

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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“The Thing That Hath Been...” First Installment

EDITOR'S NOTE: *“The Thing That Hath Been...”* (Volume 2) was written in 2020 but its circulation was hindered when I suffered a massive stroke on Dec. 15, 2020. By God's Providence, I recovered to conduct my work and this book is a large part of my final work before I leave the earth. We plan to print the book in a serialized form in this publication that may take longer than a year. This month's first installment contains the Foreword, and the Author's Preface.

Jerry C. Brewer

Foreword

While the Scriptures provide the church's indisputable final authority, certain extrabiblical writings have proven valuable in applying Biblical teachings to navigate the religious trends of the time. Other extrabiblical writings have professed to provide such aid, but have only obscured Biblical teachings and led souls into error. One current publication purports to be the “Chronicle” for the church. However, it views the brotherhood through the eye of apostasy. It focuses the scope of its “chronicling” the church to fawning over leftward lurches and leaps into liberalism. Contrariwise, the volume you presently hold in your hands critically addresses true threats to the bride of Christ and to the souls of men, and it does so through a Biblical lens.

As suggested by its title, *The Thing That Hath Been: The Cycle of Apostasy* takes its reader through a tour of history to better understand the present. It has been said, “Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it,” and this book's tour through history may help spare its readers from falling prey to the same snares that pulled previous generations away from the truth. Though this writer referred a moment ago to “the religious trends of the time,” brother Brewer admirably demonstrates that there is no new thing under the sun when it comes to apostasy. This book examines errors that have arisen in the Lord's church in recent centuries, as well as several in the denominational world, pointing out how those errors were able to infiltrate the body of Christ by adopting slightly different forms. Much of this history will be surprising, if not shocking, to most readers.

Even the more familiar aspects of history recorded herein are given a fresh and insightful treatment. Many of the brethren drifting into the cycle of apostasy are well familiar with key events and large-scale departures he discusses. Although they have a general knowledge of the past, they fail to see how they themselves are repeating it. However, brother Brewer pointedly “connects the dots” between past and present apostasy, leaving the inescapable conclusion to the modern-day apostate, “Thou art the man.”

Not only does this book examine history, and consider the present from a historical perspective, it provides a fairly comprehensive look at the present apostasy itself. It addresses numerous incremental errors and Ashdodisms among what he calls “mainstream churches of Christ.” It deals with churches who have taken the far-left plunge into denominationalism. It points out the historical problem of institutions that have led large portions of the brotherhood astray. Certainly, churches of Christ and individual Christians need to quit supporting once-worthy works that have morphed into golden calves of apostasy in recent decades. This latest revision adds additional

chapters, as well as expanding some of the previous chapters, and brings the focus even more on the present.

Indeed, the scope of this work is tremendously ambitious for a single volume. It is a treasure trove of valuable quotes, which alone would make it a worthy addition to any Christian's or church's library.

Appropriately, the initial volume of this book was dedicated to the memory of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. He held a rare willingness to stand boldly against error, matched with a rare ability to defeat error with the sword of the Spirit. However, I believe the dedication goes too far when it asserts, "We shall not soon see his like again." The first time I ever heard Jerry Brewer preach, I was struck by how much his preaching style resembled that of brother Wallace. Anyone who has read much of brother Brewer's writings knows his willingness and ability to stand against error, much like a certain soldier of the cross from a generation now past. "In the spirit and power" of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., a powerful and consistent voice against error has arisen.

More importantly, Jerry Brewer comes in the spirit of Christ. I have had the opportunity to hear him proclaim the Gospel several times over the years, and he always does so thoughtfully, boldly, and Scripturally, with a fervent love for God's truth. He is a very able writer who brings a thorough command of the Scriptures to his works, as evidenced in particular in his commentary on Galatians, as well as in his many other writings. His character outside the pulpit and away from the printed page is no less that of a man of God and follower of Christ. I have now personally known him for over 17 years—although I previously knew him via his writings—and I consider it a blessing and honor to count him my friend.

Where honest hearts read these pages, there are sure to be opened eyes going forward. The church needs to be aware of the nature of the present apostasy, and how to combat it. It may be that this book and its present reader have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Lee Moses
Union City, Tennessee
December 1, 2020

Author's Preface

At this writing, the first edition of this book has been through four printings. So much additional material describing the quagmire of doctrinal confusion in mainstream churches of Christ necessitates this Enlarged and Revised Edition of "*The Thing That Hath Been...*": *The Cycle of Apostasy*. Mainstream churches of Christ continue their parade down the broad way our Lord described (Matt. 7:13-14), with no regard for the New Testament pattern. It is our prayer that their members who still love the Lord and His word will heed the call to "come ye out from among them" (2 Cor. 6:15-17).

Leroy Brownlow described the attitude of today's mainstream churches of Christ nearly 30 years ago:

I firmly believe with all of my heart that the church is now facing the greatest dangers it has ever faced in my lifetime. Dangers from within. Modernism, denominationalism, new hermeneutics, liberalism, and liberals remind me of the old farmer who kissed his mule. His explanation was, "Well it's every man to his own choice." But his neighbor down the road didn't want to kiss **his** mule. He wanted to kiss only his wife, and he was called a **legalist** (Brownlow, "The Preservation of the Faith,").

When Harrell Davidson preached in Midwest City, Okla., Guy N. Woods and E.R. Harper were invited as guest speakers for a lectureship. During their visit, Harrell drove them to see Oklahoma Christian College's campus. In conversation on the trip, brother Woods predicted that 55 percent of churches of Christ would be lost to apostasy and only 45 percent would remain faithful. According to Harrell, brother Harper replied, "I think you're wrong Guy. I believe it will be 75-25." Of course, neither man was a prophet but they could discern the times and trends and it is likely that brother Harper was closer to the correct figures.

We are witnessing a repetition of 19th century heresy today among “mainstream churches of Christ” who **may** comprise about 75 percent of the total in our country—if not much more. Their elders are in denial of, ignorant of, or simply do not care about, false doctrines and practices. They have adopted erroneous practices they call *expedients* and have sat for so long like frogs in gradually boiling water that they cannot perceive Scriptural reality. They ignore Bible authority, are saturated with doctrinal and moral error, have left the New Testament pattern of the church, and languidly float in a cesspool of human authority.

A single heresy resulted in the emergence of the Disciples of Christ denomination from the mid to late 1800s. That was the adoption of **expediency** as a **source** of Biblical authority. In recent decades mainstream churches of Christ have adopted the same error, portending the emergence of a new denomination devoid of all distinction as the church that Jesus built—a trend sagely observed a quarter of a century ago:

There is already a wide breach between brethren, but it is destined to grow wider and finally become an unbridgeable chasm, even as it did a century ago. On the one hand there are those of us who, like Paul, are determined to shrink not from “declaring the whole counsel of God” and who are “set for the defence of the gospel” (Acts 20:27; Phi. 1:16). On the other hand, there are many who have ceased to “give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard [the Gospel]” and they have already “drifted away from them” (Heb. 2:1). These are those who can no longer be content with the purity and simplicity of the primitive Gospel. While we remain firmly rooted in the apostles’ doctrine, they have cut themselves loose from its restrictions. They are still in the drifting and changing process. The full extent of their eventual apostasy is any man’s guess, but many of them have adopted seed principles sufficiently corrupt to take them to full-blown denominational status. It is not a question of **whether** we must cease to have any company with them, but only one of **when**. Some are already so far gone that fellowshiping them would be little different from fellowshiping the Disciples of Christ denomination (McClish, “An Inspired Warning to Change Agents”).

For decades, faithful brethren have pointed out in bulletins, periodicals, sermons, and lectureships that the emperor is wearing no clothes. Their warnings fell on deaf ears. Members of mainstream churches reacted with invective of “witch hunters,” “legalists,” “hate mongers,” and “Pharisees.” The mainstream “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21-22). In their self-imposed blindness, mainstream churches continue to adopt doctrines, practices, and programs that haven’t a scintilla of Bible authority.

Those projects and programs are their idols, enshrined in the brotherhood upon the pedestal of **expediency** and anyone who dares to question them suffers censure and/or ostracism. Among their idols are periodicals, schools of preaching, well-known preachers, Social Gospel programs under the euphemism of “ministries,” and so-called “Christian” colleges. The cycle of apostasy, repeated 150 years ago has come full circle in churches of Christ once again. Verily,

The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and *there is no new thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is new*? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10).

Apostasy always wears new clothes, but they cover the **same heresy** plaguing God’s people from time immemorial. Men forget God and substitute their ways for His. Adam and Eve were the first. By Noah’s time, men had so forgotten God that the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually. That pattern continued through Israel’s wilderness wanderings, the conquest of Canaan, their dark ages during the Judges, the divided kingdom, and following the Babylonian captivity.

In the apostolic era, Paul warned of those within the church who would draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30). He dealt with apostasy among the Galatian churches (Gal. 1:6-9), told the Thessalonians that a “falling away” would come before

the Lord's return (2 Thess. 2:1-5), warned Timothy that men would reject the truth and turn to fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4), and commanded Titus to reject a heretic after the first and second admonition (Titus 3:10-11). Peter said as there were false teachers of old, so there will be false teachers among us (2 Pet. 2:1-2). John commanded the faithful to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Of Israel, God said, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without end" (Jer. 2:22). That indictment is true in the present age.

As Israel adopted the pagan practices of her neighbors, so churches of Christ have adopted the mainstream of denominational error in droves. They have forgotten God, do that which is right in their own eyes, and refuse to believe that there is such a thing as a false teacher.

Throughout history, there has never been an age when man did not change the glory of the uncorruptible God into one of his own image. That was true of the ancients, of the first century church, the restored church in the 19th century, and mainstream churches of Christ today. Like Israel at Sinai, they "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." This time, their golden calf is the Social Gospel in the garb of expediency—the thesis we prove herein.

Within this book is but a representative sampling of mainstream churches of Christ who are as liberal as any digressives of the 19th century. Space forbids an examination of every mainstream church, "the which, if they should be written every one, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Therefore, this work looks at a cross section of apostate churches still claiming to be the one that Jesus built. Their number is legion, but the examples we offer herein represent them all.

When Ira Y. Rice, Jr. returned to the U.S. 56 years ago, after working several years in Asia, he was astounded at the apostasy into which churches of Christ had sunk in his absence. He described his reaction in the introduction to his first volume of *Axe on the Root*:

Since coming back to the United States from Singapore and Southeast Asia over two years ago, I have been appalled as I moved from area to area and from state to state at the strange fruit I have witnessed growing on increasing numbers of trees—brotherhood-wide.

Fruit such as compromising . . . undermining . . . scoffing . . . secularizing . . . changing the church . . . uncertain sounds . . . church only a segment of a man-made movement . . . making light of truth . . . denominationalizing . . . language of Ashdod . . . degreitis . . . unscriptural fellowship . . . new winds of doctrine . . . not the only Christians . . . false teaching . . . false teachers not heretics . . . free to teach error . . . textual denial of God's Word . . . caring about what "others are saying" . . . unedifying jargon . . . human creeds . . . liberalism . . . no proof-text proof . . . sons of Roman Catholic Church . . . pseudo-intellectualism "Christian Atheism" . . . theological brainwashing . . . private interpretations . . . false relevancy . . . subversion of truth . . . conformity . . . educational pretentiousness . . . pride . . . worldly wisdom . . . clergy and laity . . . class consciousness . . . sophistry . . . sleight of men . . .

Because far too many are bearing such fruit among us, the time has come for us to do something about it.

Brother Rice **did** "do something about it" by issuing three volumes of his book in 1966, 1967, and 1970. While many arose from their spiritual slumber, far greater numbers ignored his documentation of widespread apostasy and continued to sink further into it. That led brother Rice to coin his phrase, "You just can't warn some brethren." That is still the case.

