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Learning Christ Teaching Christianity

By Bill Graddy

One of the most simple and one of the most sublime facts of life is that men must be taught the principles of Christianity. The teaching of Jesus Christ must be taught, learned, obeyed, and practiced.

Christianity can be taught because there is a body of known truth given by God through men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21; II Timothy 3:16-17). Jesus said, "And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). This does not mean that each individual will be taught the gospel. It means, the system of absolute truth will be revealed by God, and it will be this body of truth, when obeyed, that will make us free (John 8:32). The truth is available, but first, we must be taught.

How is truth taught? Many claim and say it is directly taught, that is, the Holy Spirit influences the hearts of men directly. But, the Scriptures teach that we learn indirectly, that is, by teaching through human instrumentality. Notice Paul said, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher" (Romans 10:14). Thus, we see that human agencies must be used to instruct people. This method of teaching was called "foolishness", but this is the means God chose to reveal His will to men so that they might believe and be saved (I Corinthians 1:21). Mortals must go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature teaching them to observe all things that Jesus had commanded them (Matthew 28:18-20). Men cannot believe something they have not been taught (John 3:15).

Since those who will be saved must be taught, teaching becomes a pertinent process. We learn this process from the Master Teacher, Jesus Himself. He used

various methods such as parables, stories, one on one, groups, proverbs, miracles and debates. He used object lessons such as: nature, people, animals, and a little child. Teaching must take place before learning is achieved. Teaching precedes learning. However, learning does not always follow teaching. Therefore, methods, personalities, equipment, environment and attitudes are of great importance.

When proper teaching has occurred and learning has taken place, obedience of that new knowledge must be forthcoming. Sometimes submission follows, and sometimes rebellion follows (Luke 7:30; I Corinthians 15:2). It is the case, at times, that men have been taught, and know the truth but will pervert the truth into a lie (II Thessalonians 10-12). We have false doctrine because we have false teachers.

If obedience follows teaching and learning, faith will be exercised. This knowledge could be a lie, and it could be the truth. Adam and Eve were taught by Satan to believe a lie, and they obeyed a lie (Genesis 3:1-19). We must, however, be taught the truth (John 8:32), learn the truth, and obey the truth.

The above may be implemented in the home, the church, Bible classes, anywhere. A man could teach himself provided someone had taught him (I say this to emphasize the importance of teaching). The teaching of the gospel is the mission and work of the church. We must put into practice these holy precepts to the saving of our souls (I Timothy 4:16).

In teaching, words become the ideas through which we learn. For example, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Heaven, Hell, Salvation, Sin, and Love are words whose meaning must be imparted, many times by flashcards in the first grade, before learning and obedience can result. What do these words mean? What do they

symbolize? How do we learn to read them? We must be taught to learn to read, pronounce, and know the meaning of words before we can believe and obey that which will please God. God chose words to communicate His will to us. We must choose to accept and obey these words (Acts 2:40). Therefore, let us receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21), because "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

The teaching program of the church is important. Are you involved? Do you plan to teach? Study Hebrews 5:10-12.

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What Price Freedom

*The battlefields of this great land
Remind us, one and all,
That a dear, dear price is always paid
For the liberty of freedom's call.*

*Never a day shall pass from view
That saddened families fail,
To reminisce of those dear ones
Who served their nation well.*

*We stand today as free from men
Who would enslave our sons,
And stand erect before the world
As a result of those brave ones.*

*The scars of Jesus' loving hands
Remind us, one and all,
That a dear, dear price once was paid
For freedom of the gospel's call.*

*Never a day should pass from view
That grateful Christians fail,
To think of their dear, precious Lord
Who served his Father well.*

*We stand today as free from sin
That would our lives control,
Before God we stand by Christ's great deed
With renewed and purified souls.*

Eddy Gilpin

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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A Fantastic Breakthrough

By Eddy Gilpin

(Editor's Note: Although this article was written some two years ago, the subject of the abortion pill RU 486 is again in the headlines. Abortion is a subject that God's people must fight against until it is stopped).

These are the words which Dr. Gilbert Schaison, a member of a French research team, used to describe RU 486, a controversial new abortion pill. Articles in "Newsweek" (Dec. 29, 1986; p. 47), and "Time" (Dec. 29, 1986; p. 64) disclosed the findings of the research team's experiment. Of the 100 women given these pills some two weeks after conception, 85 of them aborted their babies. The other 15 had clinical abortions. The consensus of the group's findings were summed up in Schaison's words: "It's a fantastic breakthrough for drug-induced abortions" ("Newsweek", p. 47). What a sad commentary on the trends of our time this statement is.

