

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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No Authority Needed?

Dub McClish

In the 1988 debate between Alan Highers and Given O. Blakely of the Independent Christian Church, Mr. Blakely attempted to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship by arguing that no authority is needed. He based his argument on at least three assertions:

1. The New Testament is not law and does not contain law.
2. It is not what one does that is accepted or rejected by God, but the person himself who is accepted or rejected; if the person himself is accepted, then what he does in worship cannot be incorrect or wrong.
3. The apostles gave no regulations or directions for worship, nor did they ever “arraign” believers for worshipping wrongly.

Those who thus argue obviously concede (by implication) that no Scriptural authority exists for their use of instruments in worship. Since advocates of instruments have utterly failed to establish any authorization for their practice for a century and a half, they are left with no argument but the denial that authorization is needed. Of course, the ramifications of this argument are many and disastrous beyond belief, reaching infinitely further than the use of instruments.

Let us briefly consider each of these three assertions underlying the “no-authority-needed” contention. Does the New Testament contain law and is it law? Most certainly. It is the “perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25; 2:12). It is “the law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2). We must fulfill “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Paul was “under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). There could hardly be a more anti-Biblical doctrine than denial that the New Testament is/contains law. This assertion is unmitigated antinomianism.

Is “personal acceptance” by God a “blank check” from Him to do whatever one desires to do as an act of worship? While no man can be acceptable to God apart from the blood of Christ, it is no less true that acceptance by God depends upon man’s behavior and his actions, including what he does in worship. Cain was “personally accepted” by God at the time he brought his offering. However, God rejected his worship (Gen. 4:5), with the admonition that had he done well (what God required), God would have accepted him. God rejected him because his offering (worship) was sinful (v. 7). Those whom God accepts are the ones who fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:35). Righteousness is determined by what the law of Christ teaches (Heb. 5:13).

The Corinthians were accepted by God, but this did not make their abuse of the Lord’s supper acceptable (1 Cor. 11:20–22). This episode provides an example of apostolic “arraignment” of worship practices that were unauthorized and unacceptable. This case also gives us an example of regulatory teaching concerning what we do in worship (the Lord’s supper). On what basis does one conclude that this principle does not apply to other acts of New Testament worship, including the kind of music the Lord ordained in His church (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)?

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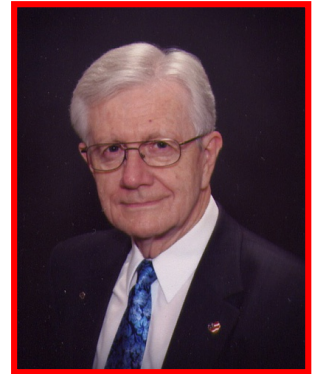
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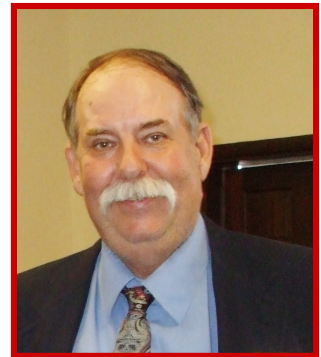
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Getting To Know Our Staff Writers

Jerry C. Brewer, Editor & Publisher

These men stand on the shoulders of the apostles and prophets of The New Testament and honor the memory of previous generations who blazed the gospel trail for us. The same fervor and love of Truth, exhibited by our predecessors in the faith, lives on in each of these men who write for *The Gospel Preceptor*, and we are honored and humbled that they have consented to work with us in this effort. They are not only fellow laborers in this work, but are our most cherished friends and brethren in Christ.

Dub McClish

After 56 years of pulpit work, including preaching both for several local congregations and as a traveling evangelist, Dub retired in 2016 because of health issues. He continues to preach the Word by means of his Website, *The Scripture Cache*, which

contains his Biblical literary efforts of almost 60 years.

Roelf Ruffner

Roelf simply describes himself as an, "Evangelist and servant of Jesus Christ in Columbia, Tenn."

Jess Whitlock

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Jess began preaching in southwest Oklahoma in 1970. He has labored with congregations in Oklahoma and Texas, holds a number of gospel meetings and has spoken on numerous lectureships. He and his wife, Terry, are now with the Morton Street Church of Christ in Denison, Texas.

