

# The Gospel Preceptor

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

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## We Are Saved Like Noah

Gayle Oler

The example of Noah and the ark is set forth in the New Testament as a true likeness of salvation today (1 Pet. 3:20-21). In that example is enough to settle the question of what one must do to be saved, if only a reasonable and candid thought be given to it.

### **The Following Facts About Noah Are Evident**

1. God saved Noah. "For if God spared not... the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness..." (2 Pet. 2:4-5).
2. Noah's faith saved him. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became the heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).
3. Noah was saved in the ark. "...wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved..." (1 Pet. 3:20).
4. Noah was saved by water. "...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:20-21).
5. Noah saved himself under God's grace and providence. "...being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house..." (Heb. 11:7). Noah went about the work "when once the longsuffering of God waited." God's grace, man's work—that's the complete story.

### **The Following Facts About Us Are Evident**

1. God saves us. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men..." (Titus 2:11).
2. Our faith saves us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).
3. We are likewise saved by baptism. "The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).
4. So like Noah, individuals today, under the providence of God and by his grace which is in Jesus Christ, "saves himself from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40) by obeying all the commands of God. It is the same story as of old—God's grace coupled with man's work. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24).

When Noah came forth from the ark, one thing had separated him from the world of condemned men—water. That was the dividing point. When a Christian comes from the water he looks upon a new world, and by the blood of Christ reached in baptism he is divided from the old life. Through faith in Christ and by the mercy of God, a man is baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). He is then saved, for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

# David and His New Cart

## B.C. Goodpasture

Jehovah called David from the sheepcotes of Bethlehem to the throne of Israel. One of his first cares, on becoming king, was to obtain possession of the stronghold of Zion, and this very thing he did. “And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. And David waxed greater and greater...” (2 Sam. 5:9-10 ASV).

It is worthy of note here that David “perceived that Jehovah had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake” (2 Sam. 5:12 ASV). In receiving the blessings of God, unlike many, he did not fail to recognize the God of the blessings. Next, after Zion had been occupied, David desired to bring the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem from Kirjath-jearim, where it had been left after being restored by the Philistines in the early days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:1). Elaborate preparations were made to bring up this treasure.

## Gathering Of Thousands

“David again gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand” (2 Sam. 6:1 ASV). Someone has well said,

In bringing up the ark to Jerusalem, the king showed a commendable desire to interest the whole nation, as far as possible, in the solemn service. The people, numerous as they were, grudged neither the time, the trouble, nor the expenses. A handful might have suffered for all the actual labor that was required, but thousands of the chief people were summoned to be present, and that of the principle both of rendering due honor to God and of conferring a benefit to the people.

It is not a few preachers, elders, and deacons only that should be called to take a part in the service of religion. Christians generally should manifest an abiding interest in the worship and service of the Lord. It does not require a large audience to “break bread,” conduct a Sunday night worship, or a Wednesday prayer meeting, but it is infinitely better for all who can attend these meetings.

## Doing The Right Thing In the Wrong Way

No one can doubt that it was right to remove the ark under proper conditions, for God told His people how it should be moved (Num. 4:1-16)—that is, it should be carried by the Levites. Also it was right to bring it to Jerusalem. But the great trouble in this case came through the use of “a more modern method” of transportation by David.

The Philistines, in bringing up the ark from Ekron to Beth-shemesh, had used a new cart (1 Sam. 6:7), and used it successfully. So, instead of following the instructions given through Moses, David copied the example of the Philistines. The “new cart” seemed to work well for a while. The procession had reached “Nachon's threshing floor,” when the “oxen stumbled,” and Uzzah, putting forth his hand to stay the ark, was smitten dead (2 Sam. 6:6-7). The ark was left in the house of Obed-edom, and the thousands disbanded.

Why all this trouble? Had Uzzah sinned in that he touched the ark? Yes, but someone had sinned in this matter before Uzzah. Speaking to the Levites, David said, “For because ye bare it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance” (1 Chron. 15:13 ASV). Thus David located the trouble at the right place. The king and his people had tried to do a good work in a bad way.

It is frequently said that the end justifies the means, but it did not in this case. What matter is it, some of this generation say, if the money has been obtained in ways that are not commendable, just so it is used for the poor or the preaching of the word? Does it matter how or by whom the gospel is preached, if the evangelization of the nations is the purpose? Does it make any difference what is done in worship, if it is all intended for the glory of God? All who speak after this fashion should remember that David could have asked, “What difference does it make how we move the ark, just so we bring

it to Jerusalem?” with as much show of reason as they. It is never right to set aside God's way of doing things for man's way.

One great hindrance to primitive Christianity today is the use of Philistine carts in the service of the Lord. They may seem to make some show of success for a time, but sooner or later—usually sooner—the “oxen stumble,” and they fail. The modern missionary society is very like a Philistine cart as a means of transporting the gospel. In the use of it, there has been some bovine stumbling, some Uzzahs have been smitten, and, at times, the cart wheels have been badly bogged in the Serbonian mire of “open membership,” “institutionalism,” and “centralized control.” The church is God's only means for carrying the gospel to the nations and no modern organizations will He accept.

### Doing The Right Thing In The Right Way

David could never have been a man after God's “own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14) if he had been unwilling to confess his sins and make amends for them. The ark remained in the house of Obed-edom for three months. In the meantime David grew in respect for the word of God, for he said, “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God” (1 Chron. 15:2 ASV). God's way was employed. It worked. “The Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon” to Jerusalem in triumph and joy. How different the result from that of the first effort! How different the means employed! “As for God, his way is perfect” (Psa. 18:30).

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## Romans 10:9—A Gross Misapplication

Dub McClish

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). The foregoing words from the apostle Paul may be among the most frequently abused and misused in Scripture. The abuse occurs when one uses this passage as if it were the only New Testament statement on the subject of salvation. Indeed, other passages state other/additional conditions of salvation.

Those who advocate the *faith only* doctrine relating to salvation (i.e., that God forgives and saves one the moment he believes in Jesus as God's Son) often quote Paul's statement above as their “proof text.” However, this very passage refutes their error. Note that it requires not only the heart-action of belief, but also the mouth-action of confession of that faith (thus not “faith alone”). The New Testament contains not a single statement to the effect that salvation occurs the moment one merely believes in the Christ. The one passage in which faith only appears (i.e., Jam. 2:24) declares that one **cannot** be justified/saved thereby. Rather, the New Testament makes many statements to the contrary.

Many verses of Scripture (e.g., John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 5:1; et al.) state that one is saved by faith, but not one of them has the word *only* or *alone* in connection with faith.

Those who promote Romans 10:9 (or any other single verse) as the totality of teaching on the terms of pardon create contradictions between the inspired men, the Lord included. A principal rule of Biblical hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation) is that an interpretation of a passage that contradicts other passages cannot be correct. To state it another way, the Scriptures must be so interpreted so as to harmonize throughout. One has a very low opinion of the Bible if he is not concerned that his view of passage **A** directly contradicts passage **B**. If Paul taught *faith only* salvation in Romans 10:9, he contradicted:

- Ananias, who baptized him (Acts 22:12–16)
- Himself (Acts 17:30; Rom. 6:3–4, 17–19; Gal. 3:27)
- Peter (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21)
- The Son of God (Mat. 10:32; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16)

A synopsis of these passages (plus the detailed accounts of conversions in Acts) reveals

that faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism are all conditions of Divine pardon. The Scriptures no more teach *repentance only* or *baptism only* salvation than they do *faith only* salvation.

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## **Does Believing a Thing is Right Make it Right?**

**Thomas Allen Robertson**

In religion, the great mass of the people subscribe to the sentiment that it makes no difference what one believes, just so long as he is honestly and sincerely convinced that he is doing right. One might as well contend that it makes no difference what one eats, just so long as he thinks it is good for him. It is not the fact of eating that sustains life (not the mere physical act of chewing and swallowing), but it is the thing eaten. One cannot get the same effect from chewing and swallowing poison that one can get from chewing and swallowing wholesome food. So it is not believing that saves the soul, but it is what one believes.

This truth is easily seen in any other field save religion. Suppose one went into a butcher shop and ordered a pound of round steak, and the butcher picked up a piece, wrapped it, and handed it over the counter, saying, "A dollar and ten cents, please." Would one accept it? Of course not. The customer would ask, "Since you did not weigh the steak, how do you know it is a pound?" If the butcher should reply, "I know I gave you full measure because I feel it right here," and pat himself in the region of his abdominal cavity, the customer would say, "Put the meat on the scales, please!"

Intelligent men demand a standard, whether ordering a pound of steak, a yard of material at the dry-goods store, or five gallons of gas at a filling station. None of us want to trust the clerk's feelings that he is giving a pound, or measuring of thirty-six inches, or five gallons. No matter how much the clerk might feel like he was right, the buyer knows that feelings can't be accurate. He wants an authoritative standard of measurement. Yet in matters of religion this same buyer is likely to say, "It doesn't make any difference what one believes, just so he thinks he is right!"

### **Bible Examples**

Such doctrine paves the way for every kind of unscriptural practice. If it is true, then the only authority in the realm of religion is the honest feelings of the individual; and Christianity is based not on facts but on opinions, fiction, and feeling. But the New Testament teaches emphatically that there is a pattern, a standard; and pronounces condemnation on those who do not conform to it. Paul warned against accepting "any other gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). John limited all to "the doctrine" of Christ" (2 John 9-11). Jude taught that that faith had been once delivered" (Jude 3). and Peter said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

The Bible is filled with examples setting forth the principle that a thing is not right merely because people honestly and sincerely believe it to be the case. Through trickery, Jacob deceived Isaac, and Isaac actually believed completely in his heart that Jacob was Esau. Did that make Jacob to be Esau? Years later, Jacob was deceived into believing that his son, Joseph, was dead, and for many years he mourned him as dead. Yet all the time of his sorrow Joseph was not dead, but was living in Egypt. Could Jacob's sorrow have been any more real or profound if, in truth, Joseph had been dead? If the feelings are convinced that a lie is the truth, then the emotional result is precisely the same as it would be if the thing believed were truth.

Saul of Tarsus said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1) Yet during that time that he lived "in good conscience" he had laid waste the church, persecuted the saints of God, and breathed out threatening and slaughter



against the Way. He had thought he was doing right. His conscience was clear. But believing it was right did not make it so. One's conscience may be misinformed or misled. There is a standard of right—and that standard is **not** the **feelings**.

### Popular Religious Doctrines

Let us apply this matter to the popular religious ideas of our day. Many have taught, for example, that one church is as good as another. The New Testament teaches, however, that Christ built one church, not churches (Matt. 16:18). There was **one church** set up on Pentecost, **not** churches, and people were added to that one church (Acts 2:47). Christ purchased **the** church, **not** churches, with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Christians are all one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5). Paul said, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). The **one body** into which men are baptized is the body of Christ, which is the church (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Paul said, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). Hence, no matter how deeply one may **feel** that there are many churches, the Bible plainly teaches that there is one, and only one, church.

