

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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How 400 People Were Saved Outside The Ark

J. D. Tant

| God | |
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| <p><u>Noah</u> One Ark One Kind Of Timber One Door One Window One Family Safe In The Ark Lost Outside Flood</p> | <p><u>Christ</u> One Church One Kind Of Material One Way Of Salvation One Book To Guide Us One Family Safe In Christ Lost Out Of Christ Day Of Judgment</p> |

As my subject is an unscriptural one, yet the most popular in all churches today, I'll find a text in the Bible for it.

At all places where I go to preach the gospel and teach people that there is one way of salvation—one place where it is located and one road that leads there—I find five people more interested in some other way than one willing to take the way Christ points out. If I can help that class any by showing them how 400 were saved outside the ark when the flood came, I am sure it will be appreciated by many who do not want salvation in Christ.

The thief on the cross is the most popular case of conversion that comes from sectarian pulpits. They tell their people that the thief did not have to be baptized to be saved, therefore they can be saved without being baptized.

If I can show them with equally strong proof that 400 were saved who did not get into the ark—therefore no one needs to get into Christ for salvation—this will add much material to religious teachers to help them get up new sermons where they have worn out the thief on the cross. But before calling attention to how many people were saved outside of the ark, it is necessary to show how people were saved *in* the ark.

In the diagram above, we have placed God at the head because in all salvation—whether temporal or spiritual—He is the Author. He is the great Saviour and others are only instruments in His hand to do His will in saving people.

The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark has reference to their temporal salvation from the flood, and not to a spiritual salvation, as some suppose.

In a recent debate, my opponent argued that God put Noah in the ark, locked the door, and saved him and put the key in His (God's) pocket seven days before the flood. Therefore, Noah was saved above the high water mark. The door was locked, God had the key, and Noah could not get out if he so desired.

I remembered that this preacher worshipped one of the creed gods and his creed says their god has neither body nor parts. I could not imagine what he wore his pants on, or

what use he had for a pocket if he had neither body nor parts.

Had this preacher known that Noah was a child of God before he commenced to build the ark, and that his salvation by water (1 Pet. 3:19-21) meant a salvation from the flood, and not a spiritual salvation, he might have had no trouble in understanding the passage referred to.

God never used one prophecy as a fulfillment of another prophecy. Neither does God use one spiritual blessing as a type of another spiritual blessing. But He often takes temporal affairs to illustrate, or typify, spiritual blessings. So Noah's salvation from the flood became a type of our salvation from sin.

If I can examine Noah's salvation from the flood and find God's plan of saving him, I can come to the New Testament and find God's plan of saving men from their sins.

I read first that when God saw the wickedness of the world He selected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to save his family from the flood. I find that God selected Christ on the spiritual side, and in the very proclamation of the birth of Christ, the angel said He should save His people from their sins (Matt. 7:21). As Noah became the Saviour of his family in the hands of God, so Christ becomes our Saviour.

Noah was to build one ark—and only one—in which his family was safe when the flood came. It was also ordained of God that Christ should build His church (Matt. 16:18). As Noah built only one ark in the antitype, we would expect only one church. Paul recognized this when he said there is, “one body” (Eph. 4:4), and that this one body is the church (Col. 1:18-24).

At this point, denominationalism leaves the Bible. The Bible teaches that we are saved in Christ's church. The religious world condemns this teaching and says that we are saved out of the church, and then go into the church *because* we are saved. They argue that we can be saved in one church as well as another. Why not argue that God saved Noah from the flood while he was out of the ark, and after the flood destroyed the old world God let Noah go into the ark *because* he was saved?! Why not argue that Joe Smith, Bill Jones, or Sam Hall could each have built an ark like Noah's and it would make no difference which ark a man went into, he could be saved? But keep in memory that God only promised to save them in Noah's ark.

In building this ark, God told Noah to build it of one kind of timber. But many preachers I know would have taught Noah that it makes no difference what kind of timber you get. In like manner, the church is to be composed of regenerated men and women. But many will say, “Lord, that doesn't suit me. I will build up our side with children also.”

God told Noah to make but one door. If some of our modern preachers had been there, they would have argued that everything cannot get in at the same door. We must make a big door for the elephant, one smaller for the camel, and still one smaller for the sheep and cats. On the side of Christ is only one way of salvation. But sectarian preachers say, “We can't all see it alike, and you think all will be lost if they don't go in your way.” But the Son of God says, “I am the way” (John 14:6), and, again, “If any man climb up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1).

To all who were in the ark, there was only one window for light. Those who are satisfied with God's law are satisfied to take the Bible for all spiritual light. But many preachers would argue that Shem, Ham, and Japheth could not all see out the same window, and each would want a window for light. Yet, God stood behind one window. So God's people today claim that the Bible is God's only book for spiritual light. But our sectarian friends say, “It is not enough. We must add our creed—a human window—for more light, because we cannot all see alike.”

There was one family in the ark, and Christ has only one family here. If we follow the Bible, there is one fold, one family, one shepherd (John 10:16), one bride and one husband (Rom. 7:1-4). But in the religious world we have many families, or folds, and many brides, all claiming the same husband.

All were safe in the ark when the flood came, and in the antitype we can see that all who are regenerated will be safe in the church. All who were outside the ark were lost. Here, the religious world is mistaken again in claiming that one can be saved outside

the church as well as in the church.

But when all warnings had been given and rejected, the time of the flood came at last and swept away those outside the ark. Christ warns us. But as people continued in sin until the very day that Noah entered the ark—little heeding their fearful doom—so shall it be at the end of the world. Peter teaches that, “few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21).

In all the items on the diagram, you notice the type answers the antitype. Noah on one side, Christ on the other; ark on one side, church on the other; saved in the ark on one side, saved in the church on the other. In all these types and antitypes, I find perfect agreement.

But the religious world claims that we should put so much stress on the word of God, for we know that people are saved in 400 or more of the human churches which are not the church of Christ. Then, at the very place in the Bible where they find salvation in 400 churches—that being the antitype—I’ll turn back to the time and read them where 400 were saved outside the ark when the flood came.

If the good people who claim that we can be saved in all the churches can find no authority for the same (which they cannot) then it may become as foolish to them, as it is for me, to claim 400 were saved outside the ark.

Let us all turn from the doctrines and commandments of men, and accept the narrow way of salvation as taught by Christ, and walk in the narrow way pointed out in His word that heaven may be our eternal home.

“The Devils Also Believe...”

Jerry C. Brewer

Rarely, if ever, will one hear a denominational preacher say, “You don’t have to believe to be saved,” or, “Repentance isn’t necessary to be saved,” or, “No confession is required for salvation.” But baptism is a different story. Almost to a man, denominational preachers oppose baptism for the remission of sins, even in light of clear statements in Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16.

Have you ever wondered why that is? The answer is simple. You see, denominational preachers are the servants of Satan as Paul noted: “...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

As ministers of the devil, it is the job of denominational preachers to make sure Satan loses no subjects from his kingdom. Therefore, they draw the battle line at the very thing that transforms one from a servant of Satan to a servant of Christ. There are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world—Satan’s and Christ’s, and that old liar Satan knows if he can dupe folks into believing they are saved without baptism, he still has them in his kingdom. He does that through the “salvation by faith only” doctrine that has worked so well for him for centuries. Satan knows that when we are baptized into Christ, God delivers us “from the power of darkness, (Satan’s kingdom, JB) and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). Thus, baptism is the dividing line between those two kingdoms, as the flood was the dividing line between the old world and the new; as Jordan stood as a dividing line between Israel’s wandering in the wilderness and the promised land, and as the waters of that same river stood between Naaman’s leprosy and his cleansing from it. That’s why Satan and his ministers adamantly oppose baptism and dupe sincere folks with their doctrine of “salvation by faith alone.”

Satan and his denominational henchmen know that even if one wants to believe there is a God, and that Jesus Christ is God’s only Begotten Son, he still has him in his kingdom. Baptism is the culminating act of gospel obedience that puts one into Christ and His kingdom (Rom. 6:3-4). Satan doesn’t even mind if one wants to repent and live a clean life. He knows that one’s works will not save and those who quit sinning are still in his kingdom. They have not contacted the blood of Christ through baptism to

have the guilt of past sins removed and they are still his servants. One does not believe into Christ and Satan knows that. Satan believes in God. James wrote, “Thou believest there is one God; thou does well; the devils also believe and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). If “belief only” saves, Satan and his devils would all be saved. But that is not what the Bible teaches. Satan doesn’t care if you want to believe, as long as that belief is not perfected (completed) in obedience to the gospel (Jas. 2:21-22).

Nor does Satan mind if one confesses Christ as God’s Son. Denominational folks are big on saying, “Jesus is Lord” and putting that phrase on their signs. But He is not their Lord if they are still in Satan’s kingdom. You see, that confession does not put them into Christ. The legion of demons who possessed the Gadarene actually confessed Jesus as God’s Son. “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?” (Matt. 8:29). If confession will put one into Christ, then those demons were saved. Who will affirm that?

Faith, repentance and confession are all necessary in order to be saved (John 8:24; Heb. 10:6; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:14), but without baptism those are incomplete. Baptism alone does not save either. One must believe “unto righteousness” and confess “unto salvation,” (Rom. 10:14), but, having done those things, one is still in Satan’s kingdom until he is baptized “into Jesus Christ” [emph. JB] (Rom. 6:3). One does not believe, repent or confess into Christ. Baptism is the dividing line between Satan’s kingdom and Christ’s and so long as one who has believed, repented, and confessed refuses to be baptized, he is still a child of the devil. Do not let Satan’s ministers lead you to believe you are saved without baptism. He is a liar and the father of liars (John 8:44).

The All Sufficiency Of The Bible

John West

Is the Bible sufficient for our salvation? Do we need anything else to aid us in salvation? The denominational world teaches us that we do. The Mormons believe the Book of Mormon is needed in addition to the Bible. The Methodists rely on the Methodist Discipline for their answer. Other denominations use their creed books to decide the rule of faith. Do we need these creed books written by man to find the answers for salvation? Absolutely not! The Bible gives us the answer for everything spiritually. Notice these observations about the Bible.