David Ray

David has been preaching the gospel for nearly 20 years. He was raised in Oklahoma, and did secular work in Michigan and Massachusetts for several years. He preached his first sermon at Newport, Rhode Island while he was in New England. Shortly after that, he decided to leave for preaching school in Texas, and has been preaching for the Yukon church of Christ in Yukon, Okla. for the past 14 years.

Ron Cosby

Ron is a former Oklahoma City fire fighter, where he lived and worked while attending the Elk City School (Oklahoma) of Preaching, directed by W. R. Craig. Ron was the first student to enroll in the school when it opened in 1968. He and the editor were classmates, car pooled each week to classes, and have been friends for a half century. Since, 1970, he has done local work in Oklahoma and preached in numerous gospel meetings, and in lectureships. He and his wife, Sue, are retired from managing a catfish restaurant on Grand Lake in Oklahoma. He preaches for The Corner Church of Christ east of Disney, Oklahoma.

Bruce Stulting

Bruce was born and raised in Karnes City, Texas. He graduated from Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1989 and participated in the Graduate Program at Memphis School of Preaching 1998-2000. He has done local work in Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas, and has worked with the Fish Hatchery Road church of Christ in Huntsville, Texas, since 2001 where he also serves as one of the elders. He has done mission work in the Philippines and Cambodia. He holds gospel meetings, speaks on several lectureships, has conducted evangelistic campaigns in Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri, worked with several Bible youth camps, and served on the faculty of the Rose City Bible Learning Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. He also works as a construction inspector for the Texas Department of Transportation.

Danny Douglas

A native of Mt. Pleasant, Tenn., Danny began preaching when he was 15 years old and has preached regularly since 1977. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman College in 1979 and has done local work in Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, and England. He has also preached in short-term efforts in the Bahamas, Russia, and the Philippines. He currently conducts a radio program, *What Saith The Lord?*, where he currently preaches in Columbia, Tenn. and speaks in numerous lectureships and gospel meetings annually. For about 10 years, he taught in public schools, served as Principal and taught Bible in Seaboard Christian Schools, Norfolk, Virginia, and taught at Tidewater Community College, Portsmouth, Virginia. He is married to the former Laarni Bristol Tabalon, and they have two children, Lydia and Daniel Moses.

Lee Moses

Lee was born in Bellafonte, Penn. And was baptized into Christ by Gary Summers in 1999 in Denton, Texas. He graduated from the University of North Texas in 1998 with a Bachelor of Music degree, and from the Memphis School of Preaching in 2002. He has done local work in Texas and Arkansas and currently preaches for the Berea church of Christ near Rives, Tenn. He is also a frequent speaker on various lectureships and in gospel meetings. He and his late wife, Kelley Jo (Goodman) Moses, have three children, twin sons Luke and Lee, and a daughter, Laina Ruth.

Harrell Davidson

Harrell was born and reared near Bradford, Tenn. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, Harding College, and Alabama Christian School of Religion (now Amridge

University). He has been preaching for 59 years, since beginning full time work in 1958, and currently preaches in Hornbeak, Tenn. He has done local work in Virginia (mission work), Arkansas, Oklahoma, Alabama and Tennessee.

His previous work includes both radio and television preaching. He did 18 years of continuous radio work. During seven of those years he had nine weekly programs on two different stations. He preached on television for four years on the NBC affiliate in Oklahoma City, and preaches in four to six Gospel meetings each year, as well as several lectureships.

Harrell has authored *Over The Vast Horizon*, *The Authorized Biography of Guy N. Woods*, and *Marriage and the Christian Home* (Out of print after the second printing), *Davidson's Notes On the Old Testament*, and *Davidson's Notes on the New Testament*, some of which are now available on CD Rom. He also authored the following workbook studies: *In Heavenly Places In Christ* (a study of Ephesians), *Go Make Disciples*, *Studies in First and Second Corinthians*, and *Selected Psalms*.

He and his Carrie have been married 54 years. They have four children who all married faithful Christians, eight grandchildren living, and one deceased.

Acts—Its Keystone Position

Cled E. Wallace

The book of Acts occupies a keystone position in the structure of divine revelation. To see how important this book really is, it is only necessary to imagine a Bible without the book of Acts in it. It is the only reliable history we have of the establishment and early activities of the church.

The Old Testament furnishes a “shadow of good things to come” and contains many prophecies of the golden age of gospel blessings. The Epistles present in various connections a profound discussion of the plan of the ages. The book of Acts is a moving picture of the divine scheme in actual operation as the heralds of truth spread quickly over the earth saving sinners and establishing churches. Many allusions in the Epistles which would be otherwise mystifying are made clear in the light of the plain narratives of Acts.

