

REVIVE US AGAIN

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One of the greatest needs of our day is a religious revival: not in the sense of a barn-storming, emotion-arousing type of evangelism, but a revival that will affect the whole man, and will result in nothing short of a religious revolution.

Any one who stops to think is aware of the fact that religious people everywhere are rapidly approaching a state of complacency; and unless something is done to stimulate their thinking, there is little reason to hope for much more progress toward perfection. (Cf Heb. 6:1-3).

When people become satisfied with themselves their intellects become dull, and they are content to have some one else do their thinking for them. Such people do not hesitate to accept practically anything that is placed before them, if they have confidence in the one who suggests it to them.

However, if we are to have an effectual revival – one that will lead us closer to God and to a greater and more perfect knowledge of his will – it must be characterized by certain basic principles, some of which we shall consider in this lesson.

The first one is:

A New Sense of Dependence Upon God

No one can read the New Testament without being impressed with the idea that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that every good and perfect gift comes from him. · “I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot,

without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality; dwelling in light unapproachable whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:13-16). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17).

Time and time again we are taught that our wills must be lost in his; and that if we would be free from those distracting influences which undermine the soul, we must make every effort to seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10b). "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

But, in the face of these plain statements of truth, how often do we find ourselves depending upon our own ideas and efforts, as if God did not exist, or had not said anything about these matters. "They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Tit. 1:16). (Read also Rom. 12:17-21; Psa. 37:1ff; Phil. 4:6,7).

A Re-examination of Our Religious Convictions

If one is not careful his religious thinking is liable to crystallize into a form which, for all practical purposes, will become his creed. And when this happens he will likely find himself using this creed, written or unwritten, rather than the word of God itself, as a standard for measuring any new ideas which may be brought to his attention. "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring

themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12).

Of course no one should hold any religious ideas which he does not believe to be scriptural; but at the same time he should always be willing to subject that which he believes to be the teaching of the Bible to a rigid examination. In short, like Martin Luther, he should nail the things which he believes to the "church door," and offer to debate them with all comers. Compare 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-5.

Any one who is acquainted with the history of Christianity knows that the greatest progress toward the knowledge of the truth was made during those times when religious debate was the order of the day. Alexander Campbell said, "A week's debating is worth a year's preaching"; and M. C. Kurfees averred that "truth has always flourished in the soil of controversy."

A Growing Interest in the Welfare Of Others

All Christians are members of the family of God, and, as such, they should be interested in the welfare of each other. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1,2). (Read also 1 Cor. 12-27).

People who are in religious confusion, or in a lost condition, deserve the help of those who are enjoying salvation and the light of eternal truth. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark

16: 15). “And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:3-6). “And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:22, 23).

Finally, the Lord’s people should manifest a benevolent attitude toward all men. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

If we will allow the principles which have been set forth in this study to become a motivating force in our lives, there will be no doubt about the nature and the results of the revival which will follow.

Bruceton, Tennessee.

Judging

By Darrell Conley

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There is one passage of scripture that is known by every reprobate and enemy of Christianity. They may know nothing else of the Bible, but be assured they know this one: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). It is used as a

weapon by the worldly, the lukewarm, trouble-makers, unbelievers, and false teachers in an attempt to disarm faithful children of God. We are told that condemning sin is judging. Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is judging. Preaching and practicing the Bible doctrine of separation from the world is judging. Refusal to bid God- speed to false teachers is judging. Attempts to obey Bible teaching on church discipline is branded as the most shameful judgment of all. What does the Bible teach about judging?

The primary meanings of the words commonly translated judge, *krino*, *anakrino*, and *diakrino* are respectively "separate, select, choose; examine, investigate, question; separate throughout, discriminate, discern." Sometimes *judge* denotes "sinful action," but sometimes it means "permitted or even required action." As always, the context will enable us to determine how the word is being used.

In the first few verses of Matthew 7, it is clear that the Lord is not condemning all judging, rather a particular kind of judging. Verses 3-5 show the Lord is condemning hypocritical or self-righteous judging.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye (Matt. 7:3-5).