The prophet Isaiah, through inspiration, penned a series of "woes" against offenders of his day. Many, such as proponents of the aforementioned, would do well to take heed to these and other Bible warnings. Isaiah said, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa. 5:21). Proponents of abortion either do not realize or do not care that they mockingly sit on a throne of judgment pronouncing death to the innocent unborn. Their wisdom, wants and wishes becloud their blinded

eyes and deceive their diluted hearts into thinking that "all's well that ends well" because "the end justifies the means". As another of the research team's members said, "If we have found a safe, convenient medical method of terminating pregnancy, I think it will turn out to be very important" ("Time", p. 64). Thus, the ideology of abortionists is prevalent: The quicker and more conveniently a life can be destroyed, the better for us all -- a fantastic breakthrough. Woe unto them!

Proponents of this drug prefer calling it "Postovulatory contraceptive" ("Newsweek"; p. 47) and the process "contragestation, not abortion" ("Time"; p. 64). Is this supposed to make it acceptable? Does calling arsenic "the essence of peppermint" change its volatile force? Isaiah said, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil . . ." (Isa. 5:20). Bluntly stated, Dr. John Wilkie of the National Right to Life Committee called the drug "chemical warfare on the unborn" ("Time"; p. 64). Whether it be called "postovulatory contraceptive", "contragestation", or some other sugar-coated pseudonym, it is still sinfully evil. Woe unto them!

As stated in one article, the real significance of the "fantastic breakthrough" is that it "would make it possible for women to choose to abort in the privacy of their bedrooms rather than the controversial setting of the abortion clinic" ("Newsweek", p. 47). Isaiah said "(Woe unto them) that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). Sin, whether in the open parlors of "parental planning" or the obscure recesses of one's own lodging is still "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Calling darkness light and permitting its practice in private changes its dimmed design not one whit. Woe unto them!

This drug (RU 486), though still experimental and not yet approved in this country, is high on the list of abortion advocates. If and when approved here, Planned Parenthood (a pro-abortion group) plans to make the drug available free or "at cost" to those who visit their centers ("Newsweek", p. 47). The primary target is, of course, "young women and teenagers whose sexual activity is very irregular and infrequent" ("Time", p. 64). Isaiah said, "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as it were with a cart rope" (Isaiah 5:18). Truly the sin of abortion is a mounting burden that must be carried by some means by those in favor of it. Around the world there are "between 40 million and 50 million abortions performed annually" ("Time", p. 64). Yet, for such a "fantas-

tic breakthrough" this staggering number is insufficient and the cords of vanity must be strained again under the increased and ever-increasing lading of iniquity. Woe unto them!

Another factor revealed by this team of researchers concerning RU 486 is that it is "quite safe" ("Newsweek", p. 47). Quite safe for whom? Certainly not the innocent infants. Their fate would lie in the mother's decision to swallow a pill with her morning coffee. Certainly it is not safe for the mothers who choose to end the newly-formed lives within them. Their souls are endangered by such decisions. For whom then, is this means of legal homicide "quite safe"? Indeed, for no one. Isaiah said, "(Woe unto them) that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). Sweetening the taste of a poisonous prescription does nothing but enhance its appalling effect. Calling the acrid elixir for abortion a confectioned contraceptive makes it nonetheless "a bitter pill to swallow".

Should this hope of pro-abortionists become a reality, one must ask what is to follow. Where is the "euthanasia pill"? How far removed is the pill for the aged? Where is the prescripion for the lame and the mentally disturbed? Just how far are we from the likes of the Hitlerian holocaust? As Isaiah pictured the destruction of the offenders of his day, so shall the case be with those who "justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him" (Isa. 5:23). The cause of such audacious actions of his day are not so far removed from modern society. "Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24). Woe unto them!

* * * * *

We can live the Christian life in any place. To seek to excuse our failures by pleading force of circumstances is cowardly. Environment has an influence, it is true, but it is possible for God's child to rise above his environment. Joseph kept his purity of character in Potiphar's house. Daniel kept his garments spotless in a heathen land. And there were saints in Caesar's sinful household.

The thing that makes sin so dreadful is the fact that it has its seat in the very center of life - the heart or the mind. If we allow it to do so, sin will take possession of every faculty of the soul and every member of the body and enslave them.

The Lamp of God

By T. Pierce Brown

In Proverbs 20:27 we find an interesting statement which deserves our attention. It says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah." It does not say, "To the spirit of man Jehovah revealed a light", or various other true statements. But the spirit is the lamp. The word "lamp" or "candle" can refer to the vessel itself, or the light which is produced by it. A light is usually not for the purpose of shining just to be seen, but to reveal something that would not otherwise be seen.

The spirit of man itself reveals some things of God. That is, its very existence sheds light on some things that would otherwise not be known. What are some things which man's spirit reveals?