The Bible Is Inspired of God

No other book in the world can claim inspiration. Joseph Smith “said” that the Book of Mormon is inspired, but it has been found full of errors and contradictions. The Bible, however, has been proven to be genuine. Paul states in Second Tim. 3:16-17, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Since the word of God completely furnishes man, he does not need anything in addition to the Bible.

The Bible Supplies Our Needs

Peter writes: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). God’s “divine power” is His word (Rom. 1:16) and it gives us all things for life and godliness. This covers the entire scope of our lives. Do we need something in addition to the Word of God? Absolutely not! Creed books cannot supply these needs, only God’s Word can.

The Bible Is Pure

Psalm 119:140 records, “The word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.” The word “pure” means, “free from defilement, uncontaminated.” In Prov.30:5-6, Solomon writes, “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar,” Those that add unto the pure word of God will be reprovved (Rev. 22:1819). Creed books are not pure because they contain many things contrary to the Word of God and they also contradict themselves.

The Bible Is Right

The Psalmist affirmed this in Psa. 33:4 when he wrote, "For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth." Since the word of the Lord is right, there is no reason to follow a "creed" of man.

The Bible Is Able To Save

In First Pet. 1:22-23, Peter wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." A person is saved by obeying the truth by being born again through faith in the word of God (Rom. 10:17); repenting of his sins (Lk. 13:3); confessing his faith (Rom. 10:10) and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 47, 1 Pet. 3:21). No creed book can substantiate such a claim. The Baptist manual contradicts itself by saying the salvation is "wholly of grace" (Hiscox, p. 61) and "solely through faith" (Hiscox, p. 62). Is it "grace only" or "faith only"? Neither! A person is saved by grace through the act of faith in obedience to God's Word (Eph. 2:8). Other creed books have similar errors concerning salvation.

The Bible Is Sufficient For All Of Our Needs

We do not need a manual, discipline, catechism or any other creed for salvation. The Bible completely satisfies God's requirement for salvation.

"So Long As He Is Honest"

Gayle Oler

"It makes no difference what a man believes, so long as he is honest." But a man's sincerity does not make a wrong thing right when he believes it. No one thinks that a doctor, though honestly mistaken, will do his patient as much good treating him for pneumonia when the patient has acute appendicitis. No one thinks a man can open his safe with the wrong combination, though he honestly thinks he has the right one.

Nearly everyone has found by experience that being honestly mistaken about the way to a certain place will make a wrong way right. One must find his error, recognize it, get on the right way, and follow it.

But in religion, men think differently. We often hear, "It makes no difference what a man believes, if he is honest." Why do people believe this in religion, but not in other things?

God will not excuse ignorance, even though it is honest ignorance. "The times of this ignorance, God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). He demands that people study and learn, and He promises that, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17).

Before his conversion, the apostle Paul consented to Stephen's death (Acts 8:1), and made havoc of the church (Acts 8:3), and persecuted Jesus (Acts 9:4-5). And all the time, Paul was ignorant of his mistake, and just as honestly mistaken as anyone ever was (1 Tim. 1:13). Even during that time, he maintained a good conscience, void of offense (Acts 23:1), and in all good conscience, he opposed the truth, the church of Christ.

It is the doctrine of demons that says honesty alone will save a man, and that sincerity will compensate for errors in belief. Many Jews are honestly mistaken about faith in Christ. They just don't believe in Him. But Jesus said, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Every disbeliever will be damned, whether honestly mistaken or otherwise. Jesus said, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16)

Some good people have been led to honestly believe that they were saved before, and without, baptism, and that baptism had nothing to do with their salvation. They are made to believe that baptism is not for the remission of sins, and they are honestly confident that one can enter into the kingdom of God without birth of water and Spirit. But Jesus plainly said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water

and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

though sincerely mistaken, if a man is not born of water and the Spirit, the law prohibiting his entrance into the kingdom of God still stands. Peter said, “...be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), and sincerity and honesty *cannot set aside* that law.

Before his conversion, Paul was wrong about the church and thought he should do many things to oppose it. For this honest mistake, he branded himself “the chiefest of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

Remember this: The honesty of a person does not mitigate the baleful effects of a false belief when it is acted upon. A loaded gun will shoot just as hard, and kill just as surely whether one believes it is loaded or not. As in everything else, ignorance and stupidity can never be so safe as intelligent investigation and accurate information. And hell will be populated with many people who *thought* they were right, but failed to investigate while they could.

It is significantly stated for all to know that the Bereans were “more noble than those in Thessalonica” because, “they searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Investigate for yourself. Don't take our word, or any man's in religious matters, unless those words can be proven by the Scriptures.

Your soul's eternal destiny hangs in the balance. “Honesty” is *not* God's standard. You can be honest, but honestly mistaken. Make sure you're on the right road by searching the Scriptures.

Morality Alone Does Not Save

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

“All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” (Matt. 19:20).

The question of eternal life is one in which every enlightened and normal person is interested. That, “infidels live, but do not die” is a terse statement of fact which has found substantiation in noteworthy dying experiences of certain avowed skeptics and infidels. Nothing will do to live by that will not do to die by. The death of an infidel places a grim emphasis upon the folly of unbelief. But the death of a Christian is the climax of a life and the fruition of hope.

And to the one who thinks seriously on the question of life hereafter, its corollary, what to do to be saved, forces consideration. Instances in the Bible of these questions being asked and answered are numerous. But there are a few outstanding instances where the inquiring subjects were persons of moral excellency. Such examples justify the main theme of the present treatise—that the inheritance of eternal life is not administered upon the sole condition of morality, or mere right living. There are certain conditions which determine the attitude of the heart and will of man toward God, which these examples emphasize

“What Lack I Yet?”

The propounder of this question was a prominent young ruler. It is not often that men of such high position ask the question, and our interest is immediately quickened. This inquirer was also very wealthy, which is another item of interest. Moreover, he was moral. He had met all the demands of the moral law from his youth. And yet, despite all the personal qualities of this intelligent, moral young ruler, he lacked a certain condition of heart that qualifies for entrance into heaven—that of full surrender and submission to the Lord's will. It is one of the tragic scenes of sacred narrative that one so intelligent and good should fail in the final test and turn from Christ and eternal life.

“Ye Must Be Born Again”

There was another ruler among the Jews named Nicodemus. He belonged to a large class of respectable men. He confessed his faith in Christ and intimated his desire to have a place in the approaching kingdom. Yet, to this respectable citizen, an upright,

moral man, Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). If this was true of Nicodemus, is it not true of all respectable citizens and moral men today? And does it not show that morality alone does not save?

“Words Whereby Thou Shalt Be Saved”

Introducing Cornelius to us, the writer of Acts places unusual emphasis upon his moral character. He was devout—strict and conscientious. He feared God. He prayed, not occasionally when called upon, but always. He was benevolent—gave alms to the poor. His moral character challenges the best of us. Yet Cornelius was not saved. Did not an angel say to him, “Send men to Joppa and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved?” (Acts 11:13-14). Singular language, indeed, to use to a saved man! But why send for Peter? The answer is plain. Cornelius, the good, moral, benevolent, even God-fearing man, had not heard the gospel of Christ. “And how shall they hear without a preacher” (Rom. 10:14). So Peter was sent for. Cornelius heard and obeyed the “words whereby” he should be saved.

“A Certain Woman Named Lydia”

Lydia was a business woman, a well-to-do woman, as indicated by the costly goods she sold, and “one that worshipped God”—a religious woman—in the city of Philippi. The writer of the narrative does not fail to emphasize her moral and religious character.

Was she saved? Strange, indeed, if so, that God should send two preachers across land and sea to preach the gospel to her! And stranger still, if salvation is the direct work of the Holy Spirit independent of the preached word!

Briefly, but with inspired accuracy, the conversion of Lydia is told in the following terse sentence: “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized,” etc. (Acts 16:14-15). Here was a moral and religious, but unsaved, woman who was required to hear the gospel and obey it in order to be saved. That being true of Lydia, is it not true that people may be strictly moral, even religious, today, and not be saved?

Why Morality Does Not Save

The Saviour of all who *are saved* knows what the *unsaved* must do to be *saved*. And He, with marked and accurate simplicity said, “Go,...preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). The Lord made no exceptions. Who of us will dare to do so?

Salvation consists in *doing*, not merely in *being*. “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). If morality alone saves, the death of Christ is void, and man dictates the plan of salvation.

Saved By Grace

Brad Green

We should be ever thankful for the grace of God that has made salvation possible. Without God’s grace and mercy, man would be without hope and “most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19). The inspired Paul wrote, “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). Paul helps define *grace* by adding that salvation is a “gift” from God. Man’s sin has separated him from God (Isa. 59:1–2), but God loves man so much that He has made a plan by which man can be reconciled to Him (John 3:16; Col. 1:21–23).

Many have misused the phrase, *by grace are ye saved*, to imply that one is saved by grace only. The verse in no way teaches such. In fact, we can know exactly how the Ephesian brethren were saved by grace through faith.

During Paul’s third evangelistic journey, he once again visited the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:1). While there, he preached the Truth (v. 8), for without hearing the Word of God,

one cannot be saved (Rom. 10:17). Of those Ephesians who heard the Word, some believed (Acts 19:18) and some did not (v. 9). The Bible teaches that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6), and thus one must believe to be saved.

The believing Ephesians acted upon God's grace and confessed that Jesus was the Christ and repented of their past iniquities (Acts 19:18–19). So, to be saved by grace, the Ephesians had to confess and repent.

Last, we know that the Ephesians were baptized to have their sins forgiven. How do we know this? The Ephesians believed what Paul preached (v. 18). What did Paul preach concerning baptism? The same command he had obeyed: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Paul taught that it was in water baptism where one has his sins washed away.

In addition, immediately upon entering Ephesus, Paul encountered disciples who had been baptized with the baptism of John. After teaching them that the baptism of John was no longer in effect, the disciples "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

And so, we can know how to be saved by grace through faith. We simply need to follow the same pattern followed by the Ephesians to whom Paul was writing: (1) Hear the Word, (2) Believe the Word, (3) Repent of Sins, (4) Confess that Jesus is the Christ, and (5) Be Baptized to have our sins forgiven. After following God's plan to save, which was given to us by His grace, and not by the works of any man (Eph. 2:8–9), God will save such and add them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47; cf. Eph. 1:22–23; 2 Tim. 2:10).

