

# Gospel Power



*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)*

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## *The Makings of True Discipleship*

Gary Henry

In the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15), Jesus said that different people would respond to the gospel in different ways. Many will initially hear and obey the truth, but not all of these will keep the faith with endurance. Some will become unfaithful and fall away. Those who "have no root," for example, may "believe for a while," but in time of temptation they will fall away (v.13). Still others are "choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life." Jesus said that these will "bring no fruit to maturity" (v.14).

The truth of the matter is, it takes a certain kind of character to seek God faithfully, and not everyone will choose to have that kind of character. The call of the gospel separates those who have a "root" in themselves from those who don't. Knowing this ought to stimulate some serious thought concerning our own selves. Do we personally have what it takes? Are we willing to be like those who have the strong inner character the gospel calls for? Seeking God requires "Three C's": courage, commitment, and confession. If we're not willing to pay the price in each of these areas, then Christianity is not for us.

**Courage.** At the very least, it takes courage to follow the Lord. In Revelation 21:8, the fearful, or cowardly, head the list of those who

will be lost. Courage is fortitude in the face of danger, and we can be sure that the devil is going to make our discipleship to Christ as dangerous as he can. But whatever loss the devil may threaten us with, we can have the courage that comes from faith, which is the willingness to take real risks based upon our trust that God will save us. The person whose main objective is to protect himself and play it safe will never be a faithful follower of the Lord. The risks are real, the losses in this world may be great, and it is only the courageous people of faith who will fight and keep on fighting until the last battle is won.

**Commitment.** Without the making of a genuine commitment to God, we will not stand very long in the face of what the devil can throw at us. The faith necessary for our salvation in God involves far more than a whim or passing mood. Neither wishful thinking nor simply "giving it a try" will suffice. If we propose to follow Christ, we must have the character that is capable of making a bona fide pledge to actually do what we've decided to do. James urges us to "purify" our hearts of double-mindedness: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). There is no greater need

in our day than for those who profess to be the Lord's disciples to make up their minds decisively and focus their hearts on God with a deep-down commitment.

**Confession.** Secret commitments don't hold up nearly as well as public ones, and so it ought not to surprise us that the Lord requires that we publicly place ourselves on record as having both believed in Him and committed ourselves to being His disciples (Romans 10:9,10; 1 Timothy 6:12,13). Like Jesus Himself, the "Faithful and True Witness" (Revelation 3:14) who never failed to acknowledge publicly what He knew to be true privately, we must be willing to die rather than cover up or hide our convictions and our commitment to Christ. So important is our confession that the Hebrew writer speaks of it as the very thing that must be "held fast" if we are to reach heaven. He wrote, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14) and "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

So being the faithful disciple of Christ requires courage, commitment, and confession. But let us not misunderstand: the fact that we may not "have what it takes" doesn't mean that we're born one way or the other by God's predestination. Quite to the contrary, character is a matter of choice, and the choice is our own. Our "heart" is determined by the many free-will decisions we make every day. Some of these are big and others are little. But together they all add up to the sum total of that which is called our "character."

Because our choices make our character, we can change from one "heart" to another. In fact, this is precisely what is involved in being "converted" to Christ. Such a "conversion" is not optional. Jesus said that we must change: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Whatever we've been in the past,

do we today have courage? Are we willing to make a genuine commitment to God? Will our lives be characterized by a faithful confession of our commitment as long as we live? If so, we have the makings of true discipleship!

~via *Focus Magazine*, Vol. 4 No. 9



## *The Christian's Blessed Hope*

**Bobby L. Graham**

The apostle Paul described the hope of the Christian as blessed (Titus 2:13). Oh, the bliss and happiness of this hope that delight our souls as we press onward and upward in the service of God! What yearning it stimulates within us all as we anticipate the glory in which we shall be privileged to share over there! This hope becomes even more meaningful to us as we remember that it is a singular and unique hope (Ephesians 4:4). Our God does not provide two hopes: it is one.

### **The Value Of The One Hope**

Because the hope offered by Jehovah is one, it has greater value. Its value is also seen in Hebrews 6:19, where the writer described it as "both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Our hope is sure because it is safe and certain. It is steadfast in that it is firm and well grounded. It is the hope of being in the presence of God, because Christ has gone before us to clear the way, as a scout blazed the trail through the wilderness in the days of our pioneer forefathers. He cleared the way through death and took His own blood as an offering for our sins. The hope of the Christian is truly a valuable hope because it extends to the next life (1 Corinthians 15:19).

### **The Basis Of The One Hope**

"Christ in us" is the hope of glory, according to Colossians 1:27. Paul affirmed that the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope in 1 Timothy 1:1.

To learn that Christ is the essential basis of our hope and that there can be no hope without Christ, read Ephesians 2:11,12. There, Paul shows that to be without Christ is to be without hope. Apart from Him there can be no basis for expecting the blessings of this great hope.