Fifty-three years later, brother Kerry L. Sword returned to the United States after 25 years of work in Ukraine. His reaction paralleled brother Rice's, as he observed the current condition of mainstream churches of Christ. I sent brother Sword an email message and opined that he must have been dismayed and amazed at what

mainstream churches have done during his time out of this country. In an email message, dated Aug. 31, 2020, he replied:

“Dismayed and amazed at the changes in the church” may be a gross understatement. We are still in shock over the apathy, ignorance, and sin that we see our brethren in. This especially applies to the “elite” in the churches of Christ that so many hold in reverence and awe.

He further described his family's experiences after returning from Ukraine and settling in Henderson, Tenn. His description accurately pinpointed the massive problem that afflicts mainstream churches: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee” (Hos. 4:6). That is shown in Chapter 9 by the results of a basic Bible test he gave to the adult Bible class of the Plainview church of Christ in Henderson, Tenn.

It is a fact that the churches of Christ (at least here in America) are in a full state of apostasy. Those who cannot see this are either uninformed (being woefully ignorant of the situation), or are a direct part of the problem. The only hope I see for the Lord's church here in America is if the Lord's people will wake up from their long slumber and start fulfilling their God-ordained obligation to simply preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2) and to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3). Is it indeed the case that **history repeats itself** (Rom. 11:7-10; 2 Thess. 2:10-12)? (Kerry Sword, Open Letter to Beth Kee, Sept. 16, 2019).

For the first time, some readers **may** have their eyes opened to the reality of doctrinal division among us. Some will be indifferent, many may be surprised, multitudes may be angered and my name will be anathema to them. It matters not. “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

I am swiftly approaching four score years upon the earth and have little time left to “cry aloud and spare not.” I am, therefore, determined that “they shall not pass” while I live on time's side of eternity. Those were the sentiments of Leroy Brownlow in 1991 and they are mine in 2020:

I cannot be true to the church, I cannot be true to myself, I cannot be true to the God of Heaven unless I call attention to some of the winds of doctrine blowing against us today (Brownlow, “The Preservation of the Faith”).

I detest and abominate what the bride of Christ has become in the hands of godless men. She has been stripped of her heavenly attire and re-clothed in the trappings of a mainstream harlot. What I have written needs to be said and I am neither ashamed nor afraid to mark those who have “gone out from us.” I **will not** stand before my Lord in Judgment with blood on my hands because I stood silently aside while the Lord's beautiful bride was mauled in the hands of spiritual rapists.

Brother McClish wrote, “It is not a question of **whether** we must cease to have any company with them, but only one of **when**.” The when is **now**.

Jerry C. Brewer
Elk City, Oklahoma
September 30, 2020

Editor's Travels and Preaching

I preached at Yukon, Okla. on June 19, and I preached on June 26 at Cheyenne, Okla.

In July I preached again at Yukon on July 17 and July 31.

On Aug. 9, I will undergo testing for my breathing to see if I have an obstruction in my throat. My voice is gradually worse and I pray that the test will lead to its improvement, and I appreciate your prayers.

The Cost of Our Justification

Ron Cosby

Mankind has an accuser before God (Rev. 12:10; Job 1:6-11; Zech. 3:1). Seeking to justify his own ungodliness, Satan has worked through the agency of men for ages to charge God with being unrighteous. In the eyes of Satan,

- Abraham stands accused because he lied (Gen. 12:11-19).
- David stands accused because he took another man's wife (2 Sam. 11).
- Peter stands accused because he was a coward in the face of enemy fire (Matt. 26:69-75).
- Paul stands accused because he ravaged and devastated the lives of many innocent saints (Acts 8:1-3).
- All men stand accused, "For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3).



History records Satan's more recent accusers, such as Robert Ingersoll. In a number of speeches, Mr. Ingersoll ranted against God taking a life, yet Mr. Ingersoll was all for the Yankees killing a Southerner. Another modern accuser is atheist Richard Schoenig. He charged God as guilty of foolishness since God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden for "eating an apple." However, Mr. Schoenig was all for killing Hitler. Though Mr. Schoenig disagreed with God's justice, he upheld his own faulty concept of proper crime and punishment.

How can God, with a wave of His hand, let men off the hook and yet punish Satan? He can't because He is just. Compare the idea of the U. S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) letting Hilary Clinton off with a wave of the hand. Americans have justly voiced great outrage over that. But unlike the DOJ, God will by no means clear the guilty (Num. 14:18).

God gave the only thing possible for our justification. Christ's sacrifice prevents Satan from justly charging God with foolishness. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (Rom. 8:33). "Shall lay—to the charge [*egkaleo*] Lit., 'to call something in one.' Hence call to account; bring a charge against" (*Vincent Word Studies*) "[H]e might himself be just, and the justifier..." (Rom. 3:26). "He spared not His own Son..." (Rom. 8:32-34).

Without God giving suitable justification for the transgressions of men, accusers could rightly stand in opposition to God. Now, however, in the face of the cross, when they seek to justify their evil, they stand without any support.

On the Outskirts of Sodom

Jerry C. Brewer

When Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom," (Gen. 13:12) he had no idea of the terrible consequences he would pay for his decision. Even though he was not a partaker



of the sins of that wicked city's vile inhabitants, his life and family were touched and adversely affected by them. His daughters married men of Sodom who refused to take Lot's warning of impending destruction seriously. They considered him "as one that mocked" (Gen. 19:14). Why did they look at their father in law in that way? Probably because they had accepted the lifestyle of Sodom and were comfortable with it. They may have thought it was just a "gay" way of living and never considered it the abomination that it was and is.

Even Lot seemed reluctant to leave—so much so that he had to be forcibly removed from the city (Gen. 19:15-16) and lost his wife in the process (Gen. 19:26). And, even then, he argued that he could not escape to a mountain, but wanted to enter a nearby city (Gen. 19:19-20). Why was Lot reluctant to leave? Was he also comfortable with

Sodom's lifestyle? He was not like the men of Sodom, and Peter even says Lot was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Pet. 2:7-8). But Lot was not "vexed" enough to take a firm stand against their wickedness and suffered loss because of his reluctance to do so.

I submit to you that Lot's spiritual descendants are alive and well today in our country. They are the vast numbers of people in our land who say they would never practice Sodomy and are "vexed" with it, but have no objection to what is erroneously called "same sex marriage." Why is that? Why have folks today, like Lot and his sons-in-law, become "comfortable" with such perversion? Because Americans are dwelling on the outskirts of Sodom. They may not be practicing sodomites, but they are giving sodomy their approval. How else can one explain the judicial branch of our federal government even thinking about ruling on such a matter? That issue would never have reached beyond the closet door a generation ago, and in 19th century England its practitioners would have been executed under the law.

One thing that has emboldened the Sodomite lobby and the federal government to give this issue respectability, by openly and unashamedly considering it as a "constitutional" issue is public opinion. How so? While there have always been Sodomites in every society, they have not always been as bold and open (at least since Lot's day) and have remained in the closet in decent society because of public opinion. But the door is now opened. As a result, parents are learning that their children are practicing this abomination and, because they have always given them whatever they wanted, they refuse to believe they could "really be wrong." Parents and other family members who would not practice Sodomy themselves now see nothing wrong with it in the lives of their children.

Like Lot, parents and family members of today's Sodomites have no idea of the terrible consequences they will pay for their decision to approve (and thereby promote) this abominable lifestyle. Family approval of Sodomy will not only result in the misery and death of their children and others through the AIDS virus, but in the eternal loss of their own, and their children's, souls. Nor do folks understand that this is not a legal issue about "rights." It is about a wicked generation foisting its evil lifestyle upon every decent person in our land. Fathers, mothers and other family members need to understand that toleration and approval of their children's sodomy is not only a move toward Sodom, but is actually a move into its outskirts. It is then just a short move into eternal destruction.

Salvation Is in the Church

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The idea that one is first saved by some mystical or mystified, unintelligible or intangible process, and afterwards "joins some church" is a common religious delusion. Yet, there is no truth more plainly emphasized in the Bible than the fact that the process of being saved is the process of entering the church (Acts 2:47).



1. It is affirmed in Acts 4:12 that salvation is in Christ. Then, to have salvation, one must get into Christ. But Paul, by analogy, in Ephesians 5:30, teaches that as husband and wife are one, so Christ and the church are one. "I speak concerning Christ and the church," he said. Christ and the church being one, how can one be in Christ and out of the church?

2. Paul makes the fact that Christ is "the saviour of the body" (5:23) the ground of his exhortation to the Ephesians concerning the church as the bride of Christ (5:25). He saved it, purchased it with His blood and redeemed it, reconciles us to God in it, and adds all the saved to it. Therefore, out of the church there is no cleansing, no blood, no redemption, no reconciliation to God, no salvation.

3. The relation between Christ and the church is the same as that which exists between God and Christ. Christ is the "fullness" of God (Col. 1:19), and the church is the "fullness" of Christ (Eph. 1:22). Therefore, no man can come to Christ and ignore the church for the same reason that no man can come to God and ignore Christ. We exhort the unsaved to come to Christ, "gladly receive the word," be "baptized into Christ," and the Lord will add you to His church.

Is it Correct to Say That No Translation is Inspired?

Guy N. Woods

It is being said with ever-increasing frequency that inspiration is characteristic of the original autographs only and that it does not extend to the translations of Scriptures in use among us today. “No translation is inspired,” we are told. The conclusion which follows from this premise is quite obvious. Most people are without an inspired Bible today.



If the truth of the premise be granted, this conclusion irresistibly follows—fewer than one percent of the people in this country today have access to, or could read if they did, the original texts. The logic is unsailable. Only those who read the Bible in the original languages have access to an inspired text. More than 99% of the population today cannot read the Bible in the original languages. Therefore, more than 99% of the people are without an inspired Bible.

This conclusion we unhesitatingly reject. We reject it because the major premise on which it rests is wholly and utterly false. It is not true that most people are without access to an inspired Bible today. Moreover, it is grossly incorrect to assert that “No translation is inspired.” What is true, and what may properly be asserted, is that we have no inspired translators today. This is far—very far indeed from saying that we are without inspired translations today.

The popular notion, “no translation is inspired,” results from a mistaken concept of (1) what inspiration is, (2) to what inspiration extends, and (3) how inspiration was achieved. *Inspiration*, noun form of the verb *inspire* (*in* + *spirare*, to breathe into), denotes the result of the Spirit’s infusion into the words, of sacred writ. Thus Paul affirmed, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Tim. 3:16). Similarly, he wrote to the Corinthians: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13).

From the foregoing it will appear to the observant reader that the “inbreathing” was into the text of Scripture rather than into the men who penned the Scripture, though they were, of course, under divine guidance in what they wrote, a fact we learn from 1 Peter 1:11-12, and often elsewhere in the Bible. *Inspiration* thus consisted of the “inbreathing” of Truth into the Word selected to bear the message. Inspiration actually resulted from the injection of Truth into the words they were prompted to write. Words, signs of ideas, thus became the vehicles to bear the ideas presented. Why were these words inspired? Because they were the vessels of the revelation of the Spirit, because they reflected exactly the “mind of the Spirit.” This they did perfectly since the words were selected by the Spirit for precisely this purpose. They may properly be said to be “inbreathed” (inspired) because they achieved the design of the Spirit in reflecting the Spirit’s message. This is verbal inspiration.

What difference would it make whether the words embodying the Spirit’s message were English, German, French, or some other modern language if, in any given instance, the word expressed as fully and as clearly the idea involved as did the original Greek word, since the inspiration consists in the full embodiment of the idea and not in the nationality of the word?

If the Word, in the second instance, reflects as accurately and as fully the meaning of the Spirit, why is not it as much inspired (inbreathed) as the former? It does, indeed; and there should be an end to the loose and thoughtless and obviously incorrect declaration so often heard these days that we are without inspired Scriptures today except as they exist in original manuscripts. This conclusion will not bear the test of either reason or revelation. Paul often quoted from the Septuagint (a translation of the Old Testament into Greek) and designated it as Scripture because the passages cited exactly represented the Truth of the original text though a translation of that text. To those who so freely assert that no translation is inspired seriously believe that the Bible

which Paul read from, and often quoted, along with Christ and other apostles, was uninspired?

