

Speak, Think, Do

by Joe Slater

Moses was dead. Israel waited, encamped in the plains of Moab, just across the Jordan from Jericho. God commissioned Joshua to lead His people into battle to conquer the promised land and pledged to be with him every step of the way. Among other things, here is what God required of Joshua: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1:8.)

Note the three directives relative to God's word: speak it; meditate in it; do it. By speaking it, Joshua would be teaching his people on a regular basis. Constant meditation would keep Joshua himself focused on his divinely-appointed mission. But words and thoughts have no practical value without careful obedience. Faithfulness has never

been merely an academic or mental exercise. God requires obedience!

Almost 1500 years later, Jesus commissioned His apostles to take His gospel to the world. We inherit that commission. Our sword is the gospel of Christ; we march toward Heaven, our promised land of rest. Like Joshua, we are to speak God's word. "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20.) Christianity is a taught religion; when the teaching stops, the church stops growing.

Meditation also keeps us focused on what we are supposed to be doing and teaching. After exhorting young Timothy regarding both doctrinal and practical aspects of his ministry, Paul instructed him to "meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all." (1 Timothy

4:15.) We live in a world filled with distractions; staying focused on the Lord and His work requires us to discipline our thinking!

Obedience may be out of sync with current notions of "toleration" and "acceptance," but God's word still mandates it. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we obey His commandments." (1 John 2:3.) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:2, 3.)

We have a commission from God, just as Joshua did. Let us preach the gospel to every creature! Let us center our thoughts upon God's word! And let us demonstrate our love for God and for each other by keeping His commands!
— Justin, TX

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THAT BABIES ARE LIARS?

By Mark Lindley

The old doctrine of Original Sin is still alive. Every now and then, one might hear a preacher state that we all have "Adam's nature," and that we are "born in sin." The doctrine is referred to as Original Sin or Total Hereditary Depravity. Many denominations of our day believe it.

The doctrine suggests that after Adam sinned in the Garden, he passed on his "sin nature" to all people. Every baby is born "defiled in body and spirit," and is "totally depraved," not because the baby has sinned but because Adam sinned.

Some believe that Psalm 58 teaches this doctrine: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stops her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. Break their teeth, O God, in

their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord." (verses 3-6.) Based on this passage some have said that "babies speak lies" because they have inherited "Adam's nature."

Let me assure you that babies are pure, innocent, and are not born in sin! Further, babies have never inherited a "sinful nature" from Adam! This is an ugly, false doctrine that should be opposed by all who respect God's Word.

Well, what about Psalm 58? I affirm that Psalm 58 does not teach Original Sin as seen by the following: 1) The passage is describing David's enemies, not innocent babies; 2) The passage says that the ones under consideration "go" astray, not that they "are born" astray; 3) New-born babies cannot talk, much less "speak lies"; 4) The ones David describes have "teeth," but babies do not have teeth; 5) Neither Adam nor

Adam's "nature" is mentioned in this passage; 6) This passage is an inspired exaggeration, designed to show the wickedness of David's enemies who were also God's enemies. Obviously, the language is not to be taken literally. Babies do not "literally" go astray "as soon" as they are born; rather, wicked men make wicked choices early in life and go astray. That is all the text teaches. No passage teaches that babies are born sinners!

Adam did not have a "sinful nature." God created him pure and sinless. But Adam chose sin. This is precisely how people become sinners today. We choose sin and therefore commit sin. "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4.) Sin is committed, not inherited.
— Ripley, MS

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

FOOLISH PREACHERS

By Hershel Dyer

Phillips Brooks was one of the most noted of Protestant preachers during the last quarter of the 19th century. He was very impressive in his appearance, quite large in physical form and of a fine countenance. In visiting Boston during those days, multitudes of the great and small would seek to hear him preach. One of his frequent hearers wrote him a letter which reveals a great side of the preacher.

"Dear Dr. Brooks: I am a tailor in a little shop near your church. Whenever I have the opportunity I always go to hear you preach. Each time as I hear you preach I seem to forget all about you, for you make me think of God."

