

UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

By Joe Slater

Truth can be uncomfortable! To avoid the distress, one of the first bad things we learned to do is lie. We soon discovered that lying only makes matters worse, but still we do it.

Will we ever learn?

Satan is “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). He deceived Eve in the Garden, and has been plying his devious trade ever since.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18; also Titus 1:2). It isn’t only that God “won’t” lie – He “can’t”! It is impossible. His nature (holiness, righteousness, justice, etc.) is such that lying isn’t even an option.

The first sin recorded in the early church was lying. Ananias and Sapphira lied about what they gave to help the needy. Peter asked, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . You have not lied to men, but to God” (Acts 5:3-4). Fortunately for us, God no longer strikes people

dead for lying as He did those two!

Paul exhorted the Colossians, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (3:9). Just as you would remove filthy, smelly clothes, you must remove lying from your way of life. You are a new person in Christ; don’t act like Satan!

That includes the “little white lies,” that so many try to excuse. Scripture knows no such classification. It’s futile to minimize sin! Hear John’s words from Revelation 21:8 – “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Not “some liars”; not “most liars”; not “big liars,” but “all liars”!

Truth can be uncomfortable; Hell is more so!

— Justin, TX

“Therefore, putting away lying,

‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:25-29)

WORKING TOGETHER

By Richard Dent

IT TAKES ALL OF US W In the gospel account of Mark, we read about a man who was a paralytic (Mark 2:3-12). This man was unable to come to Jesus by himself so he required assistance from others. Fortunately, he had some friends who were able to help him. The Bible attests to this man’s faith and determination to see Jesus. His friends picked up the bed on which he was lying and carried him to the house. Not just one or two men could have brought the paralytic to Jesus. It took all four friends carrying their corner to get the job done.

But wait! The story becomes even more intriguing as we find that there were so many people in the house that the four men could not get their stricken friend inside. In Mark 2:4, we find that his friends lifted the paralytic, bed and all, to the top of the roof of the house and then lowered him into the room where Jesus was preaching.

Jesus was impressed with the men’s faith and said to the paralytic, “Sons, your sins are forgiven you” (Mark 2:5). What a great story of faith and persistence! The man immediately arose and took up his bed as Jesus directed him to do and went out from the presence of them all. Then they glorified God saying, “We never saw anything like this before” (Mark 2:11-12).

Friend, do you know that there are many in any given community who will never find the truth or hear the words of Jesus about salvation without our help? If any of those four friends had dropped his corner of the bed, the paralytic man could not have found Jesus.

As a Christian, have you dropped your corner or are you carrying it to the best of your ability to serve in the vineyard of our Lord?

Every member is need to shoulder

the responsibility for helping the Lord’s work progress as it should. We need Bible School teachers. We need parents that set a faithful example for their children to follow. We need men who will dependably serve in a number of ways such as leading public prayers or leading songs in worship. We need men who will aspire to serve as elders and deacons in the Lord’s work.

Let us all do our best to carry our corner.

— Liberal, KS

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

“Whatever your hands finds to do, do it with your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

READ YOUR BIBLE!

By Milton Smith

It is most interesting to note the progressive revelation given by Jesus Christ in the gospel account of John. For example, at the first Passover our Lord asserted His divine authority over His “Father’s house” while in the temple. It was on this occasion that Jesus drove those greedy money changers from the temple area. But it was at Jesus’ second Passover that he demonstrated his power over disease and gave intimation of His coming dominion over the grave. In his amazing miracle involving the loaves and fishes he revealed the undeniable fact that His very hands gave increase to the earth. And it was the dramatic incident of Jesus walking on the churning waters of the Sea of Galilee one stormy night that showed that even nature itself must bow and submit to Him. In the discourse that followed, we find Jesus proclaiming Himself to be the bread of life.

Jesus said that day, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). We quickly recall another incident in which Jesus used a very similar metaphor. It was the occasion in which He met the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well and spoke those beautiful words, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, give me drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water” (John 4:10). Whether it is the “bread of life” or “living water,” Jesus is the great provider.

I have long been amazed at the manner in which Jesus progressively taught His followers. Shortly before going to the cross, at the final Passover that He would experience before His death, He said to the apostles, “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” (John 16:12-13). How fortunate we are today to have God’s complete and final revelation! While the apostles themselves had to receive revelation in a progressive sense - even receiving further revelation following our Lord’s ascension - we possess “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). How blessed we are that we do not have to “wait” for future revelation today. Read your Bible! What a blessing it is to be able to open this most Holy Book and receive that final, divine light that fully illuminates our pathway to eternal life!

— Tulsa, OK

SALVATION AND COMMON SENSE

By Dalton Key

Scripture attributes our salvation from sin to grace (Ephesians 2:5), mercy (Titus 3:5), Love (John 3:16), Jesus (Acts 4:12), blood (Revelation 1:5), the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3), the Holy Spirit (John 3:5), the Bible (James 1:21), preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21), our selves (Acts 2:40), faith (Romans 5:1), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Romans 10:9,10), and baptism (1 Peter 3:21).