Many have been convinced that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and certain of the “canonized” saints can intercede, mediate, and act as intermediaries between God and man. But the New Testament teaches that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18). And Paul said, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

It is commonly taught that the alien sinner can “pray the sinners' prayer”—that one receives faith and is saved by prayer. Many men **feel** that this is so. But the Bible teaches that some men's prayers are abominable in the sight of God (Prov. 28:9). It is further stated that the Lord will not hear the prayers of certain ones (Psa. 66:18; Isa. 59:1, 2; John 9:31). No matter how deeply one may **feel**, or how honestly he may believe that his prayers will save him, he is mistaken. The Bible gives an authoritative, clear-cut plan of redemption. One who does not obey it will be lost, no matter what his feelings are.

### The Standard

Any thinking man can see the folly of the doctrine that anything is acceptable to God if only the individual is sincere and honestly thinks he is right. Such an idea removes all standard and all authority from religion, and turns it over to the confused anarchy of every man's own inner feelings. As a result of this false idea, all forms of erroneous doctrines are in the land, both Catholic and Protestant. Christianity has lost its appeal to many people because it has been divested of all authority, and has been dishonored by the chaotic ideas advanced by these people.

A thing is not right merely because we believe it to be right. We must study the word of God, believe and practice only that which it sets forth. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” is the warning of Jeremiah (Jer. 10:23). And again, “There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand” (Prov. 19:21). “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

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## Reconciliation

### Nana Yaw Aidoo

There isn't a single aspect of salvation that a person could examine without becoming awed by the great and steadfast love of the God of hosts. The late Tom Holland said of salvation that “it is like examining a very expensive and exquisite diamond” because “every facet of it is beautiful.” Salvation is beautiful because it involves the greatest love ever shown—God's love (Rom. 5:8), the greatest gift ever given—the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16), the greatest sacrifice ever made—the death and humiliation of Christ (Php. 2:5-8), the greatest opportunity ever allowed—the opportunity to become a child of God (John 1:12) and the greatest reward ever promised—eternal life (Rev. 2:10).

One aspect of salvation is the great Biblical doctrine of **reconciliation**, a word which

means “restoration to favor.” Here is an offender and an offended, with the offender being restored to the favor of the offended. The apostle Paul wrote;

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He had made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

The idea of reconciliation implies that there once was fellowship, then an offense, and then a separation between the parties in fellowship, which is exactly the case between God and man.

### **The Cause of the Separation**

God, the creator of the world made upright beings (Eccl. 7:29), in full fellowship with Him (Matt.18:3). John Calvin wrought a great evil on humanity, when he posited that man is born wholly depraved because he inherits the sin of Adam. It is written; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezek. 18:20). If, according to this scripture, it is impossible to inherit the sins of our fathers who are closer to us, how then do we inherit the sin of Adam who is much farther away from us? Sin is in the character and as such it is impossible for it to be inherited, any more than it is possible for the police to arrest me for the crime of my dad.

Man, ever wanting to seek “out many inventions,” committed the offense which separated him from fellowship with God. Isaiah wrote;

Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

Sin, my friends, is that which separates men from fellowship with God and caused the need for reconciliation. Not only does sin separate us from fellowship with God, it also separates us from the “life of God” (Eph. 4:17). Though they had a physical existence, the apostle Paul told the Colossians that prior to their becoming Christians, they were “dead” (Col. 2:13) because of sin. Legion are the promises of sin but all it offers is death (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 11:25; 1 John 2:15-17).

However, there is good news. The Colossians who at one time were separated from God, had now been reconciled to Him. “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled” (Col. 1:21). The good news is that men can be reconciled to God.

### **The Grounds of Reconciliation**

Not only does reconciliation imply an offense and a separation, it also implies a bridge between the parties to be reconciled. There has to be something that binds back the offender to the offended. God the offended party in this scene, takes the initiative and sends His Son to be the bridge by which men would be reconciled to Him. “...God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ...” (2 Cor. 5:18). “...yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death...” (Col. 1:21-22).

Friends, Jesus Christ is the grounds and the **only** grounds of our reconciliation to God. Only by Him and through Him is reconciliation to God made possible (John 14:6). By way of His substitutionary death, “with only three nails and two pieces of wood, with one rugged cross, Jesus built a bridge.” “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

### **The Means of Reconciliation**

The apostle then tells us the means of reconciliation. He wrote; “To wit, that God was

in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). God Almighty is reconciling the world to Himself by means of the “word of reconciliation.” God is not reconciling the world to Himself by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men but by means of His perfect word (cf. Rom. 1:16; Eph. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). **How** God reconciles men to Himself is revealed in His word.

### **The Location of Reconciliation**

Finally, the apostle also tells us the location of reconciliation. He says it is “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17), which he later explained or referred to as “in the body” of Christ.

“...yet now hath He **reconciled in the body** of His flesh...” (Col. 1:21-22).

“But now **in Christ Jesus** ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ...And that He might **reconcile** both unto God **in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:13,16).

The body of Christ is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24) and thus, we see that the location of reconciliation is in the Lord’s church or body, of which there is only one (Eph. 2:16; 4:4). To be “in Christ” is to be “in the body” of Christ, which is the church. This makes sense because the church is the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). One cannot be “in Christ” without being in the church, which Christ built (Matt. 16:18) and purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28) and therefore, one cannot be reconciled to God without being in the Lord’s church, the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16).

### **The “How” of Reconciliation**

How then do we get into Christ so as to be reconciled to God? The word of God, which is the means of reconciliation, tells us how.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were baptized into His death? (Rom. 6:3).

For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21) is the only way by which any man can get into Christ so as to be reconciled to God. The penitent believer who confesses his faith in Christ and allows himself to be baptized unto the remission of sins, shall be reconciled to God as surely as it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Cor.5:20).

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

**Coming Soon: “...To The Saints Which are at Ephesus”  
A New Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians**

## **Indications Of Bible Inspiration: Its Indestructibility**

**Jess Whitlock**

The Bible has been hated and despised by men ever since its inception. Numerous attempts to destroy the Bible have proven unsuccessful. Jehoiakim cut the roll of Jeremiah’s prophecy with a penknife and threw the pages into the fire (Jer. 36). Jehoiakim died in disgrace, but the Word of God continued. The Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered the destruction of all copies of the Bible in A.D. 303, and killed many Christians. In a public ceremony over a burned copy of God’s Word he built a

monument on which he wrote triumphantly, “Extincto nomene Christianorum” (the name of Christian is extinguished). Twenty-five years later, Diocletian was dead. The new Emperor Constantine ordered fifty copies of the Bible to be made available in all the church buildings.

The centuries come and go, the enemies of the Bible come and go. Yet, the Bible continues on year after passing year. Most assuredly, “the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:8). The Psalmist penned, “Forever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven” (119:89).

In 1776, Voltaire, the French philosopher and atheist boldly affirmed, “One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker.” One hundred years later Voltaire was dead. The Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire’s own house and printing press to print and store Bibles. One hundred years to the day following his prediction, a first edition of Voltaire’s work sold for eleven cents in Paris, and that same year the British government paid the Czar of Russia \$500.000 for an ancient Bible manuscript.

Robert G. Ingersoll, an American agnostic, predicted in 1885 that within twenty-five years no more church buildings would be built and no more Bibles would be printed. In one of his lectures he held the Bible high in one hand and declared, “In fifteen years I will have this book in the morgue.” In less than fifteen years his body was in the morgue and the Bible lives on.

Christ our Lord announced, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35). Peter declared, “But the word of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:25). Critics and enemies of the Bible come and go the way of all men (Heb. 9:27), but the Word of God continues on just as the Lord God has decreed!

Let us close these thoughts with the poet's powerful words.

### **Last Eve**

**John Clifford**

Last eve I passed beside the blacksmith’s door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime:

When looking in I saw upon the floor,  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

“How many anvils have you had,” said I,  
“To wear and batter all these hammers so?”

“Just one,” said he, then said with twinkling eye,  
“The anvil wears the hammers out you know.”

And so, I thought, the Anvil of God’s Word,  
For ages skeptics blows have beat upon;

Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The Anvil is unharmed—the hammers are gone!

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## **Unity in the Scheme of Redemption**

**Kent Bailey**

There are various words used within the Scriptures that correctly depict the plan which God has provided to us for our redemption from sin. Throughout the entire Bible one can read of a scarlet thread from Genesis through Revelation. The culmination of this divine plan finds its consummation in Christ and the church.

Due to the very essence of this scheme, we find unity and/or agreement in its components. In Ephesians 4:1-6 Paul, the apostle noted:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity



of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Within this passage we take note of **the one faith**. In Acts 6:7 the record states: “And the word of God increased; and the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

The objective usage of the term *faith* speaks with reference to that of faith as a system, a teaching, doctrine—the scheme of Redemption, which is the gospel of Christ; the totality of New Testament revelation. In accordance with Jude 3 this faith was **once and for all time** delivered to the saints. Thus, the truth of God is given for all time. It is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended or modified. As it now stands it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable revelation providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer and to defeat the proponent of false doctrine,

The scheme of Redemption is not a deleted gospel; it is not a perverted gospel; it is not a changed gospel; it is not a gospel comprised of human additions wherein uninspired men have decided that the plain and pristine gospel of Christ needs a modernistic and liberalistic overhaul.

Due to the fact of the unity of God’s scheme of redemption there are three essential factors regarding this divine scheme that is worthy of our serious consideration.

**God’s scheme of Redemption refutes all forms of error.** The gospel of Christ is a mighty weapon of offense that God has provided for us that we may engage in spiritual combat and defeat Satan.

The scheme of Redemption refutes unbelief in all of its ungodly forms: atheism, agnosticism, humanism. Unbelief in all of its forms fall when facing God’s mighty implementation of war.

The scheme of Redemption refutes all false religion whether it be that of Roman Catholicism, Protestant Denominationalism, various cults, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, or the philosophy of Buddhism. Any religious system that is alien to God’s scheme of Redemption is a false system that we must oppose with all of our might (Matt. 15:12-14; Gal. 1:6-9).

The scheme of Redemption refutes both worldliness and immorality. The truth of God warns us that the love of the world chokes out the word of God from our lives (Matt. 13:22). Friendliness and fellowship with the world promotes enmity with God (Jas. 4:4). Immorality promotes a lifestyle condemned of God whereas the scheme of Redemption teaches us to deny ungodliness and that of worldly lusts (Titus 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

The scheme of Redemption refutes apathy among God’s people. One cannot be true to the word of God and be a lukewarm, heartless, disinterested, modern day Laodicean. To every apathetic member of the church of the Lord we read God’s divine rebuke (Rev. 3:19).

**God’s scheme of Redemption produces a righteous fellowship.** Our obedience to the word of God produces fellowship in the one spiritual body of Christ, the New Testament church (1 Cor. 12:13). Such promotes a Biblical fellowship with the one Lord, the one Spirit, and God the Father (Matt. 28:18-20). Such comes as the result of the one baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). This will produce the one hope in our lives regarding the promise of eternal life in Heaven.

