

LET GOD BE TRUE

By Cecil Burch

“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That you may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when you are judged.’” (Romans 3:3,4.)

What a precious thing truth is. It reminds me of a man, after fishing all day and not getting so much as a nibble, went back to shore, loaded up his boat and began to drive home. Before reaching home, he stopped at a grocery store advertising “fresh fish.” He said to the woman at the counter, “Throw me a dozen of the biggest fish you have.” The woman said, “Throw them? Why?” The man replied, “Because I am going to catch them. I may be a lousy fisherman, but I am no liar!”

Sometimes the truth is shaded, distorted, mixed with untruth, and even some have the boldness to say, “The Lord told me this in a dream.” Jeremiah wrote long ago, about 600 B.C., and said, “Behold I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:32.) How sad when lies are told in the name of the Lord and people believe them to their own destruction. The apostle Paul speaks of those who, “Exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women

exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful . . . those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:25,26,27,32.) Paul said that we cannot approve of shameful things that God has condemned! The list is long in Romans 1:21-32.

Let us keep the words of King David, close to our hearts, who long ago said, “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” (Psalm 25:4,5.)

— Amarillo, TX

Is the Bible Relevant?

By Joe Slater

Relevant: 1. bearing upon or connected with the matter at hand; pertinent. 2. having practical value or applicability. (Random House Webster’s College Dictionary)

Is the Bible relevant? The most recently-written portion of it was penned over 1900 years ago. Its oldest book, Job, dates back over 1500 years BC. None of the Bible writers ever set foot on the North American continent.

Multitudes would say that the Bible contains good moral principles that might be applicable to people living today; but aside from that, they deem the Scriptures to be largely irrelevant. “Paul and Moses didn’t commute 30 miles to work each day; Isaiah and John didn’t have to juggle mortgage payments along with braces for the children, so what could their writings say that would be relevant?” the world asks.

Even some Christians speak and act as though large portions of the Bible (especially the Old Testament

books) are irrelevant. I’ve heard boasts of elders and preachers who take great pride in being on the cutting edge: “If it isn’t relevant, we don’t study it!” I submit that their ignorance is surpassed only by their arrogance! Would one of these sophisticated folks please enlighten this hopelessly backward preacher as to which places in God’s word are irrelevant?

I freely grant that some sections of Scripture hold our attention more easily than others. The gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection are more engaging than the genealogies in First Chronicles. But are those genealogies irrelevant? Hardly! Among other things, they document that we are dealing with real people, not fictional story-book characters. They meticulously trace the line from which Jesus, our Savior, was born. Without such documentation, we could have no confidence in the fulfilled prophecies, and thus no certainty that

Jesus really is the Son of God.

Differences of time, place, circumstances, and culture make no difference as to the Bible’s relevance. Times change, but people do not; they are still sinful and in desperate need of salvation. Sin is still sin, God is still God, truth is still truth. Those who insist that only writings dealing with modern conditions are relevant betray an unwillingness or inability to think outside of their own little world. To put it bluntly, they are full of themselves. By learning how others throughout history have succeeded or failed to serve God, and by observing how God dealt with them, we come to understand what to do in our own day and time.

The problem is not with God’s word being irrelevant. It is with people who fail to take the time and trouble to see how it fits.

— Justin, TX

Old Paths

Vol. 40, No. 11 December, 2016

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

WHERE WE’LL NEVER SAY

GOODBYE!

By Hershel Dyer

As a very young preacher, fresh out of college, I was sitting near the bedside of a man who was an unbeliever. he was nearing the time of his death and I was most anxious to convert him to the Lord. Sadly, there seemed to be nothing that I could say which would change his thinking. However, he did lament that in his death he would be leaving behind his wife and this was truly a grief to him. He had no hope of ever seeing her again.

As the years go by we are compelled to bid farewell to those who have become so close and dear to us in this life. Although we know that death is just as natural to mankind as birth, the sorrow of the first is not mitigated by the joy of the last.

There is, though, a great difference in the departure of a Christian and the death of an unbeliever. When the friends of Dorcas gathered with the apostle Peter to weep at the passing of this dear sister, they could not help but be comforted by the blessed hope of her glorious resurrection and eternal life. Yet, to say goodbye to this beloved saint was most distressing even to those with strong faith. (Acts 9:36-42.)