What right do we have to condemn another when we are guilty of the same sin, perhaps to a greater degree? Paul makes it clear what our attitude should be in attempting to restore another: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Self-righteous and hypocritical judging is also condemned in

Romans 2:1-3, 17-23.

The context of Matthew 7:1-5 proves that coming to a negative conclusion about someone is not necessarily unrighteous judging. In verse six Jesus warns against casting pearls before swine and giving that which is holy to the dogs. Since it is obvious he is talking about two-legged swine and dogs, it is necessary for us to come to a conclusion about who are swinish and who are doggish. This constitutes a necessary and righteous judgment. We are also forbidden to judge things we cannot know such as the motives and secret thoughts of others. "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). No one has the right to draw conclusions without sufficient evidence. To do so is to violate what Paul commanded. But he did not forbid all manner of judging. In the next chapter Paul says that he had judged the fornicator in the church at Corinth and commanded the Corinthians to do the same. Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians what Christ said in John 7:24: "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

The Bible also forbids judging a man a lawbreaker when there is no law to be broken. When we make laws where God made none, we are guilty of sinful judging. This is the kind of judging Paul condemned in Romans 14:3 ASV: "Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." The same kind of judging is mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day; which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ."

The word *judge* is sometimes used to mean "to pronounce and execute sentence; to condemn." It is used in this sense in John 12:47: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." We as Christians certainly have no right to pronounce

eternal judgment on anyone. We do have the right and the obligation to withdraw our fellowship from ungodly church members. Such is called “delivering them to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 9-13).

These, then, are the kinds of judging that are condemned in the Bible:

1. Hypocritical or self-righteous judging
2. Judging without sufficient evidence
3. Making a law where God made none
4. Pronouncing eternal condemnation on another

As was pointed out above, some of the meanings of the words translated *judge* are “select, choose, examine, and discern.” Judging is examining evidence and drawing conclusions or making choices. It is possible to do this in unfair or ungodly ways. Such judging is wrong. However, certain kinds of judging are commanded. “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Since righteous judgment is judging according to reality, we have no right to prejudge, but we do have the right and obligation to draw conclusions about people or doctrine that are warranted by the evidence. If it is always wrong to draw conclusions about people, how could we obey the following commands?

Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine (Matt. 7:6).

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).

In the same context Christ said:

By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:20).

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).

Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear (1 Tim. 5:20).

For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).

We are commanded to preach the gospel, to contend for the faith, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort (Mark 16:15-16; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). To obey these commands in an uncompromising, but kind way is not to be guilty of unrighteous judging. To teach truths from the Bible that imply that some will be lost is not ungodly judging. It is not sinful to arrive at conclusions based on what the Bible teaches and to hold fast to those conclusions. The Bible says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

We are commanded to judge those church members who are ungodly and will not repent. Such judging is not only not sin but is positively required of us. Paul said he had already judged the fornicator in the Corinthian church and urged the church at Corinth to do the same (1 Cor. 5:3-5). The word *judge* as used by Paul here means "not only to reach a conclusion, but to act upon that conclusion" by withdrawing from an ungodly brother. "For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked men from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

Let us be careful that we are not guilty of prejudging, self-righteous judging, or hypocritical judging, but do not let false teachers and ungodly brethren intimidate us from boldly preaching the gospel and steadfastly standing for the truth. Let us "judge righteous judgment."

If Any Man Speak

By J. Shannon (Shan) Jackson

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One of life's grandest blessings is our ability to discuss with others. Speech, when correctly used, is of essential benefit. Used incorrectly, talk can do much harm. The difference between the two is often in the speaker's attitude and motive. The tongue is a "little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!" (James 3:5). Jesus asked the Pharisees, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. 12:34). Christians must consider attitude in their speech and guard their words.

We all should be impressed with the awesome power of the tongue. Improperly used, James says, the tongue can defile the whole body (James 3:6). Properly used speech can do much good. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). Consider the proper use of language.

In teaching truth, we must "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Here is the caveat. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Jesus tells his disciples to "go and teach all nations" but their teaching is to be the things he "commanded them" (Matthew 28:19).