First, it reveals that there is a higher power. How does it do that? Only a person who is perversely blind and willfully ignorant could find a car or a computer and conclude that they just got there accidentally, or came into being by some autonomous evolutionary process. How much greater the impossibility that the one who made the car and computer came into being that way!

It is one of the strangest things known to man that so many persons who otherwise seem to act rationally and with a reasonable degree of intelligence will assume against all known facts, contrary to their own experience and logic that some non living, non intelligent, inanimate thing by some unknown process evolved into a man with a spirit. How a person could say with a straight face, "I do not believe in miracles" and then assert the above theory is amazing beyond expression.

The phrase, "survival of the fittest" was supposed to explain all sorts of things in the presumed evolutionary process. For example, I have read that the giraffe had a short neck, but in order to survive when the foliage was gone at the lower level, it had to stretch its neck to reach higher, and thus, in the process of time, developed its long neck. Simple little questions about how those short necked giraffes survived long enough to live for several million years without being able to reach food, we are not told. Also, why the zebra and other animals who lived in the same locality and needed the same food to survive did not grow the long necks, we never learned.

But the point now is that the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, revealing that there is a higher power, and that we are made in his image.

When Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), he indicated that the attributes of love, mercy, righteousness, etc. that were in him and revealed by the operation of his spirit showed the nature of God. His spirit was the lamp of the Lord in a very special way. But to the extent that we let the life of Christ be manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:11), our spirits are also the lamp of the Lord in that special way.

The spirit of man is a lamp because it is endowed with the light of reason, knowledge and wisdom. There is no evidence that any animal ever raised such fundamental questions as "From where did I come?" "What is my purpose on earth?" "Why do I act like I do?" "How can I change my actions for the better?" "What is my final destiny and that of the world about me?" And it is also another interesting fact that not only did no animal ever have any answers to those questions, no person who ever believed that man merely evolved from some animal could answer them either. The reason for this is that those answers only come from God, and only the spirit of a man who is willing to let the light from heaven shine through him can find the answers to those questions.

The spirit of man is the lamp of God because it burns with the light of conscience. There is not the slightest evidence that any other being on earth has a conscience. The average person who believes in God still does not understand the function of the conscience. In hundreds of private home Bible studies I have had, it appears that most believe that the conscience tells them what is right or wrong.

The truth is that the intellect is taught by someone that a thing is right or wrong. But the intellect is not the conscience. A man may have a wonderful intellect, but a poor conscience, or vice versa. The conscience is not actually taught anything, but is like a computer, programmed to receive certain information and respond in one of two ways. When the intellect gives the input to the conscience, "That act was good, and I did it", God programmed the conscience to respond, "You are to be commended for the noble thing you did." So you have a good feeling, and the impulse to do good is strengthened. When the intellect gives the input to the conscience, "That was the wrong thing to do, but I did it", it responds, "You should be ashamed of yourself." The Bible sets forth the fact that the con-

science is a witness, accusing or excusing (Romans 2:15). And that is all it can ever do. But in doing that, it bears witness that there is a wise, loving and powerful God. For if there is no God, then there is no moral right or wrong. And we can tell that he is wise, loving and powerful because although he made man with freedom of choice, he built in a device that encourages him to do what he believes is right and discourages him from doing what he believes is wrong.

So the spirit of any man, Christian or sinner, is in many ways a lamp of Jehovah. But the spirit of a Christian is a light in some special ways. When Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), he expressed a great truth. Just by coming into the world, he cast more light on the nature of God, the nature of man, the worth of man, and many other things than all the philosophies of man combined. And he gave more light on any subject he discussed than any and all others.

But when he said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:15), he expressed another different, yet similar truth. To the extent that we let the life of Christ be manifest in our mortal flesh, we let the light of Christ be manifest in our spirit. A candle or lamp gives the fire a manifestation point to the whole room or locality around it. The candle is glorified by the fire, and the fire is manifested in the candle. The candle was made for that purpose. Only as it yields to the fire can the purpose of the fire or candle be properly fulfilled.

The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, but how brightly that lamp shines depends on the supply of oil with which we keep it furnished, and the frequency with which we re-kindle the flame. Paul told Timothy, "Quench not the Spirit". So we can let the light burn so low it cannot be seen, or actually go out unless we deliberately choose to maintain a loving and spontaneous spirit of obedience, and strive to have the mind of Christ in all respects.

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There are diseases of the body which after running their course, will stop of their own accord. But this cannot be said in reference to sin, the malady of the soul. Sin has no tendency to arrest itself. Unless the balm of Gilead, the gospel of Christ, is applied, eternal death will be the fatal result.

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Life is like a cafeteria. One goes through, choosing as he goes. But, what he chooses must be paid for at the end of the line. ". . . For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7)

Just as sickness leave the body in a weakened condition, even so sin the soul.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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