We are saved by God's grace, but not by His grace alone. Man must appropriate that grace by humbly submitting to God's plan to save (Heb. 5:8–9) and by remaining faithful unto Him (3:14).

Lessons From Naaman The Syrian

David Ray

As Christians, we are amenable to the law of Christ as found in the New Testament, but we still can, and must, learn from the many characters and events of the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4). One such character who still teaches us today is Naaman, and his story is found in Second Kings 5. His healing presents a great parallel to today, with many great lessons. Let's notice a few things we learn from him.

We learn from his condition. Before we even discuss who this man was, consider that he was a leper. Leprosy is a term describing a malignant skin disease, the seriousness of which can be seen in God's legislation to Israel about it in Numbers 13 and 14. The most important characteristic about leprosy was that it was incurable and could be fatal. Compare leprosy to the real "illness" of sin: both are ugly, cause you to be unclean, affect others around you (family, etc.), are contagious, and are life-threatening. Both can kill you *slowly*. One is a physical death; the other is a spiritual death.

We learn from his character. The scripture says he was the captain of the Syrian army, a "great man...and honorable." In other words, this man had a character that those around him could and did respect. Consider that, in verse three, we're told of a young Israelite woman who, even as his slave, respected him enough to tell him that a cure for his leprosy was available. How many slaves would care that much about their captors? An interesting point to remember is that respectable men and women are not perfect. As we'll see, Naaman is going to give us an example of what *not* to do. But by the time the story is finished, we'll see how honorable he truly was.

We learn from his opportunity. Naaman now has hope of being cured—if he chooses to believe and act up on it. As we compare the two maladies (leprosy and sin), we immediately see that action is required in order to receive healing. If the average religious leader of today had been Naaman's advisor, he would have acknowledged to Naaman that his leprosy could be cured by Elisha, but would have insisted that he "just believe; there's no need to put forth any effort! Do you believe? Then you're healed!" But the healing of leprosy is a little more visible than the forgiveness of sins. And

Naaman most likely would have had this spiritual advisor put to death for misleading him and costing him a cure. Be careful who you listen to.

We learn from his initial interest. In verses five through nine we notice the urgency and extreme importance to Naaman. After hearing the good news, he didn't go to Elisha directly; he pursued it through the king of Syria, who wrote to the king of Israel to inquire about this prophet (i.e., he took advantage of the resources that he had in order to bring about the result he desired). Then he made the journey to Elisha, bringing substantial gifts of gold, silver, and clothing. Even though he knew nobody in Syria could heal him, he believed in this Israelite prophet whom he'd never met. In reality, he had nothing to lose. Even if his information about Elisha had been wrong, it didn't cost him much to find out. After all, there was no other option for a cure. Likewise with sin, when we find out that the New Testament holds the cure, what do we have to lose in reading it? We definitely *won't* find a cure anywhere else.

Similar to Naaman's initial interest in his physical health, lots of people do have an interest in curing their spiritual condition. They may start reading their Bibles occasionally. They may start attending worship somewhere sporadically. They may even be open to a personal Bible study with a member of the local congregation. But what happens when they see the truth and understand what God requires of them? Do they follow through in total obedience? What was Naaman's initial reaction to the cure presented to him?

We learn from his arrogance. Naaman was told by Elisha's servant to "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (v. 10). This plan was very clear and simple. There was no need to repeat it and Naaman didn't need to take notes. He understood.

This plan made no sense. The Jordan didn't have healing properties any more than any other river, as Naaman knew (v. 12). If it had, every leper would have been there and Naaman wouldn't have needed Elisha. Naaman understood the healing was from a higher power (the God of Israel) and that his washing was an act of obedience, at which moment he would be healed by God.

Naaman also understood that the plan didn't *earn* him anything. The power to heal was in God, not the river, and not in Naaman's washing in the river. Naaman's obedience to the plan, while required, wouldn't *earn* his healing. Maybe this is why he rejected it (v. 11-12).

He was angry for two reasons. The main reason is in verse eleven: "*Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me....*" Elisha had sent his servant to Naaman with the instructions; he hadn't even come out personally. What an insult! We aren't told *why* Elisha didn't come out; but Naaman's response seems to answer the question clearly. And, in reality, this exposing of Naaman's arrogant attitude might just turn out to be the most important healing he would receive.

The second reason for his anger—that there were better rivers in his homeland of Syria—may have simply been Naaman's own personal justification for his anger at being snubbed by Elisha. After all, he'd already expressed clearly that he didn't want to wash in *any* river (v. 11). What Naaman needed to do to be cured was to swallow his pride. *That* is what dipping in the Jordan was *really* about.

Sadly, there will be an untold number of people on the day of judgment saying "Behold, I thought!" They may not have expected a grand display as Naaman did, but they *did* expect God to work according to *their own* ideas of how He should forgive them. "Behold I thought salvation was by faith alone" (or grace alone). "Behold I thought if I prayed the sinner's prayer..." Some in the church may be saying "Behold I thought my baptism covered every sin...even sins for which I refused to repent" (see Matthew 7:21-23). "Behold I thought attendance didn't matter." "Behold I thought attendance was *all* that mattered."

Finally, we learn from his penitence displayed in obedience. Many people today believe they're saved when they aren't because they haven't obeyed the gospel plan of salvation as outlined in the New Testament. And they go about their lives having no idea that their sins have never been forgiven. The scourge of sin isn't visible

like leprosy is.

Naaman was still a leper. As strongly as he felt about *not* being baptized in the Jordan, he could still *see* his condition and know he was unclean. So, he put aside his pride and obeyed Elisha. But it took the help of his more level-headed servants. They used simple logic to convince him to obey. We wish more people today would accept such logic.

There are some great lessons in the similarities between the plan for Naaman's cure and the plan for the cure of our sin. First, it's just as simple and makes just as much sense. If only the religious world would recognize what Naaman knew—that God forgives sins *when we obey His instructions*. God's command for all penitent believers to be baptized for the purpose of having their sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16) is just as easy to understand as Elisha's command for Naaman to dip in the Jordan seven times. The water of baptism (like the Jordan) isn't holy water. It is simply the point at which God forgives sins, washing them away in the blood of Christ.

Second, neither plan earns anything. I've never heard it preached or taught, yet I've been accused of believing that baptism earns salvation. These same accusers would logically have to accuse Elisha of the same thing—teaching Naaman that he had to *earn* his cure by dipping in the Jordan. Yet even Naaman's servants recognized that baptism in the Jordan was a simple act, and that if the cure for his leprosy *had* entailed performing a difficult task, he would have done it (v. 13). But it didn't. Why not? Because it *wasn't* for the purpose of *earning* the cure! It was a requisite act of obedience in order to *obtain* the cure. Like the Jordan water, baptism doesn't literally wash away sins. God does—at that very point when the sinner obeys His commands by being baptized to wash away those sins (Acts 22:16).

Naaman finally recognized that Elisha's instructions were *not* difficult and were in his best interest; so he obeyed and was cleansed. God's instructions in the New Testament to have your sins washed away aren't difficult either. Like Naaman, believe that there is a prophet in Israel Who can heal you. Then obey Him. Repent of your sins, confess Him as Lord, be baptized in order to have your sins washed away, then live the rest of your life in faithful obedience to Him.

One final point: It was because of the Israelite servant girl that Naaman was healed of his leprosy. She saw his disease, knew that there was someone who could cure him, and then spoke up. What if she hadn't? He would have remained a leper. His leprosy wasn't her fault, but how could she *not* tell him about a cure when she was aware of it? Likewise, how can *we* not tell people about the proper cure for their sins?

Two Types Of Divine Law

Jerry C. Brewer

Man was created morally, spiritually, and physically perfect—morally because he was created in God's image (Gen. 1:27), spiritually because he was in fellowship with his Maker, and physically because he was given the tree of life to sustain him (Gen. 2:9). Before sin entered the world, man was unmarred by it and *knew* what was morally right. That was manifested when Adam and Eve sinned and realized their nakedness should be covered (Gen. 3:7-10). They were given only *one* law when they were created—a law that brought *no moral condemnation* in its violation (Gen. 2:16-17). But it *did* bring a *recognition* of moral rectitude. Thus, from the beginning, God had—and still has—two types of divine law, which are the subject of this study.

Moral Law

The moral law of God is impressed upon the human race because man is in God's image and that law regulates man's conduct toward his fellow man. To violate this law is to sin against God. The tenets of this impressed law are right in the very nature of the case; they have been so from the creation, and they are universal, unchanged, and unchangeable. God's moral law is not right because God gave it. God gave it because it is right. For instance, it was wrong from the very beginning of man's existence to commit murder, and when Cain murdered Abel, he was cursed (Gen. 4). The prohibition against murder was never written until the Ten Commandments were given, but it was morally wrong to commit it and Cain paid a price for his action.

Murder is not wrong because it was forbidden in the Mosaic Law, but because it was *always wrong* from the beginning, and it remains morally wrong in every society upon the earth. God's moral has always been in force, whether expressed in writing or not. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). In order for murder to be sin, there had to be a law against it, but a law does not have to be written down to be in force. Concerning God's moral law, Guy N. Woods made this point:

We are not to fall into the error of assuming that these laws had their origin on Mt. Sinai. ...It was just as wrong to kill, and to steal, and to covet, and so on, before God gave the law on Sinai, as it was after. Why, then, were these laws given? Paul, in the seventh chapter of Romans, in discussing the purpose of the Law, tells us that it was for the purpose of making sin exceedingly sinful, that is, for the purpose of sharpening the people's concept of sin—in order to make the people more aware of what it means to transgress God's law (Rom. 7:13). ...It was for this reason that God gave the Law on Sinai—in order to make the people more aware of wrong doing—to set it out in simple and outline form so the people would possess a consciousness of wrong doing. But get it please: It was just as wrong to kill before Sinai as it was afterwards (“Tests of Faith,” *Sermons On Salvation*, Gospel Advocate Co., pp. 123, 124).

It is a near universal belief among religious people, who profess to be Christians, that morality is the means through which sinners are saved from sin. That is not true. If that belief were so, Jesus would never have come to the earth to die for our sins. Mankind was amenable to God's moral law before Jesus came, while He was here, and mankind remains amenable to it in our day. Neither did Jesus bring any new moral precept into the world. There is another kind of law, given by God, that cleanses man from his sins and brings him into fellowship with God.