The test of any translation is, “Does it reflect fully and accurately the mind of the Spirit as revealed through those chosen by the Lord to make known His will to man?” If yes, the words, whatever the language, embody the meaning of the Spirit and are as inspired as the original presentation.

We may, therefore, find much comfort in the fact that the Scriptures, taken from a dependable text and accurately translated, are infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient, the full and complete revelation of God to man.

How to be Born Again

Ray Stone

“Born-again Christian”—what a great ring that has. For some it evokes an image of a dedicated, avid follower of Christ, almost a super-Christian, as opposed to an ordinary, run-of-the-mill Christian who may or may not be living by Christian ethics. Conversely, some see in the term a blind follower without thought or logic, first cousin to the derisive “True Believer” label. So some embrace the term proudly, while others avoid it like the plague. Nonetheless, the most interesting thing about the phrase “born-again Christian” is that it’s almost a Biblical term—but not quite: “Born-again Christian” is a modern construct not found in the Scriptures.



The Bible certainly speaks of “Christian” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). It also discusses in detail being “born again” (John 3:3ff; 1 Peter 1:23). But you may search the Bible through and never find the two terms used together, “born-again Christian”, for a very good reason: They mean the same thing! It would be a redundancy of the most extreme sort, kind of like calling someone a “homo-sapiens human” or “an Okie from Oklahoma” or some such. God’s word equates these two terms; uses them interchangeably. To be born again is to be a Christian; the only way to become a Christian is to be born again. There is no other kind of Christian, per the Bible, than the “born-again” kind.

So what exactly does it mean to be born again? Nicodemus was stumped: At the proposition set forth by Jesus (John 3:3 “Ye must be born again”) he was amazed! and responded “How can a man be born again?” But Jesus was amazed at his amazement; He said, John 3:7 “Don’t marvel at this”; v. 10 “You call yourself a teacher of Israel, you ought to be able to understand!” Nicodemus’ final judgment was “How can these things be?” and went away in confusion.

But it’s not that hard. This whole conversation can be boiled down to, “You must be born again.” “Physically? Impossible!” “No—spiritually; and necessary.” Christ explained, (v. 5), “Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” There’s only one preposition there, the word *of*. One birth with two elements. Birth of, water and the spirit. The change that the Gospel is able to make in the one who accepts it is so basic that it’s described as starting your life all over again, being “born again” spiritually speaking.

Paul said, 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.” Peter used exactly the same illustration in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

Being “born again” is really the Bible’s way of describing our entrance into God’s family—becoming a child of God. Romans 8:16-17 says to Christians “We are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Galatians 3:26 again states “Ye all are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The apostle John exclaimed, 1 John 3:1 “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...”

So how does one go about being “born again”? The question really is “How does one become a Christian?” One hint, staying with our same figure, is 1 Corinthians 4:15 “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.” Another, 1 Peter 1:23 “...being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God...” Lay those alongside Romans 1:16 that assures us “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation,” and 1 Peter 1:22 “Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth,” and you have your answer. Romans 6:17 “Ye obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you...” In the same context, v. 3-4 he reminds them they had been “baptized into Jesus Christ...into His death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” There’s that “form of doctrine”—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. There’s that new birth; and there’s the water connected to it that Jesus mentioned to Nicodemus: “born of water and the spirit.” A spiritual rebirth in the water of baptism. A man is born again spiritually, becomes a Christian, a child of God, as he is baptized in water in obedience to Christ’s command. A “born-again Christian.” For there is **no other kind!**

The Way of Cain

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Introduction

In order to emphasize the magnitude of the sin of certain false teachers and the danger of their course, Jude made reference to three Old Testament errorists, the first of which was Cain: “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain...” (Jude 11).



It might interest the reader to know that when Jude penned these words, about 4000 years had elapsed since Cain lived and yet **the way of Cain** was being trodden in his day. If it existed 4000 years after Cain’s death, we can be sure it still exists. Therefore, we would be better served to learn what it is so we desist from it.

What the Way of Cain is Not

A great way of learning what a thing is, is by learning what it is not. I used to think that Cain’s great sin was the murder of his brother. I no longer do due to John’s words in 1 John 3:11-12:

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.

Notice the distinction between the murder of Abel and something John calls Cain’s evil works. Why did Cain kill Abel? *Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.* You see, there is a distinction between the murder of Abel and Cain’s evil works. The text suggests to me that if there were no evil works, there would have been no murder. These evil works then constitute Cain’s great sin. Abel’s murder was wrong but the murder was simply the consequence of something that had gone wrong before. That which had gone wrong before, John calls Cain’s evil works. Because Cain’s works were evil, they were not accepted by God. And it was the fact that God didn’t accept his works but accepted Abel’s that led Cain to murder his brother. However, the sin that led to the murder of Abel, was evidently not the murder itself but something that John called Cain’s evil works.

In order to know what these evil works were, we need to go back to the Old Testament to learn what it is that Cain did before he murdered Abel.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell (Gen. 4:3-5).

Passages like this one really impress on my mind the fact that God's ways and thoughts are different and higher than the ways and thoughts of men (Isa. 55:8-9). What did Cain do prior to the murder of Abel? The Bible says he *brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD*. What could possibly be wrong with this? Yet it was rejected by God and was called evil by inspiration. Notice also that John called Abel's work righteous. Why was Cain's offering rejected and called evil and Abel's offering accepted and called righteous? What was the difference between the two?

At this point, let me impress on your mind that the difference between Cain and Abel was not that one believed in God while the other didn't. Both of them believed in God the same. Therefore, *the way of Cain* is not unbelief in God.

Also, the difference between Cain and Abel was not that one of them was willing to worship God while the other wasn't. Both of them believed God ought to be worshipped and both in fact offered a sacrifice unto God. Therefore, *the way of Cain* is not a lack of willingness to worship.

Again, the difference between Cain and Abel was not that one worshipped the true God while the other didn't. The same God to whom Abel gave an offering was the same God to whom Cain gave an offering. Therefore, *the way of Cain* is not the worship of a false god.

Here are two blood brothers, who both believe in God Almighty, who both have the same willingness to worship God and who both offer a sacrifice to God. Yet, one's offering is accepted while the other's is rejected and called evil. I tell you friends the real difference between the two is what Jude calls *the way of Cain*.

What Then is the Way of Cain?

Friends the answer to the above question is found in Hebrews 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

I have heard some with speculative spirits say Abel's sacrifice was accepted because he offered the best of his flock to God whereas Cain's was rejected because he offered rotten cabbages and tomatoes to God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. What the Bible **actually** says is that Abel's offering was accepted because it was done **by faith** necessarily implying that Cain's was rejected because it was not done by faith.

What does it mean that Abel's sacrifice was done **by faith**? Paul gives us the answer in Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Since faith comes by God's Word, it follows then that Abel offered his sacrifice **by faith** because he did what God had told him to do. There is no real biblical faith without God's Word and so evidently God had told the brothers the kind of offering to bring to Him. It turns out Abel did what God required, which made his offering done **by faith** while Cain brought what God had not told him to bring, offering to God something of his own choice, which made his offering not done **by faith**.

Herein lies the answer to the question, *what then is the way of Cain?* **The way of Cain is the way of will or self-ordered worship.** It is the devil's lie that so long as you have an honest heart and are worshipping the one true God, you can worship Him with anything you choose and He'd accept it. It is the lie that we have a choice in the kind of offerings we bring to God in worship.

The truth however is that God is not obligated to accept anything we bring to Him in worship. There is nothing that God needs from us (Acts 17:25). Therefore, God only accepts that which He has required of us or told us to bring to Him in worship. The way of Cain once again is the way of will or self-ordered worship. It is the way that says you can choose to worship God with anything and He'd accept it.

What do we Learn From the Foregoing?

First, we learn that not all worship is acceptable unto God. Cain had worshipped yet God asked him, "if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?..." (Gen. 4:7).

Second, we learn that God will accept from men only that which He has told men to offer as a sacrifice unto Him.

Third, we learn that an honest heart does not make an unauthorized offering right. So long as it is unauthorized, it is evil in the sight of God. There is no indication of insincerity prior to Cain's offering. I wonder if he was thinking, "I know that God says to offer an animal but wouldn't he be even more delighted if I gave Him the best of the best of my food crops?"

Finally, we learn that only when we do in worship what God has told us to do, do we worship by faith and please Him (Heb. 11:6).

Some Applications for Today

Let us now apply our lessons to modern day religion.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ by virtue of His death has taken away the Old Testament and established a new one (Heb. 10:9). Therefore, Christians are ministers of the new covenant and not of the old (2 Cor. 3:6). Just as God desired worship in the Old Testament and authorized what to be offered to Him, so he desires worship today (John 4:23) and has authorized what we ought to offer unto Him (Col. 3:17).

One such offering is in the area of preaching. God requires that his spokespersons in the church today (1 Tim. 3:15) be of the male gender (1 Tim. 2:11-15). Since God has authorized only men to be preachers, regardless of our "honest" hearts, three things are true. First, God will not accept worship that involves women preachers. Second, worship that involves women preachers is evil in God's sight and third, worship that involves female preachers is not done by faith.

Also, in the area of music, God has authorized vocal music. In God's New Testament we are to **sing** songs not play songs. An example of this is Hebrews 13:15. God requires that the sacrifice of His praise be offered with the fruit of our lips. Nothing is said about offering praise to God with or alongside the fruit of our fingertips. Since God has authorized vocal music in Christian worship, regardless of our "honest" hearts, three things are true. First, God will not accept worship that involves instrumental music. Second, worship that involves instrumental music is evil in God's sight and third, worship that involves instrumental music is not done by faith.

Then again, God has authorized His saints to gather around the table of His Son on the first day of the week and only on the first day of the week (Acts 20:5-7). Since God has authorized the Lord's supper to be served and taken on the first day of the week, regardless of our "honest" hearts, three things are true. First, God will not accept worship that involves gathering around the Lord's table on a day other than the first day of the week. Second, worship that involves gathering around the Lord's table on a day other than the first day of the week is evil in God's sight and third, worship that involves gathering around the Lord's table on a day other than the first day of the week is not done by faith.

Furthermore, in the area of prayer, God has authorized prayers be directed to Him (not Mary or dead saints) in the name of Jesus Christ **always** (Eph. 5:20). Since God has authorized prayers to be made this way, regardless of our "honest" hearts, three things are true. First, God will not accept worship that involves prayers not directed to Him. Second, worship that involves prayers not directed to God is evil in God's sight and third, worship that involves prayers not directed to God is not done by faith.

Conclusion

We have seen that *the way of Cain* pertains to will-worship or worship in which the worshippers choose what offerings to give to God. That kind of worship can only lead to unbearable punishment in hell fire like Cain eventually received (Gen. 4:13; Matt. 7:21-23). It matters neither how much money a group gives to charity nor how many adherents it has. So long as it offers unauthorized worship to God, they need to beware *for they have gone in the way of Cain*. Because of the nature of the hearts of accountable men (Jer. 17:9), we ought to "know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). It is God's right to tell men how to worship Him and for men to worship Him just how He has prescribed. That we learn this lesson is my humble prayer.

God's Happiness is Spiritual, not Material

Harrell Davidson

Everyone is seeking happiness. Millions of dollars are spent each year in the pursuit of happiness. We read a piece recently that quoted some figure in the millions of dollars in RV sales alone. Fame and fortune are just around the corner and we are looking for it. Are we looking in the right places? Some of the most miserable people in all the world have riches beyond comprehension. The big business buys out the little business. The big farmer is slowly taking the small farmer out of the markets and away from a livelihood. What produces happiness for one is misery for another. What does the Bible say?



