

# Back To Basics

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## **AMAZING THINGS ABOUT GOD'S AMAZING GRACE**

*Johnie Edwards*

**A**lmost everyone has sung the great hymn, *Amazing Grace*. It was written in 1779 by John Newton and teaches some amazing things about God's amazing grace.

1) **IT SAVES.** The word "grace" has a sweet sound because it "saved a wretch like me." Writing the Ephesians Paul penned, "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." (Eph. 2:8). Paul said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul never forgot his life of being "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:13-14). Then he proclaimed, "...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15)! As the song, Paul could literally say, "I was blind, but now I see" (Acts 9:17; 22:11).

2) **IT TEACHES.** "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear," goes the song. Paul wrote Titus that God's amazing grace teaches men. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us..." (Ti. 2:11). Men have to be taught as to how the grace of God saves. It's by Christ that "we have access by faith into this grace..." (Rom. 5:2).

3) **IT KEEPS US SAFE.** God's grace does what it does through the gospel of Christ. Paul mentions, "the gospel of the grace of God" in Acts 20:24. After listing things to add to our faith, Peter affirmed, "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

4) **IT PROVIDES HOPE.** "His word my hope secures." The gospel tells us that "for we are saved by hope..." (Rom. 8:24). This hope serves "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast..." (Heb. 6:19). God's amazing grace brings about amazing hope!

5) **IT SPEAKS OF ETERNITY.** "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun." Paul writes the Corinthians about this, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1). Jesus assures us that "life eternal" will be the "reward" of the faithful (Mt. 25:46; 16:27). Paul told the Romans if they were "free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).

*Amazing Grace, what a song!*



# THE SOWER'S SEED

*Basic Sermon Starters*

"HE THAT GOETH FORTH AND WEEPETH, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, SHALL  
DOUBTLESS COME AGAIN WITH REJOICING, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM."

## HEAR YE NOW WHAT THE LORD SAITH

### Introduction

1. This sermon is based on the concept expressed in Micah 6:1.
2. The Scriptures appeal to man to hear (Mt. 17:5; Mk. 4:9; Acts 2:22).
3. You are invited to hear what the Lord has to say about:

### Discussion

#### I. SIN

- A. What it is (1 Jn. 3:4; 5:17).
- B. What it will do (Is. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23).
- C. How to get rid of it (Acts 2:38).

#### II. SALVATION

- A. The need for it (Rom. 3:23).
- B. Where it is and how to obtain it (2 Tim. 2:10; Gal. 3:27).
- C. That it is conditional (1 Cor. 15:2).

#### III. BAPTISM

- A. The necessity of it (Mk. 16:16).
- B. What it's for (Acts 2:38).

- C. Who its subjects are (Mt. 28:19; Acts 8:12; 2:38; 8:37).
- D. Its action (Col. 2:12; Acts 8:36-38).
- E. What it does (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

#### IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

- A. What it is (1 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:15; 2 Th. 2:14).
- B. Who designed it (Eph. 3:10-11).
- C. Who built it (Mt. 16:18).
- D. When and where it was established (Is. 2:2-3; Acts 2).
- E. Its surpassing value (Acts 20:28).
- F. How it is organized (Phil. 1:1).
- G. What its work is (1 Th. 1:8; Acts 11:27-29; Eph. 4:16).
- H. Its worship (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19).
- I. Its glorious destiny (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

### Conclusion

1. Now that you've heard what the Lord saith, what will you do with it?
2. Do like those in Acts 2, who "gladly received his word" (Acts 2:41).

## Back To Basics

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# FALSE TEACHER OR FALSE TEACHING?

John Isaac Edwards

**F**alse teacher, or teaching something false is an issue that has not gone away. This question needs to be addressed.

1) **WHAT SOME ARE SAYING.** The book, *Who Is My Brother?* by F. Lagard Smith reflects the thinking of many today. "...not all false teaching makes a person a 'false prophet'" (p. 201). "Do those whom we accuse of being false teachers today come anywhere near falling into this category [the category of Jude 5-19, JIE] of ungodly folks? If not, we owe them an apology" (p. 204). "Being a 'false teacher' is not simply about *doctrine* but about *character* as well" (p. 205). "...we simply have to get away from the simplistic conclusion that anyone who teaches anything false is therefore a false teacher" (p. 209).