As for religious television, the screen is dominated by some of the most self-aggrandizing men ever to place themselves before the public. There have always been some of this type, even long before television. However, these in our day have access to the masses through television which could never assemble in any hall or coliseum ever built. And, to enhance their personal appeal and prestige, they seem to imply every stratagem and artifice of which the human mind is capable. The attention they draw to themselves though all sorts of grooming, mannerisms and showman techniques are quite amazing to behold. In response to all of this the great crowds wave their hands and shout their acclamations as the preachers work the excited pitch higher and higher!

A man who professes to represent the spirit of Christ in the pulpit should be ashamed of drawing such attention to himself. Every such man should strive for the effect which was felt by the humble tailor when he heard Phillips Brooks. To make our hearers "think of God" and not ourselves should be our aim.
— Tulsa, OK

"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. . . . For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake."
(2 Corinthians 4:1,2,5.)

GOD - THE ONLY ATTRACTION

By Danny Tunnell

Boredom is a state of mind resulting from trying to maintain an interest in something that has no interest for us. People can become weary and restless through a lack of interest.

Can people become bored with their religion? How about the man on Sunday morning whose mind is on his golf game? Could he possibly become bored with the worship service? Or a visitor to the services who is not acquainted with the religious terminology the speaker is using? Or a young couple who love each other very much, but don't know the One the service is all about?

All of these people may have trouble focusing their attention upon the worship service.

Boredom is not a biblical word, but we may have examples of it in the Bible. Did Israel become bored while Moses tarried on the mountain? (Exodus 32:1-4.) They lacked the faith to see the invisible so they clamored for a god they could see and touch. They had more enthusiasm for the golden calf than they had for the true God. Were they bored with the invisible God?

They later got bored with the manna . . . that same old monotonous diet! They missed the fish which they ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, the melons, and the onions and the garlic. (Numbers 11:5.)

It is now a common practice for churches to offer people entertainment. Has it become hard to get people to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God? Have God's own children become bored with Him?

In some places it seems that God is not the main attraction at all! When Jimmy Carter teaches a Bible class in the Baptist church in Plains, Georgia, the crowds are always outstanding. One lady actually planned to spend the night right outside the church door in a lawn chair to get the best seat in the auditorium the next day. She set up camp at 10:00 p.m. Saturday night - 12 hours before Carter was slated to speak. What's the attraction? Is God the main attraction? Or could it be an ex-governor, former president, and Nobel Prize winner?

St. John's Episcopal church in Washington, D.C. is known as "the church of the presidents." A fellow once asked, "Will the president be in the service today?" The answer he got: "I don't know if he'll be there, but God will be there!"

Not to be outdone by the denominations, several years ago, many attended the church of Christ when they knew Pat Boone would be present.

God told those of Israel, "I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-3.) Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "The time is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24.)
— Miami, OK

HE LIVED WHAT HE PREACHED

By Bobby Key

The destiny of a nation is bound up in its leaders. This is no less true of the church. Very seldom can a congregation rise above its leadership. Men by nature follow the examples of this about them. Relatively few think for themselves or decide, rationally, on their course of conduct. For the most part we all like to play "follow the leader." This should be a sobering thought for those who stand in the place of divine leadership.

Joshua, who in earlier years was the servant and minister of Moses, led the people across the Jordan River into the promised land. It was Joshua, supreme head and leader of the people, who read God's law from Mount Ebal. There was never any doubt as to where this godly man stood. He called on the people to make a choice that would determine their destiny and the destiny of their children's children. They had but two alternatives: Serve Jehovah God or serve either the gods of their fathers which were "on the other side of the flood" or "the gods of the Amorites." Joshua's example inspires us all: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15.)

"And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old." (Joshua 24:29.) At this point his life was ended but not his influence. We are not surprised to read from Judges, chapter two, verse seven: "So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua."

No greater tribute could be paid Joshua than this. His faithful life of devotion and service to God led an entire nation in the right direction. Not only did he influence the people for good during his life but during the days of the elders that outlived him as well. He was dead, but his works continued to live on. (Revelation 14:13.)

