirit guided them. This is what the Lord promised the apostles with the reception of the Holy Spirit .

**2. The Jewish Reaction** (Verses 5-13) In hearing the apostles speak in other languages, some of the Jews were amazed and in doubt, while others mocked or ridiculed.

**3. Preaching Of The First Gospel Sermon** (Verses 14-36). Peter acting as the spokesman for all the apostles, began preaching the first gospel sermon in the name of the resurrected Christ. Basically his sermon was that the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus were in fulfillment to God's expressed will as revealed in the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus, therefore, is truly the Messiah, He is the Christ, the Son of God; King of kings and Lord of lords, the one and only Saviour of the world. The sermon was concluded with these words, *"therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Verse 36). Peter, of course, was instilling faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and man's Saviour, in the hearts of the Jews to whom he spoke.

**4. Jewish Response To The Sermon** (Verse 37). *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* The Jews now believed what Peter was preaching, they were pricked, convicted, stung in their hearts. They who had been a part of crucifying Jesus because He claimed to be the Christ, now believe in Him as the Christ, wanting to know what they must do.

Jesus, in authoring His Law, said that when man believes he must repent and be baptised in order to be saved by the remission of sins. We would logically expect that same teaching to be given by the Spirit guided apostle Peter.

**5. The Inspired Answer** (Verses 38-40). *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*

It should also be stressed that Peter, in giving the answer he gave, was guided by the Holy Spirit of God, Therefore, in reality, it was the Lord who gave the answer. We then are dealing with God, not man, and His word must be respected exactly as given.

**6. The Results** (Verses 41,47). *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”. (The word which they gladly received was "God has made that same Jesus ... Lord and Christ; repent and be baptised ... for the remission of sins; save yourselves.") In receiving the word by baptism the saved were immediately added to something. "Praising God, and having favour with all the people, And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved".*

Three truths need to be emphasised (1) In every case of conversion, those saved did exactly what Christ authored immediately after His death on the cross. (2) They did that which was commanded, immediately, (*“Without delay, straightaway, the same hour of the night”* are some of the terms used in the scripture). (3) In obeying the gospel, and doing that which was necessary for salvation, those saved were added by the Lord to His church.