2) **CONSEQUENCES.** Here is the fruit borne from the planting of this seed:

*Constitutes a shift from doctrine influencing character to character influencing doctrine.* We are told that for one to be a false teacher, it must be shown that he is of false character. This is backwards! You don't identify the fruit by the tree, but the tree by the fruit (Mt. 7:15-20). A man's teaching defines his character (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

*Makes few false teachers.* If one's character must be of the basest sort for him to be a false teacher, then very few are false teachers. Why did John warn of "*many* false prophets gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1)?

*Causes brethren to receive rather than avoid.* Paul besought, "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

*Requires one to distinguish between false teachings.* If not all false teaching makes a person

a false teacher, as we are told, then one must know what false teaching makes one a false teacher and what doesn't. What is the criteria for making such distinctions?

*Leads folks to become partakers of evil.* To receive and bid God speed to false teachers is to be "partaker of his evil deeds" (2 Jn. 9, 11). The words "whosoever" and "any" show there are not different kinds of false teachers, but that a false teacher is a false teacher!

This redefinition of who a false teacher is poses a real and serious threat to the purity and soundness of the Lord's people.

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## JEZEBEL AND ATHALIAH

*Melba Edwards*

**W**e first read about Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:31. Ahab, king of Israel, took Jezebel as his wife. She was the daughter of the king of the Zidonians who served and worshiped Baal. She slew the prophets of the Lord (1 Ki. 18:13). She threatened to take the life of Elijah (1 Ki. 19:1-3). She had Naboth murdered and took his vineyard for her husband (1 Ki. 21:1-16). Her husband Ahab was one of the wickedest kings in the sight of the Lord, whom she had stirred up (1 Ki. 21:25). She died when she was thrown down from a window and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and she was trodden under foot just as Elijah the Tishbite had prophesied (2 Ki. 9:10, 30-37). Jehu sent for her to be buried because she was a king's daughter, but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands for the dogs had eaten her flesh, so they could not say, This is Jezebel. Her name is used as a type of those who teach and seduce God's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (Rev. 2:20). We are later introduced to a woman named Athaliah. She was the daughter of Ahab, granddaughter of Omri (2 Chr. 21:6; 22:2). She was married to Jehoram, king of Judah (2 Chr. 21:1-6). She counseled her son, Ahaziah, king of Judah, to do wickedly (2 Chr. 22:3). After her son died, she destroyed all the royal seed except Joash, and she reigned over the land (2 Ki. 11:1-3). She was put to death (2 Chr. 23:12-15). She was called "that wicked woman" (2 Chr. 24:7). We can learn some important lessons from these two wicked women.

1) **WICKED WOMEN ARE DESTROYERS.** "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1). We don't want to be destroyers of our homes or the Lord's church.

2) **WICKED WOMEN CAN STIR UP THEIR HUSBANDS TO DO EVIL.** We must not be guilty of stirring up our husbands to do evil when it comes to making decisions concerning the church, or the things that are preached. Some women try to work through their husbands to get their way or to "run the church." This must not be! Elder's and deacon's wives must "be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11).

3) **WICKED WOMEN COUNSEL THEIR CHILDREN TO DO EVIL.** We must be very careful as mothers what we teach and tell our children. We need to be like Lois and Eunice who had a good influence on their son and grandson, Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5).

4) **WICKED WOMEN CAN HAVE EVIL INFLUENCE ON THE LORD'S PEOPLE.** Jezebel turned many hearts of the Lord's people to idolatry. We must be sure we are following God's word exact. Others see our example and we must have our influence for good.

Don't be a wicked woman! "...Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13). "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" Gal. 5:22).

# WHY WE BELIEVE

by  
Joe Corley

**W**e believe we should be a follower of Christ. Why? What reasons can we give? Let me suggest a few.

1) **BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS.** It is true that Jesus was a man. He often referred to Himself as the “Son of Man”—but He was more than a mere man. It is also true that He was a good man, the best man who ever lived. None could convict Him of sin, but He was much more than just a good man. He was the **Son of God**. In fact, He was God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:1, 14). He was deity incarnated. He was the **Messiah** that had been promised for centuries in numerous Old Testament prophecies. The fact that He fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies proves Him to be that Messiah.