“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). What we own or what we enjoy doing is not necessarily that which pleases God. One should be right toward God. In Luke 12:21 Jesus said: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” If we are to please, we must be rich toward Him. Jesus asks us to, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). When the apostle Paul wrote to the young man Timothy he said, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). Some say that money corrupts people. We need to be careful and note the “love” of money is that which causes many sorrows and heartaches and not just the money. One who is wealthy and rich toward God is one that makes God rejoice.

There is true happiness in peace and tranquility. Without true peace man would be and will be miserable. True peace comes from our Lord. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). While this statement was made to the apostles it is certainly appropriate for us to note today. That kind of peace can only come through obedience unto, and following Christ. Paul, by inspiration said it this way: “Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice” (Phi. 4:4). Jesus said that: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Since God is a Spirit, in order for Him to be happy, we must live and participate in spiritual things, that is, things that He has directed.

The Right Kind of Preaching

Cled E. Wallace

Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of hard and soft are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be a difficult thing to determine the kind of both that should be done. A direct appeal to the New Testament, its preachers and its writers ought to settle any question that arises in such a connection. Men who say the most about “the right method of approach,” “constructive articles,” etc., betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources, rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach. The main idea is getting there anyhow. I shall resort to the rather simple strategy of pointing some Scripture texts at some of the approaching methodists among us who never approach, or do so in such timid manner, they are useless after they arrive. They might as well have stayed at home.



Now, John the Baptizer, was a fairly acceptable preacher considering the time and cir-

cumstances of his activities. "There came a man sent from God whose name was John." He was an austere man, simple in his tastes and habits. He was neither clothed in purple and fine linen, nor did he fare sumptuously every day. "Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey." He preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and seemed to encounter no difficulty in approaching his subject. He got there a lot quicker than he would have, had he worn a scissor-tail coat and been called Dr. John. Preachers thus handicapped, seldom get there at all, for they are too busy talking about the method of approach. John was not particularly worried, according to the record, about offending people. He demanded of all that they repent or burn. There were some "honorable men" in John's audience who were highly connected and proud of their standing. They condescended to submit to John's baptism, but John perceived that their motives were unrelated to the personal repentance he was preaching. He made a personal attack on them, called them "Ye offspring of vipers" and demanded of them "fruit worthy of repentance." A questionnaire might have disclosed the fact that a goodly number of very nice people did not savor John's "attacks on honorable men." That did not bother John any. He was not preaching to please the people, but to please God by blasting sin and sinners and leading them to repentance. He even had an invitation to preach to king Herod. This intrepid man of God then said the wrong thing at the psychological moment and got his head chopped off. He told Herod that he was living with his brother Philip's wife and that it was not lawful for him to have her. What would a modern perfumed and manicured preacher think of that method of approach? John was a constructive preacher! That word sounds familiar, doesn't it? He razed the mountains, filled the valleys, and straightened the crooked and made "the rough ways smooth." By his preaching, he built a highway in all the wilderness for the Lord. The constructive preaching described by the baby-talk of modern methodists among us would not have levelled any mountains, filled any valleys, nor constructed a highway for royalty. Softly spoken platitudes in religion, mainly designed to be inoffensive, generally true as they may be, are not constructive of what the Lord wants built up! When a sinner, even a dressed-up sinner, who belongs to "a respectable church," hears a real constructive preacher, he does not feel like he had visited a beauty parlor.

Jesus is by common consent the greatest of all teachers and preachers. He astonished the men of His time and all succeeding time with the Sermon on the Mount. In it He exalted humility, purity of heart, meekness and mercy. He pronounced blessings on peacemakers and those who could rejoice under persecution for righteousness' sake without compromising or surrendering their loyalty. While holding forth true standards of holiness, He condemns divorce, hypocritical praying, fasting and alms-giving to be seen of men, the love and selfish use of money, all hate and thirst for vengeance, harsh and hypocritical judgments on others, and voiced a stern warning-against "false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." He was pointed in His definitions. A wise man is one who hears His words and does them. All others are foolish and will suffer a great fall. There is no compromise with or winking at sin, either personal or doctrinal, in the Sermon on the Mount. It is famous for the scope of its teaching and condemns as much as it applauds. Jesus was an iconoclast. He demolished the false that He might construct the true. Our present methodists of approach, who admit that they are the very sugar of the earth, are too squeamish to chop down the thorns of error. They expect their scanty scattering of constructive seed to choke out the thorns. "Preach the gospel and let others alone." Jesus did not do it that way! Some of them are strong on letting others alone and preach very little Gospel.

Jesus aroused powerful opposition among "honorable men," met them face to face in hot exchanges, answered their captious questions, directed parables against them, withered them into defeated silence by His repartee, warned His disciples and the people against their teaching, and when it was called to His attention that they had become offended at Him, He said: "Let them alone, they are blind guides." He called their worship "vain worship" and their teaching "the doctrine and commandments of men." He charged them with making void the Word of God because of their traditions. The last

days in the temple area were hectic. He charged them with turning the house of God into a den of robbers. He did justice to His subject in highly descriptive language. He attacked some of these “honorable men,” chief shepherds of the flock, as whited sepulchers, serpents, offspring of vipers, sons of hell and told them they could not escape the judgment of hell. He called them fools and blind gnat-strainers and camel-swallowers and charged them with all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the days of Abel. He said other nice things like this to them. What do you think of His method of approach? Anyhow, He approached! Yet, when some of us make a comparatively mild attack on the false doctrines of our time, long-faced mourners over the departed, journalistic glory of Zion, wail like children in the market places, that we are utterly void of the spirit of Christ! What a pity that Jesus could not have made a pilgrimage to New Jersey and learned something about the sweet freshness of a right approach! He did not even have the softening benefits of a brotherhood survey! Some of the loudest talkers about the spirit of Christ, know least about it. He was not doctrinally tolerant. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Would it not be better to preach “a positive gospel,” make heaven so inviting that nobody would want to go anywhere else? Jesus preached some hell-fire and damnation along with it, and it can be recommended to warm up the modern method of approach. We have the example of Jesus and apostolic precept for preaching the truth and exposing error.

Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Itching ears can be tickled with questionnaires followed up by “higher journalistic standards”: diluted to the formula of the proper method of approach. Such methods may please the sects and spoil the brethren. The right kind of preaching ought to convert some of the sects, agitate all of them, and put fight in the brethren. “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

If a man wants to be the right kind of preacher and writer, he should form the acquaintance of Paul and watch him approach. He might also make a side-study of Stephen with profit. Paul expressed a high degree of aversion for “some that trouble you. and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” He pronounced an anathema on all who preached any other Gospel than that which he received from the Lord and made known to the people. There is not anything in Paul’s record to show that he would be pleased with a man today, who for some twenty years was “lost” to loyal contenders for the faith, found the fellowship of digressives more satisfactory than that of “the alleged loyal church,” and gained sudden prominence among loyal churches by making a survey to find out what kind of preaching and writing the brethren wanted. “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10, 11). Paul’s preaching drew fire. Honorably connected men “contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.” Paul met the challenge boldly. “Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Instead of criticizing Paul’s method of approach, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” They did not rebuke Paul by saying, “peace, brother, peace!” Paul was charged with madness, teaching unlawful customs, being the ringleader of a sect, turning the world upside down, and being a pestilent fellow. If he lived today, he would not be sending out questionnaires and making surveys to feel the pulse of the brotherhood.

A study of Paul ought to toughen up some tenderfeet among us who tread about over Gospel principles about like a barefooted boy in a grass-burr patch.

\$1,000.00 Reward

We will pay \$1,000.00 to anyone who can produce a New Testament passage telling one to “Pray The Sinner's Prayer” in answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

A Vessel Unto Honor

Lester Kamp

We certainly know that the church is not a physical building made of wood and stone; the church is people. But, the inspired Paul likens the church to “a great house” (2 Tim. 2:20) and referred to the church as “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). It is, therefore, appropriate to visualize the church as a mansion, the palace of the king, **a great house** with many inhabitants. And, as we consider the residents of this house, we notice a variety of people that Paul refers to as **vessels**. He says, “...there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth” (2 Tim. 2:20). In the church the people have a variety of talents, abilities, levels of usefulness. When Paul describes the church under the figure of the human body, he describes the **members** of the body functioning in different ways and with different purposes (1 Cor. 12:12-27).



Here in 2 Timothy 2, Paul emphasizes that these **vessels** (people) in the **great house** of God can be described as being in two groups “some to honor, and some to dishonor” (2 Tim. 2:20). Surely, all of us should desire to be honorable in our service to God. There are only two alternatives. The choice is ours. There is no middle ground. If we are in the **great house** of God, we are either a **vessel unto honor** or a vessel unto dishonor. We cannot be both; we must be one or the other (Matt. 6:24; 12:30). What then is necessary for us to be vessels unto honor? God through Paul tells us precisely what we must do.

Consider carefully 2 Timothy 2:21, “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” First, notice that this is a conditional statement. The word **if** cannot be over-emphasized. Meeting these conditions is absolutely necessary in becoming and being a **vessel unto honor**. These conditions are things a person must do **if** he is to be a vessel of honor. Let us examine each of these necessary conditions.

“If a Man Purge Himself From These”

Purge is found only here and in 1 Corinthians 5:7 where Paul instructs the brethren to separate themselves from the sinner among them lest the entire congregation be defiled by their association with and acceptance of his sin. The key idea of the word *purge* is to separate oneself by deliberate action. Purging does not just happen automatically; it requires decisive action. **From these**, according to the context means two things: 1) Moral impurity, and 2) Doctrinal impurity. Notice:

Moral Impurity. Earlier, Paul had stated emphatically, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ **depart from iniquity**” (1 Tim. 2:19b, emphasis mine). Later the instructions are: “Flee youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). This idea of separation from sin is taught throughout the New Testament. We are told: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed...” (Rom. 12:2). “Love not the world...” (2 John 2:15-17). “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). In Romans 6, the case is made throughout the chapter that conversion means a determined, absolute separation from sin. Notice, “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 servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). “Keep thyself pure” (2 Tim. 5:22). When individual Christians are pure in life, the church is pure (Eph. 5:27).

Doctrinal Impurity. Moral purity is dependent on a Divine standard and is obtained only when we are guided by God’s Word. Doctrinal purity is the result of following that Divine standard in teaching (doctrine). Again, the context here dictates a separation from every deviation from that standard. Paul had warned, “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Tim. 2:16). He mentions Hymeneus and Philetus by name and warns against their false teaching. “Who con-

cerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2:17). In the larger context, Paul had stated early in his first letter to Timothy, "...that thou mightiest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which in faith; so do" (1 Tim. 1:3-4). All faithful Christians must separate themselves from false doctrine and those that teach false doctrine (2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17).

“Sanctified”

Sanctification (related words: saint, holy, hallowed, holiness, sanctified) appears several hundred times in the New Testament. It literally means to “set apart.” It does not mean sinless perfection for it is used of the Corinthians, “To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). These people before their conversion engaged all kinds of sins, but then after their conversion Paul told them “...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 Cor. 6:11). This process of their sanctification and justification is briefly described by Luke, “...and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

According to the New Testament, obtaining sanctification involves a number of essential things. Sanctification is obtained by five things:

- 1) By the truth of God.** Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth” (John 17:17).
- 2) By faith.** When Jesus gave Paul his mission purpose, he said, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).
- 3) By the Will of God.** “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Paul told the Ephesian elders, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
- 4) By obedience to the Word.** “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” (1 Pet. 1:22).
- 5) By water and the word.** Speaking of the church, Paul wrote, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). In summary, people are sanctified when they are obedient to the Word of God and are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4).

“Meet For the Master's Use”

The idea here is to be available and willing to be used in the service of the Master (Jesus). This same word is translated *profitable* in 2 Timothy 4:11. This person not only allows the Master to use him in His service, but also desires that service and is eager to serve.