Frank recognition of the character of the book and the place it occupies in the New Testament would have made the appearance of top-heavy systems of theology, which have done so much harm in obscuring the simplicity of the gospel, impossible. It is not too much to say that this book furnishes a factual standard by which the rest of the Bible is to be measured and understood.

The evidence for the Sonship and redemptive work of Christ in the four gospel accounts is so complete that the failure of anybody to be convinced who examines it reflects either on his ability or his honesty. The gap between the Gospel accounts and the Epistles is too wide to be crossed without the bridge that Acts affords. The Epistles could never have been written without the work being done which is recorded in Acts, and they are best and most quickly understood when studied in historical settings abounding in the book of Acts. This sane and fruitful method would ruin about all the sectarian sermons of a textual nature built up in top-heavy grandeur by doctors who keep one eye on the text and the other on the speculative theology of the creeds, but then the ruins would be replaced by something far richer and more vital.

A rediscovery of the book of Acts precipitated the Restoration Movement of the 19th century and resulted in many thousands of befogged religionists, as well as ordinary sinners, finding the “foundation of the apostles and prophets” with Jesus Christ as “the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). A mind saturated with a knowledge of Acts is far less likely to be “corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.”

The four gospel accounts furnish an unfinished climax in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and His ascension to heaven. The last meeting with the apostles and the giving of the great commission, the great Magna Carta of salvation, demanded something to complete the climax. Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the spread of the gospel over the earth, the trials and triumphs of the church, all this and more

which are found in the book of Acts, glorify the climax with which the Gospel accounts close.

Luke starts in Acts where he ends his Gospel account. The last chapter of Luke and the first chapter of Acts form a perfect dovetail. As there could have no great commission without the events recorded in the Gospel accounts, we could have never known its power and seen it in operation without Acts.

A preacher today without Acts is as futile as a builder without tools or a soldier without weapons. And yet a lot of the old theology which still tarries to mystify conversion and glorify feelings over faith was constructed of odds and ends of religion and philosophy in almost total disregard of it. Some inane things can have far reaching consequences in religion as elsewhere.

Without the book of Acts there could be no definite understanding of the proper division of the Word. It makes clear that the Gospel has supplanted the law, that salvation is gracious and not legal; yet it makes clear the conditions of faith by which it may be enjoyed by all. It is futile to go to Old Testament history, Jewish institutionalism, prophets, or psalms for detailed information to direct sinners into the kingdom of heaven. The Epistles and the book of Revelation have their places, but were certainly not written primarily for this purpose. It is an aggravated case of spiritual blindness and often perverseness that insists on detouring around the great commission, Pentecost, and the cases of conversions in Acts, and steering sinners to the morality of the Decalogue, the precepts of Proverbs, or even the gripping story of the thief on the cross.

Jesus abolished the law on the cross, and the testament “by which we are sanctified” was sealed with His blood and went into effect after His death. The terms of pardon to aliens which it contains were first announced to sinners by Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost. It followed the probation of the will and the qualification of the apostles as executors by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Without this Gospel there could have been no Christians and no churches of Christ; with it, the record of the triumphal march of Christianity, which is Acts, was possible.

A recognition of the fact that pardon was offered to sinners on the simple terms of the Gospel—faith, repentance, confession, and baptism—that at the same time they became Christians, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, and members of the church, the “one body,” would do much to eliminate the theological confusion and partyism of modern times. The only law these early disciples were bound by was “the apostles’ doctrine.” Accorded its true place in the structure of revelation, the book of Acts not only makes a human creed unnecessary, but its very existence absurd.

Certain exponents of speculative theology which create and maintain partisan setups, have come to recognize that the book of Acts, undoctored by their speculations, is hostile to their schemes. They resent the emphasis that some of us are giving this inspired record in our preaching. Partisans in the ranks are often heard to strenuously object that we preach too much on Acts. Such expressions as these come to our ears: “They preach nothing but Acts.” This is not true, of course, and the criticism is inspired by sectarian leaders.

The scheme of redemption foretold by the prophets is fulfilled in the plan of salvation contained in the Gospel. Sinners who are saved by the power of the Gospel and constitute the church are enjoying the blessings the prophets of the Old Testament foretold. The book of Acts reveals this as a certainty. The whole scheme is thrown out of balance and rudely perverted when such books as Daniel and Revelation are made to usurp the emphasis that properly belongs to Acts. It is supremely important that the book of Acts be allowed to maintain its rightful place in the structure of divine revelation.