During World War I, a father went with his soldier-son as the young man prepared to board ship for the war zone in France. Knowing that when he passed through the swinging gates to go aboard, he might never see his father again, the son commented, “Dad, if I never meet you again here, I’ll meet you where the gates never swing outward.” While riding the train back to Chicago, Charles Gabriel meditated upon the parting words of his son and then wrote those memorable lyrics for the song, “Where the Gates Swing Outward Never.”

To say goodbye to those we love is not so hard if we have hope that we will see them again. What balm it is to our aching hearts that “over there” the dear ones will never be leaving us, for then we shall be “where the gates never swing outward.”

— Tulsa, OK

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18.)

THE GREAT IMITATOR

By Bobby Key

Satan is a great hand at imitating God. His only original idea as far as I can determine was that of becoming a rebel. As the “god of this world” he has set up a kingdom similar to that of God Himself. “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14.) The American Standard Version has the word “fashioneth” here, and Moffatt says, “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” Satan has the power to make himself look very righteous and sometimes he tries to act like God.

We are not told how God talked with Adam and Eve in the garden; however, it seems the Devil tried to imitate the mode of revelation through which God communicated with man. It is possible that he appeared as an angel of light in the very beginning. Of course he used the body of a serpent, but he was disguised so that Eve was not in the least suspicious of his approach. Eve was deceived in the entire matter. (1 Timothy 2:14.)

The Devil first wanted to know how much Eve knew. She confessed that she knew of God’s restriction and the penalty for disobeying. The Devil as much as called God a liar and then explained that God had forbidden the eating of the tree in the center of the garden because He didn’t want man to be like Himself. Eve was taken in by the whole story and believed the Devil was telling the truth.

Yes, we think it is possible that Satan imitated God’s mode of revelation. He certainly did not reveal his true identity or purpose.

The Devil also attempts to imitate the miracles God has performed. He did this in Exodus 7, in the case of the plagues. He also tried to work miracles in the New Testament. In fact Paul said, “The coming of the lawless one is through the activity and working of Satan; and will be attended by great power and with all sorts of (pretended) miracles and signs and delusive marvels and lying wonders.” (2 Thessalonians 2:9, Amplified Translation.)

Read 1 John 4:1 and learn how to tell the true from the false. If we are not careful, Satan will pull the wool over our eyes!

— Miami, OK

“ALL TO JESUS”

By Bill McFarland

Maybe you have heard the story about the farmer who told the preacher he had “got religion.” The preacher replied, “That’s fine, but are you sure you’re going to put aside all sin?” “Yes sir,” said the farmer, “I’m through with sin!” And are you going to pay up all your debts?” asked the preacher. “Now wait a minute,” said the farmer, “You ain’t talking religion, you’re talking business.”

It is unfortunate that we so often, like this man, want to suppose that we can be Christians only in part of our lives. Many seem to think that we can have Christ in our “spiritual” lives while we reserve the right to please ourselves in “secular” things. Scripture makes no such distinction.

A Christian is to follow Christ every day. Jesus said, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23.) No days are left out in this matter of following Christ.

A Christian is to honor Christ in everything. The Scripture says, “And whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17.) No conversations nor actions are exempt from the claim of Christ.

A Christian is to live for Christ with all his being. The apostle wrote, “I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1.) There is no part of our lives which we should not see as belonging to God.

If Christ is Lord, there can be no corners of life where His lordship is not recognized. One’s loyalty to Christ will make a difference in his home, his work, his business, his play and his talk. A Christian is to mean it when he sings, “All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.”

— Springfield, MO

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are being and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13,14.)

Editorial . . .

(EDITOR’S NOTE: As 2016 comes to a close, let me say “Thank you!” to those of our readers who have helped to keep this paper financially solvent. Your help at the first of the year saw us through, almost to year’s end. We are, however, right where we were this time last year: in desperate need of help! Sorry to bring it up, but it’s true. So . . . thanks . . . and please help again!! Thanks so much!)

THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR

By Dalton Key

What is your definition of religious faith? And perhaps of even greater importance, what is your attitude concerning faith?