Positive Law

Moral law was given because it is right. God's *positive law* is right *only because He gave it*. This is a stumbling block for most men because God's law of salvation is of a *positive* nature—not moral. For instance, the first law God gave to mankind was to Adam and Eve. “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). When they ate of that tree, they did not commit an immoral act, but they died for violating a positive law of God. Benjamin Franklin was a preacher in the 1800s who wrote two volumes of sermons entitled, *The Gospel Preacher*. Of God's positive law, brother Franklin wrote,

...positive divine law is of a higher order than this [moral law]. It has the force to make that right which is not right in itself, and is the highest test of respect for divine authority known to man. It is also the greatest trial of faith ever applied to man. It is intended to penetrate down into the heart, and try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. The very acts that some men have irreverently styled, ‘mere outward acts,’ ‘mere external performances,’ are the Lord's tests of the state of the heart, intended to penetrate deep down into the inmost depths of the soul, try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. They try the faith. The man that will obey a commandment, when he cannot see that the thing commanded can do any good, or, it may be, that he can see pretty clearly that it cannot do any good in itself, does it solely through respect to divine authority; does it solely to please God; does it solely because God commands it. This has no reference to popularity, pleasing men, or to the will of man, but it is purely in reference to the will of God. This is of faith; it is piety, devotion to God. It rises above mere morality, philosophy, or the pleasure of man, into the pure region of faith, confidence in the wisdom of God, and in submission to the supreme authority—yields to it reverently when no other reason can be seen for it only that the divine will requires it. The man in his heart says, ‘It must be done, because the absolute authority requires it’ (Vol. 2, p. 151).

God's positive law tests one's *faith* not his morality, because in positive law there is no logical connection between what God commands and what He promises as a result of

obeying positive law. To Adam and Eve, there was no logical connection between eating fruit and dying. Guy N. Woods further noted that, "There is no necessary connection between a person's keeping the moral law and his desire to honor God. In fact, a person may, and many people do, keep all of the moral law, and yet have not the slightest intention of honoring God" (Ibid, pp. 125, 126).

Man's faith is tested today—as it has been from the beginning—by *positive* law, not moral law. The command to, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38) is a *positive* law of God. It tests man's faith and one who refuses to be baptized for the remission of sins fails the test. He *does not really have faith* that saves. He may believe *in* God—that God exists—but he does not *believe* God (Rom. 4:3). In refusing to be baptized, he violates no moral law but, in so doing, he remains lost in his sins. To be a child of God "by faith" is to be baptized into Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

Men carp, complain, and rail against God's command to be baptized because they cannot see a logical connection between baptism and the remission of sins. Neither could Naaman could see a logical connection between God's command to him to dip in Jordan to have his leprosy cleansed, and that command angered him (2 Kings 5:10-15). But when he finally did so, his leprosy left him.

So it is with baptism. It is a *positive* command of God that tests his faith, unrelated to any moral precept. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Baptism is *absolutely necessary* for one who desires to have his sins forgiven and go to heaven at last. It makes no difference how morally upright he may be. He is still lost unless, and until, he obeys this positive command of God.

What Is a Christian?

Fred Dennis

The highest encomium that can be given anyone is to be able to say truthfully that he is a Christian. We have this word three times in the Bible. The first time is in Acts 11:26: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." God called the disciples "Christians." We ought to call them the same thing. That is sufficient. Paul preached the gospel to King Agrippa. After Agrippa had heard the gospel at the mouth of Paul he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). If all preachers would preach the same gospel that Paul preached, it would make the ones who heard and obeyed it Christians. They would be members of the New Testament church. To make something besides a Christian, something besides the gospel of Christ will have to be preached. The gospel only makes Christians only. "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:16). Oftentimes it entails suffering to be a Christian. We must not be ashamed of this suffering. We ought to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for his name.

In faith a Christian is a believer. He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of all that believe. After the apostles had been with Jesus for nearly three years he said to them: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). Those who had seen and heard him had some erroneous ideas relative to his identity, but they did not believe he was just another man. He asked the disciples: "But whom say ye that I am?" (Verse 15). Peter answered by saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thus does every Christian believe; thus does everyone who ever will be a Christian believe. Without this faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Paul says: "I know whom I have believed." (2 Tim. 1:12.) The devil has a lot of people fooled into thinking that they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but in reality they deny him.

In knowledge a Christian is a disciple. A disciple is one who receives instruction from another. He is a follower, a learner. The Christian receives his instruction from Christ. He allows no man to come between him and Christ. He is a follower of Christ. He sits at the Master's feet and learns of him. He drinks in what the great Teacher says. He remembers that Jesus said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He wants the truth, and nothing but the truth. He knows that this

truth is the word of God. He knows his Master's voice. He knows not the voice of strangers. He studies to get the approval of God (2 Tim. 2:15). Well has he learned this lesson. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). He knows that "the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psa. 119:130).

In character a Christian is a saint. We do violence to the Scriptures when we apply the word "saint" to just certain ones of God's children. All Christians are saints. A Christian's character is unstained by the contaminating influences of sin. He has pure religion. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). He loves to help those who need help. He is not spotted with the things of this world. Dirty places of amusement have no attraction for him. He is busy about his Father's business. The world has lost its attractions for the saint. He has learned his lesson. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17). You cannot be a saint and a worldling at the same time. You have to choose one or the other. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). Character is what God and the angels know about us. Reputation is what men and women say about us.

In influence a Christian is a light. He does not shine his light, but he lets his light shine. Light is attractive. It has drawing power. The very life of a Christian is a powerful influence for good. The darker the night, the brighter the light shines. Christians are lights in this dark world of sin. They go about doing good. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). The light of the Christian shines steadily. The Father can count on his child letting his light shine. This will show others the way home.

In relationship a Christian is a child of God. God is his Father. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17). Our Father is rich. We are his heirs. We are joint heirs with Christ. What a marvelous thought!

In purpose a Christian is a sojourner. He is a pilgrim here. This world is not his home. With Abraham of old, he is looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). He knows he has no continuing city here. He is looking for a better home. Here he has sorrows and tears. How he longs for that home where sorrows do not come and where tears of sorrow never come! Here he has pain and sickness. There will be no pain and sickness in heaven. Here he sees death on every hand. Every few days he must follow some of his loved ones or dear friends to the cemetery. Over there, no partings ever come.

Kind reader, are you a Christian? If not, O, hasten to the outstretched arms of love and mercy! Believe with your whole heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Genuinely repent of every sin and turn from all manner of sin. Make a wholehearted confession of your faith in the Christ. Then be gently lowered with him in the waters of baptism. Rise from the grave of baptism to walk in newness of life. Keep looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. Do not allow the cares and anxieties of this world to turn you from the faith. Teach others the right way of the Lord. Remember that we are saved to save. God wants us to tell others about the love of Jesus. He has no other tongues but our tongues to tell this old love story. He has no other feet but ours to run the errands of mercy. He has no other hands but ours to do the many things that must be done in this vale of tears.

You want your life to count for something here. It would have been better had you never been born if you live and die without Christ. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these. It might have been." May God help us to be Christians in deed and in truth, and then heaven is waiting for us when we must lay down this mortal body.

Music In Worship

Geoff Litke

Walking into the auditorium you notice the lack of a real stage and see no elaborate lighting rig or sound system. Perhaps you look around for a piano or organ wall, suspecting the congregation to be more traditional, but find none. You take a seat as the man stands up to extend the welcome and make some announcements. The greeter concludes his introduction and leads the congregation in prayer. Afterward, a man walks up front and center with a book and invites the assembly to sing together in a given song.

A visitor burdened with expectations created through prior experiences, television, movies, or other ways may feel that the music service felt flat, thin, empty compared to what they imagined it ought. Is there a reason for this for purposeful simplicity? The answer to that question is “yes.”

The distinct lack of a band to accompany the singing characterizes an attitude toward worshipping God. Jesus spoke about worship saying, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Worshipping in spirit means worshipping God with the correct attitude in contrast to simply going through the motions, but worshipping in truth means worshipping God correctly as directed by truth. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (17:17).

God created human beings with a tremendous capacity for imagination and creativity, but when they come together to worship it is not the time for that kind of demonstration. Worship is first and foremost about God and not men. God expressly communicated His desires for worship. Particularly in the offering of music in worship God has plainly asked for singing; nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

Twice in the New Testament the church is instructed to sing. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus saying, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). In a similar passage, Paul wrote to the church in Colossae saying:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:16-17).

In both passages the instruction is to sing. While in Ephesians there is an instrument to be played, that instrument is the *heart* which nicely corresponds to Jesus’ instruction to worship in “spirit.” It is easy to imagine that God would be pleased with something you imagine and say you are doing it for Him and thus in His name but doing something without His authority is contrary to His name. Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament. These men were the sons of the High Priest Aaron. God gave explicit instructions on how to conduct the worship and, in particular, the fire in the altar of incense. Nadab and Abihu chose not to follow the instructions given. God had not itemized every other source of fire and said, “Thou Shall Not”; He simply specified what He wanted. When Nadab and Abihu committed their sin, the Lord destroyed them with fire and they died. While this seems rash and tragic, their efforts are a memorial to all future generations on how God feels on similar transgressions. What was their sin? The Bible says, “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1). God considers offering something other than what He requests a corruption of worship.

When worship comes from the heart, singing is an expression of inner joy and the

heart is the only instrument necessary for meaningful worship (Jas. 5:13). A worship assembly whose music is built around sensuality easily hides a lack of real spirituality from the worshipper. It is easy to mistake the emotional response to highly skilled and talented musicians for your own personal spirituality, but simply following God's Word is the remedy.

For further study please consider Hebrews 7:14.

Please announce *The Gospel Preceptor* in your weekly bulletin and use it as a tool to teach the lost

Denominationalism Or The Church?

Dub McClish

Thoughtful Bible students realize that denominational "churchianity" bears no resemblance to New Testament Christianity. It is not only fundamentally **undenominational**; it is *anti*-denominational. Men have so long lived with the abnormality of denominationalism that they almost universally accept it as "normal" (i.e., Scriptural, for those who may still bother with such trivialities).