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul tells Timothy to "preach the word." He warns, "for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A proper use for human speech is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). There is also occasion for sealed lips and answering not a word (See John 19:9). In worship of God, acceptable worship must be "in spirit and in truth" – correct in attitude and correct in action. The Bible names five acts of worship – singing, praying, teaching, communion, and giving. Singing, praying, and teaching require speech. "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Bringing our feelings into sweet harmony with the words of a song, a public prayer, or the presentation of God's word shows our love for a loving God.

In confession of Jesus, there are also five steps that bring salvation. The New Testament tells us to hear God's truth, believe it, repent of our unholy life, confess Jesus as Lord, and submit to water baptism. It is the acceptance and obedience of these steps that puts us "in Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

Confession of Jesus as the resurrected son of God is to be verbal. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).

In defense of truth: Many problems facing the church today stem from our unwillingness to defend God's truth. A Christian is to be ready always to teach the truth and protect it. We fear and studiously avoid controversy to the disgrace of the gospel and our own shame. Argument for the sake of argument is infamy, but argument in defense of truth is honorable and necessary. We forget Jesus was a brilliant debater.

Paul said that “in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” we are “partakers of grace” (Phil. 1:7). Our knowledge enables us to approve the things that are excellent (and therefore disapprove things that are contrary to truth) that we may be “void of offence unto the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10). We must be “bold to speak the word of God without fear... set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:14, 16).

“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4). Yes, our speech is very serious business. Jesus said, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). Watch your mouth and pay attention to your words. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:1, 7). What you say can condemn you! What you ought to say, but fail to speak, also can condemn you! Happy is silence in the face of slander and injustice.

Spirituality – What is it?

by Wayne Price

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The word spirituality is often used to describe worked-up-emotion, which is a horrid caricature of the sober and sacred idea. The New Testament uses the adjective *pneumatikos*

(translated spiritual) twenty-six times. What is spirituality?

Paul's Spiritual Man

Paul contrasts the natural man and the spiritual man, and describes the natural man as one who “receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things” (1 Cor. 2:14-15). Martin Luther pictured man in his natural state “like a pillar of salt, like Lot’s wife, yea, like a log and a stone, like a lifeless statue which uses neither eyes nor mouth, neither sense nor heart, incapable of understanding the things of God until he is enlightened, converted, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost.”

According to Luther, the natural man cannot understand the Bible. He needs special illumination from the Spirit to discover the message of the Scriptures. The spiritual man, according to this view, is, at first, like a lifeless statue incapable of understanding the scriptures, but after being regenerated by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, he is illuminated and converted. The teaching of Luther does not agree with the teaching of the New Testament, but is popular with many well-meaning, deceived people.

Paul contrasts the gospel he preached with false doctrines of false teachers. In first Corinthians chapter one, the apostle helps us to understand the term spiritual. The words “foolish” and “foolishness” are used seven times and “wise” and “wisdom” twelve times to contrast God’s wisdom with man’s wisdom (foolishness). “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor. 1:20). Paul is discussing God given teaching versus human philosophy.

Paul affirms that his preaching was “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:4). In the first two chapters of 1

Corinthians, Paul develops the theme that Christianity is a revealed religion, and that man, without revelation, cannot know the blessings of redemption. God reveals redemption, and also its interpretation and explanation (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Paul proclaims, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all thing, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). The plural pronouns of verses 10-13 do not refer to Christians of all ages (the very thing that Luther misunderstood), but to the apostles and other inspired teachers of the first century who were involved in revealing "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Paul's "natural" man is the uninspired man, and his "spiritual" man is the inspired man. Paul uses the word "spiritual" in 1 Cor. 14:37 with the same meaning: the spiritual man was guided by the Holy Spirit, and miraculously empowered.

Paul contrasts inspired revelation with false teaching. To make the passage mean a sinner who cannot understand the Bible until the Holy Spirit interprets it for him is a terrible perversion. If the sinner cannot understand the gospel until he receives supernatural illumination, and if illumination never comes, God is at fault.