2) **BECAUSE OF WHY HE WAS SENT.** He was sent **because of love**. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...” (Jn. 3:16). He was sent to **help helpless sinners** like you and me, to “seek and save the lost” (Lk. 19:10), for God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

3) **BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DID.** Jesus left His heavenly abode and “**humbled himself**” by taking the “form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7-8). He was born in a stable, raised by poor peasants in a despised city. He was “tempted in all points like as are we, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He **gave His life for us willingly** (Jn. 10:17-18) and thus

paid our penalty for sin. He suffered the agony of the cross to obtain “eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12). He was **raised from the dead** to give us hope of our resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3).

4) **BECAUSE OF WHAT HE IS.** He is the “**light of the world**” who leads His followers out of darkness (Jn. 8:12). He is the “**good shepherd**” (Jn. 10:11). We are all like “sheep going astray” (1 Pet. 2:25). We have wandered far from God. Jesus as our Shepherd leads His followers back to the fold of God. Jesus is “**the way, the truth, and the life**” (Jn. 14:6). We have all “gone out of the way” (Rom. 3:12), and Jesus is the way back. He is the way *out* of a life of sin, the way *into* a new life (2 Cor. 5:17), the way *up* to God—“no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (Jn. 14:6), and the way *through* sorrow and suffering, anxieties and cares, temptations, and problems of life.

5) **BECAUSE OF WHAT HE GIVES.** He gives **peace** (“peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you—Jn. 14:27), **abundant life** (“I came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”—Jn. 10:10), **eternal life** (“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life...”—Jn. 10:27-28), and **rest** to those who follow Him. (“Come unto me, all ye that are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest”—Mt. 11:28). And He will give an **inheritance** that is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).

6) **BECAUSE HE IS OUR ONLY HOPE.** There is “one hope” (Eph. 4:4) and Christ is “our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

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## EVERYTHING IS FOR SALE

*Donnie V. Rader*

I am amused at people who will say that something they own is not for sale “at any price.” “Wow,” I think to myself. “You mean that if someone offered you a million dollars for it, you would not take it?” Surely, they must be saying that they are not interested in selling what they own at a reasonable price.

For example, someone may have a car that they dearly love. When asked if they would sell it, they respond, “It’s not for sale.” A friend may urge them saying, “You should have priced it to that fellow. You could have made some good money.” Again, they say, “It’s not for sale...” adding “at any price.” Do you mean that you would not sell this car (which has a book value of \$10,000) for \$20,000? or \$30,000? “Well, yea, I would sell it for that!” Now, we are back where we started – everything is for sale.

When speaking of things material in nature, I would agree with that. Everything is for sale! I have a number of things that I don’t want to sell. I really don’t want to see them go. No, I’m not really interested in selling them. But, for the right price, I would sell them. I have a piece of paper that President Ronald Reagan personally handed to me. I also have a personal handwritten note that President George H. W. Bush wrote to me. No, they are not for sale. What are you thinking? Well . . . of course, unless the price is where I would be foolish to keep them. Then, I would sell.

So, I say again, everything is for sale! Or is it? What about things that are not material in nature? What about your family, worship or your soul itself? Are they for sale? You think

that sounds crazy? You mean that if someone asked what you would take for your family you would say, it is not for sale – at any price? You mean that if someone asked you what you would take for the opportunity to worship the Almighty you would say, it is not for sale – at any price? Do you mean to tell me that if someone offered to buy your soul, you would say it is not for sale – at any price? Really? Would you change your tune if the offer was real good? Are you sure these are not for sale?

Before you are too quick to answer, consider the examples of people in the Bible who sold things of considerable value for little of nothing! Esau sold his birthright for a worthless bowl of stew (Gen. 25:29-34). Jacob’s sons sold their brother for twenty shekels of silver (Gen. 37:28). Judas sold his relationship to the Lord for thirty pieces of silver (Mt. 26:14-16). Surely, we would never think of doing anything of the kind. Or, would we?