By definition, a denomination is a religious body having peculiarities that distinguish it from the church revealed in the Bible. A denomination cannot exist without believing, doing, or preaching things not found in God's Word. While all denominations teach and/or practice some things the Bible teaches, the things they teach that are *not in the Bible* are what make them denominations, of which the Bible knows nothing.

Consider some distinctions between denominational and Scriptural concepts of the church:

- Denominations glory in their *many* churches/bodies. Jesus built *one* church (Mat. 16:18), which is His "*one* body" (Eph. 1:22–23; 4:4).
- Denominations laud their *diversity* of doctrines, practices, and faiths. The Bible demands adherence to the *singular* "doctrine of Christ" (1 John 9–10; cf. Acts 2:42), and insists that there is *only one* faith (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3) and *one Gospel*, to which all must adhere (1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 1:6–9).
- Denominations were *founded by a man or men*. Biblical Christianity was *founded by Jesus Christ* upon the fact that He is the Son of God (Mat. 16:16–18; 1 Cor. 3:11).
- Denominations are subject to *human authorities* (headquarters, president, board, councils, conference, pope, et al.). *Jesus is the sole head* of His church (Eph. 1:22–23; Col. 1:18), and He governs it from Heaven through His New Testament (Heb. 1:1–2; 8:6–13; 9:15–17). Each congregation is autonomous under its own elders/bishops/pastors (Acts 20:28).
- Denominations admit that sinners can be saved *apart from* them. The Bible teaches that when one is saved, the Lord *adds him to His church*, and that one *must be in it* in order to go to Heaven (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23–27).
- Denominations worship according to *human doctrines and preferences*, rendering their worship vain (Mat. 15:9). Jesus' church worships only as *He authorizes* (John 4:23–24; Col. 3:17).

Denominationalism rests upon the words, whims, and wills of men, not upon the Word and Will of the Son of God.

Denominationalism Is Sinful

E. R. Harper

In the discussion of denominationalism and its evils, I am discussing the question, "Is it possible for one to know for certain when he is in the church the Lord had in mind when He said in Matthew 16:18, 'I will build my church'?" If I can find that church, and how to enter it, then I will have paved the way for the destruction of all denominations,

for they will be of no more use in this world.

It is common to hear people say, “How can you know which one is the church the Lord built?” They say, “Since you cannot know which one He built, then we just get in a branch of the church.” The Lord said, “I will build my church.” He never said, “I will build branches of my church.” Now for one to know that the “branch” of which he is a member is a “branch” of the church the Lord built, he would have to find the church the Lord built. If he could not find the one the Lord built, how could he know that the thing he is in was a “branch” of it? Well, if he found the one the Lord built, then why not just come down out of the limb and get in that which the Lord said He built?

Now turn with me to Acts 2, and find out just how we become members of the church of the Lord. It is the day of Pentecost. The promise of the Lord to His disciples of the Spirit has been fulfilled (2:33). They are now speaking as moved by the Spirit (2:1-4), Who came to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). That truth is now being spoken. It is from heaven, and not from men.

On that day, Peter told them they had crucified the Lord of Glory, and that they did it by wicked hands. He brought the Old Testament prophets to witness that the things taking place there that day were the things spoken of by them, that Christ was raised in fulfillment of them, and that He was raised up to sit on the throne of their father, David. He declared that Christ was at that time exalted at the right hand of God, and commanded them to know assuredly that this same Jesus whom they had crucified was then made both Lord and Christ.

They were cut to their hearts by this message. Nothing but faith, or belief, in that message would have cut them to the heart and made them inquire, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Thus, faith comes before repentance, Baptist preachers notwithstanding. Then, guided by the Holy Spirit, Peter answered that question in these words: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (2:38). Not a denominational preacher that I know will give that answer and stay with it all the way through. Did you ever hear a Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian preacher give that answer? Why do they not give it? It is not the doctrine of denominationalism. The Lord is the author of Peter’s answer. Man has made an answer to fit his denomination. God did not build a denomination, branch, or limb of the church, and neither has He given the various doctrines that govern those limbs. He built the church and gave the terms of admission into it, and here those terms were given.

How do I know that to believe the Word of the Lord, repent of sins, and be baptized for the remission of sins are the conditions of membership in the church of the Lord? Hear the Book as it speaks in verse 41: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” Verse 47: “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Now we have a question or two to ask. The Lord said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church.” In Acts 2:47 the record says “the Lord added to the church.” To which church did the Lord add them? He said He was going to build His church, and here we find Him adding to the church. To ask that question is to answer it. He added them to the church He built. What had they done? Those who believed what Peter preached were told to “Repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). So they were not members of a church that will not preach that same thing. But those who did that back there were members of the church the Lord built, and it looks like all preachers could see this.

Did you know that the Lord did not take 500 of them and add them to the Baptist Church, then add 500 to the Methodist Church, 500 to the Nazarene Church, etc., until He got them all situated? There were no such denominations then. These denominations are the products of error taught in our land, and if all taught today just what Peter taught then, there would be no denominations, and we would all be one. Someone is teaching error, and that is the Church—or Churches—that deny what Peter preached as being necessary today. If you are in one that will not teach what he did, then you are in the wrong one. It could not even be a “branch” or “limb”—if there were such a thing—for you would have the branch trying to destroy the trunk!

What is the danger in being in that which the Lord did not build? In Matthew 15:13 Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” Be it remembered, He never did say, “I will build branches of the church as warring denominations.” He said, “I will build my church,” and it was one body (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16).

Now, since He never promised to build “branches” of the church—one teaching one thing and the other denying it—but since He promised, and built, His church, and has definitely said He will root up all He has not planted, do you not think you had best be thinking whether you are out on a limb that has no connection with the Lord’s building program, or whether you are in that which the Father sent His Son to build?

Friends, get out of denominations now and come to the sermon preached by Peter and obey it, and let the Lord add you to the church, as we of the church of the Lord beg you to do. We have done just what they did on Pentecost. Since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11), He has added us to the church He built, just as He did those on the day of Pentecost, and will add you to that same church if you will obey Him.

What Can We Tell People Who Want To Know About Salvation?

Johnny Oxendine

There will always be people who will need additional information about salvation, but we want to give them the opportunity to appreciate just how wonderful salvation really is. Here we would like to offer a little Old Testament background history that might be helpful for them—and for us: Before the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land, Moses spoke to them to encourage them to remain faithful to God. This series of speeches that Moses gave are recorded in Deuteronomy. Near the beginning of the book, Moses says the following: “The Lord your God hath given you this land to possess it” (Deut. 3:18). After Moses had died and the people were about to go into the land to possess it, Joshua told them: “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land” (Josh. 1:13). The land that the children of Israel were to live on had been given to them by God; it was the gift of God. Yet, they still had an obligation to go in and take what was given to them. If they had turned around and gone back to Egypt, they would not have received the gift that God had given to them.

Shortly after the children of Israel entered the land, they came upon the walled city, Jericho. In the ancient world, a walled city was a particularly formidable thing to conquer unless an army was prepared to wage a long campaign. But God said to Joshua, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (6:2). God had given Jericho to Joshua and the children of Israel. Yet, the children of Israel had to take the city. They were given special instructions about marching around the city once each day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. After that they were to blow their horns and shout and God said the walls would come down and they could go straight up into the city and conquer it. Jericho was the gift of God, but if the children of Israel had not obeyed God, then they would not have received God’s gift.

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul writes, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” There are many today who say, “Salvation is God’s gift to man and so there is nothing that one must do to be saved.” Of course many say that one has to “believe,” but they turn around and say that “belief” is not a work that you do (regardless of the fact that Jesus said it was—see John 6:29). These fail to take into account the fact that Israel’s land was a gift of God yet Israel had to take that gift; they had to receive it. So also it is today; the salvation that God gives to man through Jesus is a free gift! That concept, however, does not do away with the fact that God expects us to obey Him to receive that gift. In fact, the Bible teaches that obedience is necessary for one to be saved. In Hebrews 5:9 God’s grace teaches, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Indeed, salvation

has already been given for those who obey.

What must we do to receive salvation? After having heard God's Word we must believe it (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). We must then repent of our sins (Acts 17:30). We must then confess Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32-33; 1 Tim. 6:12-13). We must then obey the command of Jesus in Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19 to be baptized. It is at that point that we receive God's gift of salvation as Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 2:11-13, and First Peter 3:21 teach. Praise God that salvation is a gift! Praise God that we can receive that wonderful gift through our obedience and be saved!

“Perseverance Of Saints”

Jesse M. Kelley

The Doctrine

"We believe the Scriptures teach that such as are truly regenerate, being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and perish, but will endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (Article XI, *The Standard Baptist Manual*, page 67)

The Definition

"We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul. ...All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger." (From a tract entitled, *Do a Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?* by "Rev." Sam Morris, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Stamford, Texas.)

The Analysis

Misrepresentation is a serious thing. We were very careful therefore to copy the above excerpts exactly as they appear in the Baptist Manual, and the tract by Sam Morris. We have in the above, the official doctrine held and taught by Baptist churches, and the definition of that doctrine by one well qualified to "spell it out." And "spell it out" he did!

It is absolutely amazing that intelligent people could believe, teach, and practice such a doctrine so obviously contrary to the teaching of the word of God. Both common sense and the Scriptures sustain serious injury when such is preached in the name of Christ. It seems incredible that sensible people could be so deceived by false teachers as to believe that there is no sin a child of God can commit, "from idolatry to murder," that could result in his soul being lost in hell. But their number is legion.

The number of passages in the word of God that could be cited to show the utter fallacy of such perversion are far too many to be put down here. But as space will permit we want to set a few of them down and ask that you consider them seriously.

The first we would call your attention to is First Corinthians 10:5-12. Here the apostle calls to mind an experience of the Israelites in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. These were children of God whom He had chosen for His own peculiar people. These people. These God-chosen people so sinned that God destroyed 23,000 of them in one day. Paul then says, "these things happened unto them for examples and are written for our admonition." Now read carefully verse 12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Paul is writing to sanctified people in the church at Corinth, and he is talking about sanctified people in the wilderness. The sanctified people in Corinth were warned to take heed lest they fall like those sanctified people of God in the wilderness. Such warning as here set out to saved people is utterly ridiculous if it is impossible for saved persons to sin and fall from the grace of God.