The Spiritual Man Today

In 1 Corinthians 3:1, Paul uses the word spiritual with a different emphasis. Paul accuses the brethren in Corinth of being carnal, and therefore of not being spiritual. The carnal man, oblivious to the gospel, is sinful. The spiritual person, influenced by the gospel, is godly. This is the way the term spiritual ought to be understood by mankind in today's religious world. Inspiration has ceased, and there is no progressive revelation of saving truth today. Paul's usage of spiritual in 1 Corinthians 2 applied only to the first century

in the age of miraculous manifestations of the Spirit.

The word spiritual may mean, in the New Testament, things that have their origin with God, and are in harmony with his character. Passages such as Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 9:11 and 10:3; and Ephesians 1:3 are examples of this usage.

The Apostle Paul writes the brethren in Galatia that “if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). There are two classes in this verse. One is spiritual, and the other is not. Spirituality was something that was recognizable, else no one would know who was to restore who!

The spiritual person today is the one who walks by the Spirit, and does “not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). The fruit of the Spirit will be seen in the life (Gal. 5:22-25). Vine’s Expository Dictionary points out that in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, “Paul contrasts the spiritual state of a mature Christian with that of the babe in Christ, i.e., of the man who because of immaturity and inexperience has not yet reached spirituality, and that of the man who by permitting jealousy, and the strife to which jealousy always leads, has lost it. The spiritual state is reached by diligence in the Word of God and in prayer; it is maintained by obedience and self-judgment.”

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

Cotham's Comments on the Holy Spirit

By Perry B. Cotham

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A misconception of the Holy Spirit and his work for man's salvation leads to all kinds of religious errors. All that we can ever know about the Spirit and his work comes from the Scriptures. It is tragic to see some turn away from what the Bible teaches in favor of an inner, mystical longing, which they mistake for information about God.

The Holy Spirit is a person. There are three beings in one Godhead (Acts 17:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but three beings possess the divine nature.

The Holy Spirit gave us the Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17). The apostles were guided by the Spirit into all of the truth (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3). In conviction, conversion, and edification the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of man only through the inspired Word of God (Psa. 19:7; Psa. 73:24; Psa. 119:50, Psa. 119:93, Psa. 119:105, Psa. 119:130). "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Spirit operates through the words of revelation, which are spirit and life (John 6:63).

The Bible plainly says that the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

How does the Spirit indwell the child of God? He indwells directly or indirectly. There is a difference in stating the fact and in stating the method (the how) of the Spirit's

indwelling. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit dwells in Christians apart from the inspired Word. Many religionists have the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. They think the Spirit gives the believer extra help besides the Word of God. This, of course, denies the all-sufficiency of God-breathed writing to make the man of God complete. Of course, this belief leads to all kinds of "experiences" and "feelings."

Let us note some things: (1) God dwells in Christians (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-16). Does God dwell in his children directly or indirectly? It is indirect, through obedience to the word: "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him" (1 John 3:24). (2) Christ dwells in Christians (Col. 1:27). But how does Christ dwell in us? Paul explains, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. The Spirit is in each faithful member of the church the same way that God and Christ are in the saved. Neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit dwells directly, personally, in Christians. As the Christian obeys the Spirit's message, the Spirit's influences are in him, and he brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Comparing Ephesians 5:17-19 with Colossians 3:16 shows how the Spirit is in the child of God. To be "filled with the Spirit" is to let the "word of Christ" dwell in you richly. There is no statement of Scripture saying the Holy Spirit dwells literally, directly, and personally in the child of God. If Jehovah the Father and Jesus the Son can indwell Christians indirectly and figuratively, the Holy Spirit can do the same.

Children of God cherish the Spirit's message and live by it, and in this way the Holy Spirit dwells in them and in the church. The teaching that the Spirit works directly – separate

and apart from the Word of God in the heart of the alien sinner or the child of God, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God ... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the Bible and it is sufficient to make us what God wants us to be.

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

By Allen Webster

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Time is changing. The new soon becomes old; the modern becomes ancient; the technological breakthrough becomes yesterday's news; the popular becomes lost in the latest; and the up-to-date is soon out-of-date.