We are all someone's servant. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). Everyone is a servant: we either serve satan to our own destruction or we serve Christ. There are only two alternatives. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). The master that we serve is determined by our willingness to yield ourselves in that master's service. Unless we yield ourselves in service to Christ we are servants of satan. Service to Christ begins when we begin to obey Him. “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” (Rom. 6:17-18; cf. 6:3-4). Read the entire sixth chapter of Romans and notice the emphasis throughout the chapter on the importance of our conscious yielding of ourselves completely to Christ now that we are Christians.

In God's view, every person is important. In the preaching of the gospel, “every creature” is to hear the good news (Mark 16:15-16). In the church every member (vessel) is

important. "...according to the effectual working in the measure of every part [i.e. every *vessel unto honor*, lk], maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Regardless of the number of talents we have or the quality (according to man's view) of those talents are, God can use us effectively (Matt. 25:13-30). **Every member is important.** "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members, which we think to be less honorable, upon whom we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part that lacked" (1 Cor. 12:22-24).

There are some in the church that God cannot use. There are some who live like they want to, attend only when they want to, and serve only at their convenience. There are those who are unwilling to give their lives to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:2). There are others who believe only; that is, those that believe without doing. These are vessels unto dishonor. Clearly, Christianity is not only abstaining from evil, but also doing what God calls us to do. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). James emphasized, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jam. 1:22).

Are you meet for the Master's use?

"Ready Unto Every Good Work"

Readiness involves willingness (Acts 21:13), preparedness (Acts 23:23) and having the proper equipment (Eph. 6:13f). A vessel unto honor must have a ready mind when it comes to God's work, willing to be used in His service. He must be yielding his life in the service of the King. A *vessel of honor* must prepare himself for that service through the study of God's Word and equipping himself through the application of that Word. Notice three passages where the phrase, or its equivalent, "every good work" appears.

First, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all (every, ASV) good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We learn what good works are from God's Word. Surely a knowledge of the inspired Word of God is essential to being a vessel of honor in the great house of God. That knowledge comes from study (2 Tim. 2:15). Knowing God's Word is essential to answering questions that are raised by others (1 Pet. 3:15) and to being able to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). After all, everyone is ultimately going to be judged by that Word (John 12:48). **We need to know the Word of God.**

Second, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). These people were hypocrites because they said and taught the truth, but their lives were absent of good works; they failed to display the good works authorized by God. They thereby denied God by their lack of good works. Jesus described the scribes and Pharisees in the same way, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not" (Matt. 23:3). The presence or absence of good works, the fruits of life, determine are faithfulness to God (Matt. 7:21), "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

Third, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:1-2). Here the context indicates the need to be good citizens and good neighbors. Vessels of honor who are ready unto every good work are obedient to the laws of the land (unless they conflict with the law of God, Acts 5:29); they are exemplary citizens who "render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). Honorable service to God requires that we be good neighbors. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-

25). Honorable vessels use their good lives to influence others to become Christians and live the life pleasing to God (Matt. 5:16).

To Honor: To Glorify

In summary, we are vessels of honor in the great house of God, the church, when we devote ourselves to glorifying God. Jesus said of himself, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). We glorify God when we accomplish the work that he has given us to do. "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4, ASV).

Jesus again states, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciple" (John 15:8). We honor God and the Christ by bearing abundantly the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and by producing through teaching other disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). Notice here the emphasis Jesus made on not only bearing fruit, but also on bearing much fruit. Growth is important.

Finally, Peter wrote: "but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (1 Pet. 4:16, ASV). God is glorified when His vessels wear His name honorably. Paul urges all Christians to "walk worthily of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). "...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

Let us all be vessels of honor in the great house of God!

The Gospel Preceptor Circles the World Every Day

**These are some locations around the
world which visited our website July 10-11, 2022:**

Goose Creek, South Carolina; Saint Ignatius, Montana; Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia; Bengaluru, Karnataka, India; Frankfurt am Main, Hesse; Germany; Jerusalem, Israel; London, England; Istanbul, Turkey; Amsterdam, North Holland; Tokyo, Japan; Balashikha, Moscow Oblast, Russian Federation; Fulton, California; Abilene, Texas; Hong Kong; Paris, France; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Kaohsiung City, Taiwan; Singapore; Xiamen, Fujian, China; Redding California; Thirsk, North Yorkshire, England; Barcelona, Spain; Ap Binh Dinh, Tinh Ca Mau, Vietnam; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Camden, Tennessee; Gardone Val Trompia, Italy; Thane, Maharashtra, India; Richmond, Virginia; Tel Aviv, Israel; Ocala, Florida; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Chicago, Illinois; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada; Leek, Staffordshire, England; Atlanta, Georgia.

The Church Today Must be the Church of the First Century

Charles Pogue

Sometimes people scoff at the idea of the New Testament pattern for the church. They will say it is neither possible nor desirable for the church of today to be the same church as was begun in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. On the contrary, the church of today must be the church of the first century.



The church today must be the church of the first century, because the church was and is the design of God. The church was in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). The Old Testament prophets, including Isaiah (Isa. 2:1-3), Daniel (Dan. 2:26-44), and Micah (Mic. 4:1-2) prophesied concerning it. Among the things Daniel stated about that church, or kingdom, was that it would stand forever.

The church of today must be the church of the first century, because the things that were taught concerning it from the very beginning were to be taught in the future. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth to bring to their remembrance the same things he taught everywhere in every church (1 Cor. 4:17). Writing to Timothy, Paul told him to teach the things Paul had taught him, so they could teach it to others (2 Tim. 2:2). Peter declared that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. The church is one of those things that pertain to life and godliness in as much as, God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul affirms that Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). Where is there any recall of any of the instructions taught by the apostle in the New Testament? There isn't! And where is there authority on the part of man to change the church? Again, there is none.

The church of today must be the church of the first century, because the miraculous gifts of the Spirit ended when that which was perfect (the completed Word) was come (1 Cor. 13: 1-13). If the Word of God is perfect, and that Word describes the message, the worship, the organization, and the work of the church, which it does, then the church must remain the same as it was in the First Century.

The church of today must be the church of the first century, because Jesus Christ built the church (Matt. 16:18), He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and He is the head over all things to it (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). If man changes the church in any regard, then he has usurped the headship of Christ. Man cannot usurp the authority of God, or he will pay for that in the judgment.

The church of today must be the church of the first century, because any one who takes away from the Word of God will have his name taken away from the book of life. Any one who adds to it will have added unto him, the plagues written in the book (Rev. 22:18-19). One cannot change the church of the first century in any regard without either removing something that was a God given attribute of it, or that was not commanded of God. In other words, any change made by man is either an addition or a subtraction, and such will result in him losing his soul.

When man changes the church Jesus built, it is no longer the church Jesus built, and there is no salvation in any institution of man. We must not for our souls' sakes change the church of the first century.

Clothing Talks and it Speaks Volumes

Jess Whitlock

The summer heat is coming on and the clothes are coming off! The wise man wrote: "I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the **attire of a harlot**, and a crafty heart." (Pro. 7:7-10). The clothing of a man or a woman speaks volumes.



Mary Quaint is remembered as the "Mother of the Miniskirt." She was quoted for her reasoning behind the design of the miniskirt.

Am I the only woman who has ever wanted to go to bed with a man in the afternoon? Any law-abiding female, it used to be thought, waits until dark. Well, there are lots of girls who don't want to wait! Mini-clothes are symbolic of them. (*Newsweek*, Nov. 13, 1967).

While preaching for the Lord's church in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, I was driving to my office one morning—a trip usually that took me by the Methodist church building. Imagine my amazement to see a large poster that read: "A HOT PANTS DANCE ~ December 1st from 8:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m. ~ ALL GIRLS wearing HOT PANTS get in for half-price..." (at the bottom of the sign in all upper case letters): "COME AND ENJOY THE SCENERY!" (Emphasis theirs).

We know that when Adam and Eve were created that "...they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). Soon, they ate of the forbidden fruit and realized that they were naked. The Bible then informs us that they "...sewed fig-

leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:6-7). The word “aprons” comes from the Hebrew *chagorah*, which is defined in meaning; “girdle, or coverings or loin-cloth.” Those “aprons” were not sufficient clothing in the sight of God. “Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and **clothed** them.” (Gen. 3:21). The NKJV renders it “tunics of skin.” The word “coats” is from the Hebrew *kutoneth*, which is described by the scholars as a “long shirt-like garment.”

God did not consider Adam and Eve to be **clothed**. The words *chagorah* and *kutoneth*, are used in the garments worn by the High Priest (Exo. 28:4). Later, the clothing worn by the priest is dictated by God. “You shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness: they shall reach from the waist to the thighs” (Exo. 28:42). To uncover the thighs was to expose **nakedness** in the sight of Jehovah.

In Galatians 5:19-21 we have listed the “works of the flesh.” Paul warns that “...they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). The word: lasciviousness; lewdness in the NKJV (Gal. 5:19), comes from a Greek word *aselgeia*, which scholars define as “licentiousness, lewd, unchaste, indecent desires, preceding from lust...” Webster’s Dictionary has this: “inclined to lechery, lewd, lustful, tending to arouse sexual desires...”

Some women dress to be **Chaste** (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Pet. 3:2); others dress to be **Chased!** The Godly teaching must come from three different avenues:

The Home: To be a member of the cheerleaders, majorettes, or the Pom-Pom girls, permission must be granted by the parents. I cannot imagine a Christian father who would want his wife or daughter to dress in such a way as to invite the lustful looks of this world.

The Elders: These men are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the flock (the church), (1 Pet. 5:2), and are responsible for what the flock is fed (Acts 20:28). They will one day give an account to the Chief Shepherd (Heb. 13:17). The elders must set proper guidelines for what is allowed in worship to the Lord God. They must charge the preacher to uphold God’s truth in all matters pertaining to Christian living.

The Preacher: God’s man is to preach “all of God’s Word” on any subject that is addressed in Scripture. Sometimes the topics covered will not be popular with the world, and sometimes, even members of the church. This does not negate the command of Paul to young Timothy: (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

“Hearing They Hear Not”

Lee Moses

Jesus said of His fellow Jews, “they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not” (Mat. 13:13). One could translate this, “While they see, they do not see; and while they hear, they do not hear.” How can this be? One either sees or does not see; one either hears or does not hear. But so many people with good perceptive abilities fail to use those abilities as God has given them. Thus, it can truly be said of such people that “hearing they hear not.”



Many Hear There is a God, but They do Not Hear

There are those who hear the Word of God, or at least hear enough portions of the Word to have testimony to God’s existence. They have heard: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), which remains the best and only viable explanation. They have seen with their eyes evidence of God’s existence:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psa. 19:1-4).

People have the ability to hear and see these things, they surely do see and hear these

things—yet it as if they never do. They pay no attention, as a deaf man will pay no attention to the sounding horn of an automobile rapidly approaching him. They do not live as though they are aware—that there is a God who is aware of their every move and every thought.

Many Hear There Will Be a Judgment Day, but They Do Not Hear

There are those who claim to believe in God, but continue to stroll leisurely down the pernicious paths of immorality, selfishness, and man-made religion. They see that all accounts are not settled on earth. Job asked, “Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?” (Job 21:7). The wicked often remain unpunished throughout their lives, and are certainly not punished to the degree they deserve (compare with Rom. 6:23). But will a just God allow all such wrongs to go unpunished? He most certainly will not. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). He most certainly will. And the Lord has revealed that He will and how He will: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6).

Revelation’s depiction of the Judgment Day should serve as a sobering reminder to forsake the paths of wickedness:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

Who can hear such things and not turn from their wicked ways?

Many Hear There is Salvation, but They do Not Hear

Some wallow in self-loathing, believing they could never be saved. Others assault what they believe to be a tyrannical God. But do they not hear what God says? God has offered salvation to all: “And he [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). To receive a Presidential pardon, one must usually be a personal friend of the President. However, God offers salvation to His worst human enemies:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:8-10).