Does the Bible contradict itself in assigning to many different prerequisites to our salvation? No. Salvation is the result of the combination of all these spiritual ingredients working together on our behalf.

To attribute salvation to one of these, and one ONLY, excluding the others, would not get the job done. Such would be a violation, not only of basic biblical interpretation, but of simple common sense as well.

Imagine a man struggling to stay afloat as he is seen flailing against the strong under-currents of a roiling river. He desperately needs help. As he fights for his life, another man appears on the river’s bank holding a life preserver connected to an ample length of rope. The man on the bank throws out the life preserver and shouts instructions about taking hold of the rope and hanging on. The man in the water does just that. He makes use of the preserver and is pulled safely to shore. He has been saved from a drowning death.

What saved the man from drowning? Could you say he was saved by any one thing alone? In a sense, he was saved by the kindness of the man on the river bank. Yet had this man not demonstrated his kindness the victim would still have been lost. Did the instructions given save him? Yes, to the extent they were followed. What about the life preserver and the rope? Did they save the man? Yes, but not alone. And the drowning man must have required some measure of faith in the reliability of his savior or we wouldn’t have followed the man’s instructions. He was thus saved by faith. The man on the bank pulled him in, so the act of pulling saved him. Further, it could be said that the man saved himself in that he did what he was told to do. In short, the drowning man’s salvation was the result of a combination of many things, none of which ALONE saved him.

Man is lost and drowning, as it were, in a sea of sin. God, in His grace, has provided His own Son, that through Jesus we might be saved. Yet we must follow certain God-given instructions. Our salvation from sin, like the physical salvation of the man mentioned above, is the result of many things, none of which will save us ALONE and apart from the others.

TIME TO PICK A SIDE!

by Bobby Key

This is a wicked world. Iniquity abounds and the love of many has waxed cold. The Apostle John declared, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). In this materialistic age it is difficult for the Christian to keep himself unspotted from the world. This evil world continues to pull us away from God and righteousness. The greatest of all wars is the war between right and wrong. Every responsible person is on one side or the other. No one can remain neutral. If you are not for Christ you are against Him. The time has come to pick a side!

God is leading the forces of right and righteousness; the devil leads the forces of evil. Ever since the tragedy in Eden every one has been crippled and blinded by sin. We are unable to walk alone. The god of this world has blinded the minds of most people. (2 Corinthians 4:4). Sin so warps the thinking of many to the point where evil is seen as good and good as evil. Paul tells us that some will have their conscience served with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2).

My brother, we can be so deceived by the world and by sin that we become past feeling. We can get to the pint that we just don’t care anymore.

There are four basic things all Christians must come to realize: (1) By yourself, you can’t win against sin. Lord Byron, who lived a lifetime in pleasure, once said, “There’s not a joy in the world that can give like it takes away.” Sin brings pain. God’s children are made to feel pain when yielding to sin. And woe to the man who sins without pain; he feels nothing and continues in sin. The wages of sin, though, is still death.(Romans 6:23). (2) We live in the world, but we are not of the world. We are taught, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). (3) The pleasures of sin last but for a season. “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). Remember, the things which are seen are temporal and temporary; the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). (4) With the help of the Lord we can overcome the world and its evil. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world . . . For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith” (1 John 4:4;5:4).

Don’t forget that Christ “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Galatians 1:4,5). (1929-2018)

EDITORIAL . . .

SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

By Dalton Key

One obvious and universal rule of thumb: a good harvest always follows the sowing of seed; no seed sown equals no harvest enjoyed.

The same principle is true spiritually. The gospel of Christ, as the seed of the kingdom, wields tremendous power upon those honest and good hearts which receive it. This remarkably potent seed has power to convict, to convince and to convert. It has power to transform the vilest of sinners into saved and sanctified children of God. “The seed is the word of God . . . The sower sows the word” (Luke 8:11; Mark 4:14).

Paul felt the urgency of preaching the gospel, in sowing this seed, describing its message as the very “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).

Peter spoke of the gospel as the incorruptible seed by which God’s children are begotten (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Centuries have passed and much in this world has changed since the time when Paul and Peter proclaimed the gospel’s powerful message. Both men have long since left the scenes of this life.

But the seed they sowed lives on. Wherever and whenever the gospel seed is planted in “honest and good hearts” (Luke 8:15), its life-giving effects are still realized. The same seed by which Christians were begotten in the first century is alive and active and able to do the same in the twenty-first century.

Not all hearts are honest; not all ground is good ground. But regardless the condition of the soil, the seed always retains its power!

Those who sow the kingdom’s seed face times and circumstances, both “in season” and “out of season.” There will be those times when many hearers simply “will not endure sound doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2,3). But through it all, good times and bad, the word must be preached. The seed must be sown.