Eternal truth never changes. It reads the same today as yesterday and as it will tomorrow. It is "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Those who would change it become "accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9) and find that it will meet them in judgment unchanged (Rev. 20:12).

Modern man feels he has outgrown the ancient gospel. He thinks an absolute standard is obsolete. Exaltation of self and sensuality replace the idea of sin and spiritual death. He ridicules blood and the need for forgiveness. He scoffs at the virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection of Christ. He regards these as myths of a bygone era.

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

Never! The only way man can outgrow the gospel is to conquer sin. He has not. "All have sinned and come short of the glory

of God" was true in Paul's day and is true today. Sin is still the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4), which can include violating one's conscience (Rom. 14:23), omitting a duty (James 4:17), and lawlessness (I John 3:4).

Never! God, not man, determines what is sinful; sin will not change. Men may call sin by another name, but that will not alter what it really is. Forgiveness is still the most basic spiritual need that man has (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23). The only way a person can be forgiven is through the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Never! The gospel is the power to overcome temptation (Eph. 6:17), and man needs its power because temptation is still with us. Mankind has not conquered carnal desires. He still gives in to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). He cannot overcome without the power of the written word (Heb. 4:12).

Never! The devil is still "as a roaring lion" walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Man is still in danger; therefore he needs the unchanged gospel, for it is God's great power to save. When humans can defeat Satan without the truth, then they will no longer need the truth. They cannot. No one is strong enough to conquer the Evil One without an "it is written" (Matt. 4:1-11).

Never! The soul of man needs food. If man could invent a substitute for "soul food," he would not need the gospel, but he has not. Peter stated that the soul feeds on the "sincere milk of the word" (I Pet. 2:2), and Paul wrote that he could progress to eat "strong meat" from the hand of God (Heb. 5:12-14). The gospel fills those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

Never! Man still needs a map to heaven. Men try to invent a roadway to heaven, but these maps will only get one lost. If we follow the road of "faith only" or the lane of "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" or the path of "once saved

always saved," we are traveling a broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Only Christ and his gospel can lead one to heaven (John 14:6). "I must needs go home by the way of the cross; there's no other way but this."

Jesus plainly stated the conditions by which men can reach much needed salvation. A sinner must believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), decide to change his sinful life (repent) (Luke 13:5), confess the sweet name of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). We can choose to heed these scriptures or harass them, to read them or reject them, to respect them or ridicule them. Still, the same ancient gospel is the cure for all the spiritual ills of men! Why not obey today?

Working the Works of God

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

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The Bible teaches that works have nothing to do with salvation, and it teaches that works are necessary to salvation.

Still, the Bible does not contradict itself.

How can this be? How can the Bible say two things that seem to be diametrically opposed and yet not contradict itself? It would appear to be self-evident that works cannot be both necessary and unnecessary to salvation.

Since the Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it must be true and therefore cannot contradict itself. Truth, in order to be truth, must be coherent. If two statements

contradict, either one or both of them must be false, but there is no way they can both be true. How, then, do we deal with the fact that the Bible says works are not necessary to justification, and also says that we are justified by works?

Some assume a “take your pick” attitude and go blithely down the path not knowing how to reconcile the two statements – and, possibly, not caring. The honest person however cannot do this and must either reject the Bible or find a logical way to harmonize the two statements.

Various Works

To understand the Bible we must define its terms correctly. It is necessary to understand accurately how Bible writers use the word “works” (sometimes “deeds”), or we will be confused. A survey of how the Bible uses this word will help us to avoid the confusion of misunderstanding. A failure to understand something correctly leads to incomprehension and perhaps unbelief.