Another significant passage is found in Second Peter 2:20-22. As you read it keep in mind that Peter is writing to Christians.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Here are some who once “escaped the pollutions of the world,” but who returned to them, becoming entangled again and were overcome. They went back into sin. Peter said the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Before they escaped they were sinners under the condemnation of God. Frankly, I do not know how they could be worse than they were when they were under condemnation, but Peter said they were and I am not disposed to argue with inspiration. But they became children of God, then returned to live again in sin. Thus they stood under God's condemnation. Language and its meaning could not be made plainer than it is here put by the Holy Spirit.

It is said frequently that a “real born again Christian” will never fall from grace; that only “superficial professors” return to sin. Let us see. The Bible teaches that every “born again” person is *in* the kingdom of God. Jesus said that when one is “born again” he enters the kingdom of God. (John 3:5) But did you know that Jesus also said that in the judgment some would be taken out of the kingdom of God and cast into a furnace of fire? Read it: “The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.” (Matt. 13:41) Who are in the kingdom? Those who have been “born again.” So here are some “real born again Christians,” as they are called, being taken out of the kingdom and cast into a furnace of fire. Does this sound like a “real born again Christian” cannot so sin as to finally be lost?

But indulge us with the citation of one more passage. Read Second Peter 1:4-11. For the sake of brevity we will not quote the verses here; but Peter is writing to those who had been saved from the corruption of the world. (verse 4) Then he tells them, “besides this,” or in addition to primary obedience to the gospel by which they had escaped the pollutions of the world, “add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” (vv. 5-7) Then he said in verse 8: “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now note carefully verse 9: “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Then, based upon these stated truths, Peter issues a warning to those Christians to whom he was writing. Note it carefully: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall.” (verse 10) “Never fall” is a conditional promise. What is the condition? “If ye do these things.” What if one doesn't do them? He falls from the grace of God.

Reader, these passages are too plain to be misunderstood. Don't let some false teacher misrepresent them to you, and thus lull you into a false security of “once saved, always saved.” It is not so and these passages we have introduced, together with many, many, more, prove it beyond the shadow of any doubt.

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A False “Assumption”

Roelf L. Ruffner

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*” (John 19:26-27 NKJV).

You may not have known this, but Monday, August 15, was the “Assumption of Mary,” a major religious feast day in the Roman Catholic Church and various other denominations. It is the day, according to them, when the still living Mary, the mother of Jesus, ascended body and soul into Heaven. You may search your Bible from Genesis to Revelation and find neither hide nor hair of this false doctrine. Even the Apocrypha, the uninspired books the Roman Church has added to its version of the Bible, fails to mention it. This feast day was rarely observed in this man-made religious body until the Middle Ages, and then infrequently. Finally, in 1950, Pope Pius XII declared it *infallible dogma* or an unquestioned belief.

All my life I have wondered at the worship of Mary by adherents of Catholicism. I recall how the late Pope John Paul II made a point of making a pilgrimage to every shrine to the Virgin Mary in the different countries he visited during his papacy. Maryolatry in Roman Catholic theology seems to supplant the worship of the Father and the Son. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

As a Christian I have a great appreciation for Mary. God choose her to be the human mother of the Messiah—a great honor. “And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). She, among all the virgins of ancient Israel, was chosen by God to be the vessel of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 7:14; Mat. 1:10-23; Luke 1:35). She was at Calvary standing near her Son’s cross while His life ebbed away and most of His disciples had fled like a covey of quail (John 19:25). All of these are admirable qualities but none make her divine or worthy of veneration as “co-redemptrix” or co-redeemer with Jesus Christ.

Catholic teaching refers to some Bible passages to support their damnable doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. The following examples are perhaps the worst case of eisegesis (The false reading of something into a text.) I have ever seen. One is First Corinthians 15:27: “For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.” They combine this passage with the Messianic seed prophecy of Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” While both passages deal with Jesus’ triumph over Satan and death—followed in context by His ascension into Heaven—where is Mary’s ascension into Heaven mentioned? Mary was a descendent (seed) of Eve and she played her role in defeating Satan by giving birth to the Messiah but to assume that she also ascended to Heaven is a false assumption.

Another passage used is Psalm 132:8: “Arise, O lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.” This is from a psalm of David that expresses his desire that the Ark of the Covenant be returned to the tabernacle. The Ark had been taken in battle by the Philistines, returned by them and resided in a house (1 Sam. 4-5) for 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2) before being returned to the tabernacle in Jerusalem by David (2 Sam.6).

The Roman Church has proclaimed Mary the “Ark of the New Covenant” “The Virgin Mary is the living shrine of the Word of God...” according to them, much as the old Ark of the Covenant contained the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. Using Psalm 132:8 as a pretext, they maintain that she ascended into Heaven bodily and did not die. Do you grasp that? I don’t! Their theologians do a masterful job of trying to create a parallel between the Old Testament and the New Testament that does not exist. It is a false assumption—a false teaching which they try to bolster with a peppering of passages which do not mix. I am reminded of what the Holy Spirit and the Apostle Peter wrote about those who abuse Scripture, in particular the Apostle Paul’s writings: “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do

also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16).

My friends, especially those who are Catholics, examine this false doctrine about Mary in light of the Scriptures. Do your leader’s explanations pass the smell test or are they just a bunch of nonsense passing itself off as from God? Do you believe this humble, human, servant of God, if she were alive, would agree to this? Please remember that Mary did not consider herself divine. The real Mary herself uttered these words, “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God *my Savior*. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (Luke 1:47-49 [emphasis mine]).

Sources:

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Calvinism Denies The Gospel's Power

Ron Cosby

Regrettably, most religious folks are inclined to believe the insidious teaching of “irresistible grace.” By making God totally accountable for man's salvation, this doctrine relieves lost men of any responsibility for being lost. After all—according to its advocates—sinful man cannot do what God commanded.

In an internet article, entitled, “God's Irresistible Grace,” Jacob Moseley defines this ungodly belief:

The doctrine of irresistible grace, or effectual calling, may be defined as the most gracious work of God by which He, according to His eternal purpose and electing grace, does sovereignly and powerfully conquer the sinner's rebellion, thereby enabling him to turn to Christ in genuine repentance and saving faith. (<https://graceonlinelibrary.org>)

The Canons of Dort (1618-19) also advocated the doctrine of irresistible grace:

Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred upon him, breathed and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to work, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also (Third and Fourth Head, Article 14).

Like most Calvinistic writers, Moseley offers John 6:44 as proof of his false assertion, saying, “In one of the most definitive (with regard to irresistible grace) verses in the Bible Jesus himself says: ‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day’ (John 6:44).”

Moseley's “most definitive” verse actually *refutes* irresistible grace. Note that the Holy Spirit is not even mentioned in John 6. But more important, the text tells us *how* the Father draws men. Verse 45 says, “...they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

Couple this being “taught” and having “learned” with Paul's clear declaration of the *power* of the gospel to save all, and one sees *exactly* how God works in the hearts of men. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16). In light of these verses, irresistible grace goes down in flames.

Though John 6:44-45 and Romans 1:16 forever remove the dark cloud of Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace, its advocates offer an excuse to buttress this unholy doctrine. They claim that the Holy Spirit directly aids only “the elect” to understand

the Bible, thus enabling them to obey God. This concept needs closer scrutiny.

According to surveys which asked why people neglect reading the Bible, 75 percent answered that they could not understand the King James. Apparently, the Holy Spirit's aid in comprehension does not extend to the King James Version. The inconsistencies and fallacies of the Spirit's direct enabling are made clear in the following situation:

The audiences of *The 700 Club* believe and teach the doctrine of the inward, direct working on the Holy Spirit. In one episode, while he was advocating the use of modern translations of the Bible, the host asked those in attendance what translation they read. Each acknowledged that he used a modern version. When he asked them, "Why?", they replied, "Because I can't understand the King James. Hmmm. So, they couldn't understand the Bible, even when "aided" by the Holy Spirit!

Dear reader, do you see a problem with this? A viewer of *The 700 Club* did. As a believer in the direct enabling of the Holy Spirit, she saw the inconsistencies of what the audience, the host, and the guest panelists were saying and asked, "If God gives us understanding of the Bible, why are you saying we need further assistance from modern translations?" The host's answer missed the point. However, we too ask, "If the enabling of the Holy Spirit illuminates the modern versions, why not the King James?" Indeed, why not the *Greek text*?

God so wrote that the thinking man whom He created *can understand* His revealed conditions of salvation. Bible students need not, ought not, and must not, rely on the false doctrine of direct illumination of the Spirit. When we seek the meaning of the Scriptures, a diligent, honest search for the truth will yield nuggets of spiritual gold. And, when discovered, man *can* obey his Maker. The problem is, obviously, *not* with the King James version or the nature of man, but with the doctrine of "irresistible grace."

Election—Is It Unconditional?

Lee Moses

To the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote, ". . . [God] hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Indeed the church of our Lord is composed of the *elect*—those who are "chosen," or "singled out." God has chosen a special people for Himself. But the putrid TULIP of Calvinism attempts to transform Biblical election into another fragrance altogether:

God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and **immutably determined** the history and destiny of each and all of His creatures.

. . . God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. . . . Thus election was **not** determined by, or **conditioned upon, anything that men would do**, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose (emph. LM).

This is the Calvinistic doctrine of **unconditional election**—that, regardless of his desire, man can do nothing to be chosen by God for salvation, nor can he do anything to reject being chosen by God. For those who believe in the love and goodness of God, such a doctrine is abhorrent on the face of it. Yet most Protestant denominations teach unconditional election. But "what saith the scripture"—is election unconditional?

Election In Our Earthly Lives

A college student registering for courses will have required courses, and he will have *electives*. The electives are courses that the student may or may not **choose** to include as he plans what courses to take. But this does not mean that there cannot be **conditions** on which electives he may include—a finance major may not be able to take a drama course as an elective; a music major may not be able to take a biology course as an elective.

A man may meet and fall in love with a woman, and subsequently **elect** to ask her to

be his wife. But she, in turn, may or may not **elect** to accept his proposal, depending on whether certain conditions are met.