1) **WORSHIP.** Let’s start with our worship. Would you sell your privilege of worship? Did you say, “Absolutely not!”? I don’t mean giving up all your privilege – just part of it. I mean, would you sell a service here or there, as long as you could keep part of the service time? Suppose someone said, “I’ll give you \$25 to miss one of the services on Sunday.” Would you take it? What if they bumped it up to \$100? Okay, let’s make it worthwhile. Suppose it was \$300? Is it sounding better?

Just maybe our worship is for sale. It may not take that much to buy it. A close look at attendance records shows that at any given service

that something besides sickness is keeping a lot of folks away. What is it? For some it may be a good offer they made at work. For others it may be something not worth a dollar. Yet, if asked, we would say, "My worship is not for sale!" Well, . . . at least until the offer is right!

Compare that with the context (textual and historical) of Hebrews 10:25. The thing that seemed to be causing some to forsake the assembling was the fear of persecution! Yet that was not to keep them from assembling with the saints.

You see, we would cry long and loud that our worship is not for sale – at any price. We would not take a million dollars for it. But we would miss now and then (or even regularly) for a few dollars or maybe for no money at all! Really, our worship is for sale! How sad!

2) **FAMILY.** What about your family? Would you sell one of the children? What about your husband or wife? "Absurd!" you say? You're right. None of us would put a "for sale" sign on our loved ones and take a dollar figure for them – even if it were in the millions. After all, "money is not everything" you know. Aren't we proud of ourselves for having such values! So, we can safely say our families are not for sale. Or, are they?

Would you neglect your family for a job? I mean would you take a job that keeps you from being the father or mother or even the mate you should be? Would you let someone else (grandparents or babysitters) do the real job of training the children so you can have the "extras" in life? Maybe it's not money that we would take for our family. Maybe it is pleasure or relationships that we value over our own families. Would you sacrifice your children's spiritual well being for them to succeed in sports or in the academic

realm? Would you risk your marriage with a job that keeps you away from your mate so much that you really can't have a marriage?

Maybe I should explain at this juncture what it means to sell. It could be that you thought we meant selling for one lump sum. Get with the plan! We are in modern times. Today, we buy and sell on installments! That makes things so much easier to buy, or sell for that matter. No, we would not sell anyone in our family for a trillion dollars! But, we might sell their well-being or our relationship with them for small payments (of money, pleasure, or fortune) spread out over a long time!

3) **YOUR SOUL.** The most important thing of all is your soul. We all know that it is worth more than the whole world (Mt. 16:26). Oh, yes, it is worth more than our mates or our children. What would you take for your soul? Would you take...aaah, no need to go there, we both know you would not put a price on your soul. Or, . . . would you?

You see, what ever you let keep you from serving the Lord, is the price you put on your soul. For some, it is the pleasure of sin (Heb. 11:25) they don't want to give up. For another, it is the friends they have in the world, from which they will not part (1 Cor. 15:33). For others, it is the fear of losing family approval (Mt. 19:29). Yes, their soul does have a price! It can be sold – and in many cases has been sold. When I know what I should do, but just can't bring myself to do it (Jas. 4:17), I am selling my soul for that price! In most cases it doesn't even involve a dime!

Maybe it is true that "everything is for sale."

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# How Do We Know Our Translations Are Accurate?

Bob Waldron

1) **ARE ALL TRANSLATIONS CORRECT?** There are translations, such as the *New World Translation* produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses, that are altered to support false teaching, and there are perhaps some translations that reflect theological bias, but with any standard translation, we may be assured that we have a reliable text of the Scriptures. The question we seek to answer in this article is: how can we prove the reliability of our translations?

2) **FROM WHAT ARE OUR TRANSLATIONS MADE?** The reliability of translations depends upon the copies from which the translation was made and upon the competence of the translators. We need therefore to look at the sources from which our translations come.

3) **TRACING THE LINEAGE OF OUR TRANSLATIONS.** Let us take the *American Standard Version* as our beginning point to go back and substantiate the accuracy of our copies of the Scriptures. It was translated in 1901. Actually, the New Testament was done in 1881 and newly revised in 1900, while the Old Testament was done from 1881-1885 and newly edited in

1901. We still have copies of this version, so no corruptions could have crept into the Bible in the last 100 plus years.