Following is a partial list of “work(s)” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments:

- The work God does – Gen. 2:2; Judges 2:7; Ps. 71:17; 1 Cor. 12:6; John 6:28-29; John 10:37; John 14:10
- The work man does in providing food and shelter – Gen. 3:17-19; Exod. 23:12; Exod. 26:1; Eccl. 2:4; Matt. 21:28
- The work man does in obeying specific commands of God – Gen. 6:13-22; John 9:4; 1 Cor. 15:58
- Work of iniquity (evil) – Ps. 6:8; Ps. 14:1; Jer. 1:16; Ezek. 33:26; Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27; John 3:19; Rom. 1:27; Eph. 4:19; Rom. 13:12 (“works of darkness”); Gal. 5:19-21 (“works of the flesh”)
- Work of righteousness (good) – Ps. 15:2; Acts 10:35; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 1:4; James 3:13
- Works that are worthy of repentance – Acts 26:20

- The mighty works (signs, miracles) of Jesus – Matt. 11:23-24; John 10:32; Acts 2:22
- Works of the Law of Moses – Rom. 3:20; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:2
- Greater works done by Jesus' disciples – John 5:20; John 14:12
- Good and bad works by which all men shall be judged – Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12
- Human works apart from works of God – Rom. 9:11; Rom. 11:6
- Converts to Jesus – 1 Cor. 3:14
- Apostolic signs, and wonders, and mighty works – 2 Cor. 12:12
- Work of sinless perfection – Eph. 2:9; Col. 2:21-23
- The power that works in the saved – Eph. 3:20; Eph. 4:12
- The word of God that works in the believer – 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:21
- Works that justify – James 2:24; James 3:13
- Works of the devil – 1 John 3:8
- The ungodly works of ungodliness – Jude 1:15

This gives a sample of various “works” mentioned in the Bible. It is a mistake to suppose that the word work(s) always refers to condition of acceptance with God. It does not!

Even a casual glance at this list will convince the thoughtful Bible student this is a complicated subject, having many interrelated parts. It is difficult to deal with because of the need to take different relationships or points of view into consideration.

The mighty acts of Jehovah are works. Creation (Ps. 8:3-6; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 92:5; Ps. 102:25; Ps. 104:24), redemptive acts in history like the Exodus (Judges 2:7-10).

Jesus is our perfect example in all things (1 Pet. 2:21). The Savior went about doing good (Acts 10:38-39; John 4:34; John

5:36; John 10:25-38; John 15:24; John 17:4). His words and his works confirmed his authority and mission.

Humans are sinless at birth, seeing that Jehovah is the Father and Giver of the human spirit (Heb. 12:9; Eccl. 12:7). As the child matures it comes to understand that some things are right and other things are wrong, but chooses to do wrong things and ignore right things. This is called sin – sin of omission and sin of commission. This is the something a person knowingly does to himself. Iniquity separates a soul from its God (Isa. 59:2). Those who die in sin cannot go where Jesus is; they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God (John 8:21; Gal. 5:19-21).

In his infinite compassion Jehovah sent Jesus to offer himself sacrifice for sins (John 3:16; John 10:18; Matt. 26:28).

We access the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb of God through belief (John 8:24).

“They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28-29).

Saving belief is a work that includes other works. Faith is shown by works (James 2:18). “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Abraham was justified by works produced by faith (James 2:21-22). Works make faith perfect (James 2:22). Sinners are justified by works and not by faith only (James 2:24). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Jesus said, “He that believeth (a work) and is baptized (a work) shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (James 2:22). In baptism the sinner, “is buried with Christ” and is “raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). In baptism we are buried “with” Christ and we are raised “with” him believing

that God will keep his promise to save "he that believeth and is baptized." Peter tells us that baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21). In baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

The spirit that is born again in the water of baptism (John 3:5) enters the kingdom of God, where faith continues to work, bringing glory to God (Matt. 5:16). The saved "work the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 16:10), abound "in every good work" (1 Cor. 9:8). Servants of righteousness "end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:5). The child of God is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10); the saint is "fruitful unto every good work" (Col. 1:10). The Christian "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Paul prayed that God the Father may "comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word" (2 Thess. 2:17). Women professing godliness are to adorn themselves "with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10). If a man desires the office of bishop, he desires "a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1). Widows to be enrolled are to be "well reported of for good works" (1 Tim. 5:10). The new covenant lauds the good works of some that are "evident, and cannot be hid" (1 Tim. 5:25). Those described as "a vessel unto honor" are "prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). "The man of God" is "furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Preachers are to be "an ensample of good works" (Titus 2:7), "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Followers of Jesus are to "be ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:1). Paul desired "that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister" (Heb. 6:10). "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). Our Lord Jesus "make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:21).