It would be impossible to over-stress the importance of godly leaders. If those who speak for God fail to be steadfast in doctrine and moral purity, what may God expect of the people in general?

Joshua, God's servant, lived the way he preached.
— Miami, OK

Editorial . . .

KEEP SOWING!

By Dalton Key

"The seed is the word of God . . . The sower sows the word." (Luke 8:11; Mark 4:14.)

Inspiration is both clear and consistent. The gospel of Christ, as the seed of the kingdom, wields tremendous power upon those honest hearts which receive it. This remarkable 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.

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 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.

While no one would dispute the fact that some ages, some places and some people have been more receptive to the seed than others, the seed has always retained its intrinsic power. When Christ discussed the disparate outcomes in His parable of the sower, one thing remained constant. Hearts (soils) varied in character and thus in receptiveness. Not all hearts were honest; not all ground was good ground. But regardless the condition of the soil, the seed had (and has) its power! The same seed fell on all the different soils. The good ground received the same seed as the wayside soil.

Those who sow the gospel seed face some times and circumstances which are "in season" and others which are "out of season," when many hearers "will not endure sound doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2,3.) But through it all, good times and bad, the word must be preached and the seed retains its power.

We may not 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, His word will not return void. (Isaiah 55:11.)

Never forget: We may fail and men and women we admire may fall; times may change and hearts of many hearers may grow cold; our lips will soon become silent as these fragile bodies return back to the dust - but the seed of God's gospel will live on.



SOULS TORMENTED

By Dalton Key

The decadence of our day reminds us of the sordid conditions, the "perilous times," described by Paul in 2 Timothy 3. Among the apostle's warnings, note these ominous words: "But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13.) From all appearances, evil men and imposters are, even now, alive and active and intent upon deceiving all souls within their ability to deceive.

We may as well admit the obvious: things are getting morally and spiritually worse nearly everywhere you look. As God's children living in a benighted world fraught with ever-increasing levels of depravity,

we seem to be sharing an unwanted kinship with Lot, of Old Testament days, who while living in Sodom, was "oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds). (2 Peter 2:7,8.)

Lot's soul was tormented "from day to day" in "seeing and hearing." And he didn't even have access to the internet!

Despite today's worsening spiritual and moral climate, we do have reason for hope and genuine optimism. Trials and tribulations are not novel. There was sin in the

Garden of Eden. There was sin in the days of Noah, There will be sin around us until the end of time. The world has never been inclined toward God and godly behavior. But the good news is found in heaven's promise: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.) "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4.)

And remember fellow "sojourners and pilgrims," we're not yet home! (1 Peter 2:11.)

WHAT WILL BE "JUDGED" ON JUDGMENT DAY?

By Milton Smith

The question posed in the title of this article is not "who" will be judged on Judgment Day, but "what" will be judged. We know that every soul will be judged on this day. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 25:31-32, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Consequently, we know that every soul who ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But "what" will be judged on that day? In other words, exactly how and in what manner will each person be judged?

Revelation 20:12 tells us, "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 that were written in the books, according to their works." Paul tells us, ". . . every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Corinthians 3:8.) It seems quite obvious that each person will be judged by his own obedience, conduct, and faithfulness. Even our motives will be considered. There are some people who do many good works in this life, but they often do those things for the wrong reasons. I'm sure there are even some atheists who do certain "good" works. But God will judge our motive as much as our action.

Paul tells us that we are going to be judged according to the things done in the body, "whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10.) We thus know that our conduct in this life will be part of our own judgment. Jesus also tells us that our service to our fellow man will be a part of our own judgment. (cf. Matthew 25:34-40.) Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians

3:13 that "every man's work shall be made manifest." Every feature of our life will be judged on that day. Obedience, motive, conduct, service and faithfulness will be the type things that will judge us. It will be those things viewed by God as having eternal value that will prove to be worthy of eternal reward.

— Tulsa, OK

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