For most of the last five centuries the version that has been the most famous is the *King James Version*, published in 1611. Later translations, such as the *American Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, the *English Standard Version*, and others have all made use of the *King James Version*. In the case of most of these, the reason for a new translation was to update the archaic language of the *King James Version*, and, even more importantly, to incorporate information gained from the wealth of manuscripts found since 1611 into the translation. This Bible is, of course, still widespread. So we can determine that no corruptions have crept in since the KJV.

The *King James Version* was based to a great extent on the translation of William Tyndale which had been printed in 1525. The church condemned Tyndale for his translation, and fiercely sought to destroy all copies of it. Out of 18,000 copies made between 1525 and 1528, fragments of two copies remain.

A good bit earlier than

Tyndale's translation was the one by John Wycliffe, which goes back even before the time of printing (ca. 1450). It was copied out by hand, and made its appearance in 1382. Wycliffe's Bible was a translation from the Latin Vulgate into English, but it was a translation of the whole Bible. There are now less than thirty manuscripts containing Wycliffe's Bible of 1382. But, you see, we have that Bible with which we can compare the Bibles we have over 600 years later, and no corruptions have crept into the Bible during the more than six centuries since John Wycliffe's translation.

One of the truly significant translations of the Bible was the Latin Vulgate. At the request of the Bishop of Rome, Jerome began his work of translation, at the age of 60 and spent the next fourteen years doing this colossal work, A. D. 390-404. It became the Bible of all western Christendom, and for a thousand years was without a rival. Again, we have copies of this Bible. The oldest copy of it dates back to the seventh or eighth century, over 200 years after its publication. Comparisons between it and the Bibles we now have show that there has been no corruption of the text.



Thus we have an unbroken chain of overlapping translations, and we have very old copies of these translations so that we can still compare our translations with them. With the Latin Vulgate we are only 300 years after the apostolic age.

Some of the oldest and best manuscripts we have date back to the year 350 A. D. or thereabouts. No changes have been made in the text since then, we know, because we have actual copies of Bibles that old, notably the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus. These are copies of the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments.

But these are not the oldest of our Greek manuscripts. The oldest Greek manuscripts are written on papyrus and are called papyri. The two most valuable collections of these are the Chester Beatty Papyri and the Bodmer collection. Of the Chester Beatty collection Price comments, "We have here, therefore, the oldest extensive text in existence, the Gospels and Acts being dated to within a century and a half of the autographs" (*Ancestry of the English Bible*, p. 163).

The M. Martin Bodmer collection contains one of the oldest considerable portions of the Greek New Testament, a papyrus codex of the Gospel of John, dating from around 200 A. D. Another of this collection contains the gospels of Luke and

John. It is dated between 175 and 225 A. D.

Also of significance is a small fragment in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, England. It preserves a few verses from the gospel of John (18:31-33, 37-38). C. H. Roberts, Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, dated the fragment on the basis of the style of writing in the first half of the second century.

The apostle John died sometime after 100 A.D., and we can take it for granted that there were no serious corruptions in the text of the New Testament while the apostles were still living.

We have a wealth of manuscript information reaching back to within a hundred years of the apostles. The only period of time when corruptions could have occurred is between the year 100 A.D. and the 200's. None were made before 100, and we are able to determine that none were made after the 200's.

What about this period of over a hundred years between the end of the first century and the dates of these various papyri? How do we know there were no changes made during this period? This is the chasm we must bridge, and we can do it. According to Sir Frederick Kenyon, the earliest Syriac translation was around 150 A. D. (p. 26). Thus 50 years after the death of the last apostle, the New Testament was

translated into the Syriac tongue (Eastern Aramaic). Also the evidence is not quite conclusive, but it is pretty certain that there was also a Latin translation of a good portion of the New Testament (perhaps around A. D. 150 - Kenyon, p. 26). Before the end of the second century quotations were frequently being made from a Latin translation. Jerome actually lifted whole certain of the books of the Old Latin Version into his Latin Vulgate.

Also, during every single year between the year 100 A.D. and the year 325 A.D., there were scores and hundreds of faithful Christian men preaching, teaching, writing. There were New Testament quotations almost without number that they had to copy. There were not copies enough of the Scriptures to make it possible for every reader or hearer to have a copy. So the man who taught would quote copiously and extensively from the Scriptures. Instead of just giving a citation to a passage, as we do, they would carefully and painstakingly write out the whole quotation in full. From the writings of one man, Origen, nearly three-fourths of the New Testament can be found. Probably, if all of Origen's writings were extant, the whole New Testament could be reproduced from the writings of that one man.