We may not always see the results we would like to see. We may appear to be making no progress in extending the borders of the kingdom. But we should not, we must not, lose heart. We can’t possibly know all the good that may come or all the fruit that may one day develop, through the years and across the globe, from the precious seed we sow today. Our business: sowing the seed; God’s business: giving the increase.(1 Corinthians 3:6,7). And in the end, when all is said and done and the dust of history has settled, His word will not return void. (Isaiah 55:11).

Never forget: We may fail and men we admire may fail; times may change and the hearts of many hearers may become hardened. But the seed of God’s gospel will live on.

Will we sow God’s seed? Remember, with no seed sown there can be no harvest enjoyed!



THE INCOMPARABLE CENTRAL FIGURE OF ALL HISTORY

by Danny Tunnell

Two thousand years ago, God gave us His Son (John 3:16). A tiny baby was the incarnation (in human flesh) of God and the fulfillment of God’s promises. Baby Jesus was both the earthly child of the heavenly Father and the heavenly child of an earthly mother. The baby in the manger, dimpled feet touching the straw, was the mighty God of Genesis 1:1 (see John 1:1-3). This child would reshape history.

Even non-believers and atheists demonstrate the fact of the incarnation every day that they live. Every time they look at a calendar or date a letter, they acknowledge that Christ came to this earth. This year is 2025 AD, AD standing for “Anno Domini,” a Latin term which means “Year of Our Lord” in English.

The brightest spot in history is when Jesus came into this world. We should give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Let the whole world know what He has done (1 Chronicles 16:8, NLT). “In all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11).

Many people assume Christ is

simply our Lord’s second name - Jesus Christ. The term “Christ” means “the Anointed One,” “the Messiah.”

Most people have three names, first, middle, and last; and some perhaps have a nickname. If we read through the Bible, Genesis to Revelation, and listed all the names and titles for Jesus, how many would we find? Over 300!

Jesus cannot be described with a single word. “His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He is Jesus, the Nazarene, the Galilean, the King of Israel, Son of Man, Son of God, the Alpha and Omega, the Bright and Morning Star. He is Immanuel, the great I AM, the Redeemer, the Man of Sorrows, the Lamb of God.

Richard Rogers used to say, “He is not just the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (Alpha and Omega); He IS the alphabet!”

The name Jesus is the same in Hebrew as the name Joshua which means, “Jehovah saves.”

As the song goes, “Let’s talk about Jesus more and more. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life; the Door. the Bread

of Life is He, the Savior of the world, the well of Living Water, the Great Physician, the Lily Pure and White, the Rose of Sharon, the Shepherd, the Rock of Ages, the Great Immanuel, the Word of God, the Bridegroom of His Church.”

Perhaps John the Baptizer described Jesus best, as “The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15, NASB). Kenneth Wuest translated it, “Thanks be to God for His ineffable gift.” The English Standard Version reads, “His inexpressible gift.” The New Living Translation, “This gift is to wonderful for words.” The Amplified Classic Edition, “His gift (precious) beyond telling.”

When the right time came, God sent His Son (Galatians 4:4,5),

It has been said, “You can find Jesus in every book of the Bible.” In the Old Testament they had the promise of the Savior. We have the Savior. He is not only the central figure of the Bible, He is the central figure in all of history

— Miami, OK

RESPONDING TO THE INVITATION

by Milton Smith

Anyone who attends a few worship services in the church of Christ will quickly notice than an “invitation” is almost always extended by the preacher at the end of his sermon. Some might be curious as to why we practice this. We must admit that there is no direct command in the Scriptures telling us that a public invitation was a normal part of the worship of the early church, and there is no historical evidence that would lead me to doubt this fact. I have had numerous members tell me that they have attended services in the past that did not include such an invitation. I have even had some suggest that this practice could lead to a person ignoring the urgency of responding to the gospel during the week so that he might follow “protocol” and come forward Sunday morning. What if such a person’s life ended before Sunday?

Often - as I have extended the invitation - I have stated from the pulpit that a person can “respond” anytime he/she wishes to do so. I hasten to add that to eliminate such a

public call to respond would certainly not be a sinful act; we cannot even say that such would be inappropriate because we have no scriptural reason to make such an accusation.

So why do we practice this public call to respond?

I have always viewed the invitation as simply taking advantage of the opportunity! A person might attend the worship service on a particular Sunday (or Wednesday evening), with no intention of getting his life right with God; but something might be said during the service that might cause this person to seriously reflect upon his spiritual condition. In this case, a public call to respond might be the final encouragement that this soul needs to get his life right with his Savior. I have known of such cases in which a person is touched by something said and comes forward that very day.

The key word here is “opportunity.” Because there is nothing unscriptural about a public invitation, to offer

such a call to respond can (and often does) prove expedient. Again, one can respond any time, but what better time to do so than “today,” and this certainly includes those times when the church assembles together publicly.

“Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation . . .” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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