Tyrannical? Not remotely. “Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Anyone can be saved from his sins and become an heir of eternal life, if one will hear what God calls him to do. The Lord has blessed mankind with the capability to see and hear (compare with Psa. 94:9). He has blessed mankind with faculties capable of discerning and acting upon the greatest spiritual truths. Yet, too often, “hearing they hear not.” When God has revealed to us crucial spiritual truths, yet we fail to discern and act upon them, the failure lies with the hearers themselves:

For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Mat. 13:15).

Let us not close our ears to the most important things we will ever hear.

Coping with the Plague of Biblical Ignorance

Dub McClish

Introduction

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children (Hos. 4:6).



Such is the awful assessment of the ignorance of God's people in the 8th century BC. Plainly, God was displeased with his people in the Old Testament because of their ignorance of His Word. If ignorance of God's Law was inexcusable in a day when there was no way to mass-produce it and circulate it among the people except by public reading, how much more inexcusable is ignorance among us with our multiple copies of the Bible in our homes and the many opportunities to hear it preached and taught?

Time was, in previous generations, when we were known as a “Bible-totin', Bible-quotin'” people by our neighbors and friends. Now we can't even get our brethren to bring their Bibles to classes and worship. At one time, we had the reputation of being able to find the Scripture needed if we could not quote it. Now, many of the saints know less about the Bible than their sinner friends. Surely, there is evidence aplenty to indicate that we no longer deserve being called a Bible-knowing people generally.

In saying these things, I do not have in mind the babes in Christ who have had little time to learn. I am speaking of those who have been members of the body for a decade, or two, or three, or four and still have hardly even a vague concept of what the Bible says specifically or (in some cases) teaches generally.

Why are we so timid about talking to our friends about Christ, the Gospel, and the church? More than anything else, I believe it is because we feel insecure and inadequate in our knowledge of God's Word. A few years ago, I took a survey in a Bible class, asking where the key verses on the plan of salvation are found. While many in the class knew what the plan of salvation was, not even the elders of that church could tell where to find them.

If you wanted to look up the passage quoted in the first paragraph, would you look near the beginning, the middle, or the end of the Old Testament? Is the book of Hezekiah in the Old Testament or the New? Are you sure? Can you place Moses, Abraham, Joshua, David, and Noah in chronological sequence? Was Luke an apostle? How many New Testament books can you name? In order? “But,” you say, “these things are not important.” Perhaps not. But if we 2 know not these simple factual “unimportant” things, chances are good that we don't know many of the more important things. Please read Hebrews 5:12–6:1 (it's in the New Testament).

Why Such a Plague of Ignorance?

1. We do not study like our spiritual forbears did. We have become slaves to frenzied schedules. Parents and children alike are involved in so many **good** things we haven't time for the best. Our family members run in many directions, making it difficult to even assemble for a meal together. In those rare moments when everyone is at home, often we are offering up our devotions to our TV altars. Consequently, Bible school teachers are greeted by pupils (young and old) who have made no preparation, some of whom will cease to attend if strong encouragement to study is applied or homework is assigned. Along with our instant and effortless coffee and oatmeal, people want instant and effortless Bible study. Some would just as soon have none.

2. Weak preaching has done its part. Mind you, no one ever became learned in the Bible by listening to preaching alone, however strong it was. But our grasp of God's Word can be powerfully accelerated by strong Biblical preaching. The less people study at home the more they need strong preaching from the pulpit. Ironically, the people who need it the most have the least appetite for it.

Several years ago, the cry began to go up that our preaching had been “too hard,” “too doctrine-centered,” and “too tactless.” If that ever was the case, it certainly is not so now. Many of our preachers are so up to date that they know more about the fine art of ear-tickling than of sounding forth the clarion call of the saving and strengthening Gospel. Many “pew-sitters” have confused polite little twenty-minute talks that would be met with approval in any church building in town, with Gospel sermons. Some not only like such; they demand it. Preach the Bible to such people and you’ll raise their ire. Say what you will about our preachers of yore (and many who are still like them today, thank God), their hearers knew more Bible after their sermons than before.

3. The profusion of Bible versions is at least suspect. I am not opposed to up-to-date and accurate Bible versions, and no Bible student should be. Excellent translations have been in circulation for generations, nixing any excuse for a constant stream of new ones—except financial profit from their publication. With the proliferation of versions has come a corresponding lack of distinction in men's minds about what is and what isn't Scripture. Often the most farfetched, subjective paraphrase is most readily adopted by the most ignorant person on the Bible. Rather than being a source of enlightenment, such volumes only compound ignorance of the true teachings of the Bible and mislead the uninformed reader. More about this subject later.

Consequences of Our Ignorance

If one remains totally ignorant of the Bible, so that he never learns its message of salvation, he will be lost eternally (Mark 16:15–16; 2 The. 1:8–9; et al.). Even those who learn enough to obey the Gospel and do so, imperil their souls by choosing to remain in spiritual infancy. Biblical ignorance results in dire consequences:

1. A teacher shortage in the churches (Heb. 5:12). I am sure that the most frequent reason given for not teaching is, “I don’t know enough.” It is probably the truth in many cases. One can no more teach Bible than Biology without knowing the subject.

2. Spiritual pygmyism (Heb. 5:12–13). Biblical ignorance causes one to perpetually remain a spiritual baby. It is from these that most of the “bawling and squalling” is heard in local churches when “the whole counsel of God” is declared (Acts 20:27).

3. Inability to “discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). A person who cannot see the difference in worldly and Christian conduct is demonstrating his Biblical ignorance. A person who says, “there are no moral absolutes,” shows his ignorance, for God says there are such things as “good” and “evil.” A Christian who says he can see no harm in social drinking, dancing, or viewing obscene movies, and cannot distinguish between modest and immodest clothing often fails these matters through ignorance.

4. Susceptibility to “every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:13–15). Perhaps the church has felt the devastating curses of her ignorance at this point more than any other. The devil will never invent a false doctrine that the Holy Spirit has not anticipated and refuted in the Bible. However, this is all for naught if we don’t know the Book. The old doctrines of Calvinism and the more recent waves of “holymrollerism” have been exposed repeatedly by faithful preachers in public debates spanning centuries. Many among us think these doctrines are new because they are ignorant of the Bible and church history alike. Some are deliberately leading the church toward denominationalism; many are following because of their ignorance.

Overcoming Our Ignorance

How can we cure the great famine of Bible knowledge that is so prevalent among the saints? The following suggestions may be oversimplified, but I submit them for consideration:

1. There must be a desire to learn more. The Lord likely meant more, but surely, He included spiritual knowledge that produces righteousness when he promised, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5: 6). We will remain ignorant only if we are content to be. A great part of the cure lies in our priorities. If we view the concerns of the kingdom as an inane pastime,

engaged in only two or three hours every Sunday, we guarantee our own spiritual malnutrition.

2. Get a good, reputable version of the Bible, and stick with it. I deeply respect the King James Version and some other versions have some strong points. The New King James Version (1979) is a faithful update of its original namesake. However, it is generally conceded by sound brethren that the American Standard Version (1901) is the closest thing to a literal, word-for-word English translation in existence. While it has some weaknesses, it probably has fewer than any other. I unhesitatingly recommend it. I use it in my private study and in the pulpit and classroom. Most “modern speech” versions are one-man efforts, resulting in many biased renderings (Williams is perhaps the safest of the lot). Also, remember that some of these are not even translations, but paraphrases, making them biased commentaries, at best. The committee-produced volumes of the last several decades (e.g., The Revised Standard Version, The New International Version, The Easy-to-Read Version, et al.) are little better. They reflect Calvinistic, Premillennial, Pentecostal, and even skepticism errors held by various committee members. Further, beware of so-called “study Bibles,” the commentary notes of which are loaded with denominational poisons of various sorts. I recommend use of such books only comparatively with your basic version.

3. Set aside a time each day to study and follow a system. Here is one suggestion: Choose one book and devote your study time to it until you complete it. Use good commentaries, Bible dictionaries, atlases, a concordance, and other helps. Read everything you can on the book or subject, compiling a notebook on your research or making notes in your Bible’s margin. When you have done all you can on one subject or book, dig into another one. Don’t neglect at least reading some portion of the Bible every day.

4. Faithfully attend all the Bible classes and worship periods. Study your lesson before coming to class. If possible, outline the sermon as it is being preached. Take advantage of every special lecture series and Gospel meeting conducted by your home congregation and other faithful congregations in your area, for such will greatly enrich your knowledge. Enroll in a Bible correspondence course and try to enroll others.

We must use every opportunity to “...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ...” (2 Pet. 3:18). Our own salvation and that of the world depends upon our efforts to this end.

Is it Nothing to You?

George E. Darling, Sr.

Lamentations is a short book of but five chapters. It contains many practical lessons that could well be studied by Christians today. It contains a series of dirges by Jeremiah bewailing the afflictions of Israel and portrays the sad condition of God's people.

In verse twelve of the first chapter is a question asked from a heart that overflowed with pain because the sins of the people had placed them into the hands of their enemy and the last remnant was about to be carried away into exile. Jeremiah was grieved to see flagrant disinterest of his people and asked them, “**Is it Nothing to You?**” A city once strong and prosperous, now desolate and unpopulated, those whom God once favored and gave them victory over the Canaanites, now a victim of the heathens. **Is it Nothing of You?** Can it be that you just don't care! My beloved brethren, have we reached a point that we just don't care?

The church of our Lord is today faced with some of the greatest problems it has faced in modern history. Preachers who are willing to contend for the faith and stand for the old paths are becoming more and more in the minority. The warnings are sounded out, only for ears that are “dull of hearing.” The general attitude seems to be, “We just can't be bothered; the problems of God's people and the future of the Lord's church is of no importance to me.” We cannot deny that worldliness has the strongest hold on Christians today than it has ever had. It is in control in the hearts of the majority. Things

that were once frowned upon by society in general are now tolerated and condoned in many congregations. For instance, drinking was once confined to the “saloon crowd.” Respectable people would not patronize them. A member of the church could not be found with liquor on his breath. Today things have changed; we have been brain-washed into accepting the drunkard as an alcoholic that is in need of our patience, sympathy and understanding. He is fellowshiped and used in the services of the Lord; called upon to lead in prayer and to wait upon the table. If the preacher dares to condemn drinking, he runs into the argument that the Bible doesn't condemn drinking, only drunkenness. It's alright to drink, just so long as you don't get drunk. My question is **how drunk?** Social drinks are served in the homes of professed Christians. I know of one preacher that was offered a drink; he refused and said, “No just give me a ginger ale and no one will know the difference.” **For shame!** A preacher with no backbone—but it was in the home of a deacon, and he didn't want to create a fuss.

There was a time when dancing was condemned from the pulpit in no uncertain terms. Not only the pulpits of the church, but from denominational pulpits as well. Many a member of a denomination was “turned out” of his church for dancing. Some of the strongest sermons I have ever heard against the evils of the dance were preached by a sectarian preacher. Today the preacher that has enough courage and conviction to condemn dancing is considered as a “cranky old nut” that is not in tune with the times. Fathers and mothers who were not allowed to dance when they were under their parents actually encourage their children to dance. Some might try to discourage it but the children want to do what “everyone else is doing” so Mom and Pop give in. They are afraid their children will “quit the church” if they are not allowed to do as they please. Public opinion does not make an immoral thing clean, nor a clean thing immoral. Dancing is condemned in the scriptures. It is just as wrong to dance today as it was when Mom and Pop were growing up. It still breeds lasciviousness. The Christian doesn't dance—period. The dancing foot and the praying knee is not found on the same limb. I have **never** known a strong Christian who danced or who allowed his children to dance. **Is it Nothing to You?**

The introduction of mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church brought about division. For years its use has been severely condemned, and rightly so. Not only were thousands of souls lost because of this innovation, we also lost many buildings. Our ranks were greatly reduced but the Lord was with us. He saw us through and we made a tremendous comeback. Today we are faced with the same problem. Though the instrument has not been brought into the majority of the congregations, we do have those who are powerful advocates of our fellowshiping those who use the instrument. If a poll were taken in the average congregation of the Lord's church today we would find a staggering number of members who would not oppose the instrument in our worship. Must we be brought into the bondage of the heathens again? **Is it Nothing to You?**

There was a time when divorce was rare, even among those of the world. A person could not be found in the church with two living companions with a fine toothed comb. Today it is hard to find a congregation that is not plagued with such people. The preacher who cries out against this sin and dares to preach the truth on the subject is in for a “skinning.” Sometimes by an elder who has a son or daughter in this predicament, or maybe even the elder himself.