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# THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

*George Parsley*

**T**he church at Thessalonica received much praise from the apostle Paul. This church has many lessons for us to learn. What did they do that brought so much praise from Paul? Well, let's notice a few things.

1) **THE WAY THEY WALKED.** These brethren were the way they were from the way they walked. Paul encouraged them, "so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Th. 2:12, NASU). And this they did, "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more" (1 Th. 4:1, NASU). They did not only walk the way they should, but they excelled in it! Notice they excelled in "that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification" (1 Th. 4:4-7, NASU). Paul commended the whole church for walking this way.

2) **THEIR LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN.** When a church walks in accordance with the will of God, brotherly love is bound to follow. "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel

still more" (1 Th. 4:9-10, NASU). The love they had for one another was beyond Paul's admonishing, but he encouraged them to excel still the more. And they did for notice, "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater" (2 Th. 1:3, NASU). In the first letter, their love was beyond words but yet somehow their love was able to grow.

3) **THEIR PERSEVERANCE.** This congregation was not without its struggles but Paul praised them for staying the course and being focused. This was a church that had turned from idols to the living God. "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1 Th. 1:9, NASU). Any preaching of Christ brought sufferings and turmoil, and this church endured the same things as did Paul in his travels. "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost" (1 Thess. 2:14-16 NASU). A church that is filled with love and committed to walk according to the ways of the Lord is able to persevere anything.

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## THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM (PART 4)

*Shane Williams*

**T**he story of God's Judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah encompasses Genesis 18-19. There are some great lessons to be learned from this text.

1) **ABRAHAM'S HOSPITALITY.** Three men came to Abraham by the Oaks of Mamre. There's no indication that Abraham knew at first this was the Lord and two angels. We see Abraham anxious to show hospitality to these visitors. He invites them to refresh themselves, wash their feet, eat and drink (Gen. 18:3-8). He ran to greet them, called himself their servant, and hurried to prepare something for them. What an example of hospitality for each of us! This is surely what the Hebrew writer had in mind when he wrote, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:2). Christians are told to be hospitable (1 Pet. 4:9; Rom. 12:13).

2) **ABRAHAM'S PLEADING.** After Abraham and Sarah are told the good news about their heir being born in the next year, the Lord tells Abraham of the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord describes the outcry as "great" and their sin as "exceedingly grave" (Gen. 18:20). Two of the men start heading toward Sodom. We learn in Genesis 19:1, these men were actually angels. Abraham is concerned about the righteous being destroyed along with the wicked in God's judgment (v. 23). The Lord says He would spare Sodom if fifty righteous were found (v. 26). Abraham, in his concern, keeps pressing to find out if this judgment can be avoided. Finally, he works his way down to ten righteous, in which the

Lord says He would not destroy the cities if ten were found. Abraham was not only concerned about his nephew Lot, but all who were righteous. We can learn a lesson here about the value God places on a single soul. Judgment upon these cities would have been avoided if only 10 righteous souls could be found. God wishes for none to perish and is joyful when a sinner repents (1 Tim. 2:4; Lk. 15:7).

3) **TWO ANGELS VISIT LOT.** Two angels come to Sodom and Lot offers them the same kind of hospitality that we see from Abraham (Gen. 19:2-3). The wickedness of the city is great and it wasn't long before the men of Sodom were pounding on Lot's door for him to bring these men out. Lot refuses and when the men are about to break the door down, the angels strike the men with blindness (v. 11). It is easy to see how Lot would have been tormented by the lawlessness of the people (2 Pet. 2:8). The angels tell Lot of God's plan and instruct that his family must leave or they will be swept away in God's judgment (vv. 12-15).

4) **LOT'S ESCAPE.** Because God remembers Abraham and has compassion, the angels lead Lot and his family out by the hand (vv. 16, 29). They were told expressly to not look back (v. 17), but Lot's wife does and is turned to a pillar of salt (v. 26). Sodom and Gomorrah will forever be remembered as examples of God's judgment (Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6).

