

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

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## "So Great a Salvation"

**"HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE,** if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

1. This salvation is great because of what it saves — *man*, the crowning point of God's creation, the one made in the image and after the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26,27 — but one who has allowed that precious image to be marred by sin. It saves evil, corrupt, and wicked man. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extoritoners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" ( 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

But it also saves good men, men who are morally good but still in need of salvation, "For there is no man that sinneth not" ( 1 Kings 8:46). Cornelius was a

good man, "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). And yet this good man was commanded to send for Peter, who would speak to him words whereby he and his house could be saved (Acts 11:13,14). This salvation is great because it is for all men, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Showing that it is for all men, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16).

2. This salvation is great because of what it saves from. It **saves from past sins**. Paul, in looking back over his past life, said that he was "before" a blasphemer and a persecutor, and yet he had obtained mercy ( 1 Timothy 1:13). God made a promise to all who would enter into the new cov-

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## GREAT A SALVATION

enant by their obedience to the gospel, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). On the day of Pentecost, following the death of Christ, Peter showed the people that they were guilty of crucifying the one made both Lord and Christ by the God of heaven, but he also showed them that they could have remission of their sins: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...” (Acts 2:38). When one is baptized into Christ, he becomes “a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

3. This salvation is great because it **saves from every sin**: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

4. This salvation is great be-

cause it saves us **from the terrible consequences of sin** — in this life and in the life to come. Even in this life “the way of the transgressor is hard” (Proverbs 13:15). And in the life to come the sinner’s suffering is without relief: “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night ...” (Revelation 14:11). But this great salvation saves one from such a horrible destiny.

5. This salvation is great because of **what it saves for** It saves one for honor and respectability in society. The Christian is appreciated and respected in the community because of the nobility of his character and the useful, compassionate service which he renders to his fellowman, when, like Christ, he goes “about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He is saved for the greatest work to which man can put his heart and his hand, and that is work in the Father’s vineyard in helping to carry the gospel, God’s power to save, to a world lost in sin. Christ has commissioned his own to go into all the world with this message of salvation (Mark 16:15) — God’s only way of salvation, and man’s only hope of deliverance from sin.

6 It is so great a salvation because it **saves one for the heavenly home**. “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2,3).

7. This salvation is great because of **how it saves**. God’s word said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Since God’s word is always true (John 17:17), this means that all men are under the sentence of eternal death because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). But God in his infinite love provided a way by which man might be redeemed from his sin, and from the eternal consequences of his sins. In this provision God sent his own Son to be “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). On the cross Jesus died in behalf of all mankind, but for man to be redeemed from sin, Christ’s death must become the sinner’s death. God has made this possible in his great plan of salvation. Through the hearing and study of God’s word the sinner is led to faith in Christ, and to repentance (Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3), and as a penitent believer is baptized into Christ, into his death. (Romans 6:3,4). Thus in this obedience he claims the death of Christ in behalf of himself. Vicariously he has paid the penalty for his sin, and he is redeemed by the precious, atoning blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

This great salvation is the only salvation, for without it there is no escape. As great as it is, it may be lost by rejecting it, or by neglecting it, or by waiting too long to accept it. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2.) — BN

# Freedom

**THE IDEA OF FREEDOM** has a rich background in many Americans. We can still imagine that we can hear that great statesman as he shouted: "Give me liberty or give me death!" Much is said about liberty in the New Testament. Most of the time, in the New Testament, when the word liberty is used it is from the same word which is also translated "freedom." Let us give some consideration to the freedom which a Christian has. He may or may not have freedom in temporal things, depending upon the time and country in which he lives; but he has some freedoms regardless of country and time.

## **Freedom From The Law Of Moses**

If one was ever under the law of Moses, in Christ he is free from that law. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1.) Again, we read: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:2,3.) Truly, a Christian has freedom from the law of Moses and needs to realize that it is not binding upon him in any way.

## **Freedom From Sin**

If one is a Christian, he has freedom from his past sins. He receives this freedom when he obeys the gospel.

"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6:17,18.) Man will be subject to temptation and sin after he obeys the gospel, but he is free of all past sins. This is in complete harmony with what Jesus told the apostles to teach: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16.)