The past few years I have heard so much about “fads.” When the women started wearing their dresses above the knee, I was to I told, run its course, etc., etc—Well, it has “It's just a fad, it will pass away. It won't do any good to preach against it. It will run its course alright!” Today you can hardly tell the difference between the dress of many church members and the costume of a burlesque stripper or a June Taylor dancer. Then comes the “fad” of the hippies with their long hair. “Don't preach against it. It's only a fad and will pass away,” I was told. The “fad” caught on! Today you can't tell the difference between the men and women if you sit on the back pew in church, that is, until they stand up and even then you are in doubt. First it was condemned and then it was condoned. Well, brethren, we had a new fad that swept the country called **Streaking** —(you know, where they run around stark naked). Again I was told, “It is only a

fad, like swallowing gold fish, panty raids or stuffing Volkswagens. It won't do any good to preach against it." Will we wait until a "Streaker-streaks" down the aisle during the Lord's Supper? It didn't take us too long to accept the mini and the long hair fads. I can hear some saying, "Why preacher, the Bible condemns nakedness." I know it does and I also know it condemns immodest dress and that it is a shame for a man to have long hair—we accept two out of three. **Is it Nothing to You?**

Well, what can we do about it? We can teach our children. We can teach our neighbor's children. We can preach and teach the truth from the pulpit and in the classroom. It might cause us to have "fire in our bones" like Jeremiah (Lam. 1 :13) and we might get fired—**period**. We may "call on our lovers only to be deceived and find elders who have given up the ghost in the city" (Lam. 1:19) but God will see us through. **Is it Nothing to You?**

A Bible Question For You...

Where can you find the following in your Bible: A Community Church, The Nazarene Church, A Cowboy Church, The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, The Pentecostal Church, The Lutheran Church, The Roman Catholic Church, The Christian Church, The Assembly of God, The Mormon Church, The Episcopal Church, The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, or The Presbyterian Church.

If you cannot find them in the Bible, why are you remaining in a church that God will root up? "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13) Every single church listed above will be consigned to hell on The Judgment Day. Those churches are abominations, founded by men—not God. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain" (Psa. 127:1).

By Whose Authority?

Gary W. Summers

Not long ago, the following statement appeared in a national magazine: "No one religion is better than the other. Stop the hate and murder of those who don't believe the same as you."

The first sentence is false. One religion is better than all others because it has been verified to be true. While all religions may have some value, there is only one that accounts adequately for the origin of all things. Only one religion was foretold with hundreds of prophecies centuries in advance. Only one religion sets forth the highest morality possible. Only one answers questions as to why things are the way they are—everything from natural disasters to pain and suffering. Only one provides a remedy for sin—mankind's greatest problem. Only one reveals the truth about existence after death. What religion—besides Christianity—does all of these things? Not one!

So, by whose authority does someone say, "No one religion is better than the other"? Who possesses such knowledge and insight? There is no higher authority to confirm what this individual said beyond the person who said it, which means that no one is required to accept it. In fact, if all religions are the same, all of us face an immediate dilemma—that of contradiction. Suppose one religion teaches, "Love thy neighbor," and another one champions, "Kill thy neighbor." If all religions are equal, then the actions of loving and killing must be equal. If not, why not?

In fact, the author of the original statement must endorse contradiction in any area of disagreement between two or more religions. As Thomas B. Warren showed in his debates with atheists, unbelief in an objective God means that no authority for morality exists; therefore, abortion is both right and wrong. The same goes for stealing,

gambling, drunkenness, and every other moral issue. Without an objective source for morality (as saying that all religions are equal implies), everything falls into the realm of the subjective—with chaos resulting.

Is the original statement aimed at fanatical Muslims, or is some other religion hating and murdering people on a grand scale? If radical Muslims are the audience, they too will ask, “By what authority do you say our religion is no better than others?” Does the questioner think his mere affirmation will suffice? If they would listen at all, they would see that Christianity is superior—not equal!

Links to Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Northpoint church of Christ

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives – Gary Summers

False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ, Rives, TN

South Seminole church of Christ

The Danger of Godly Influences

David Ray

Is that title correct? Could there actually be anything negative about having a godly influence in your life? Let’s look at Scripture and see.



The books of the Kings and Chronicles, while giving us the history of the monarchs of the nations of Israel and Judah, give us many good lessons that we need to learn. One such lesson has to do with influence.

King Joash is known as one of the better kings of Judah. You can read about him in 2 Kings 12 as well as 2 Chronicles 24. Unfortunately, we learn in 2 Chronicles 24:17-22 that he was only good in the sight of God as long as Jehoiada the priest was alive; once Jehoiada was dead, Joash fell away from God.

Likewise, Joash’s grandson Azariah (also called Uzziah) was known as a good king. He followed God in the same way his grandfather did—partially. 2 Chronicles 26:5 says that he “sought God in the days of Zechariah.” But skip to verses 16-21 and we find the details of his apostasy after Zechariah was gone.

Jehoiada and Zechariah were obviously very righteous men. Certainly nobody would disagree that Joash and Azariah were greatly blessed to have the influences of these two men in their lives. But it also seems evident that these two kings **relied** on these two righteous examples to a fault.

It **is** possible to trust too much in others, even faithful brethren. No human is perfect. You can't rely solely on any godly influence; what happens when they're gone, either by death or figuratively by apostasy? Each one of us has to develop his/her own faith in God based on knowledge of His word. Each one of us must study to show himself approved (2 Tim. 2:15). Because each one of us **will** “appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Who are you allowing to influence you? And how much are you allowing yourself to be influenced? Whoever influences you, positively or negatively, will not stand with you in the judgment. He won't be there to answer for your actions. “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). Are you ready?

FREE!

“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised

By Jerry C. Brewer

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Salvation by Faith Only?

Guy N. Woods

According to the Baptist view, the order and conditions essential to salvation are: (1) repentance and (2) faith. Repentance is a change of mind, produced by sorrow for sin and leading to a reformation of life. What produces a change of mind (i.e., attitude of heart) in the sinner? In a word, all the factors involved in the scheme of redemption. The sinner, through contemplation of his lost condition, is led from feelings of gratitude for the provisions made for him to decide to turn from rebellion against God to humble and complete obedience to Him. From what source does he derive information touching his lost condition, and where does he learn of the provisions thus



made in his behalf? From the Scriptures, of course. What prompts him to act upon the impressions obtained in this manner? His confidence in the reliability of the facts and principles presented! But is not this confidence he now enjoys in the Sacred Writings nothing more nor less than faith? It is indeed, and without it there can be no repentance. Furthermore, it is the acceptance of the facts presented that leads him to desire to repent.

Faith, then, must **precede** repentance. Faith enables the sinner to repent—in fact, prompts the desire. Without faith, the sinner cannot repent; without faith, he would not if he could. As irresistible and conclusive as these facts are, they are, nevertheless, in hopeless conflict with Baptist doctrine. Why? The basic assumption of their doctrine is the dogma of salvation by faith only. They insist that the sinner is saved at the very instant of belief, before and without additional acts of obedience.

With such a position, it becomes clear that they cannot place repentance **after** faith in their scheme; to do so they would have the sinner *saved* before and without repentance.

Thus, to get repentance in their *plan of salvation* at all, they must place it **before** faith. Such an arrangement is illogical, unscriptural, and psychologically impossible. It is, however, but the inevitable consequence of their false theory regarding the plan of salvation. It is the fruit of an effort to be consistent in error while clinging tenaciously to a false premise—namely, that salvation is conditioned upon faith only.

They face a similar difficulty in their position regarding an alien sinner's prayer. While it is a tenet of their doctrine that God will hear and answer the prayer of an alien sinner, their position thereon makes such psychologically impossible. In their view, faith and salvation are concurrent—that is, the moment the sinner believes, he ceases to be an alien, he is saved. Manifestly, then, he cannot pray as an alien after faith, for he is—according to their conception—no longer an alien. If, therefore, he prays as an alien sinner, it must be before he believes. It is, however, psychologically impossible to pray without faith; moreover, such is displeasing to God (Heb. 11:6). Thus, since an alien cannot pray before he believes, and since Baptist doctrine has it that he is no longer an alien after believing, their doctrine makes it logically and psychologically impossible for an alien sinner to pray any time! Yet, it is of the very essence of their doctrine that an alien sinner must pray to receive salvation.

To Call Upon the Name of the Lord

Brad Green

Our loving and merciful God wants “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Since God desires that all men be saved, He provides for us His plan to save man (Rom. 1:16-17). How comforting it is to know that God loves us and sent His only begotten Son into the world that through Him we might be saved (John 3:16-17). It is also extremely comforting to **know** that we can **know** what God requires of us regarding salvation (8:31-32).

The Bible teaches that, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). What does it mean to “call upon the name of the Lord”? Many have de-

defined calling on the name of the Lord as a prayer for salvation and for Jesus to come and abide in one's heart. However, this definition contradicts the words of Jesus who said, "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" (Mat. 7:21). Any interpretation of a verse in the Bible that contradicts another verse is, of necessity, deemed to be false. The inspired James writes, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves...Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jam. 1:22; 2:17). Additionally, there is no example anywhere in the New Testament of an individual praying for salvation. Therefore, calling upon the name of the Lord does not refer to a prayer or to any spoken act.

It is important to understand how to "call upon the name of the Lord" since it is necessary for salvation. To understand the meaning, we must study the statement in the context of the book and chapter in which it is found as well as the whole of the New Testament. In the immediate context, we find that there are prerequisites to calling upon the name of the Lord—Romans 10:14-15 teaches that one must hear and believe. Also, in the immediate context, verse 16 in particular, we find a phrase that is used in substitute for "calling upon the name of the Lord." The inspired writer uses "obeyed the gospel" interchangeably with "call upon the name of the Lord." To be saved, one must obey the Gospel of Christ—i.e., "call upon the name of the Lord."

The apostle Paul further defines what it means to call upon the name of the Lord when he recalls the words spoken to him by Ananias, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Here, calling on the name of the Lord is defined as arising and being baptized to have one's sins washed away. This is in harmony with Paul's letter to the Romans seeing that Paul told them:

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 up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

It is also in harmony with the first Gospel sermon recorded in Acts 2. Peter and the other apostles preached, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:21). Later, when the audience was convinced of their sins and asked what they must do to be forgiven and thus saved, "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (2:38). The New Testament teaches that, following faith (Heb. 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3), and confessing that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:37), baptism is the culminating act of God's plan to save man (Mat. 28:19-20).

The act of calling upon the name of the Lord is inseparable from obedience to the Gospel of Christ and baptism. The Gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) and obeying the Gospel is used interchangeably with calling upon the name of the Lord (10:13, 16). Being baptized is an act of obedience commanded by the Gospel of Christ and is eternally connected to calling upon the name of the Lord by God, Himself, in such verses as Acts 2:21, 38 and 22:16. The Gospel is God's power unto salvation and baptism is the act at which the Bible teaches one is saved from past sins. According to the apostle Peter, "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21) and Jesus proclaims, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16).

Calling upon the name of the Lord, therefore, is not something that is spoken; it is an act of humility and submission to the Word of God in simple obedience. Those who obey God's plan of salvation, which culminates with water baptism, and remain faithful to God's Word until they depart this life (Rev. 2:10) are they who are calling upon the name of the Lord and will be saved.

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Is One as Good as Another?

Charles Box

If you are sick and need a doctor, is one as good as another? If you need medicine, is one as good as another? If you are reading a book, is one as good as another? If you are looking for a wife, is one as good as another? If you are buying a car, is one as good as another? If you are serving God, is one God as good as another? If you are a member of a church, is one as good as another?