**God’s scheme of Redemption produces victories in our lives that we may achieve.** God’s scheme of Redemption will produce victory by procuring forgiveness of sins—initially by obeying the gospel and continually by confession of sins and repentance. It will produce victory in meeting the Devil and overcoming temptations. It will produce victory in soul-winning for Christ (Prov. 11:30). Finally, the ultimate victory will be realized in eternal glory (1 Cor. 15:57). The one faith—the scheme of Redemption with its facts, conditions, and promises makes such all possible in Christ.

# Satanic Verses

**Doug Post**

In 1988, Salman Rushdie wrote a book entitled, “*The Satanic Verses*,” which created an uproar in the Muslim community. In fact, the Ayatollah ordered and decreed the murder of Rushdie, having him put on “Allah’s “hit list.” But what did Rushdie write that was so offensive to Islam, its clerics, and the Ayatollah? The title of the book, “*Satanic Verses*,” actually refers to this passage found in the Quran: “Have ye thought upon al-Lat and al-Uzza And Manat, the third, the other? These are the exalted intermediaries Whose intercession is to be hoped for” (Sura 53:19-22).

Mohammad desired greatly to convert his Arab brethren to worshipping one god, namely Allah. At that time, his Arab brethren were still polytheistic – a people who worshiped many gods. In fact, in the pre-Islamic world the Arab people believed the three goddesses, *al-Lat*, *al-Uzza*, and *Manat*, to be the daughters of their supreme god, Allah. However, while he was in Mecca, Mohammad was not having much success in converting his Arab brethren to monotheism, which in this case was worshipping only Allah. So, Mohammad decided to compromise his monotheistic view, including the three goddesses, along with Allah, as the deities they were to worship. So, Mohammad decided to write that in the “holy book,” the Quran.

What was Mohammad to do? He couldn’t erase or cross-out what he had written concerning the need to worship multiple deities, including three goddesses. After all, he claimed direct inspiration from Allah. So, he decided that he would simply add an addendum to what he had previously written, claiming Allah told him to write it. He wrote the following:

“Never sent We a messenger or a prophet before thee but when He recited (the message) Satan proposed (opposition) in respect of that which he recited thereof. But Allah abolisheth that which Satan proposeth. Then Allah establisheth His revelations. Allah is Knower, Wise; That He may make that which the devil proposeth a temptation for those in whose hearts is a disease, and those whose hearts are hardened ...”

In trying to explain away the blunder he had written in the Quran, Mohammad devised a plan wherein Allah came to him to tell him that Satan had tricked him, and that the devil was responsible for having influenced him to write the error known as the “Satanic Verses.” Of course, this fabricated excuse is reminiscent of the old Flip Wilson line of, “The devil made me do it.” But such an excuse simply made matters worse, because the implication is that Allah was also caught off guard, being unaware of the “wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Evidently, Allah is not omniscient since He did not know Satan was using his own prophet, Mohammad, to write down lies in His “holy book,” the Quran.

This, **alone**, demonstrates the wild imagination of Mohammad. He invented his god, Allah. He invented the wild claim that Allah inspired him to write the Quran. Above all else, this demonstrates that Allah is the invention of the fertile imagination of Mohammad, and is not, nor ever could be, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the omniscient God of the Bible.

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## How Did Christ Become Sin For Us?

**Ron Cosby**

We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

How is a man made righteous? Here are two basic views: Some teach the error that the sins of Adam are transferred to all men. Then, the sins of men are transferred to Christ. After which, Christ’s righteousness is transferred to the saved. The truth of the

matter is, personal sins are **taken away**, resulting in righteousness. God does **not** simply **hide** our sins under the robe of Christ.

Does Second Corinthians 5:20-21 teach that Jesus literally became sin, as the denominational world teaches? Or, does God teach that Jesus was made our sin-offering?

### **The Error Expressed**

From centuries past, John Gill expresses the error of Jesus becoming sin:

He was made sin itself by imputation. The sins of all his people were transferred unto him ... and placed to his account. He sustained their persons and bore their sins. And having them upon him, and being chargeable with, and answerable for them, he was treated by the justice of God as if he had been not only a sinner, but a mass of sin (*Exposition of the Entire Bible*).

Don Fortner, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Danville, Kentucky, agrees. He says:

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, suffered and died under the justice and wrath of God as the greatest sinner who ever lived. He was charged with all the sins of all his people. He was made to be sin for all God's elect at once ([grace-for-today.com/652.htm](http://grace-for-today.com/652.htm)).

### **Christ Was/Is Sinless**

In opposition, Albert Barnes responds:

But all such views as go to make the Holy Redeemer a sinner, or guilty, or deserving of the sufferings which he endured, border on blasphemy, and are abhorrent to the whole strain of the Scriptures. In no form, in no sense possible, is it to be maintained that the Lord Jesus was sinful or guilty" (*Commentary*).

Christ's sinlessness is declared in the text itself —“knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus declares His own sinlessness (John 8:46). Peter and John, who were eyewitnesses of His life, declare His innocence (1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Paul also teaches that the Lord was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15), though He was “in all points tempted like as we.”

### **Closer Study of Second Corinthians 5:21**

Second Corinthians 5:21 corresponds to Israel's “sin-offering.” Hebrew scholar Adam Clarke observes, “The Septuagint translate the Hebrew word by *amartia* in 94 places in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where a sin-offering is meant; and where our version translates the word not sin, but an offering for sin.”

Let me give just one example of the 94 places referenced by Mr. Clarke: Exodus 29:36 “... thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement.” Jesus is/was our sin-offering. He died on our behalf. He is **not** the “greatest sinner”

One more thing: The animals that were sacrificed were not sinners. It was not necessary for Jesus to become guilty of sin in order to accomplish the design of His death.

### **The Sinless Died For The Sinful**

Peter said Jesus died for our spiritual healing (1 Pet. 2:24-25). He was not only the sacrifice but the priest who made the sacrifice (Heb. 9:27-28). Because of Christ's sacrifice for sin, God does not write our sins to our account (2 Cor. 5:19 ASV). “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses.”

He wipes the slate clean. “A lad was told by his mother not to play near a certain pond. One day the temptation was too much, and, venturing too close he fell into the water. He was very conscious of his wrongdoing, and most uncomfortable. So he wrote on his school slate: 'Dear mother, I am sorry I have been bad. If you to forgive me, please rub it out.' Back came the slate, perfectly clean!” How like the love of God Who said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins...” (Isa. 44:22).

By becoming our sin-offering, Christ enabled the sinner's sins to be washed away (Acts 22:16), **not** simply hidden under the robe of Christ. He made it possible for the saint's sins to be cleaned off the slate (1 John 1:9).

# The Silence of the Bible

H. Leo Boles

There has been a great deal of discussion on “The Silence of the Bible.” Some have emphasized the respect we should have for the authority of God by respecting the silence of the Bible. Others have taught that where the Bible is silent, we have a right to speak. The issue is, “Does God give to man the right to teach and practice in the name of Christ anything about which there is no divine revelation?” Has God given sufficient guidance in all affairs that pertain to the work and worship of the Lord? Has He left some things to the wisdom and judgment of man? How shall we know what has been left to the judgment of man in the work and worship of the Lord?

If, by His silence in revelation, God has granted to man the right to teach and practice some things, then there opens a field of strife and division. Man cannot agree with his fellows as to what must be brought in, and no greater source of division can be found than the different standards of men.

The Bible clearly teaches that man should not add to the word of God. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you.” (Deut. 4:2). Here we learn that Jehovah would not let the children of Israel add to or take from anything He had commanded them. Jehovah had given the law, and it was sufficient to guide them in all of their work and worship. They were to let the law stand, without additions, subtractions, or alterations. This enforced upon them to respect God's silence on any subject. If they could not add to or take from the law, they were not to impose human judgments upon the people. To do so would be to add to or take from the law. They had to respect the silence of Jehovah on the work and worship they were to perform.

The New Testament teaches the same principle:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book. (Rev. 22:18-19).

This demands that man respect the silence of divine revelation. No one is permitted to add to or take from the teachings of the New Testament. It will not do to say that the above quotation applies only to the book of Revelation. God would not forbid one from adding to or subtracting from only one book in the New Testament, while granting man the privilege of adding to and taking from other books.

This principle applies to all the books of the New Testament. Other teachings show this to be true. “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written...” (1 Cor. 4:6). These Corinthians were thus forbidden to go beyond the things that were written. They were to respect the silence of God—the silence of the Scriptures—and not make any alterations. God would not forbid the church at Corinth to “go beyond the things which are written,” and at the same time allow other churches to add what they pleased or to leave off anything they did not wish to teach or practice. What He says here to the church at Corinth is applied to all of the churches, and is applicable to His people through all ages.

The same truth is expressed by John:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works. (2 John 9-11).

This teaches that the silence of “the teachings of Christ” must be respected. John is writing to no particular church, but Christians in general. Hence, the principle of re-



specting the silence of “the teachings of Christ” is here taught by John.

One is safe when one follows the teachings of God. One impeaches the wisdom of God when one attempts to make any alterations in “what is written” in the New Testament. In doing so, one must take the attitude that either God did not know enough to give man a complete guide for all ages, or that God has left man free to make additions where God has not spoken.

The foundation of the argument that man may speak where the Bible is silent rests, like Dagon's temple, upon two pillars, which, so long as they continue sound, will support all the theories of men. The first pillar is that “the church of Christ, like all other societies, has power to make laws for its government.” The second pillar is that, “where the sacred Scriptures are silent, human authority may interpose.” But if some Samson can be found to shake these pillars from their bases, the whole edifice, with the lords of the Philistines in their seats and the multitude with which it is crowded, will be involved in one common ruin. If the two principles mentioned above are granted, the arguments cannot be refuted. But if it can be shown that the principles are false, the conclusions, with all the arguments based on them, are false.

First, the church of Christ is not like other societies. It is different from all human institutions, because Christ framed a constitution for it which is different from any of the teachings of man. No one can show that God permits man to speak or act in the name of Christ where the New Testament is silent. There is not a single sentence in all the New Testament that warrants man to speak in the name of Christ where the New Testament is silent; there is no Scripture that grants man such authority. How, then, can man know that he has the right to speak where the Bible is silent? No human association, no individual has any right to interpose authority where the New Testament neither enjoins nor forbids. We must respect the authority of God here.

To interpose and draft regulations where the New Testament is silent is to legislate for God's people where God has not legislated. It is a fearful thing to impose anything in the name of Christ upon God's people when God has not spoken on that point. If He has spoken, then we must respect what He has said. If He has not spoken, then we must respect His wisdom in remaining silent.

