

ARE YOU A “HOPE-SO” CHURCH MEMBER OR A “KNOW-SO” BIBLE CHRISTIAN

The apparent indifference on the part of the multitudes is appalling. Men and women, old and young, carry on as though they expect to remain on earth forever, with utter disregard for the Bible statements, “So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God,” and, “Man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The profound ignorance of so-called intelligent people concerning spiritual truth is pitiable and deplorable, if not inexcusable.

Then again apart from the deceiving power of one who is accused of deceiving the whole world there is no excuse, apology, or explanation for the manner in which thousands of religious people, who pretend to follow the teachings of Jesus, pervert Divine truth, audaciously repudiate God’s message of redemption, and arbitrarily substitute some human religious philosophy which is without power or value so far as salvation from sin is concerned.

Perhaps more than fifty per cent of the adults of the United States are either affiliated with some kind of religious organization at the present time, or have belonged to some such organization in the past. But it is no exaggeration to declare that the great majority of the present or former members of these religious organizations are either ignorant or confused as to God’s message of salvation, the Bible way from earth to heaven. And it is also true that the great majority of those who believe this message, who not only know the true way but are on that way, are equally ignorant and confused as to the believer’s position, membership, hope, and calling, in the true Bible Church. This is because they have little, if any, knowledge as to what the Bible teaches concerning the Church of the living God, the Body of Christ.

THE BELIEVER’S ASSURANCE

Let us consider these two Bible verses:

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” I John 5:13.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and 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.” I Peter 3:15.

Here we learn that God, the Father, wants His redeemed children to know that they have eternal life. They are to know this on the authority of God’s statements in the Bible, because they are trusting in Jesus Christ, what He has done, what He is now doing, and what He is yet to do.

Note something of what He has done:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” I Peter 3:18.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He (Christ) entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Hebrews 9:12.

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Hebrews 10:12.

Then note what faith in Christ and His redemptive work accomplishes for the believer: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Romans 5:10.

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13.

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Romans 4:5.

“And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:39.

Then note the spiritual benefits which the believer enjoys because of the present ministry of the living Christ in heaven:

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

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.” Romans 8:31 and 34.

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25.

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” I Peter 1:5.

Therefore, on the authority of God’s Bible, every person who believes God’s Word and trusts God’s Son should say with confidence and positive assurance what John wrote in I John 3:2:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

Here we read what believers are, and what they shall be. But let us never forget the statement in I Corinthians 1:29: “no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Note how the greatest of all Christians stated this in Philippians 3:3—“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Note again Ephesians 2:9—“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

See how this statement is joined with other statements:

“That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:7 to 10.

A great and blessed time is ahead for believers, saved by grace. True believers really believe Romans 11:6:

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.”

If and when the believer, knowing that by nature he is unworthy and unrighteous, is saved by grace through faith in the redemptive work of the worthy Son of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous, he will not glory in his goodness, his religious activities, or in anything that he can do

to help get him into heaven. He will know that he is going to heaven by grace, by faith in the work of Another; that he is God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The believer is saved because he is the recipient of God's grace; because eternal life is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Then he can say—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20.

The true Bible Christian knows that it is an insult to God to try to make the redemptive work of Christ more efficacious by adding religious ceremonies or to endeavor by any human scheme or service to supplement the grace of God and the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note again carefully Romans 4:4 and 5:

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

With such knowledge and with such an experience the believer can be ready, and should be ready, at all times to give an answer to any one who asks him for a reason of the hope that is in him. This should be done with meekness and fear, but with absolute confidence, and positive assurance. In other words, when asked the question, "Are you saved?" or "Are you sure you are going to heaven?", the person, who is trusting wholly and solely in the grace of God and in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, should answer humbly, but boldly, "Yes, by the grace of God and on the authority of God's Word, I certainly am." "These things are written that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Note Titus 1:2 and the words of Jesus Christ, in John 6:47 and in John 5:24:

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

JOINING THE CHURCH

Multitudes of unsaved religious individuals, for different reasons, have become members of some religious organization; have joined some organized company of people—a church. The Greek word translated "church" in the Bible is "ekklesia," which means "called-out." God's Word thus instructs God's "called-out" people—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Hebrews 10:25. God's Word, in I Corinthians 14:23, mentions the church coming together. In Acts 14:27, we read that the church was gathered together. Therefore, by Scriptural authority, believers in different communities should gather in assemblies for worship and Bible preaching. But they should first be members of the one true Bible Church before they gather in an assembly with other believers for worship or Christian service. Many, many people who are members of some religious church organization are not members of the true Bible Church. Note the Bible description of the Bible Church of this present dispensation: "the Church which is His (Christ's) Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1:22 and 23.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:12 and 13.

Now let us carefully note how being joined to Christ and His Church is described in the Bible:

“Christ, from Whom the whole Body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:15 and 16.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the Body is not one member, but many.” I Corinthians 12:12 to 14.

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Romans 12:4 and 5.

Believers are joined to Christ. Believers are joined to one another. Believers, by the work of God, are made members of Christ’s Body and the two shall be one flesh. This is the great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:32. Only God by the Holy Spirit can join the believer to the Bible Church.

Then note the future of the true Bible Church:

“That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:27.

“When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:4.

This should cause diligent, thoughtful, serious meditation and consideration on the part of every religious person who is hoping to get into heaven because of membership in some church organization, whether that person is enthusiastically and emotionally religious or an inactive and indifferent member.