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# JESUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

*Kevin Markum*

**J**esus is on a journey to Galilee, but He stops in a Samaritan city on the way. He meets a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and takes that opportunity to teach her. As Christians, we have responsibility to teach the gospel of Christ. Sometimes we make excuses for why we do not take some of the opportunities we have been given. In a sermon delivered by Wendell Watts, of Athens, Alabama, on October 5, 2003, he pointed out how Christ taught the woman in spite of...

1) **HIS WEARINESS (v. 6).** Jesus was in the midst of a long journey. His body was probably tired and His mind was probably exhausted. He overcame this and proceeded to preach the gospel despite His physical weakness. I am reminded of Paul and his situation when he was stoned in Lystra and was on the edge of death. Despite being hurt greatly, he proceeded to do the work of the Lord (Acts 14:19-23). Would you let your own weariness get in the way of your teaching?

2) **A LACK OF NUMBERS (v. 7).** Christ was alone in this situation because His disciples had gone into the city. Christians are the minority in the world. Sometimes it can be intimidating to teach someone without some support from others. Would we let this situation prevent us from teaching others?

3) **HER NATIONALITY (v. 9).** In this culture, it was uncommon for Jews to have conversation with Samaritans. However, Christ did not see nationality, but instead He saw a soul that needed salvation. Do we see people of other races and avoid religious discussions with them? Jesus did not.

4) **HER MISUNDERSTANDING (vv. 10-11).** The woman did not completely understand what Christ was telling her at first. This would be discouraging to many of us today and might cause us to give up. Christ did not give up on her, neither should we today.

5) **HER SINFULNESS (vv. 16-18).** The Samaritan woman was a sinner by all means. She had been married to five different men. She had sinned greatly, but that did not stop Jesus. Sometimes today, I am afraid that we see people that have lives that include so much sin that we assume they would not possibly believe. The fact is Christ did not come to save those without sin, but instead those with sin (1 Tim. 1:15). This includes everyone (Rom. 3:23).

6) **HER VAIN WORSHIP (v. 22).** She was worshipping something that she did not know or understand. Christ points out that true worship requires understanding and knowledge of what one worships. Christ took this opportunity to enlighten her on the subject despite her initial ignorance. People will worship things in ignorance today, and it is our responsibility as Christians to teach them the truth.

We make many excuses to avoid teaching people today. We have a command given by God to preach His word no matter what situation comes about. We must always stand ready to proclaim Christ without excuse just as He did.

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# THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

Heath Rogers

This is the familiar of the classic hymn, “Jesus Loves Me.” The sound of children singing this song brings joy to one’s heart. It is not only because we hear children acknowledge the Lord’s love for them, but also because of the professed basis of this belief—the Bible tells them so.

Jesus told His disciples that unless they were converted and became as little children they would by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:3). Christianity requires a child-like faith. A child-like faith is a trusting faith. If we have this kind of faith, we will believe what God tells us simply because He tells us. With that in mind, let us see some other things we need to believe because the Bible tells us so.

**1) GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS.** “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day...” (Ex. 20:11). Naturalistic science insists that the earth is billions of years old, and that life on this earth has evolved for millions of years. This theory has long been taught as fact in our schools. Some who claim to be Christians have been influenced to reject the Biblical account of creation and to compromise with evolution. Such shows their lack of faith in the word of God.

**2) JESUS’ DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION.** It is not uncommon for denominations to have scholars at their seminaries that deny Bible miracles such as the Lord’s resurrection. Belief in the resurrection is fundamental to Christianity. “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day

according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). We believe it because the Bible says it is so.

**3) SALVATION IS FOUND ONLY IN JESUS.** Leaders in some denominations are suggesting that God could be using men other than Jesus to bring about the salvation of mankind. We believe that salvation is found only in Jesus because the Bible tells us so. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6).

**4) THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUE CHURCH.** Denominationalism prides itself in offering churches for man to choose from. “Attend the church of your choice” is the common invitation, yet the Bible offers no such choice. Jesus said that He would build His church, not churches (Mt. 16:18). Paul said that there is one body (Eph. 4:4), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

**5) BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION.** Many would deny this truth, but in doing so they deny plain statements of Scripture. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mk. 16:16). “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Pet. 3:21). Why believe that baptism is essential for salvation? Because the Bible tells us so.