It seems that anyone would know that the floodgate would be open and all sorts of innovations would be brought into the work and worship of the Lord's people if we do not respect the silence of the Bible. To respect the silence of the Bible is to respect God. To break that silence is to impeach the wisdom, love, and authority of God. It is to commit the high crime of presumptuous sin. “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16- 17).

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## **“I Think God Has A Plan For My Life”**

**Jerry C. Brewer**

The denominational world of pseudo-Christianity is soaked to the gills with the Calvinistic notion that God micro-manages the life of every human on earth, as a puppet master manipulates his puppets' strings. That mantra is repeatedly intoned by denominationalists—and some members of the church even join in the chorus. When one's marriage is good, he says, “I think this is God's plan for my life.” A college graduate finds a job he absolutely loves and says, “I think this is God's plan for my life.” A preacher “feels led” to move to another location and says, “I think God had this planned for my life” (and that “plan” usually involves more pay). One lady told of a man falling from a drilling rig, uninjured, and said, “Someone was riding down with him,” meaning, that was “God's plan.”

A few years ago, when a Baptist preacher said that he had prayed about what scripture to use at a lady's funeral, I whispered to my wife, “Proverbs 31”, after which he said, “And God led me me to Proverbs 31.” I wasn't “led” by some mysterious “urge,”



“prompting,” or “Holy Spirit nudge” to suggest that scripture. I had studied it with the brain God gave me for that purpose, and recalled it. Neither was he “led” by a vague “hint” or a miracle. Some Calvinist preachers still claim to be “God’s Mouthpiece” thinking God directs every movement and thought as part of His “plan” for their lives.

Even when tragedy strikes, God is not immune from such speculations about a mysterious “plan.” When my brother died, a Methodist aunt said, “Well that’s God’s plan.” I pointedly told her it was not. God does not kill people and it was never his “plan” that we die. When a person escapes a car wreck, or some other accident unscathed, he often reasons that “God has a plan for my life.” Really? What is that plan? Was part of it to save you from a car wreck? And, since God is no respecter of persons, (Acts 10:34; Matt. 5:45), why does he not save **everyone** from accidents if that is “His plan?” None of these people know what “God’s plan” is. They just blindly fumble through life trying to figure it out.

What all of them have in common is the Calvinistic notion that God foreordained everything that happens, even to the moment and method of one’s death. General Stonewall Jackson was most consistent in his Calvinistic belief. When asked how he could be so calm in battle when bullets flew about him, he said, “My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave.” His statement sums up the gamut of one’s life as viewed through Calvinistic lenses. It was his Calvinistic doctrine that cut short the general’s life at Chancellorsville. Had he not embraced that false doctrine, Gettysburg might have had a different outcome.

To Calvinists, God ordained everything that occurs in their lives, from the moment they are born to what clothes they will wear, where they will go, when they will eat, what they will eat, where they shop, how they travel, who they will marry, (I wonder if Calvinists apply this to “same-sex” marriages), what diseases they will contract and the moment they will die, etc., ad nauseam. The Calvinist who says, “God has a plan for my life,” believes it is shrouded in mystery, which he must learn by his subjective conclusions through vague “nudges,” “promptings,” and “hints” from the Holy Spirit—an absolutely false concept.

### **God Does, Indeed, Have A Plan**

There is nothing mysterious about God’s plan for man that leaves us groping in uncertainty. In communicating His plan to the human race, God did not leave us in doubt. His plan has been set forth by inspiration, and clearly revealed in the Bible. It is not one that destroys the free will of man as God created him, but is **adapted to** his free will. Nor does God “have a plan” for each individual’s life that must be sought through subjective feelings. It is a plan that sets two paths before every person, one of which each of us chooses by his own free will. Joshua set those before Israel in these words:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods that your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

That same choice was expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on The Mount.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

God has a plan for **all** of mankind, **not individual** plans for each of the billions who have lived in ages past, who live today, or will ever live. His plan is so simple that a child can understand it and it was written by the wisest of ancient mortals. After recounting the vicissitudes, joys, tribulations, and sorrows of this life “under the sun,” Solomon wrote,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).

God's plan for the human race is two-fold: Fear Him and Keep His commandments. It's as simple as that. It applied to every person who lived in the past and applies to every living person today. Those who accept that plan will enter into life's strait gate and those who refuse it will enter into the broad way of eternal doom.

To "fear God" is to reverence and respect Him as the Creator—to hold His Person in awe and to recognize that He alone is the source of our life. Growing out of that genuine reverence will be the desire to "keep his commandments." In verse 14, Solomon sets forth incentives for doing those two things. God will bring everything we do into judgment. We will be judged according to the lives we have lived, and the standard of Judgment will be His commandments. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

When an architect designs a building, he has a plan—a blueprint, as it were. That plan is clearly set forth in words and with specifications that can be understood by the builders. The Great Architect of humanity also has a blueprint—a plan upon which we are to build our lives—that is easily understood. If the architect who designed a building was as vague about his plan as so many believe God is, our cities and towns would be filled with buildings that have no utility or purpose at all. The Bible sets forth God's blueprint in clear, Holy Spirit-inspired language:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

...how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5).

Great masses of "religious" people grope in the darkness of their subjective feelings, saying, "I **think** God has a plan for my life," because they refuse to "fear God and keep his commandments" expressed in His objective standard—the Bible—where His plan is revealed in clear terms. They are the same people who reject the worship God has prescribed in the Bible, the plan of salvation He prescribed there, and the righteous living He demands therein. They **think** God has a plan for their lives and they are right, but they are seeking the **wrong kind of plan in the wrong place**.

God's plan for your life, and mine, is plainly set forth in His word. Hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believe it (Mark 16:16; John 8:24), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31), Confess Christ as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and live faithfully all of our days so heaven will be ours at last (2 Tim. 4:6-8). That is God's plan for the whole world, not the mundane things of life that happen to us by chance. "...time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11), but God's plan does not involve chance. His word is sure and forever settled "in heaven" (Psa. 119:89).

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## The Mission of Jesus Christ

A.R. Hill

"And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shall call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21 ASV). Jesus existed with God before the world was. He is the Eternal Word and all things were made through Him. He

came to earth and dwelt among us in the likeness of sinful flesh. He emptied Himself of the beauty, glory and peace of His Father's home, and came to this sin-blighted earth on a specific mission. He had a great work to do—a great mission to fulfill. His mission was to seek and save that which was lost—to redeem fallen humanity from the guilt, power, and punishment of sin.

The divine record vividly describes the deplorable condition of Jew and Gentile before Jesus came to earth. The Messianic prophet said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6 ASV).

The Gentile was “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12 ASV). Man in his stubbornness and rebellion had transgressed God's law. He had offended divine justice, and had brought the wrath of God upon himself. All had sinned and come short of the glory of God. The penalty for this transgression was death—eternal death. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

In His infinite mercy and love for fallen humanity, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to make the atoning sacrifice for sin. God was willing to give His Son, the rarest Jewel of heaven, that we through Him might have abundant life. And the Son of God was willing to come to the earth, rejected and despised of men, to die on the cross that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and “purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14 ASV).

The wrath of God, so justly kindled against man for his sins, could not be appeased by animal blood and sacrifices that were offered under the law of Moses. “For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4 ASV). It follows that without the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ there is no remission. “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 ASV).

The coming of Christ revealed the love of God for man. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16 ASV). “God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8 ASV). The righteous died for the unrighteous. The Son of God died that He might bring us to God. Are we truly grateful to our Heavenly Father for the unspeakable gift of His love?

Our love should respond to the love of God. How can we manifest our love toward Him? Jesus said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 ASV). There is no other way for us to prove to God that we love Him. Some say that His commandments are hard and that we cannot keep them. “For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). What has God taught us to do that is impossible? We must desire to do the Father's will and not our own. If we want to go to heaven, we must follow the Way, the Truth and the Life—the only Way to God. We must deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow the Christ daily.

The alien sinner is commanded to do certain things in order that his sins may be forgiven. He must believe with all the heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 16:30-31). Without faith it is impossible for one to please God (Heb. 11:6). This belief is produced by hearing the word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17). After reading of His miracles and wonderful works, we would be compelled to say with Nicodemus, “For no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2 ASV).

After developing this simple, trusting faith in the Lord from His word, the sinner is commanded to repent of all sin. “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30 ASV). If men love Him, they will obey Him and will therefore turn away from all sin in godly sorrow. The Master said, “I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

The sinner is taught to confess with the mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. “Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my

Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33 ASV).

Then, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, such a one is baptized into Christ Jesus and into His death. God's promise to those who comply with these conditions from the heart is the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).

The young Christian then must “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” (2 Pet. 3:18) and add the Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

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## Faith is a Condition of Salvation

**Lester Kamp**

The text of Mark 16:15-16 begins, “He that believeth....” Of this believer, our Lord concludes, “shall be saved.” The essential nature of belief for salvation is obvious in the closing words of the verse, “but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). One of the conditions upon which salvation depends, according to this verse, is faith (belief).

This is a point upon which almost all are agreed throughout the religious world. The New Testament makes it clear that God requires faith, on the part of the sinner, for his salvation. For example, we are told, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews shows the important role of faith in the lives of those pleasing to God, even in the days of the Old Testament. But, the faith described in that chapter is not faith alone; it is faith that responds in obedience to God. Even here, in verse 6, we have action inferred by the references to coming to God and seeking Him. It is that kind of faith (active, obedient) that justifies (Rom. 5:1). Bear in mind that this faith comes from hearing God's Word (10:17). As noted earlier, in the verse preceding our text, Jesus commissioned the preaching of the Gospel. That is the God-given way for people to hear the Gospel. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

We will soon note in Mark 16:16, faith is not the only condition of salvation according to the Gospel. James' words are emphatic on the connection between faith and action. “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). This, by the way, is the only Biblical reference to faith only. It is significant that James tells us that justification (another word for salvation) is **not** by faith only in spite of the very popular denominational teaching to the contrary.

James then concludes his discussion of faith and works with these words, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (2:26). It could not be any clearer! The faith that saves involves more than mental assent; faith must act to save.

There are even New Testament examples of some who believed, but were not saved. Consider those among the chief rulers: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43).

Consider the devils (demons, ASV): “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam. 2:19). Felix believed and “trembled” at the preaching of Paul (Acts 24:25). King Agrippa also believed according to Paul's own appraisal, “I know that thou believest” (26:27). It is, therefore, clear that man **is not** and **cannot** be saved by faith alone; nevertheless, faith is absolutely essential to salvation.

Obedience is also necessary for salvation. Referring to Jesus, the writer of Hebrews notes, “And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). According to this, Jesus is the “author of eternal salvation” to “all them that obey him.” Add to this the statement of Peter, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). Souls are purified (i.e. cleansed, forgiven of sins, etc.) by “obedience to the truth.”