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Baptism Is *For*, Not “Because Of” Remission Of Sins

Charles Pogue

When the Pentecost crowd called out to Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” Luke records the following words as the answer. “Then Peter said unto them, 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” (Acts 2:38).

For many years, there have been men who attempt to deny the necessity of baptism for salvation. One of the attempts has been to change the word “for” in Acts 2:38 to the word “because.” That does not work, as the three following facts show.

First, the words *repent* and *baptized* are connected by the coordinating conjunction, *and*. A coordinating conjunction ties together things of equal value. Whatever the consequence of baptism is, so is the one for repentance. Because that is true, if baptism is because of the remission of sins, so is repentance. If that is what Peter meant, he contradicted the words of the Lord Himself, who said, “I tell you nay, Nay: but except you repent ye shall all likewise perish.” If baptism is because of the remission of sins so is repentance, thus Peter was affirming the people had remission of their sins before they repented. *Not so!* Nor was *baptism* because of, but *for*, the remission of their sins.

Second, after the apostle Peter relayed the fact that Noah and his family were saved from the flood by being in the ark, he wrote, “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). If baptism is because of rather than for the remission of sins, then one is saved before baptism as so many vainly argue. To be consistent, those who deny baptism is for the remission of sins must also argue Noah and his family were saved from the flood before they went into the ark. Their entering into the ark may as well have been after the flood was already passed, not before it came. When Jesus sent the apostles on the great commission He was very clear, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). Baptism is *for* the remission of sins and salvation, not because of them!

Third, it is evident Saul of Tarsus repented when the Lord appeared unto him on the road to Damascus. We know that because of his question to Christ, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). The Lord instructed him to go into Damascus and there it would be told him what he must do. After three days of Saul (later Paul) praying, Ananias came to him restored his sight unto him and instructed him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” So much for the ‘sinner’s prayer’ some falsely teach for salvation. The point is if baptism is because of the remission of sins, Saul had his sins forgiven before they were washed away, no one in his right mind would argue for that being the case as washing means cleansing or removing the filth, in this case, from the garment of human flesh.

The false idea that Peter meant for the Pentecost questioners to be baptized “because of” the remission of sins is inconsistent with the need to repent because of the remission of sins. It is also contradictory to every other statement the New Testament makes concerning baptism. The errors men teach regarding baptism make light of the the beautiful language penned by Paul in Romans six, beginning with verse four: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Baptism is *for*, not because of, the remission of sins.

Did Paul Say Baptism Is Unnecessary?

David Ray

Those who reject the truth regarding the purpose of baptism sometimes point to Paul’s statement in First Corinthians 1:13, 17 in attempt to prove that baptism isn’t essential

to one's salvation. There he says "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius... For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...." "Therefore," they say, "baptism isn't essential."

First of all, nothing in this passage speaks of the purpose of baptism (for this, we can turn to Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; First Corinthians 12:13; First Peter 3:21, et. al.). Therefore, this passage *does not* and *cannot* teach a non-essential nature of baptism. What does it teach?

Paul speaks of two responsibilities in verse 17: preach and baptize. This is exactly what Jesus commanded the apostles to do (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). These were the two parts of the necessary evangelistic work. Both were necessary when Jesus spoke it and both were necessary when Paul wrote it. Nothing in First Corinthians 1 suggests otherwise.

Paul said his job was primarily to preach the gospel rather than to baptize. Why? Because God was revealing truth to him and through him; i.e., he was inspired (1 Cor. 2). Inspiration wasn't required in order to baptize; therefore, any of the brethren could do it. But this in no way minimized its importance.

But, why did Paul even bring up baptism? The topic was church division. The Corinthian brethren were dividing over their loyalty to different men, even though these men weren't divided (v. 12). Paul urged them to "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (v. 10).

So, why did Paul bring up baptism? What did it have to do with unity or division? If we assume a non-essential purpose of baptism, then it seems there's no good answer to this question.

However, when we read the scriptures referenced above, it makes perfect sense. Baptism is the point when one's sins are forgiven and he is therefore saved and added to the body of Christ (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). Paul's reference to baptism here harmonizes with this. It makes sense that these prideful brethren, knowing the importance of baptism, would divide over who had baptized them. This is why Paul was glad he had only baptized a few, so people wouldn't be claiming to have been baptized in Paul's name (i.e., saved and added to the church by Paul). If baptism were as meaningless as so many folks believe, Paul's point would have been just as meaningless!