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# Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

## Christ, Our Example

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

We read the Bible to learn about Christ. The verses below show examples Christ left for us to follow. Read each verse and write in the blank something Christ did that we should do.

Hebrews 4:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 2:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 23:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:35 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 26:36 \_\_\_\_\_



**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,  
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

## THE RIGHT ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP

Carl Peterson

The eighth and ninth chapters of Nehemiah depict what is possibly one of the most moving instances of worship directed toward God that we have recorded in the Bible. In context, the people of Jerusalem have just completed the rebuilding of the city walls. Chapter 6 records, “So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God” (vv. 15-16). After completing a census in chapter 7, we come to the scene in chapter 8. Let’s look at some of the attitudes demonstrated by the actions that took place.

1) **“AND ALL THE PEOPLE GATHERED AS ONE MAN” (NEH. 8:1).** Two things are evident from this first verse. *First, all the people gathered.* We do not have recorded anyone who chose to miss this assembly. How unlike many today, who will miss a worship service at the drop of the hat, almost seeming to look for an excuse to miss. The Hebrew writer admonished his audience and us, “not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25). Some people have a habit of missing services. This should not be so. We should be like David, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord’” (Ps. 122:1). *Second, they were gathered as one man.* There were no divisions among them in this assembly. This was the type of assembly Paul hoped for in his first letter to the Corinthians, when he exhorted, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1:10). There are some congregations which have trouble coming together in an assembly without one brother

having a quarrel with another. While it is important to defend sound doctrine, many churches have split over what Paul called “foolish controversies” (Ti. 3:9).

2) **“THEY ASKED EZRA THE SCRIBE TO BRING THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF MOSES WHICH THE LORD HAD GIVEN TO ISRAEL” (NEH. 8:1).** Notice that the people were the ones requesting the law be brought forth. While the law had originally been prescribed to be read every seven years (Dt. 31:9-13), that had not been done for a number of years. This was a fully voluntary effort to return to God’s path—to rededicate themselves to God.

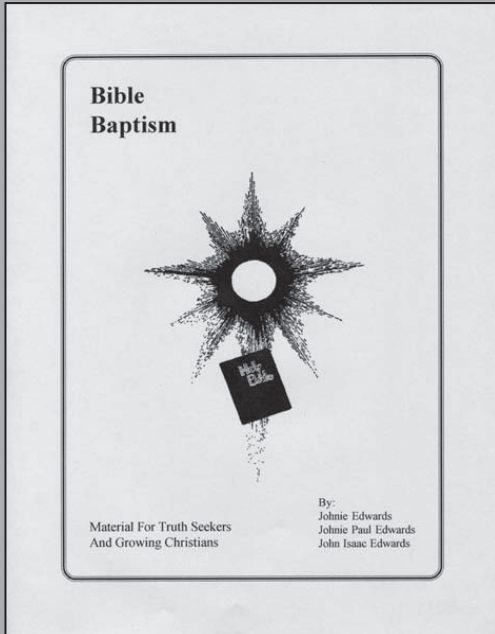
3) **EZRA OPENED THE BOOK IN THE SIGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLE...AND WHEN HE OPENED IT, ALL THE PEOPLE STOOD UP” (NEH. 8:5).** This is the respect that they had for the law. Do we have similar respect for the word of God? We may not stand up when the word of God is read (though there is nothing wrong with that), but do we listen to its reading? Do we follow along ourselves? Do we study the Bible as we should? Paul said, “give attention to the public reading of Scripture” (1 Tim. 5:13).

4) **“WHILE THEY STOOD IN THEIR PLACE, THEY READ FROM THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF THE LORD THEIR GOD FOR A FOURTH OF THE DAY; AND FOR ANOTHER FOURTH THEY CONFESSED AND WORSHIPED THE LORD THEIR GOD” (NEH. 9:3).** That’s dedication for you. In a day and age of “efficient” and “streamlined” services, spending half a day engaged in worship, might seem like a horror when there’s so much else we can do with our time. Perhaps we need an attitude adjustment?

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