According to the context of Mark 16:16, that which is to be believed is the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The historical facts of the Gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul wrote that the resurrection was the powerful proof that Jesus was the Son of God, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Hence, Jesus insisted, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Our sins separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and thereby cause us to be in need of salvation. If sin remains unforgiven in our lives, we will be lost! Therefore, part of the Gospel which must be believed in order to be saved is that Jesus is God’s Son. Recall that when Philip had preached Jesus to the Eunuch on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza and when the eunuch desired baptism, Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Acts 8:37). The Ethiopian then properly confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (cf. Matt. 10:32), and was baptized. Paul commented on faith and confession in Romans 10. He wrote, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

#### **Infants And Others Exempt From The Requirements Of This Verse**

The necessity of belief to be saved rules out infants and the mentally deficient. Babies cannot believe, nor can those who lack the mental capabilities to learn and make rational decisions for themselves. These are not candidates for baptism since they are incapable of belief which is prerequisite to baptism.

Indeed, these individuals are not in need of salvation for they are safe. The Bible refutes the claim of Calvinism of “inherited total depravity”—that babies are born sinners of the worst sort! Children are born innocent and those who do not mentally progress to the point of making rational decisions based on information given remain in that innocent condition. We are told that we are responsible for our own sins, and not for the sins of our ancestors, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezek. 18:20).

Jesus further told us that in order to be saved, we must become like little children, “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).

So, we must conclude that children should not be baptized because they cannot be believers, and that children are not in need of salvation until they become sinners.

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## **Can I be Saved Outside of the Church?**

**David Ray**

It doesn’t matter where, when, or how often it’s preached (or even what the Bible says about it), there will always be people who believe that they can be saved without any affiliation with the Lord’s church.

A recent Barna survey and article, *Meet Those Who “Love Jesus but Not the Church”* (<https://www.barna.com/research/meet-love-jesus-not-church/>), discussed how these folks are becoming the norm (“orthodox”) in religion. They usually define themselves as “privately spiritual” and they “love Jesus but not the church.” The article said “this spirituality is deeply personal, with many preferring to keep spiritual matters to



themselves.” This may sound fine to most people, but **is it acceptable to God?** Certainly this should be an important question for anyone who claims to love Jesus, considering that Jesus Himself said “if ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)!

Not surprisingly, the folks who believe in salvation outside the church don’t read the Bible. According to the Barna article, these “love Jesus but not the church” folks “only read scripture half as much as the average practicing Christian” and less than a third as much as “evangelicals.” What this boiled down to was that only 26 percent said they read the Bible at all! Instead, they choose to spend their time in prayer, meditation, and “in nature for reflection.” Notice that none of these things can reveal God’s will (e.g., how to be saved, what God wants in worship, etc.), which means that these folks admittedly have no idea what God actually wants from them, and apparently don’t care.

Are you one of these folks? If so, may we lovingly enquire why you’ve come to this conclusion about salvation and the church? It’s important to see, from your own response (or lack thereof), that you cannot support your view biblically.

When we read the New Testament, we cannot find anything that supports the idea that one can be saved outside of the church. To even suggest otherwise trivializes Christ’s death, since the church is called His “body” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24), and He died to **save that body** (Eph. 5:23)! Or, as Luke said in Acts 20:28, He purchased the church “with His own blood.”

The conclusion of most of these folks is that the church doesn’t matter. After all, if one can be saved outside the church, then the church is unnecessary! But, how can anyone conclude this given the truth in Acts 20:28? Doesn’t this verse tell us the pricelessness of the church? It is worth the Savior’s blood! Shouldn’t we then understand the absolute necessity of being members of this body? Did He purchase any other institution with His blood?

These folks claim to believe in Christ and that His death matters. The article says they “made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important to their life today” and that they have a “continued commitment to faith.” But their actions contradict this, claiming that the Son of God gave His life for an institution that is unnecessary!

If this describes you, please know that members of the Lord’s church have great love and concern for you because, though you may believe you’re saved, the Scriptures teach that you’re not. Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church, and there is no salvation outside of it. It is this church (or kingdom, cf., Matt. 16:18-19), and **only** this church, that will be delivered by Jesus to the Father in the end (1 Cor. 15:24).

We hope and pray that those who claim to love Jesus but not the church will reconsider their ways before it is eternally too late.

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## Is Undenominational Christianity Possible?

**Dub Mowery**

A large percentage of people believe it is impossible to be in a church that is not a denomination. Some talk of an “invisible” church and the “visible” churches. Obviously, they are claiming that the various denominations are the **visible** churches that are ultimately united in the **invisible** church. I do not know of any passage of scripture that even hints of an “invisible church.” The undenominational church of the first century was very visible. It was so visible that persecution was brought upon it (Acts 8:1-4). To speak of an “invisible church” is to indicate something intangible. But the church of the first century was very tangible.

There are those who refer to the parable of the True Vine at John 15:1-8 as representing the different denominations being in fellowship with Christ. These people teach that the branches represent the different denominations. But examine the passage for yourself to learn what the individual branches represent. Each branch represents an individual disciple who must bear fruit to remain in spiritual union with Jesus Christ.

Many in the denominational world declare, “We are all going to heaven, but taking different roads to get there.” Now, think about that for a moment. Is that concept taught in the Bible? “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). To claim that there is more than one way to heaven is to either suggest that the Bible itself teaches different ways or that it does not matter whether we adhere to what it teaches. Neither of these alternatives can be harmonized with the scriptures (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Philp. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6).

Also, there are those who use the phrase, “other sheep I have which are not of this fold,” (John 10:16), to uphold religious division. They fail to stress the latter part of that verse, which states, “they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” All who hear Christ’s voice (the new covenant) shall become one fold, **not** many folds. When Gentiles (those of other races) obeyed the gospel of Christ and were added to the spiritual body of Christ (His church), they became one with Jewish Christians (Eph. 2:12-22).

Yes, undenominational Christianity is possible today when obedient believers submit to the one true standard, the Bible rather than the creeds and philosophies of fallible human beings (Philp. 3:16; Matt. 15:8-9; 1 Pet. 4:11).

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## For What Am I Responsible?

Marvin L. Weir

One of the greatest problems afflicting mankind is the refusal to accept responsibility for one's actions. Most people are determined to blame someone else for their own unacceptable conduct. Some blame their bad behaviour on their ancestors, others blame a society that existed 150 years ago, and many say the **devil makes** them act as they now act.

The word of God says, “So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 4:12). The Bible doesn't teach that we shall be able to successfully blame our failures on others. God holds each of us accountable for his **choices** and **actions**. This is why each person should possess the attitude of the Bereans who, “received the word with all readiness of mind, and examined the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

A person is responsible for his attitude toward, and knowledge of the Word of God. Many people believe that the Bible is God's Word, but they never study the Holy Scriptures. To ignore the teachings of the Bible is to act as if it does not exist. Some give “lip service” to the Bible, but have no real understanding of the Scriptures. It requires diligent study to know right from wrong and truth from error. (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

Some are convinced that if they remain ignorant of God's Word they will not be accountable for their ignorance. But the Bible doesn't so teach. Each person is responsible for finding the truth on any given matter, accepting the truth as it is, and making such truth a guide for his actions.

One may know that instrumental music was used in the Old Testament (cf. Psalms 150) and thus **feel** that it is an acceptable means of worshipping God today. But the Old Testament is not the covenant that we are under today. That covenant—and all it contained—was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14) to make way for the “better covenant” (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). The first covenant was taken away “that he may establish the second” (Heb. 10:9).

Under the New Covenant God has authorized singing, **not** playing. Search your New Testament and you will find examples and commands regarding the music that God desires in worship today (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Jas. 5:13; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3). There is Bible authority for singing, but no such authority for playing on an instrument.

One is responsible for understanding that there is only **one** church that Jesus built

(Matt. 16:18), the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). The church and the body of which Christ is the head are one and the same (Eph. 1:22-23). The apostle Paul made it clear to the Ephesians that there is only **one** body (Eph. 4:4). “One” **never** means more than “one” until folks begin to discuss religion. It's only then that “one” means “two,” “three,” “four,” or “one hundred and four.” The one Head (Christ) then becomes the Saviour of multiple bodies that He never promised to build and did not purchase with His blood (Acts 20:28). There is no Bible authority for man-made churches (Matt. 15:13; 1 Cor. 10:10-13).

One is responsible for obeying the gospel. There is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and it alone has the power to save a soul from sin (Rom. 1:16). Those who obey not the gospel will be eternally lost (2 Thess. 1:8). Baptism is a part of the plan of salvation, and one must be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is **for** the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and one cannot be saved while still in his sins.

Yes, man is responsible for many things. But the thing that matters most is your attitude toward the Word of God. Will you accept it and obey it as the Truth it is (John 17:17; 8:32), or will you ignore it and cling to the opinions, creeds, and traditions of men? Remember, **you** are responsible before God for your choices and actions.

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## The Editor's Travels and Writing

July kept us busy preaching and writing. The editor preached at both worship assemblies of the Eastside church in Lexington, Okla. on July 7 where Pat Craig is the faithful evangelist. On the Lord's Day morning, July 14, we preached at Willow, Okla. where Jim Foster has faithfully preached for 23 years. We attended the wedding of our faithful brother, Dub McClish, and his new bride, Diane (Tharp) McClish in Wills Point, Texas on July 20. The next day, July 21, we preached morning and afternoon for the Northpoint church in Denton, Texas where Philip Smith is the faithful Gospel preacher. It was a joy to be with the good brethren in all of these places.

After about eight months, writing was completed on our Ephesians commentary. It is now in the hands of the printer and should be available in the latter part of August or shortly thereafter. Pre-publication orders will be filled as soon as we receive it.

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## “It's a Book”

Lee Moses

As a young girl followed her mother through a bookstore, something caught her youthful eye. She apparently saw something different about one particular book that set it apart from the others that filled the racks and shelves. As curiosity filled the young child, she asked her mother, “What's that?” Her mother curtly responded, “It's a book.” So mother and daughter promptly moved on to look at other things, with nothing more said about the book that captured the young girl's imagination. That book was the Bible.

The above story is true, as related to me by a Christian lady who works at the bookstore where this mother-daughter dialogue took place. The mother's unhelpful answer to her daughter manifests the world's increasing ignorance of and callousness toward the Bible. “It's a book”? The Bible is as far from being just a book as any book could be.

**It's a book by which God speaks to man.** No, rephrase that—the Bible is **the** book by which God speaks to man. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Of what novel could this be said? Of what textbook could this be said? “God... hath...spoken” (Heb. 1:1-2). What a wondrous blessing that is! Our Creator has revealed Himself to us and speaks to us, but He only does so through the Bible.

**It's a book infallible in every way.** “[God's] word is true from the beginning: and every one of [His] righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160). From beginning to end, every word of the Bible is true. Of what other book could this be said? Every historical tidbit is precise. Every scientific statement is accurate, even if it was not

corroborated by science until centuries or millennia later. Textbooks continue to have new revisions almost every year, because the writers' "facts" change. But with the Bible, one can be sure he **has** the facts. And only the Bible provides such assurance.