The “wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). Behave seemly among the pagans, “that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12). “My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Jesus knows and commends the works of his disciples on earth (Rev. 2:2, Rev. 2:9, Rev. 2:19; Rev. 3:8). Those who die in the Lord are blessed because “their works follow with them” (Rev. 14:13).

On the last great judgment day, God will render unto every man “according to their works, whether they be good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12).

It is because of a present and future judgment that we must avoid the works of the flesh ... the works of darkness ... the works of the devil. Abstaining from all evil works is critical to the believer.

In the light of what the new covenant has to say about the importance of good works – works of faith – works that justify (James 2:24) – it seems strange that anyone would say that works have nothing to do with salvation ... unless, of course, he is blinded by denominational dogma.

The Bible does warn us that we cannot live to maturity and be sinless (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:2-6). “All sin and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). It also tells us the works of the Law of Moses cannot save us (Rom. 9:32; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:10). If eternal salvation could come by the Mosaic Law, then the death of Jesus was needless, because the people had that law for 1,500 years before Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 2:21). We are also told that we cannot save ourselves by austerities (Col. 2:18).

Some honest person may be misled into wrongly supposing that

when the Bible tells us we cannot be saved by our own works because it is not possible for us to live without sin – sooner or later all will sin and fall short of God's glory, that it is saying that even works of faith and righteousness – works of God – do not save. Also some will read Bible passages which say that the works of the Law of Moses cannot save, and mistakenly conclude that works have nothing to do with salvation. This study should clear that up because it gives indisputable proof that there is no justification without works.

It is indisputably true that works are necessary to justification (James 2:24), but it is also true that some works cannot save – the work of living a perfectly sinless life – the work of devising our own scheme of redemption – the works of the Law of Moses – the works of darkness, which are the works of Satan.

So, it is true that works both save us and have nothing to do with our salvation, depending on what kind of works you are talking about.

It is not possible for a reasonable adult to be sinless and therefore, in this sense, one cannot save himself by his own works. We cannot be saved by the works of Satan, nor by the works of the Law of Moses, nor by any human invention. Such works have no power to save and many of them are an offense to God.

Still, it is true that the work of faith (the works produced by faith, see Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26), bring the sinner into a right relationship with his Creator, help to maintain that relationship, and will one day be the reason for his promotion to glory (Matt. 25:31-46). To say that works have nothing to do with salvation is to fly in the face of Bible teaching.

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Anti-Christ (antichrist)

By A. B. Gregoreo

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No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as that of "antichrist." The speculation is extreme among those religious teachers holding the various premillennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God's word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of "antichrist."

The term is a combination of "anti" and Christ. "Anti" has two basic meanings: (1) "over against," hence one who puts himself in the place of Christ; (2). "opposition to," i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan's attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the Creator's rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God's image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah's day he nearly succeeded in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan's man enslaved the Hebrews and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God's people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God's cause. From the broken Grecian

Empire he saw a "little- horn that rose up to persecute God's people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God's people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domitian (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were antichrist.

Jesus was confronted by antichrist forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered. When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christ, i.e. messiah (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of a coming "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:1-12) – described as the "son of perdition." He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of anti-Christian iniquity was already at work in Paul's day.

The apostle John wrote of "antichrists," not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they have gone out from them because they were no longer with them in heart and mind (1 John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (1 John

2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John's day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (2 John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (2 John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels "anti-Christian" (1 John 4:1-3).

Antichrists are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Such antichrists seek to corrupt the faith and practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of denominations. Founders and leaders of all the cults that pervert the message of the Master seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body as antichrist. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured forgiveness of humanity's sins, and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those antichrists who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe who hate Jesus, his church, his word, and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-Christian spirit are seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-Christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble, and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining antichrist to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind, and unaware of the antichrists working in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God " (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the place of Christ or worked against his cause!

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