## **Freedom In Temporal Matters**

Christians have freedom in temporal matters where they are not bound as long as other restric-

tions are not violated. Christians have freedom to eat anything they want so long as they do not eat the blood and as long as they are not offensive to others. (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 8:9.) Christians may work at anything they desire as long as their choice does not violate scripture. Christians may choose the companion they want as husband or wife as long as they do so within the restrictions of the scriptures. (Matt. 9:9; 1 Cor. 7:39.) Christians have great freedom in temporal matters.

## **Restrictions On Freedom**

Christians do not have freedom from everything. As citizens of a country do not have freedom to do exactly as they please, even so, Christians do not have freedom to do everything they please to do. Christians do not have freedom of speech in religion. They are obligated to speak as the New Testament speaks and only as it speaks. They must not go beyond. (Gal. 1:6-10; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9.) Even angels do not have such liberty. (Gal. 1:8.) Prophets had to speak as the Spirit moved them with no private interpretation of what they said. (2 Peter 1:21.) Even Christ spake as the Father instructed him to speak. (John 12:49.) The Holy Spirit revealed that which he was told to speak. (John 16:13.) Thus Christians do not have freedom of speech in religion.

Christians do not have freedom so far as civil law is concerned.

## ANDREW

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, and from John learned that Jesus was the “Lamb of God!” Along with another disciple they followed Jesus and learned where He was staying. Andrew then first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). *And he brought him to Jesus.* Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas (which is translated, A Stone).” Peter proved to be one of the greatest servants of Christ.

Even though Andrew was an apostle, He was not chosen to be with Peter, James and John when Christ was transfigured, nor was he chosen to be with them when Christ called them apart while He prayed in the garden. (Matthew 17:1-8; 26:36,27). His greatest work was bringing his brother to Christ.

Like Andrew we should be greatly concerned about reaching those of our family with the gospel, God’s power to save. However, the great commission charge is to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Andrew has set a noble example for us to follow.

## FREEDOM

They are obligated to obey them that have the rule over them in temporal things. (Matt. 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1.) Christians must obey the law of the land except where that law conflicts with the law of God. (Acts 5:29.)

Christians do not have freedom so far as spiritual law is concerned. Christ has a law. (Gal. 6:2:) Christ expects his followers to give heed to what he says. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21.) This means that Christians do not have freedom of actions in many things. Christians must assemble when the church gathers. (Heb. 10:25.) Christians must serve as Christ directs. (Gal. 6:1-10.) Christians do not have liberty to live as they might desire but are obligated to live as Christ directs. (Gal. 5:13-21.) Christians do

not have freedom to use their liberty as a cloak to cover up things to their own advantage. (1 Peter 2:16.) Christians do not have freedom in many temporal things where the Lord has bound, such as in marriage. We will all be judged by the law of Christ. (John 12:48; Romans 2:16.) This should tell us something of the restrictions of freedom.

### It Is Enough

The freedom which Christians have to enjoy is enough. It is described thusly: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” (Romans 6:22.)

If you were in fleshly bondage and had an opportunity to be made free, would you not seek the freedom? Christ offers freedom of far greater importance. Will you accept it by obeying the gospel and living as he directs?

— Curtis E. Flatt

# Crossroad of the World

**THE LAND OF ISRAEL** was the ancient crossroad of the Middle East — Egypt on the one hand, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia on the other. It was the meeting place of armies in time of war, and merchants in time of peace.

In the land of Israel there was a place that can be considered the crossroad of the world — Golgotha, the place where Christ was crucified (Matthew 27:33).

### I. The cross was the meeting place of light and darkness.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45). Those

## CROSSROAD

who crucified Christ were not content just to watch his suffering; they passed by reviling him and wagging their heads. The chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." Even the thieves cast the same reproach. But at high noon, when the sun should have been shining in all its glory, God brought a mantle of darkness over that dreadful scene (Matthew 27:36-45). God's demonstration of power in this phenomenon of nature, it seems, should have caused the wicked to see the horror of their mistake; but when men are moved by emotion and are convinced they are right, even the power of God and the word of God make little or no impression.