**It's a book that illuminates the way through darkness.** The world is filled with conflicting philosophies and religious doctrines. The world is filled with temptations to ensnare us as we attempt to make our way through our earthly lives. Satan attempts to keep the world in darkness, to keep people from finding out what is truly important in life and to keep people from God (2 Cor. 4:4). His efforts have been largely successful. With such darkness, how is one to make it through his earthly life without stumbling and falling? "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:19). Only the Bible provides illumination brilliant enough to pierce the gloom: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

**It's a book that provides Divinely-selected historical accounts that best encourage and instruct the child of God.** Learning history, and especially learning **from** history, is valuable. As many history teachers well remind their students, "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat its mistakes." I have personally found great encouragement in reading biographies of pioneer preachers and other faithful Gospel preachers who have gone on before. However, when **God** has specially chosen which past figures of history to profile and which information to include in their accounts, one can be certain that those accounts, without ever overly glorifying or romanticizing the men and women they profile, will prove particularly encouraging and instructing (cf. Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 10:11).

**It's a book that shows us how to be saved and remain saved.** Without the Bible, man would likely not perceive that he is lost—he would certainly not perceive the separation his sin brings from God and the punishment that his sin demands. But the Bible not only indicates man's lost state, it constantly points the way toward salvation. As a drowning man esteems the life preserver that comes his way to be of inestimable value, so much the more should a man who has been lost in his sin esteem the Bible. "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).

**It's a book that shows us an eternity we can anticipate.** Without the Bible, we could easily think that this life is the only life we have to live, and that this world is the best that man's Creator could offer. But the Scriptures make clear that man's Creator has prepared dwelling places for His redeemed far greater than anything human eyes have ever beheld, or that human imagination could ever conceive (John 17:24; Rev. 14:13; 21-22).

People need to understand that the Bible is far more than just **a** book. It is the Book of books, unapproached by the most timeless classics that the earth's greatest authors have offered. Parents need to seize opportunities to teach their children what a marvelous book it is. Every human being needs to appreciate what a wondrous blessing it is to have the Bible, and to treasure it, constantly mining its unsearchable depths.

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## **"What Saith The Scriptures?"**

**Harrell Davidson**

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Via the internet comes the following question and comment: **"We take the Lord's Supper every Sunday morning, but only offer it on Sunday night. Why not take it both times? Sunday night is also a worship time. Could you discuss this question with others and get back with me."**

**Answer:** Matthew's account of the instituting of the Supper is found in Matthew 26:26-29. Please note that verse 29 says, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." In instituting the Lord's Supper, our Lord essentially is saying not now, but



later in My kingdom. In Acts 2:42 Luke wrote, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The Kingdom had its beginning earlier in the same chapter of Acts. They are now communing with the Lord in His kingdom—church.

In Acts 20:7, Luke the inspired writer, said in part, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” In First Corinthians 11 Paul also addressed the subject of the Supper. In every instance of the partaking of the Lord's Supper, we have no authority of any apostle, or first century Christian, partaking of the Lord's Supper more than once on the Lord's Day. This is significant in that without divine authority we would be adding to the Word of God (cf. Rev. 22:18) by partaking more often than commanded. We also worship in song and prayer on Wednesday night. Both are worship, but we are not authorized to partake of the Supper every time we come together to worship. We well remember in the late 1940s and mid 1950s that there were many all day services on the Lord's Day, but never was the Lord's Supper partaken of more than once by anyone. In Acts 20 Paul preached until midnight, but there is no indication that the audience was eating the Supper all during this time.

We are commanded to partake on the Lord's Day. Sometimes, due to health or other legitimate reasons, one may not be able to participate with the rest of the saints in partaking of the Supper. Since it is still the Lord's Day, and we are under commandment to partake, if able, it is Scriptural for those who could not do so earlier to eat and drink the Supper at another worship service. By doing so, they fulfill the Lord's command. But partaking more than once is not commanded, and as such, is not authorized in the Scriptures. We must do all by the authority of Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 3:17).

**Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at [harrelld@charter.net](mailto:harrelld@charter.net)**

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## The Crucial Issue of Authority

**Batsell Barrett Baxter**

Every thinking person realizes that authority plays a very significant role in all of our lives. Before we may drive a car, we must have the authority of a license. A doctor must have a diploma from a reputable medical school before he can practice. A policeman must have a badge which authorizes him to carry out his duties. To get married, we must have a license. There is little that we can do in life without proper authorization.

Especially in the realm of religion must we have proper authority for all that we do. In the worship and service of God we must do that which we are authorized to do and nothing else.

The question Jesus once faced, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” (Matt. 21:23) is a good one for all of us.

### **Possible Sources Of Authority**

Final or ultimate authority in religion rests in one of three possible sources. First of all, there are those who believe that final authority rests in the church. Councils, conclaves, and synods meet and make decisions. From these human deliberations such doctrines as purgatory, the adoration of Mary, the seven sacraments, papal infallibility and others have come.

It was Martin Luther who pointed out the problem of such human authority when he said, “...I cannot trust either the decisions of Councils, or of Popes, for it is plain that they have not only erred but have contradicted each other...” (Friedenthal, *Luther: His Life and Times*, p. 278).

Second, others conceive final authority to rest in the reasoning power of men. One's own conscience, inner feelings, or reason is the final arbiter. Saul of Tarsus demonstrated this view to be erroneous. In spite of his honesty of purpose and intensity of zeal, he was wrong. Many a person, guided by his own inner feelings, believes and practices what is contrary to the will of God.



The whole blight of denominationalism is a result of man's trusting his own views, rather than conforming his convictions to God's teaching. Liberalism makes the mistake of thinking that man's reason is the infallible authority in religion.

The third possibility, as the absolute source of authority, is the Bible, the inspired word of God. God the creator of the universe and of man is the only ultimate, final source of authority. He has spoken in his word. It is our responsibility to read the scriptures, understand them and obey them. Let us say, as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." (1 Sam. 3:10).

### Never With Men

Authority always rests with divinity. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and in so doing established his ultimate supreme authority. Later, when Jesus was upon the earth he said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18). He further announced to his apostles that when he left the earth, the Holy Spirit would come in his place and "...shall guide you into all truth." (John 16:13). Authority has always rested with the Godhead, and **never** with men. The prophets, the apostles, and others miraculously guided by God were simply spokesmen. God's word has always been the final authority among men. Our Only Guide.

The Bible is our guide—our only guide. For this reason, it is encouraging to hear people say, "Let us have a 'thus saith the Lord' for all that we do in our religious faith and practice." Still, another way of saying it is "Let us speak where the scriptures speak, and be silent where the scriptures are silent." Each of these is a statement indicating the acceptance of the authority of the scriptures.

At this point let us examine two opposite positions on the matter of the authority of the scriptures. Martin Luther championed the idea that, "Whatever is not expressly prohibited in the scriptures is permissible" (*History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, by D'Aubigne, Book II, p. 297). Luther's view opens the door to all kinds of innovations, such as the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, the use of images, instrumental music, and even adding other elements to the Lord's Supper.

Huldreich Zwingli championed the second view which said, "Whatever is not expressly authorized in the scriptures is prohibited" (*History of the Christian Church*, by W. Walker, 1959, p. 322). This is the view set forth in the scriptures themselves. In Galatians 1:8, Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." The apostle John said the same thing in these words: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

### Three Avenues

In determining what the scriptures authorize, there are three avenues through which we may receive guidance. First, there are direct commands, such as Acts 2:38. In the second place, there are approved apostolic examples, such as the apostle Paul's eating of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7). And, finally, there is necessary implication. Each command of God authorizes whatever is necessarily implied to carry it out. When the Lord commanded Christians to meet for worship, he necessarily authorized the providing of a place for Christians to assemble for worship.

Our religion—our relationship to God—is our most important relationship. We must be **absolutely certain** about everything that we believe and practice.

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## Why Baptism?

### Charles Pogue

Nothing is made clearer by the New Testament Scriptures than baptism is essential for salvation. As is true with any other commandment given by God, baptism alone does not save. As is also true with any other commandment given by God, one is not saved without baptism.

An understanding of why God commanded baptism and grasping why baptism is a burial would help many who hear the Gospel to accept its absolute essentialness in obedience to the Gospel. Thus, those two facets of why God has given us this command are the subject of the following discussion.

Why did God command baptism? Part of the answer lies in the fact that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Sin is filth of the soul, as dirt is filth to the human body. How is filth washed away from the physical body? The answer is by water. If sin spoils the soul, and it is by the blood of Christ one is cleansed, it seems hard that anyone would fail to understand that water is both symbolic of the cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ and the point at which the blood is applied. Thus God commanded baptism in water as the means of applying the blood of Christ in order to wash away one's sins.

Why is baptism a burial? The complete answer to this is recorded by the apostle Paul in Romans 6. A close study of the entire chapter will convince anyone of the necessity of baptism. Verses 3-6 explain:

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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

At the time of one's knowledge that he has sinned, he understands that he is spiritually dead. When the physical body is dead, what is done with it? It is buried. Since the man guilty of sin is spiritually dead, what is done with that old man? He is buried. He is buried in the grave of baptism wherein he is washed from his sins by the blood of Christ, via his obedience to God's command to be baptized. He is then raised from the water, even as Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. He now walks as a new man in a new life as a servant of righteousness instead of a servant of sin as was the old man. Why water and why a burial is not hard to understand. For many what it is an unwillingness to accept baptism. They often do so because they have isolated one verse from the rest of Scripture, that one being John 3:16.

John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Christ came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). If the Jews of his day had any difficulty understanding why baptism was essential in John's work, we are not told. When Jesus instructed the apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, He declared the essentiality of baptism for salvation (Mark 16:16). The apostles had no difficulty grasping why baptism was part of the command. When the apostles answered the question of "what must we do" on the day of Pentecost, baptism for the remission of sins was commanded. The people that day never had a problem understanding it. In every single instance of individuals in the book of Acts who complied with the Gospel, **all** were baptized. None of them said I don't need to be baptized. They understood it and they believed the message of God, not a message of man.

Why should anyone today fail to understand and accept the simple words of Peter in 1 Peter 3:21? "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" The answer is that there is **no reasonable cause** to **not** understand what baptism is and its role in the plan devised by heaven to save man who dwells upon the earth.

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## "No Judgment—No Hell"

W.C. Graves

The judgment is not a pleasant subject to those who have no hope and are not making any effort to obtain a hope. When he was before Felix, Paul "reasoned of righteousness,

temperance and judgment to come,” and the record says that “Felix trembled.” (Acts 24:25). And God intended it to so be.

The love of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross touches the hearts of many and moves them to tears and loving obedience to Christ. But it takes the “judgment to come” and the terrors of hell to make some stop and think in their downward rush to eternal destruction. The “no judgment—no hell” doctrine that ungodly men loudly proclaim today is one of the main causes of the increase of wickedness in our society.

Remove from people's minds the fear of God and tell them there's “no hell” or “judgment to come” and you have done away with much of the New Testament—the very part that God ordained to hold people back from wickedness. Felix was a wicked man. Paul knew it. That was the reason he preached to him “righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.” Paul also placed the judgment before the Athenians as an incentive to repentance.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31).