In a presidential election, the people **choose** who is going to be President. However, if the person whom they wish to choose has failed to meet the prerequisites for office, someone else who meets the qualifications will be chosen by the people to serve as President.

Thus, election regularly takes place in our earthly lives, yet it is rarely, if ever, **unconditional**. But this does not mean that we do not make choices at such times. Likewise, though God makes choices conditioned upon what others do, this does not detract from their being **His choices**.

The Scriptures Confirm Conditionality

God has always set terms for man to remain in God's grace. God had chosen to place Adam and Eve in the Garden, where they could enjoy everlasting life and fellowship with Him. But there was one condition for them to remain in this great grace: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). When they violated this one condition, they were removed from the grace in which God had chosen to place them (3:13-24).

God had chosen to bring the people of Israel into the land of Canaan for their inheritance (Exo. 3:8). But this was conditional; as Joshua and Caleb observed, "**If** the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Num. 14:8; emphasis mine, LM). And the Israelites refused to meet God's terms: "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God" (Deut. 1:26). Because they failed to meet the conditions that God had set forth, they did not receive the grace that He had chosen to give them (Num. 14:26-35).

God has chosen to save people from their sins, that they might be saved from their just punishment in hell (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8), and instead dwell with Him for eternity in heaven (John 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:2-4). But there are conditions that one must meet before he can be numbered among God's chosen—one must **(1)** hear the word of God (Rom. 10:14, 17), **(2)** believe (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6), **(3)** repent of sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), **(4)** confess before men that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), and **(5)** be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21). After one has been numbered among God's chosen, that person must continue faithfully to receive the reward that God has chosen to give the faithful (2 Tim. 4:7-8; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). And Christians help Christians to remain among the elect: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes; that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10; cf. Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 3:13; James 5:19-20). But that conditions must be met by man takes nothing from God's choice being God's choice.

God's Choice—Your Choice

God has chosen to extend His terms of deliverance to **all** (Mark 16:15; Titus 2:11). But it is each person's choice whether or not he will meet the terms God has set forth. God **desires** for **all** to be among His elect:

Who will have **all** men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that **any** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9; emph. LM).

Thus, it **cannot** be said with any degree of truthfulness, "God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save." Contrariwise, as the apostle Peter observed, "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

Throughout Biblical history, God has expressed grief when men and women refuse to

accept His terms of deliverance (Gen. 6:5-6; Heb. 3:10; Ezek. 33:11). And when the final judgment day comes, far too many will be grieved that they have refused to accept God's terms of deliverance (Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 20:12, 15). God's earnest desire is that **you**, dear reader, be numbered among His elect. Why not make God's choice your choice?

Answering The "Hows" Of The Spirit

Doug Post

Did God speak in times of old? *Yes!* (Heb. 1:1-2). Does God still speak? *Yes!* But the question that remains is *how?* God speaks to me. After all, the Bible says God has "spoken to us in these last days through His Son." Of course, it would be proper, fair, and reasonable to press me on the matter. You would want to know if I mean that God speaks *directly* to me or if I am claiming that God speaks to me *indirectly* through His Word. Obviously, you would go to various other passages showing me that God speaks or reveals His mind to me through His Word (1 Cor. 2; cf John 12:48).

Similarly, if I say the Holy Spirit leads me (Rom.8:14) you would do well to question me on whether I mean that He *directly* leads me or *indirectly* leads me through His Word, and press me on the question, "*How* does the Spirit lead?" Of course, that would be fair and reasonable of you, because you know that the Scriptures lead us through their teaching, their reproof, their correction, and their instruction in righteousness, and that they make us complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures are lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psa. 119:105; 1 John 1:7). Jesus said the words He spoke were spirit and life (John 6:63). We learn that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the very means by which the Spirit wields His influence. And, we know that we get understanding, clarity, and guidance from the inspired Scriptures (Psa. 119:104, 130).

If I say the Holy Spirit strengthens me, again you would press me on what I mean. Do I mean He *directly* strengthens me or *indirectly* strengthens me through His inspired Word? Paul specifically says to be strong (Eph. 6:10). Where? In the Lord! How? In the strength of His power—the word or gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16). We are to put on *truth* (the Word—John 17:17); we are to put on righteousness (the Word—Psa. 119:172); we are to put on the gospel (the Word—Rom. 1:16); we are to put on the shield of *the faith* (the Word—Gal. 1:6-9, 23); we are to put on salvation (the Word of salvation—Acts 13:26; Jas. 1:21); and all of this is the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). To be strengthened in the Lord is to be strengthened by the Lord's Word. The Word of His grace strengthens us (Acts 20:32).

Likewise, if I say God dwells in me, you would press me on the matter asking, "*How* does God dwell in me?" *Directly* or *indirectly*? Of course, *indirectly* through or by means of His Word (John 14:23; 2 John 9; Eph. 3:17 "the faith"; Gal. 3:2; 1 John 3:24. Etc.). Of course, from these passages we understand we dwell in God which is, obviously, *indirectly* rather than literally or *directly*. Therefore, this "dwelling" concept is one describing relationship—a relationship between God and the person who keeps His Word, continues abiding in His Word, and quite simply, continues obeying His Word. Therefore, a relationship that is based upon the Word of God, or is "through, or by, the Word."

The Idolatry Of Conscience

V. E. Howard

The doctrine of human reasoning which claims that man's conscience is a safe guide is, both, infidelity and idolatry. To honor man's conscience rather than God's will is infidelity. To displace God and His divine authority with human reasoning—man's conscience—is nothing short of idolatry.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

“Should a church continue to support a preacher who has a secular job and misses the Lord's Day worship on a regular basis because he has to work? This preacher is only at worship about half the time, but the congregation still provides him partial support. What about Hebrews 10:25?”

Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” We understand that it is necessary for a man to earn a living for his family, including the preacher. Let us illustrate this with a factual account.

In October, 1958, a Gospel preacher started preaching full time with a salary of \$35 per month. His house rent was \$33 and his utilities were \$7. He worked by picking up and delivering clothes for a dry cleaning store, being paid 10 cents per garment he delivered, but he never missed a Sunday or Wednesday. Additionally, he worked seasonally at a cotton gin, but he never missed a worship service due to his work. He was a mechanic and worked on anything that had an engine, but he never missed a worship service. He farmed some with his Dad, but he never missed a worship service of any kind whether it was Sunday, Wednesday, or a Gospel meeting. All these jobs were necessary for him to take care of his meager obligations.

Anyone, whether he is a preacher or not, who has a job that requires him to work every Lord's Day, needs to get a different job, or maybe two different jobs. It is also understood that one doing public work is sometimes required, in emergencies, to work on Sunday, but most of the time the individual can make it to one worship service.

As for the preacher in question, how can he ever preach on being faithful in attendance and apply Hebrews 10:25, or any other passage that instructs one to be faithful? How can he preach on singing and making melody in the heart (Eph. 3:16; Col. 3:16) if he is not there? How can he teach and instruct regarding public prayers (Acts 2:42) if he is not there? He is obviously working, but what is he preaching regarding giving unto the Lord as we have prospered? (1 Cor. 16:1-2). His tongue would also be silent when it came time to proclaim God's Word with regard to the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

“Half time” is not acceptable for anyone to worship God. There is no such thing as a “half time” Christian. We are either Christians or erring saints. There is no middle ground when it comes to our souls' salvation. Some may think that we are too harsh or critical. But, we ask, “Which are more important, material possessions or the soul?”

One of these days the material will melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10). The soul that is prepared will go home to be with God. This scenario displays very poor judgment that influences everyone who knows the preacher. He—and anyone else who succumbs to this—is a poor example and exhibits a lack of love for the Lord and His blood bought church (Acts 20:28).

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. Those who have Bible questions may email them to him at harrelld@charter.net.

Is One Church As Good As another?

Bruce Stulting

One doesn't have to look far to notice the multitude of churches which claim to follow Christ. This religious division has caused many to become cynical about Christianity in general. Furthermore, the notion that one church is as good as another has given way to the contemptuous view that churches as a whole are unnecessary.

In the not so distant past there have been many efforts at unity among denominations. At one time the "ecumenical" movement was very popular. It is still not unusual to see or hear in the news of "denominational mergers" where two differing groups will get together. "Unity in diversity" was the catch phrase espoused by "ecumenicalism." According to this view those groups professing Christianity are more alike than they are different, and since they have so much in common they can have "unity" in spite of their disagreements.

It has been the long held belief of many that sincerity is all important regardless of which church one belongs to. Many popular denominational evangelists have encouraged people to "join the church of your choice." Many believe that churches are like vitamin tablets in a bottle; it doesn't matter which one you take, just as long as you take one. Others liken churches to gas stations; it doesn't matter which one you stop at as long as you get your tank filled. But, does this view really hold up in light of the Scriptures? What does the Bible say about such an attitude?

Indifference usually leads to cynicism. When one comes to the conclusion that any church will do, he is only a small step from believing that the church is irrelevant. If it does not matter what one believes, can it really matter whether one believes at all? However, the matter of the church is too important to be taken so lightly. Surely our disposition should be as that of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to prove their beliefs (Acts 17:11).

Let's consider this parallel. A person searching for the Lord's church today is in a similar position as a person in the first century searching for the Messiah Himself. "Could this be the Christ?" was an important question, the answer to which no one could afford to get wrong (John 4:29). However, during that time, there were many who claimed to be Christ (Acts 5:36-37). The question then is "will the real Messiah please stand up?" There was only one true Messiah or Christ and all of the rest were imposters.

We must remember, it is not enough to claim to be the Lord's church. Apostasy was predicted early on in the New Testament (1 Tim 4:1). Even in the first century some congregations had already disregarded Christ's authority and He rejected them (Rev. 2:5; 3:16). Faith and practice has always been a matter of great importance (Matt. 7:21). Individuals, as well as, churches that go beyond the "doctrine of Christ" depart from God and forfeit the right to wear His name (2 John 9).