### **II. The cross was the meeting place of love and hate.**

Love is seen on the part of God who gave his Son to die in behalf of mankind. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Love is seen indeed on the part of Christ who was willing to leave heaven and come to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world" (John 1:29. Jesus himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13),

But hate is seen on the part of man, whom he came to save. In the same chapter in John, while talking with his disciples, Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you ... They hated me without a cause" (John 15:18,25). Though He came to serve them and to save them, not to harm but to bless, with prejudice blinding their eyes, and hate filling their hearts, they were led to murder the Son of God.

### **III. The cross was the meeting place of grace and justice.**

The cross clearly shows the grace, the unmerited favor, of God; for though man had so persistently rebelled against his will, God was still willing to provide through the sacrifice of his Son the means of man's redemption from sin. Paul said, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21). The wages of sin is death, and all men are guilty of sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23), but the grace of God said in effect, "I will let my Son pay the penalty and die for you" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Grace is like the light burning in the window, depicting welcome to the wayward; but the light will not burn forever. When man refuses the provision which God has made for his salvation, when he refuses to accept Christ as his substitute by refusing to obey the

gospel, God's grace must give way to is justice, for he has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4). When man will not accept the provisions of God's grace, he must experience the effects of his justice. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

### **IV. The cross is the meeting place of the law and the gospel.**

The law of Moses served various purposes. It required high moral conduct on the part of the Jewish people. It kept Israel intact as a people that God promised to Abraham concerning his seed (Genesis 12:3; Deuteronomy 7:3.) As Paul showed, it also was to bring the people under it to Christ — "wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24,25). When Christ came and fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17,18), it had served its purpose and was taken out of the way. Speaking figuratively, Paul says that it was nailed to the cross. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

When Christ died, was buried, and arose from the dead, he established the great facts of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This is the last will and testament of Christ. (Hebrews 9:16,17). It is the power of God to save (Romans 1:16). We are amenable to it, and we must obey it, for by it we will be judged in the last day (John 12:48).



## THE BABY JESUS

This baby was identified to shepherds by an angel. "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:9-11,13,14).

He was given the name Emanuel. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23).

Wise men from the East, guided by a star, came to worship Him and bring Him treasures gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:9-11).

This baby grown to manhood said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

## CROSSROAD

The cross can be viewed as the crossroad, the meeting place of light and darkness, of love and hate, of grace and justice, of the law and the gospel. The precious blood of Christ was shed on the cross for our redemption. We need to come to the cross, not with hate, but with love for God and thanksgiving for his grace in providing for our salvation. We must come in humble obedience to the gos-

pel that we may reach the atoning blood of Christ. God has made it possible for us to reach back to the death of Christ and to his blood. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3,4). — BN

## Unity in Christ

**"NEITHER PRAY I FOR THESE ALONE,** but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17:20-23).

With these words Jesus moved from petitions concerning the apostles to requests on behalf of all disciples in that prayer on the night before his betrayal and arrest. The leading thought, and therefore the primary request, involved the oneness of all disciples.

The unity of the people of God has always been highly valued by the Lord himself and by all

who were trying to be partakers of the Divine nature. In the words of the one hundred thirty-third Psalm, the unity of the brethren is both good and pleasant. Its value is compared to the precious ointment of Aaron and the dew that watered the mountains of Zion. All who claim to love the Lord should be as concerned about the kind of unity that the Lord prizes as is He.

## UNITY IN CHRIST

Ours is a time when there is fervent concern for the oneness of all believers, but the oneness most often sought is not the kind that the Lord values and that the Bible describes. It is sometimes described as unity in diversity. People calling themselves by the same religious name but believing and practicing differently, however, can be no more united than a herd of wild horses scattering in different directions. At times they might run together, but their inclinations are so divided that they are apart more than they are together. If this kind of unity is even achieved, it will be done to the later distress and fracture of all involved; for Bible unity requires a true oneness in recognition of the Divine standard so that all human inclinations and ideas inconsistent with that standard or with the unity of saints can be mortified and surrendered to the will of God as expressed in the Word of God. If men are not ready to lay aside their ideas in order to accept God's idea, then they have no idea of what Bible unity is.