Is One God as Good as Another?

There is a God in Heaven. The first words of the Bible say, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Is one God as good as another? The God of the Bible built all things. “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4). The heavens declare His glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). There is no God like the God of the Bible!

Is One Book as Good as Another?

The Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13). The message Paul and the other apostles spoke and wrote came by revelation (Gal. 1:11-12). Jesus promised, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat. 24:35). Since this promise is certain, is one book as good as another?

Is One Sacrifice as Good as Another?

Animals were sacrificed in Old Testament times to the God of Heaven. Daily sacrifices are made to gods around the world? Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. His substitutionary death for our sins is the greatest fact of all times. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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. 15:1-4). Jesus Christ suffered sin’s penalty in man’s place. There is no sacrifice to compare with the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins!

Is One Church as Good as Another?

Jesus promised to build His church. “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). All the saved are added to this “one church.” “Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved” (Acts 2:47). The church is those people called out of sin and called into God through Jesus. There is no church like the church of the Bible.

Is One Faith as Good as Another?

God’s plan included only one faith. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). This one faith is produced by all speaking the same things. “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind

and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). One faith is not as good as another. Jude said Christians must, “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Even in a tradition bound world it is possible to be a Christian only.

Is One Worship Just as Good as Another?

Acceptable worship is in spirit and in truth. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). The early church worshipped on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Their worship was simple: (1) Singing (Eph. 5:19), (2) Praying (1 The. 5:17-18), (3) Communion (Acts 20:7), (4) Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and (5) Preaching (Acts 2:42). Scriptural and acceptable worship is from the heart and according to the New Testament pattern.

Is One Name Just as Good as Another?

“And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The first century Christians were Christians only. We should wear only the name of our crucified Savior. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:15-16). There is no name like a Bible name!

Is One Plan Of Salvation as Good as Another?

Can we pray the sinner’s prayer or “pray through” for salvation? Or must we believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Those who accept the wonderful news that Jesus died for our sins should repent and be baptized to be saved. “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Won’t you choose to be saved in Christ instead of following some plan that will not save?

Is one as good as another? Is there any god like the God of the Bible? Is one baptism just as good as another? Is one church or one doctrine just as good as another? Our only hope is salvation in Christ. Are you in Christ?

The Authority of the Scripture Concerning Instrumental Music

Bill Jackson

Jesus Christ indicted the Jewish leadership of His day for “not knowing the Scriptures” (Mat. 22:29), and He showed His belief in the power of the Scripture in citing it in answer to every temptation Satan placed before Him (Mat. 4:4, 7, 10). The Lord directs us to the Scripture in all matters pertaining to worship by His statement, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). And the Lord identifies that truth as being the **Word of God!** (John 17:17). Thus, we find the Scriptures are authoritative, furnishing us completely (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and forming the basis of our eternal judgment (John 12:48).

As we consider the issue of instrumental music, the pertinent question then must be, “What saith the Scripture?” We have a record of approximately 63 years of the history of Jesus’ church in the New Testament and the record is inspired, complete and authoritative. What do we find in that volume? We find a complete silence as to the use of mechanical instruments of music! That silence, in keeping with the repeated statements as to what God does sanction in worship, is a thundering voice of God against the use of the instrument!

May we illustrate what we do find in the New Testament? In reference to Jesus and the apostles, we find them **singing** (Mat. 26:30). Saints of God at worship in a jail cell (Acts 16:26), in their public assemblies (1 Cor. 14:15), and in instruction that applied in

any circumstances of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), are found engaged in **singing!** The praise offered to God is called the **fruit of lips** (Heb. 13:15), and in any circumstances of joy the expression that God expects of us in terms of music is to **sing** (Jam. 5:13). More, even Old Testament pictures of the Christ coming into the midst of men, and then worshipping the Father, are pictures of the Lord in **song** (Rom. 15:9; Heb. 2:12). And there we have it, from the Scripture: All that is said about worship of God, in terms of music, from the time of Christ throughout the revealed history of the church, and it is **vocal music**, and vocal music **only!** When we ask, “What do the authoritative Scriptures say?”, we have the answer!

Mechanical instruments of music, in this Christian age, do not have Scriptural authority! The origin of such is in the realm of man’s desire, and against the Scriptures! It is important to note that: (1) there is absolute silence as to their use in the New Testament; (2) no verse authorizes such; (3) no inspired writer recommended or used such; and, (4) we have no record of a New Testament congregation that practiced such!

And, with all that has been said, we must also note the warning that if any go beyond what is written in the doctrine of Christ then God is not with that person (2 John 9)!

We go further in noticing that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 do indeed specify the “instrument,” and that is the human heart! God knoweth the heart (Acts 15:8), and the worshipper thus expresses “from the heart” his devotion to God. The Scripture not only speaks against the mechanical instrument, but in favor of the instrument God places in each of us! The use of vocal music **only** in worship of God is one of the marks of the New Testament church of Jesus Christ. We call upon all men to obey the gospel of Christ, and to worship him in every way as the Word of God directs! That worship will not be with mechanical accompaniment!

Those Troublesome, Objective Facts

Terry M. Hightower

One day an actress tried to take her tiny white poodle through customs. She knew it was against the law, but because poor little dogs suffer away from their masters, she tried to smuggle him through, covering him up under her coat. Smiling her prettiest, the actress sailed up to the customs barrier. Everything went splendidly—until her coat barked! We laugh at people trying to fool fallible humans, but some try to fool the infallible God:

Then came the word of Jehovah unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments...And Samuel came to Saul; and said unto him, Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? (1 Sam. 15:10-14).

God told Saul to smite the Amalekites, utterly destroying everything, both “man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (15:3), but he thought that his way concerning religious instruction was better than (or at least as good as) the Almighty’s way. Amazingly, Saul twice claims that he had obeyed the voice of God and had gone the way that the Lord had sent him (15:13, 20). But (instead of a dog) sheep bleated and oxen lowed to call him a liar! Objective facts are hard for even a king to get around. No one ever gets too big or powerful that he can ignore “obeying the voice of Jehovah” (15:22). When we reject God’s objective Word, He will in turn reject us (15:23).

Like the movie plot involving the so-called “perfect crime” where the perpetrator thinks he has planned every move and every “cover-up” so perfectly, we actually believe we can avoid a day of reckoning. On a vacation trip to the mountains, a man and wife from Vermont met a quiet, pleasant couple from New York. All four of them had a great time together. Later, the gentleman from Vermont made up an album of snapshots he had taken of the other couple and mailed it to them in New York. The gift was never acknowledged, until one day a big-city lawyer appeared and asked the man if he

had prepared the album. “Sure,” was his reply. “Did they get it?” “It was received all right,” said the lawyer, “And I’m representing the man’s wife in the divorce suit. You see, she wasn’t the woman in the album!”

Are you trying to fool the infinite God? Do you really think that you can hide personal sin from the One who formed you in your mother’s womb (Psa. 139:13) or from the One of whom it is said that “there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do”? (Heb. 4:13). Are you really irrational enough to believe, even for one moment, that the Bible is wrong when it declares a “day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ”? (Rom. 2:16).

If you know that the Bible requires belief (John 3:16), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession of Christ (Rom. 10:10), and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), then why not do these things if you have not? If you know that you are an unfaithful Christian, why not come back today by repentance, confession, and prayer? (Acts 8:13-22). “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

“The Church Isn’t Growing”

W.R. Craig

Recent months have heard the statement of our title mouthed again and again. All sorts of reasons are suggested as to why we are no longer the fastest growing religious body in America. In desperation, because of the slowing of the growth of the church, numerically that is, has caused many among us to try to apply every slick sales promotion that has ever been heard of to turn the “trend” around. Some of our folk have run to the denominations for ideas to bring in the “numbers” again.



We need to remember that when churches of Christ were growing more rapidly than any other religious group in America that we were just preaching and teaching the old Jerusalem gospel to folk with whom we came in contact. That was before we were deluged with workshops to win souls; teens to take America; seminars on marriage and family problems and commercial “church growth” companies set up by some of our preaching brethren so “we won’t have to go to the denominations any longer to learn how to make the church grow.”

There are still “7000” in spiritual Israel who have a sincere desire to do what they can to aid the church in her growth both spiritually and numerically. However, in the light of all of the propaganda telling us that we have reached the “no growth” stage, and that by the year 2000 they told us that we would cease to exist, they do not have the foggiest idea of what **they** can do about seeing the church grow, and that scripturally.

The great majority of our people in a majority of our congregations have somehow been “programmed” to believe that in order to bring folk to Christ, into His kingdom, the church, we must do something **big**, something spectacular. Yea, we must promote and conduct a big “campaign,” bring in smooth talking, yea, dynamic speakers heralded by an all out advertising blitzkrieg. Oh, how far away from the New Testament and the truth we have drifted.

Since some are so “hepped” on denominational methods, let’s look at the methods of one such group. One of the groups that has replaced **us** as the fast growing folk, **the Mormons**. They have been trying to grow for the past century. They send out young men in their late teens and early twenties and they knock on doors all over the world. From their own studies we are told the conversion rate is one in every one thousand of their contacts. But now, they are changing their strategy. They now find that if a Mormon family will open their home to a friend and study with them and teach them and bear with them, the conversion rate is 50%. So now “leaders” instruct the rank and file “laity” to cultivate close personal ties first, and then concentrate on doctrine secondly.

We've known it all along, but just have not practiced what we have preached.

The members of the church are our most effective missionaries. The disciple from the pew, when he will train and prepare himself, is more effective than any preacher, elder, or other leader in reaching the man who needs the gospel. If the disciple is not as knowledgeable, as yet, in the Scriptures and the presentation of them, he can bring his friends to the Bible studies and services of the church. Remember, people change because of other people. It is because of the efforts of the disciples (influence) that we are able to find that “good soil” that will receive the Word with gladness.

From apostolic times until now, the “average” disciple or church member has been the key to the growth of the church. We read in John, chapter one, that John the Baptizer introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. In verse 40,

One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.

In verse 43, we are told, “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.” In verse 45, it is declared, “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Here, then, is the “approved examples” of the first century method of church growth. Now that we know it, let's get on with it.

Finding Real Value

Cled E. Wallace

Some religious suckers go into ecstasies over gold bricks. They think real religion is found in tables of statistics or in fashionable pews. They cannot thrill to anything short of hired choirs or polished declamations. A John the Baptist, with garments of camel's hair and a diet of locusts and wild honey, is a fanatic or a mad man to them. A Christ who snubs lawyers and Pharisees and associates with publicans and sinners is both a pain and an enigma to them.

Dorcas, who was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did, was a real value in womanhood. She would not fill a column on a society page today. Some of the most valuable Christians I have known have been men and women in out-of-the-way places, honest sons and daughters of toil, who reared families and were unknown outside of narrow circles. They could not express their thoughts in Shakespearean elegance, but they could show their devotion to God in practical ways most pleasing to Him.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. That is why man accepts so many gold bricks for real human value. **“For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26 ASV).** A man will select a painted butterfly for a wife instead of a sensible, practical woman. And the woman actually looks a lot better—especially after the paint is washed off the butterfly.

“Doctrine”

R.L. Whiteside

Doctrine is teaching. If there is any teaching in a speech or an article it is a doctrinal speech or article. More than once I have seen the absurd expression, “doctrinal teaching,” as if there could be any teaching that was not doctrinal. But to me there is an interesting thing about doctrine and practice. Some doctrines cannot be practiced. Do you doubt that?

How can one practice universalism? or the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election and irresistible grace, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, or the future kingdom theory? The Christian Scientist says, “all matter is a delusion of the mortal mind”—the brick wall is not there, you just think it is. How practice that? A doctrine may kept alive by agitation or by practice, or by both methods; if it cannot be practiced, it can kept alive only by agitation. If a doctrine cannot, then without agitation it will fade out of your thinking. Think on these things.