There is a point that is often overlooked in searching for the one true church. The point is; the Lord's church is not the one "correct" denomination that one must find to be saved. Rather, the church of the Lord consists of the saved who have been added by the Lord (Acts 11:24; 2:47). The Lord's disciples are not members of any "denomination." They cease to be the Lord's disciples if they attach themselves to a congregation or organization operating outside the boundaries of Christ's authority (Lk. 6:46). It needs to be recognized that if one is in any denomination at all, he is part of an organization that came along many years after the Lord's church began.

In the first century, there was no choice of "churches" except in the sense of the local church or congregation. There was never a question of which denomination to join. With this in mind, all who genuinely obey the Gospel will want to submit to the Lord's will in all things (Col 3:17). Thus, we must ask, "What is the Lord's will regarding the church?" That can only be determined by a careful, honest examination of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Perhaps the more basic question is whether one has actually obeyed the Gospel. The Scriptures teach that one must: (1) Hear and believe the Gospel (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 8:24). (2) Repent of sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30,31). (3) Confess faith in Christ before men (Mat. 10:32,33). (4) Be baptized for the remission of sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). If a group of churches do not teach the truth about salvation, they can hardly belong to the Lord. Fellowship with other Christians grows out of fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3-4), not through some "group" of churches making an erroneous claim.

**Video and Audio Sermons May Be Found On Our YouTube Channel At,
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWMJ7eHqllzMlvj2rtk-0jg>**

Can We, Understand The Bible Alike?

Gary Henson

Can we, or can we not, understand the Bible alike? With of all the different beliefs on any Bible topic, it seems as though man can't. However, the Bible teaches that we not only *can* understand it, but that we can *understand it alike*.

One of its God-inspired writers wrote: "By revelation He made known to me the mystery; (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" (Eph. 3:3-4). Thus, the writer (the apostle Paul) received God's Word by inspiration and wrote it so that readers *can* understand it. Furthermore, if one person reads and understands it, and a second person reads and understands it, then both would be understanding it alike.

We are also told, "These things I write unto you...so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself..." (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Thus, the very *purpose* of the writing the Bible was so that we can *know* how God wants us to live. And, in order to know how He wants us to live, we have to, of course, be able to understand it—and understand it in the way God meant it to be understood. Otherwise, if man cannot understand the Bible, why did God give it to us in the first place?

If it is true that God made the Bible too difficult to understand, therefore allowing each person to have his own opinion with His approval, then why was Apollos (as well as numerous others) corrected in his beliefs? (Acts 18:24-26). Why wasn't it permissible for him to understand it his way, and others understand it their way? Because it's not what God allows.

Besides, if we could not know the truth as to what the Bible really teaches, then we could not know for sure whether Jesus is the Son of God. Nor could we even know for certain whether we are saved!

While "there are some things hard to be understood"—notice: he did not say "impossible to be understood"—(2 Pet. 3:16), we *can* "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

Can we understand the Bible alike? The Bible teaches that we *can*—and *must*.

Global Warming Is Approaching!

Jess Whitlock

Twelve years ago Al Gore said we had only one decade left to the save planet earth from "global warming." The experts said Arctic sea ice would melt entirely by September of 2016. However, earth is doing just fine. The latest satellite images have shown there is far more ice there now than three years ago. In 2006, Gore said, "unless drastic measures to reduce greenhouse gases are taken within the next ten years, the world will reach a point of no return." He described the threat as a "true planetary emergency."

It is a scientific fact that earth has not warmed in nearly 20 years, 2015 was recorded as the third warmest year on record on earth. Gore predicted an ice-free Arctic Ocean would happen soon. In 2014 the Arctic ice was thicker than ever. Is anyone thinking, "see Deuteronomy 18:21-22?"

Yet, *Global Warming is coming!* Peter declared:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

No man living (including Al Gore) knows when that time will be (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32-35; 1 Thess. 5:2-3). Peter went on to say,

...what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall

melt with fervent heat? (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

Look again: “what manner of persons ought *we to be*?”

After that “global warming” there will be another “greater warming” for all those unprepared to meet God in judgment. The final judgment *is coming* for all mankind (John 12:48; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27; 1 Pet. 4:17-18; 1 John 4:17; Jude 6; Rev. 20:12-14). For those who have neglected to obey the Christ, in that day He shall say to them, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). That “everlasting fire” is *gehenna*, the place spoken of as “hell.”

The Word of God does not mince words about that abode prepared for the “devil and his angels” and those who persist in following after Satan! That will be a *greater warming* than any man who has ever lived can possibly have known in his earthly existence. Here some of the characteristics of that “warming”:

- “...to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire...” Mark 9:43
- “...where their worm dieth not...and fire is not quenched...” Mark 9:48
- “...I am in anguish in this flame...” Luke 16:24
- “...to be cast into the eternal fire...” Matthew 18:8
- “...death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire...” Revelation 20:14
- “...not found in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire...” Rev. 20:15
- “But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone...” Revelation 21:8

The wildest imaginations of Al Gore and his cohorts concerning so-called “global warming” will be mere child’s play compared to that eternal *gehenna*, that we read about in God’s inspired and authoritative Word. Therefore, let us ask: “What manner of persons ought ye to be?”

God's Word Is The *Final* Word To The Christian

N. B. Hardeman

Christians propose to take God at His word, believe what He says, become and be what He requires, try to live as He directs, and trust Him for His promises.

They claim to be nothing, preach nothing, practice nothing for which there is no authority in the word of God. When any matter is presented, they ask, “Does the Bible authorize it?”

“Circuit Riding” Editor

Of late, *The Gospel Preceptor's* editor has become a “circuit riding” preacher. We regularly worship with the church in Willow, Okla., but on Sept. 23, we hit the “circuit” to teach Bible class and preached in morning worship for the church in Yukon, Okla. One of our staff writers, David Ray, preaches for the Yukon church. He and his father, Mernie, were instrumental in establishing a sound church in Yukon a few years ago.

The next Lord's Day, Sept. 30, we preached for the church in Chillicothe, Texas at their morning and evening worship. We did local work there in the 1970s, so it is always a “homecoming” to be with our beloved brethren in Chillicothe.

Our last preaching trip was to Denton, Texas, Nov. 11, where we preached three times in a one-day meeting for the Northpoint church. Northpoint also holds a special place in our hearts. Philip Smith is the faithful evangelist there, and one of our staff writers, Dub McClish, is a Northpoint member, as well. Both men are long time friends and Dub was Northpoint's first preacher when that sound church was established, following Pearl Street's departure from the truth. We have preached for this good church a number of times, and conducted a meeting there in 2015.

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A 24/7 Online radio station broadcasting the Gospel

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Self Publishing Innovations**

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One Church Or No Church

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

It is an admitted fact that Jesus Christ founded an institution which he called the church. It is also true that there are in the world today many human institutions which are called churches, founded by men, existing by no higher authority than the word of men, governed by no higher authority than the creeds of men. Who is ready to say that these institutions are as good as the church that Jesus Christ built, and of which He is the Head? The fact that good people are in these human churches—better would they be called fraternities—is beside the point. There are good men in the Masonic Lodge, and good women in its feminine gender, the Eastern Star, but that does not make them divine institutions. If good people in all the churches makes one church as good as another, then good people out of all the churches makes no church as good as any. All such is shallow reasoning. In the light of the New Testament, it is the church or no church.

What church should a man join? Why say what church? Rather, why not join all of

them, that is, all to which we might have access. If, as claimed, there is good in all of them; some good in one not in the other; truth in all, but not all the truth in any; why limit a man to only a part of the truth and a fractional amount of the good when he could have access to all of the good and all of the truth by joining all of the churches? Men belong to more than one lodge, society or club; hold insurance policies in more than one bank, why not membership in more than one church, if it is purely a matter of “joining some church,” one of which is as good as the other? It reveals the fact that nobody really believes that one church is as good as another and the statement turns out to be an effort to be broadminded and polite.

Men do not join the divine church. The Bible says that God adds to the church those who receive and obey His word when they do. “Then they that received the word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 24:41). “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Yet this dashing, smashing slogan of a “union meeting” was once seen: “Join The Church Of Your Choice And Be Baptized As You Please!” And that in the name of religion, assuming that God has neither church nor choice and that the Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles never uttered a syllable on the how and the what of baptism.

The matter of finding the true church is as simple as any matter of identification, when the means by which to identify is at hand. Do you have an identification card in your billfold, purse or key folder? For what purpose? It describes your person, so that in case of accident or emergency you could be identified. When an automobile is lost or stolen the method of identification proceeds on the basis of registration, that is, the make, the model and the number. The New Testament contains the description of the New Testament church—the church of Christ. It is a registered institution. Its make, its model and its number, so to speak, are on divine record. Identify it by characteristics. You have the means at hand—the divine record—and when you find a body of people today who embrace the principles set forth in the New Testament in teaching and practice, that will be the identification.

The New Testament plainly teaches that there is but one true church. Jesus Christ said, “My church.” Paul said, “The church, which is his body.” Again, “The body, the church” (Col. 1:18). Further, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). And finally, “But one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). If that is not talking of one church, and the same one, it is a peculiar way to talk of many.

There are several uses of the word church in the New Testament, but in each use its unity is seen. First, the general church—all the saved in the aggregate. “And gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body” (Eph. 1:22). Second, the local church, all the saved within a certain locality, restricted by a geographical term of limitation. “The church of God at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2). “The church of Macedonia” (2 Cor. 8:2). And also “the seven churches of Asia,” all the same church (John preached for all of them), of one faith and order. Third, the congregation, or assembly. “When the church be come together” (1 Cor. 14:26). In any New Testament sense the use of the word church when it refers to the institution of Christ includes all the saved, and no more, and no less. But a denomination cannot be the church in *any* Bible sense. In the general sense, the denomination is smaller than the church, for no denomination claims to have within its folds all of the saved on earth. In the local sense, the denomination is larger than the church, for a denomination is composed of all local bodies of one faith and order. The denomination is too large to be the church in the general sense, it is therefore *not* the church in *any* sense.

The church as set forth in the New Testament is simply this: God ordained that men should obey the gospel, thus become Christians and by this process be saved. In so doing, they are added to the church, the saved in the aggregate. God then ordains that Christians should band themselves together for the purpose of work and worship and wherever such a body of Christians is found, banded together in and under the scriptural requirements of the local church, without ecclesiastical head or creed, but who are in doctrine, worship and work what the New Testament requires, there you find a New Testament church.