### **The Importance of Unity**

In the verses quoted from the prayer of Jesus at the outset of the article, the Son of God made several points concerning His kind of unity. Verse twenty suggests something of the importance of unity.

The oneness under consideration in this passage is of the utmost importance, as suggested

by its inclusion as a petition in Jesus' prayer. The place of the prayer at the end of the earthly ministry of the Lord also indicates that Jesus' mission had been spent in doing all that He could to make this unity possible and was now approaching the cross for the same purpose. How important this unity must be in view of all of this!

### **The Key to Unity**

All recognize that unless they are willing to use the key, they cannot unlock and open the door. It is likewise impossible for men to be united unless they use the key provided by the Lord. According to Jesus' prayer in verse twenty, the key to oneness is faith in Him. It is evident that there can be no oneness between the believer and the infidel because the common ground of faith is absent. It is no more possible for the child of God and the member of a human denomination to be united, for the same key is missing — faith in Jesus Christ. Although both consent to the fact of Jesus' sonship, both do not have a faith of the kind that God approves. Faith in Jesus whom God sent necessarily involves faith in the word which Jesus spoke and that which the apostles spoke. Jesus said, in fact, that men believe on Him through the preached word of the apostles. Here is the basis for Bible unity. Men unwilling to stand on all taught by the Lord and His apostles and on that word alone cannot be one, for in some areas there will be invariable division

as a result of their acceptance of varying standards.

### **The Kind of Unity**

That Bible unity is not unity in diversity can be seen in verse twenty-one. Here Jesus compared the unity of disciples to that existing between the Father and himself. It is a unity of plan or purpose, heart, and attitude. When all disciples are genuinely committed to the will of God and develop the attitude of faith that will accept unreservedly what the Bible says, they can be as one. Jesus' dedication to the will of God is seen in His prayer in Gethsemane when He said, "... nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

### **The Purpose of Unity**

Jesus said that disciples ought to be united so that the world might believe that He was sent by the Father. (Verses 21 and 23.) The historic division of the world into diverse religious bodies stands as a barrier to belief on the part of many, as does the fracture of those claiming to compose the church of Christ. Complete unity is not affirmed to be the panacea to lead all men to believe, but it would help to persuade some.

Jesus also said in verse twenty-three that the oneness of His disciples would help the world to know that God loved all, even as He had loved Jesus. In believing that God sent Jesus, the world will also come to believe the purpose of His coming — to display the love of God to the world.

## THE BOY JESUS

When the boy was twelve years old, He went with His parents to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. After the Feast when they started home, His parents thought He was with relatives. When they found that He was not with them, they returned to Jerusalem, and after three days found Him in the temple "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers." When His parents found Him. His mother asked. "Son, why have You done this to us?" He answered, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Though His parents did not understand His statement, His mother "kept all these things in her heart."

His development was *fourfold*. "And Jesus increased in wisdom (*mentally*), and stature (*physically*) and in favor with God (*spiritually*) and with men (*socially*)" (Luke 2:39-52).

If you would like to learn about Jesus the Man who shed His cleansing blood on the Roman cross to make possible your eternal salvation read the entire New Testament over and over again.

## UNITY

### A Stimulus to Unity

Jesus said that He had given to the disciples the glory that He had been given by the heavenly Father. Verse twenty-four shows that He is speaking of the offer of eternal glory. Verse twenty-two says that Jesus made this offer of glory so that disciples might be united. A consideration of the glory belonging to the faithful on the other side should move us to fulfill the will of the Lord in this matter.

### A Necessity for Unity

In the seventeenth verse Jesus prayed for the sanctification of

His apostles by means of the Word of truth. He set the example of sanctification for the benefit of His chosen ones. (Verse 19). If there was a need for the apostles to be sanctified (devoted) by means of the Word so that they might enter upon their Divine mission of preaching the gospel, is there not also the same need for all, because belief comes about as a result of the Word that the inspired preached? We all must be devoted to God's Word as revealed, devoted to it as adequate to supply us unto all that is good (2 Timothy 3:17), and devoted to it as the basis for Bible unity.

— Bobby Graham

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