An anonymous English schoolboy once defined faith as “the power of believing what you know ain’t so.” H. L. Mencken described it as “an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable.” Ambrose Bierce opined, “Belief without evidence, is what is told by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel.” An unknown writer called faith “the boast of a man who is too lazy to investigate.” And G. B. Shaw once remarked, “People will believe anything that amuses them, gratifies them, or promises them some sort of profit.”

As the foregoing opinions suggest, there exists, at least in the minds of many people, a good deal of cynicism concerning the faith we as Christians cherish.

The inspired author of Hebrews demonstrates a more reasoned and respectful approach to our faith in God. He laments the unbelief of the wandering Israelites, applauds the faith and faithfulness of the heroes of Old Testament times, and encourages his readers to develop and maintain a steadfast faith patterned after the enduring example of Jesus. (Hebrews 3; 4; 11; 12:1-4.) The author presents trusting, unwavering faith as the key which unleashes the gospel’s power and assures one of entering into God’s heavenly rest. (4:1-3.)

Unlike the scoffers and skeptics who have long sought to demean the faith of God’s people, the Spirit-led writer of Hebrews affirms such faith to be essential. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. . . But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6.)

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8.)



THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

By Milton Smith

“If any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” These words were written by the apostle Peter. (1 Peter 4:16.) Obviously, Peter took great personal pride in the fact that he was given the opportunity to wear the name of Christ and live his life in service to his Master. If you are a true Christian, this fact should be clear and visible to all whom you come into contact with. But what are some of the marks of a true child of God?

For one thing, a person belonging to Christ will never deny that special name by which he is called. We are told in Acts, chapter eleven, that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. One can only imagine how proud these men and women

were to be identified with the name of Jesus Christ! These devout men and women would have never done anything that would have remotely implied denial of that special title that they proudly wore.

We are also told that the true child of God should be “a doer of the word and not a hearer only . . .” (James 1:22.) One can “hear” the word of God, but it takes a true and devoted Christian to be a real “doer” of the word!

Also, a real child of God realizes that he cannot be neutral when it comes to standing with Jesus. Our Lord Himself made such statements as: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathers not with me scatters abroad,” and “No man can serve two

masters.” (Matthew 12:30; 6:24.) No true follower can be neutral.

But one of the main marks of a faithful child of God is to “seek first the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 6:33.) One may seek after the things in this life (if such things are proper), but at the top of his list should be the earnest seeking after of the kingdom of God. This simply means that our ultimate goal in life is to obey, serve, and follow Jesus Christ. Our greatest privilege in life is to surrender selfish desires in order that we might better please our Savior. The kingdom of God must always come first. Let us never forget that our light to the world will always shine in proportion to our faithfulness to the King of Kings.

— Tulsa, OK

SEEING GOD IN HIS CREATION

By Danny Tunnell

Billy Graham has said, “I know that God exists. I can look into a telescope, and tell you there is a God. I look into a microscope, and I know there must be a God.”

Mr. Graham was only saying what Scripture teaches. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1.) “Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all ye stars of light. Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowls . . . all these things praise God.” (Psalm 148: 1,3,4,9,10.)

God’s creation tells us about things God must like. He must like trees, flowers, mountains, rivers, and babies! If not, why did He create them? “And God saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31.)

One time the missionary author, Elisabeth Elliot, invited an Acua

woman from her jungle home in Ecuador to New York City. As they walked the streets, Elliot explained cars, fire hydrants, sidewalks, and red lights; things she had never seen before. She took her to the observation platform atop the Empire State Building. As she did these things, Elliot could not help wondering what kind of impression modern society would have on the woman. But the lady didn’t say a word until she saw a large white spot on a concrete wall. Then she asked, “What kind of bird did that?”

The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, told a parable about a rich man riding in a lighted carriage driven by a peasant who sat behind the horse in the cold and dark, outside. Because he sat near the artificial light inside the carriage, the rich man missed the panorama of the stars outside, a view gloriously manifest to the peasant.

We are reminded of Abraham. The Lord “brought him outside and said,

‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” (Genesis 15:5.)

Have you ever marveled at God’s creation, and then glorified God the Creator?

— Miami, OK

Old Paths

829 S. Rockford Ave. ,
Tulsa, OK. 74120

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and supported
by Churches of Christ
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor

“Subscription Free;
Prayers Requested;
Contributions Appreciated.”