Going outside of this passage, we should also be reminded what Paul said about the purpose of his own baptism, per the instructions given him by Ananias. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). From this, we see that the purpose of baptism had not changed from the time Jesus commanded it (Mark 16:16) until the time Paul received it. And it *hasn't* changed today.

The Evils Of Subjectivism

Jerry C. Brewer

"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

Man is a created being (Gen. 1:26). That he is such, presupposes a Creator. That Creator is God, who formed man from the dust of the ground and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Man is both physical and spiritual. The physical is from the earth and the spiritual is from God—that which is made in the image of God. As the Creator in all things physical and the origin of of things spiritual, God is sovereign in *both realms* and His creatures are subject to His laws *in* those realms.

The laws of God are immutable, and cannot be broken. Those who violate His laws break not the law, but themselves. One law of physics says that two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. That law cannot be broken. When two automobiles collide, that law is violated, but not broken. Drivers may consciously, or unconsciously, attempt to break that law, but it remains intact while the drivers are

broken in the attempt.

In both, physical and spiritual realms, God has a plumbline by which He measures the conduct of His creatures. While society believes that moral standards are fluid, ephemeral, and subject to the desires, ideas, and rationales of humankind, there is a higher, perfect standard of moral conduct by which man will be judged, and to which he must give account. That standard is God's will revealed in the Bible (John 12:48).

In the 1970s, my American History professor in a Texas college handed out copies of a test for our class and gave instructions for completing it. "Mark the answer that is *most nearly* correct," he said. "I don't believe there are any *right* answers because I do not believe in absolutes. I pondered his last statement and raised my hand to speak. "Are you *absolutely sure* there are no absolutes," I asked. He smiled and said, "I can't answer that question." *That* is the dilemma in which the subjectivist traps himself. He cannot be *absolutely certain* that there are *no absolutes*.

Our exchange was the classic example of two basic concepts of moral standards. Relativism (his concept) and absolutism (God's law) war for the souls of mankind. The absolutist says God's objective standard governs moral conduct. The relativist says all conduct is subjective, relative to each situation and can be determined only by those involved in it. Webster defines subjectivism this way: "The doctrine that the supreme good is the realization of some type of subjective experience or feeling, as pleasure. The doctrine that individual feeling or apprehension is the ultimate criterion of the good and right." As we use them here, the terms *relativist*, *situationist* and *subjectivist* are synonymous, describing an individual. *Subjectivism*, *relativism*, and *situation ethics* are also synonymous terms describing the concept that there is no objective standard of morality.

Living by no fixed standard of morality, the subjectivist becomes a law unto himself—doing that which is "right in his own eyes" as Israel did in the days of the Judges. He is subject to no higher authority than *his own* feelings, desires, and experiences, and practices moral anarchy. Objectivism—the opposite approach—is based upon a standard *outside* of man's consciousness, and defined by Webster as, "Any of certain theories stressing the objective reality, especially as distinguished from the purely subjective experience of the phenomenal world, of moral good, or the like"

The objectivist understands that moral conduct must be regulated by a higher authority than his own consciousness, and that *God* is that authority Who rules in the moral realm. The objectivist understands that God's moral law existed before he was born, is revealed in Biblical precepts, and has always been applicable to all men in all ages. The moral laws of God are fixed and unalterable. They teach what they teach, regardless of what society may think or declare that they teach. The moral philosophies of men exist in a constant state of flux, but God's moral precepts remain unchanged in every age.

The abolition or alteration of law requires an authority as great as that which enacted it. Society has no power to change the law of God because society is not the source of His law. Basing one's moral conduct on subjectivism is an attempt to alter and/or abolish God's law, and a rejection of His authority. Man may ignore God's law, but he cannot abolish it. He merely substitutes the the creature's standard for that of the Creator. Subjectivism brought ruin to mankind in the ancient world, as Paul describes:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour

their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:18-25).

Subjectivism has always brought ruin and misery to the human race. Adolph Hitler recognized no higher moral standard than his own prejudices, developed within the matrix of his life experience. Believing he was right, he murdered millions of innocent men, women, and children. He blamed Jews for Germany's defeat in World War One, considered them a pestilence in the German nation, and set about to “cleanse” Germany of them. Hitler was a subjectivist who based his personal moral conduct on his own feelings and experience. Would the subjectivist accept Hitler's conduct as right?