### **The Foundation Of The One Hope**

Peter praised God because He had begotten believers again unto a living hope “By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). You and I were not there to witness the resurrected Christ with Peter and the others, but there is ample credible evidence that Jesus arose from the grave to generate strong faith. That faith is the “substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

### **The Essence Of The One Hope**

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24,25). Desire and expectation, the dual elements of hope, are seen in this passage. Desire plants the seed of hope, which is then nourished and sustained to fruition by our expectation of receiving that for which we hope.

### **The Object Of The One Hope**

The faithful Christian hopes for the second coming of Christ. Paul said he looks for (awaits) “that blessed hope, and glorious appearing” of Christ (Titus 2:13).

God’s child also desires and expects his own resurrection. He is assured that, should he die before Christ returns, he will be among those raised at Christ’s coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), even before the living are changed and caught up to be with the Lord forever.

Being like Christ is also part of the Christian’s hope. He hopes that when He shall appear, he “shall be like Him,” for he shall see Him as he is. It is not yet manifested what we shall be, but it is enough to believe that we can be like Christ.

The follower of the Lord also hopes for salvation. He has the hope of salvation as his helmet for protection in life’s battle (1 Thessalonians 5:8). That salvation for which he hopes is the final deliverance, after passing from this world into the next world. Paul said that it is nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11).

That final salvation involves eternal life, another part of the Christian’s hope. The faithful child of God lives “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2).

Eternal life, the ultimate end of all that for which the Christian hopes, has its location in heaven. “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Colossians 1:3-5).

### **The Advantages And Accomplishments Of The One Hope**

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God” (Hebrews 7:19). That the hope of the Christian is better than any hope held by the faithful of former ages can be seen in what the present hope can achieve. It saves (Romans 8:24,25) in that it motivates to faithfulness. It anchors the soul (Hebrews 6:17-20). It promises the life to come (1 Timothy 4:8). It causes the Christian to purify his life (1 John 3:1-3). It gives him rejoicing (Romans 12:12) and confidence (Hebrews 3:6; Romans 5:3).

In view of what the Bible says concerning that one hope of the child of the Lord, surely we can have no doubt that it is a blessed hope.

~via *The Gospel Observer*, Avondale, Pennsylvannia.

#### **Remember Our Bible Class Periods**

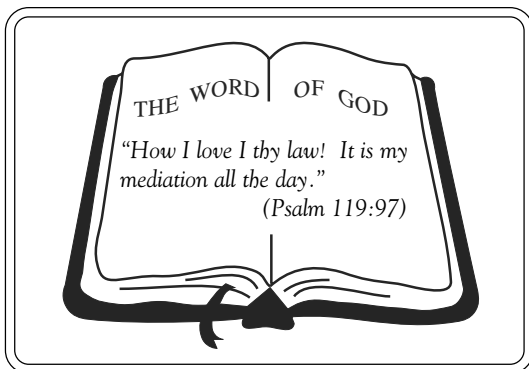
Sunday at 9:45 a.m.

Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.

# News & Notes

**THE SICK:** *Jerry Dickey's mother, Pat Dickey*, is in the ECM hospital in Florence, room 173 ... *Rodney McCrary's sister and Rocky Rose's aunt, Becky Rose*, is scheduled to have knee surgery on Friday of this week ... *Cindy Pressnell* was sick and unable to be at Bible study Wednesday night. ... *Shelia Goode* was not feeling well and not able to be at Bible study Wednesday night ... *Henry Trousdale* was feeling better and was able to be present at Bible study Wednesday night ... Remember *Scottie Goode's father, Hubert Goode*, as he is taking treatments in Athens... *Kerry Cox's grandfather, Coy Lowman*, continues about the same at home ... *Millinea Word* will begin a new round of medication soon ... *Mattie Blanche Word* continues at home and not able to be out ... *Aldeen Noles* is in the SunBridge Nursing Home in Lawrenceburg ... *Sheila Moore's mother-in-law, Laurene Whitehead*, is in the Athens Convalescent Center ... *Mary Best's nephew, Shannon Johnson*, who is at home ... *Millinea Word's mother, Nola McCafferty*, and *Tisha Thomas' grandmother, Nellie Hunter*, who are both in the Meadow Brook Nursing Home in Pulaski.

**COMMUNICATION GROUPS:** Communication group four will meet tonight after the evening service. If you are in group four, remember to meet with your group this evening.



## Gospel Power

is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.

### Schedule of Services

#### Sunday

Bible Classes ..... 9:45 a.m.  
 Morning Worship ..... 10:45 a.m.  
 Evening Worship ..... 6:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday

Bible Classes ..... 7:00 p.m.

### Anderson church Home Page

Anderson-church.org

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