“Hath appointed a day”—that day is yet future, and it is coming to you, to me, to all. It's coming to the rich, the poor, the high, the low. All will be judged. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Heb. 9:27). What could be plainer? Just as surely as all men die, so all will surely be judged.

What do we have jail houses for? What do we have law enforcement officers for? What do we have the courts of the land for? What are all these things for if not to curb wickedness? Remove these means of restraining wickedness and this would indeed be a charnel house of death in which we live. Likewise, remove “hell” and “judgment” from God's word and you take away from people the fear of God. And that's exactly what the devil wants done.

The devil took away from Eve the fear of God when he said, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4). Having had the fear of God removed from her, “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband and he did eat.” The very first transgression—the one that brought death upon the whole human race—was because the devil removed from Eve the fear of God's judgment upon her if she should eat of the forbidden fruit. That's what the “no judgment—no hell” doctrine is doing to people today. It is removing the fear of God from men's hearts. It's no wonder the courts are flooded with divorces, homes are broken by fornicators and adulterers, drunkenness is rampant, murder stalks our streets and God's name is flippantly profaned in speech!

The devil says, “All the hell you get is in this life,” and that sets well with many—with those who have no hope and who make no effort to obtain any hope. But the rich man in Luke 16 didn't think so—at least after he died—for, “in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments,” and said, “I am tormented in this flame.” And so shall it be with all who forget God and openly flaunt his word. Yes, there is a judgment after death and plenty of hell for the wicked and disobedient.

The “no judgment—no hell” doctrine is inspired of Satan and has one purpose only—to remove the fear of God from you and bring you to eternal loss.

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## Some Lessons About Sin and Death

**Marvin L. Weir**

It never ceases to amaze me as to what those who claim to be Bible believers will falsely declare. Calvinism and its damnable doctrine of hereditary total depravity is more precious to countless thousands of professing “Christians” than a “thus saith the Lord.” The false teaching that one is “born in sin” is not a new, “Johnny come lately,” doctrine. God charges His people in Ezekiel's day with misrepresenting the facts. He says to His people of old, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land

of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel" (Ezek. 18:2-3). It could **not** be clearer that the fathers eating sour grapes did not set the children's teeth on edge. The obvious conclusion is that the children would also have to eat the sour grapes to be affected by them. Who can deny such? Hereditary and environmental influence may be great, but neither negates the personal responsibility of the individual. There is no escape from this truth: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth**, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, emph. mlw). God continues to deny the false doctrine of inherited sin in saying,

Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like; that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; that hath withdrawn his hand from the poor, that hath not received interest nor increase, hath executed mine ordinances, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live" (18:14-17).

Let us now learn some Biblical truths about sin and death.

**All Souls Belong to God!** God is the "Creator" of all life (Isa. 40:28; 1 Pet. 4:19). He is the Father of "spirits" (Heb. 12:9). Every soul then belongs to God, and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4).

**Each Soul Is Individually Responsible and Accountable to God!** Even a casual reading of Ezekiel 18 impresses one with the truth that it is impossible to inherit another person's sins. Sixteen verses after verse four God again says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (18:20). A son of a just and lawful man who chooses to sin will die in his sins, but the father will live (vss. 5-13). The righteous son of a sinful and wicked father will not die because of the iniquity of the father (vss. 14-17). The Bible consistently teaches that every person will give an account of **himself** unto God. Paul preached this to the brethren at Rome and also to congregations located elsewhere: "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12; cf. 1 Cor. 4:17). Adam did sin, and sin entered into the world, but people die spiritually not because they have inherited Adam's sin, but because "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

**Righteousness Is The Condition of Life!** "If a man be just...he shall surely live" (Ezek. 18:5, 9). A just man is a man who keeps the Word of God (a lawful or law-abiding man). One is righteous who chooses to do what God declares to be right. John said, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (1 John 2:29). The righteous man is the one who chooses to live in complete harmony with God's Word (see Psa. 119:172) and be guided by that Word in all things.

**Wickedness Is The Condition of Death!** "The soul that sinneth, it shall die ..." (Ezek. 18:20). Wickedness is literally **lawlessness** and is the very opposite of those who are just and lawful. The KJV says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Note the ASV rendering of the same verse: "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Enmity to God's Word will lead to lawlessness and eventually spiritual death!

**Sin and Spiritual Death Are Inseparable!** Again, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). The New Testament makes it clear "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). One will most assuredly reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7-8). Just as the absence of light means darkness, the presence of sin means death! Isaiah said, "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:



but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). “Wages” are something duly earned, and the just payment for impenitent sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

**God Has No Pleasure in the Death of the Lawless!** “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live” (Ezek. 18:23)? God’s will is that all men might be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The problem is that many people “have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:2-3). May we learn to trust the Word of God instead of the wisdom of man. Let us learn well the lessons of sin and death before we meet the Word of the Lord at the judgment (John 12:48)!

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## There is Only One Church

**Brad Green**

Men have made many claims regarding the church. We have all heard statements like, “One Church is as good as another,” “Attend the Church of your choice,” and “We’re all going to the same place; we’re just taking different roads to get there.” How do these man-made claims compare to what the Bible teaches?

Jesus said He would build only one church (Mat. 16:18). The apostle Paul says there is only “one body” and that body is the church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23). Jesus prayed for His followers, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). The only way to have unity with God and His Son is to obey God’s Word (14:15; 1 John 1:7). Paul, by inspiration, begs “by 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 perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). The only way we can speak the same thing and have the same mind and judgment is by using the same standard—God’s Word.

Those who follow God’s plan of salvation are added to the church of Christ by God (Acts 2:38, 47). After about 3,000 obeyed the Gospel on that first Pentecost after Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, the Bible says, “all that believed were together, and had all things common” (2:44). In like manner, if we desire to be a member of the New Testament church, we must follow the same pattern. Sadly, there are many patterns being followed among religious people today. Those patterns make them members of some denominational body, but not members of the one church we read about in the New Testament and the church for which Jesus died. Now let us consider the initial statements made by men with what God has to say. Man says “one Church is as good as another.” God says there is **only one** church (Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28).

Man says, “attend the Church of your choice.” God says to attend the worship of only the *one* church His Son built and purchased with His blood (Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28). Man says, “we’re all going to the same place; we’re just taking different roads.” God says there is only **one** way to Him (John 14:6) and that different roads lead to destruction (Mat. 7:13-14). The New Testament church can be recognized. The church of Christ has no creed but the Bible, and has only one Head, Jesus Christ.

The one church worships in spirit and truth (John 4:24)—singing without mechanical instruments of music (Eph. 5:19), praying to the Father through Christ (1 Thess. 5:17), teaching and preaching (2 Tim. 4:2), partaking the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7), and giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The one church is overseen by elders where there are men qualified (1 Tim. 3:1-7) and has no state or national headquarters. The one church has no conventions and has no assemblies larger than the local congregation.

The one church preaches the same Gospel preached in the 1st century—hear (Rom. 10:17), believe (Heb. 11:6), repent (Acts 2:38), confess (8:37), be baptized to have your past sins forgiven (2:38), and live faithfully unto death (Rev. 2:10; 1 John 1:6-9). If we



follow **God's** pattern, we can **know** we are in His church and that we are pleasing unto Him.

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## Are We Born With A "Sin Nature"?

**Jerry C. Brewer**

The undocumented assertion by a local denominational preacher in his newspaper column that, "we were all born with a 'sin' nature" and that sin "was bred into us" is right out of John Calvin's doctrines and is without foundation in the word of God. In 1536 Calvin published his religious views in a work entitled, *The Institutes of The Christian Religion*, resting his system upon the error that all men are born sinners. Calvin's doctrine asserts that, "All men are conceived in sin and born the children of wrath, indisposed (*inepti*) to all saving good, propense to evil, dead in sin, and the slaves of sin..." ("Calvinism," "Doctrines of Dort," *McClintock & Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 39-46).

The Bible nowhere teaches that "we were all born with a 'sin' nature" or that, sin "was bred into us." Sin is not inherited, as one inherits the color of his eyes or hair. If sin is "bred into us" then God must be its source for Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38). To support the lie that "we were all born sinners," Calvinists cite these words of David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). But notice: The iniquity existed when David was shapen, and the sin existed when he was conceived. There is a vast difference between being born *in* sin and being born with sin.

A consideration of a verse in Acts 2 will illustrate what David meant. Astonished that unlearned Galileans could speak in their native languages, the mixed crowd on Pentecost Day asked, "How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born" (Acts 2:8). They said they were born in—"wherein we were born"—their native tongues. They were not born speaking those languages but learned them **after** they were born. They were born **into an environment and culture** where those tongues were spoken. They weren't born speaking them. The same principle applies to David's words. He wasn't born with sin, but was conceived **in**, and born **into**, a world polluted by sin.

The Hebrews writer says that God is the "Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9). If sin is "bred into us" that means God is the Father of a sinful spirit and that is little short of blasphemy. When Jesus sought an example of purity and innocence for His followers to emulate, He chose a little child. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). If little children are "born with a 'sin' nature" then we must become sinners like them to enter the kingdom of heaven, for that is the example Jesus sets forth in this passage.

That sin is an **acquired** spiritual characteristic is a truth taught throughout the Bible. Man is not born astray, but goes astray of his own free will. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born; speaking lies" (Psa. 58:3). The wicked "go astray" by "speaking lies." They aren't born that way. Ezekiel declares that sin is **not** passed from generation to generation as an inherited trait from our parents. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). Sin is an acquired characteristic, not something "bred into us." We acquire sin when we come to an accountable state before God by our knowledge of good and evil and choose to sin. The notion that, "we were all born with a sin nature," expressed in the statement that, sin "was bred into us," has **no basis** in God's revealed Truth and is false to the core.

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# A Charge To Preachers

G. K. Wallace

“I charge thee therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). There are a lot of priggish, puritanical brethren who are led astray by the assumed piety of certain preachers. What Brother Longface preaches is surely the truth because he is such a devout man. They size up what he preaches by his piety and not by the Book. I am not opposed to piety. The Bible teaches us to be sober. It also teaches us to be honest. But the man who **keeps insisting** that he is honest is generally a crook. And he who **parades his piety** is usually a hypocrite. Piety, like honesty, flourishes better when it is treated as something personal and too sacred to be put on parade.

If our piety is the test of our soundness, then the Pharisees would be orthodox. They were reverent. The Pharisee instead of leaving the door of his room open while he was on his knees praying, would stand out on the corner of the street and make long prayers. Thus he could be seen of all men. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, nor a dresser of sycamore trees, but I predict that these super-pious brethren will be on the street corners next. Paul was reverent, saintly, godly and heavenly minded, but was not too pious to call one fellow a “son of the devil” (Acts 13:19). His brotherly love did not keep him from resisting Peter. “I resisted him to his face because he stood condemned” (Gal. 2:11). The real test of one’s orthodoxy is not his sincerity or affected devotion, but whether he is true to the charge to preach the word.