This is a very serious and important matter, something that the individual can settle this side of death. But the sinner who dies unsaved will remain forever unsaved. So let each one ask of himself this question, “am I a member of the Body of Christ?” “have I been baptized by one Spirit into this organism, this one true Bible Church?” What a tragedy that multitudes of deceived, religious church-members are going religiously to perdition! The very moment any sinner today is saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that individual becomes a member of the one and only Bible Church, and this is accomplished without application to, or examination by, any group of church officers.

Then note in Ephesians 4:4 and 5:

“THERE IS ONE BODY, AND ONE SPIRIT, EVEN AS YE ARE CALLED IN ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING; ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM.”

A CHRISTIAN IN PRINCIPLE

In religious circles we hear of orthodox and unorthodox Christians, of Liberals and Fundamentalists, in the church. Let us be assured that a Christian infidel is an impossible paradox. Many church organizations are under the domination and legislation of Christianized agnostics who accept the Bible with many reservations, criticisms and eliminations. These so-

called Liberals claim that the Bible must be interpreted in the light of modern science and scholarship; that Christianity must be properly related to modern psychology. They demand for themselves and for their followers a reasonable faith, a natural religion, and a revised Bible, with the discard of all that is miraculous. They pose as benefactors who are seeking to deliver Christianity from the non-progressive, narrow-minded, ignorant, old-fashioned “literalists” who are not up-to-date in their thinking.

These “pseudo-Christians” are described in II Corinthians 11:13 to 15:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

Encouraged by the boldness, if not the eloquence and leadership of these deluded counterfeit Christians, so many people are in a state of spiritual lethargy, indifference and ignorance, apparently devoid of any fear of God or eternal perdition. This majority is made up of groups and individuals who make no pretense at subjecting themselves to the authority of God’s Word in their decisions or indecisions concerning their eternal destiny. Many of them condescend to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was a very superior character, the courageous and noble son of Mary and Joseph, who was honest in his convictions. They classify him as a religious martyr who died for his fidelity to his convictions, for his loyalty and devotion to God, as a good man who was hated, persecuted and killed because he was misunderstood and the world was not then ready for his ideal philosophy. Of course, they do not object to being called “Christians,” if it be understood that they do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the eternal Deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ, or redemption by His shed blood, or in the bodily resurrection of Christ. They say, “We are Christians in principle, that is, we accept the moral teaching, the ethical philosophy of Jesus Christ, as set forth in His Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule, as an excellent standard of behavior.” “We know that this world would be a better world, if the people in it would try their best to obey and follow Jesus, the ideal man.”

They deny the very existence of the great adversary who, in the Bible, is accused of the crime of deceiving the whole world. Perhaps they have never even heard II Corinthians 4:3 and 4:

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

If they have ever heard this, they paid no attention to it. Of course the self-righteous individuals among them do not believe that they are blind, and the very idea of their being lost is absurd. But God’s Word is true and the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only Divine power that can or will save a human being. God’s Word tells the truth when it declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; “there is none righteous, no not one.” God’s Word is, that righteousness cannot be found in the natural heart. God’s Word is, that the unrighteous man cannot become righteous by imitating Jesus Christ; by being good with the help of Jesus, the Teacher; by any human reformation scheme; by self-control or religious education. There is but one place in the universe of God where the unrighteous man can find for himself righteousness, and that is at the cross of Calvary. Note II Corinthians 5:21:

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

Hear this very interesting statement concerning some folks who claim to be Christians:

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” Titus 1:16.

Note on the other hand what God expects of those who claim to be His children, who claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ as believers:

“That they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Colossians 1:10.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1:11.

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life.” Philippians 2:15 and 16.

The Christian is exhorted in the Holy Scriptures to walk circumspectly toward sinners. The Christians have a tremendous responsibility toward the unsaved sinners all about them. Christians are in the world but not of the world. They should not be worldly. They are crucified to the world. They are not to be conformed to the world.

“For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” II Corinthians 4:6.

The sinner is dead in sins. The Christian is dead to sin. Note Colossians 3:3 to 5:

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Not only many unregenerated, religious church members, but many saved church members are careless and carnal in their conduct. Their testimonies are worse than worthless; they are harmful. The unsaved sinners, beholding such inconsistencies in the lives of those who claim to belong to Christ, discount the worth and value of Christianity, the saving and keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a shame that any member of the Body of Christ should be a detriment to the cause of Christ and a stumbling-block to any sinner on the way to the sorrows of the second death. Christ said to His disciples, “ye shall be My witnesses.” Every Christian should be able to honestly and constantly say with Paul—“But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.” I Corinthians 15:10.

But let no sinner believe that he can or will escape God’s wrath in that awful day of judgment because of the faults, failures, and frailties of some professing Christian. The thing to do is to get past the inconsistent professors to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Calvary, and then, by the grace of God, go back and show that disloyal witness how to be a genuine Christian in the midst of a world of lost sinners.

Hear God’s warning to sinners:

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27.

“Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” Acts 17:31.

Every sinner will keep these appointments. God offers to the believer a way of escape. Hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24.

“JESUS, WHICH DELIVERED US FROM THE WRATH TO COME.” I Thessalonians 1:10.

Why not just this moment take God at His Word, be the recipient of His wonderful grace, believe that you are the ungodly sinner for whom Christ died, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour and God for Christ’s sake, will forgive you for all your sins and you will stand in His holy presence as though you had never sinned.