Realizing that the Gospel, and not piety, is the power of God unto salvation, how shall we preach it? It must be preached boldly and without fear or favor. The second recorded prayer in the book of Acts is a prayer for boldness. Brethren today call the preacher aside and ask him to tone his preaching until it is so tame as to be insipid.

Some say that we should be like John, the apostle of love. Of course, they think John was not vigorous and trenchant in his preaching. Was John a shy, soft, effeminate preacher of the Word? The Sanhedrin was amazed at the boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4:13). Please notice that the text says “Peter **and** John.” John was just as bold as Peter.

What reckless saints were those early preachers! They did not so much as regard their own lives in preaching Christ (Acts 20:24). Watch these great men in action and compare some brethren who are apparently afraid to quote the Great Commission with emphasis lest they should offend some sectarian. No doubt the uncompromising fearlessness of these apostles was derived from Christ. “They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”. (Acts 4 :13) No one would suspect a compromising, cringing preacher of having been associated with the world’s greatest Preacher.

Faithful preaching of the Word of God will accomplish divine results. First: The word preached, believed and obeyed will put one into Christ where he is saved from his sins. (Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Gal. 3:26-27) Second: The word preached will expose false teachers. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus that false brethren would arise among them. “I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). False teachers should be exposed. Those in the church should not be spared. Third: The word preached fulfills the sacred charge of Paul to Timothy. We would thus save ourselves. “Take heed unto thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee” (2 Tim. 4 :16).

The Gospel preached “with thoughts that breathe the words that burn” will please God and disturb man. The early preachers did not please everybody. Occasionally, a preacher of our day boasts that all were pleased with his work. Even the sects dismissed to attend his services. How different from Paul. He did not please the world nor all the brethren. When he went into a place to preach he had a revival or a riot. The enemies of the truth spoke of Paul and his companions after this fashion, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”

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## **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.

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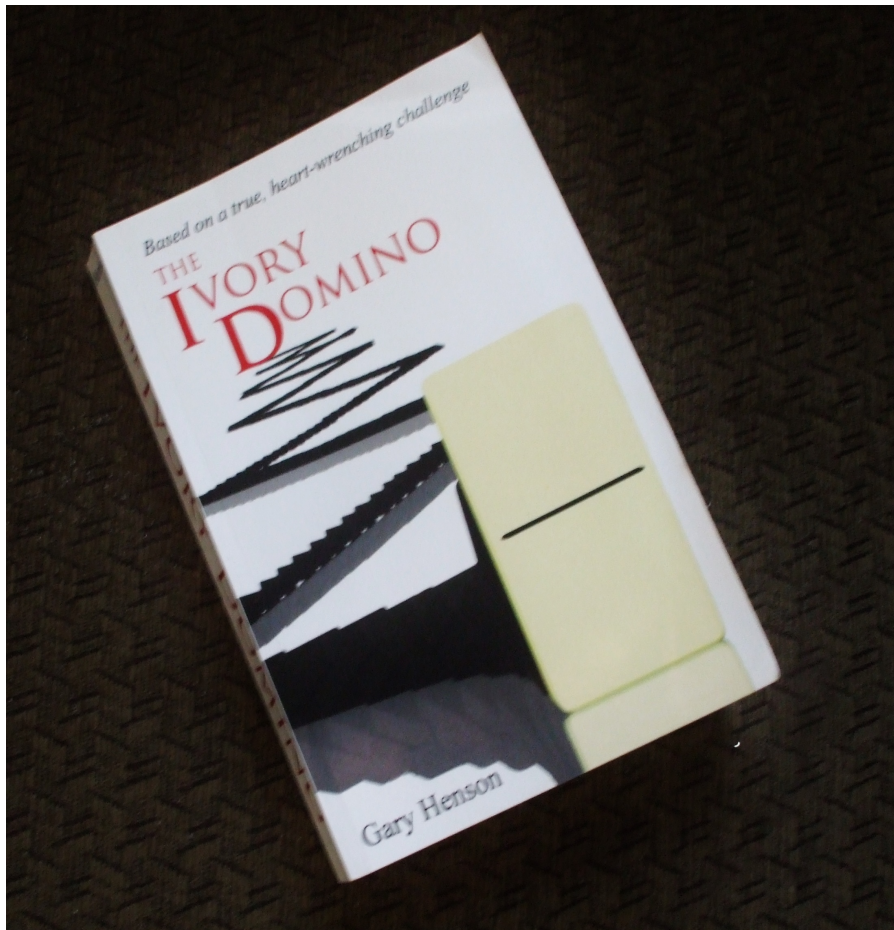
## **Unbelief of Moses and Aaron**

**R.L. Whiteside**

On one occasion, Moses turned his confidence from God to self. The people were thirsty in their journey. God commanded Moses to assemble the people and to speak to the rock that it bring forth its water (Num. 20:8). Moses and Aaron assembled the people before the rock, but he did not speak to the rock, but to the people: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). "Must we"—thus leaving God out of the transaction.

Then God said to Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num 20:12). Moses had no more doubt then of the existence of God than he had any other time. Yet, God says he and Aaron did not believe in Him. They did not have sufficient confidence in God to do what He said, but followed their own way; and no man does that except through lack of faith in God.

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**Jerry C. Brewer**  
**Editor & Publisher**  
***The Gospel Preceptor***



## Our Staff Writers



**Nana Yaw Aidoo**  
Accra, Ghana



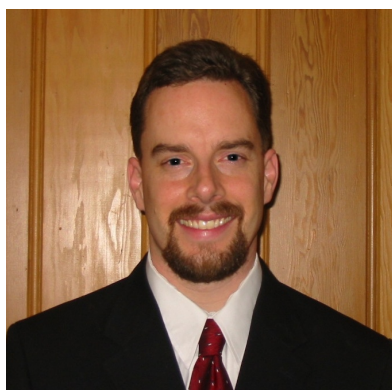
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Denton, Texas



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**David Ray**  
Yukon, Okla.



**Jess Whitlock**  
Maysville, Okla.

Introducing two new additions—**Doug Post** and **Nana Yaw Aidoo**—to our staff of writers.

Doug Post has preached for 20 years, doing local work in several states. Additionally, he has spoken on Bible lectureships in numerous places and currently preaches for the Lake Road church of Christ in Gore, Okla. He attended Southern Christian University, Gordon Conwell University, Amridge University, and the University of Connecticut receiving his BA and MA in Biblical studies.

Nana Yaw Aidoo is a native of Ghana and lives in Accra. He was born to Christian parents and became a Christian on June 12, 2011 when he was baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. He attended the Southern Institute of Biblical Studies in Accra and worships with the church of Christ at New Bortianor in that city where he preaches and teaches Bible classes on a regular basis, and has previously written for *The Gospel Preceptor*.

# God's Definition of a Christian Acts 11:26

Franklin Camp

There are various definitions given of a Christian. The only one that is worthwhile is God's definition. The only kind of Christian worthwhile is the one as defined by God. The reason for saying this is God's definition of a Christian is because of the meaning of *chrematizo*, translated "called." It is not a nickname, claimed by some. "And it was in Antioch that the disciples first received the name Christian." (*Weymouth*). The Greek word rendered *called* implies a divine source. It is "to be divinely instructed, to receive a warning or revelation from God" (*Green's Greek-English Lexicon*). "To give a response to those consulting an oracle, to give divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven; to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed; to be the mouth-piece of divine revelations, to promulgate the commands God" (*Thayer*).

The word is found nine times in the New Testament (Matt. 2:12; 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Heb. 8:5; 11:7; 12:25; Rom. 7:3; Acts 11:26). In all of these instances it has reference to divine revelation, unless Acts 11:16 is an exception. The meaning of the word fits Isaiah 62:2: "Which the mouth of Jehovah shall name." Compare Romans 7:3: "She shall be called an adulteress." Who calls her an adulteress? Compare "defer not, for thine own sake, my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Dan. 9:19). In Israel, we have the root of *Elohim*, the Hebrew name for God, which supplies an explanation for the statement, "Thy people are called by thy name." Amos 9:12 and Acts 15:17 are equivalents. Thus the subject: "God's Definition of a Christian." Why was not this name given at Pentecost? We may not know, but I can think of a reason. Christian is the sum of Christianity. Christianity not Jewish, not peculiar to Jews. This is implied in the very fact that the term that most describes Christianity was not given until Gentiles were brought in. Thus, those who think of Christianity offering something yet for Jews in a special way have not properly understood Christianity.

A Christian is one who heard the Gospel and believed it (Acts 11:19-21). Why were there no Christians in Antioch prior to this time? There were not any that had heard the Gospel and believed. A Christian is one that assembles (Acts 11:26; Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42). The Christians at Antioch assembled. The Christians in every place assemble. A Christian is one that accepts responsibility (Acts 11:29). Note the words—every man—determined—according to his ability. They did not seek to do as little as they could but as much as they could. Many seem to think today that a Christian is one who does as little as he can. A Christian does not shirk responsibility. A Christian is one in the Lord's church (Acts 11:26). There were no Christians in Antioch that were not members of the church. There were no Christians in Antioch that were members of another church. "I give in mine house and within my walls...a name" (Isa. 56:5). The church is God's house (1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:42; Gal. 3:26-27).

Are you a Christian as defined by God?

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**Day 1** - Matthew 1 through 9

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**Day 3** - Matthew 16 through 22

**Day 4** - Matthew 23 through 27

**Day 5** - Matthew 28 through Mark 6

**Day 6** - Mark 7 through Mark 12

**Day 7** - Mark 13 through Luke 1

**Day 8** - Luke 2 through Luke 7

**Day 9** - Luke 8 through Luke 11

**Day 10** - Luke 12 through Luke 18

**Day 11** - Luke 19 through Luke 23

**Day 12** - Luke 24 through John 5

**Day 13** - John 6 through John 9

**Day 14** - John 10 through John 16

**Day 15** - John 17 through Acts 2

**Day 16** - Acts through Acts 9

**Day 17** - Acts 10 through Acts 16

**Day 18** - Acts 17 through Acts 23

**Day 19** - Acts 24 through Romans 3

**Day 20** - Romans 4 through Romans 13

**Day 21** - Romans 14 through 1 Corinthians 8

**Day 22** - 1 Corinthians 9 through 1 Corinthians 16

**Day 23** - 2 Corinthians 1 through 2 Corinthians 13

**Day 24** - Galatians 1 through Ephesians 5

**Day 25** - Ephesians 6 through 1 Thessalonians 1

**Day 26** - 1 Thessalonians 2 through 1 Timothy 1

**Day 27** - 2 Timothy 2 through Hebrews 7

**Day 28** - Hebrews 8 through James 3

**Day 29** - James 4 through 1 John 3

**Day 30** - 1 John 4 through Revelation 9

**Day 31** - Revelation 10 through Revelation 22