In his book 1966 book, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, Joseph Fletcher clearly set forth the subjectivist's viewpoint:

How shall we respond to the question whether extramarital sex is wrong? Or even paid sex? Women have done it to feed their families, to pay debts, to serve their countries in counter-espionage, to honor a man whom they could not marry. Are we entitled to say that, depending on the situation, those who break the seventh commandment of the Old Law, even whores, could be doing a good thing ...if it is for love's sake? In short, is there any real 'law' of universal weight? The situationist thinks not (p. 146).

Having no, “real law of universal weight,” Adolph Hitler committed mass murder, as did Jim Jones in Guyana, Charles Manson in California, Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, and Mao Tse Tung in China. Situation ethics knows no objective evil or morality—only that which the *individual* determines to be so in a given situation. “Situation ethics is a brand of reasoning designed to circumvent all law. The logic of the situationist leads to the conclusion that evil may be righteousness and righteousness may be evil” (H. A. Dobbs, *Anchor*, Summer Quarter, 1970, p. 2).

The greatest tragedy of the 20th century was not the enslavement and murder of millions by Hitler and Stalin. It was the adoption of “Situation Ethics (subjectivism) as man's moral standard of conduct, from which all evil arises. Paul said, “...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). Only evil results when man rejects God's absolute moral standard and does, “that which is right in his own eyes.”

Where Is The Authority To Claim That Baptism Is Not Necessary For Salvation?

Roelf L. Ruffner

“And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?” (Luke 20:1,2).

It comes as a shock to many people that Jesus Christ *commanded* they be baptized in order to be saved. He told a confused Nicodemus, “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).

In an explicit command the Lord said to His disciples before He left this world, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). He authorized his followers to preach the gospel and baptize those who obeyed it. How much clearer can you get?

The baptism commanded is not sprinkling or pouring “holy water” on the top of a person's head. There is no Biblical authority for those actions. To baptize or “baptizo” in the original Greek text means “to dip, plunge, immerse” (*Vines*). Scriptural baptism is a burial in water. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him

through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). How do you bury a dead person? You do not just sprinkle or pour some dirt on his casket.

Authorized baptism does not come *after* salvation, as many teach, because it is *for* the remission, or forgiveness, of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). The phrase “for the forgiveness of sin’ (Acts 2:38) is defined by Jesus Himself when He initiated the Lord’s Supper. “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*” (Mat. 26:18 Emph. RLR). When he uttered these words His blood had not yet been shed and no sins had been remitted by that blood. Likewise the sinner does not have his sins remitted until he comes in spiritual contact with the blood of Christ at baptism (Rom. 6:3,4). Dear reader, there is *no* authority in the Holy Bible for claiming that baptism is something one does *after* salvation. Please go back to the original authority on baptism – Jesus Christ. “And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18, ASV). Millions have obeyed His command and been saved from their sins. Why not join them and “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27)? “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39).

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The New Name

Jess Whitlock

Prophecy and its fulfillment is one of the great proofs that the Bible is God’s inspired word. Let’s consider one such important prophecy.

For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name (Isa. 62:1-2).

The promised blessings are pronounced on “Zion” and “Jerusalem.” Zion was a noted hill in Jerusalem, whereas Jerusalem was called the “city of David.” The Hebrews author wrote, “but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” (Heb. 12:22). Zion (Sion) came to be used as a figurative name for God’s people. Jerusalem was the city where Christ was crucified and His church was established (Matt. 27; John 19; Acts 2). Isaiah also wrote, “and ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; and the Lord Jehovah will slay thee; and he will call his servants by another name” (Isa. 65:15). It is my conviction that when Isaiah writes of “another name” he speaks of that “new name” of Isaiah 62:2.

Let us fast forward to the book of Acts. We frequently refer to Acts as being the book of conversions. On that notable day of Pentecost, the apostles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Thus, enabled to speak in tongues (languages) they had never studied, Peter and the other apostles preached the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:22-ff). Three thousand Jews obeyed the Gospel in baptism that day (Acts 2:38, 41) and the Lord added those souls to His church the same day (Acts 2:47). Paul would later write, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Jews came from everywhere to observe the day of Pentecost, and many became obedient to the faith. For approximately ten years the Jews must have believed they were the only ones to be saved.

The Gospel would not be revealed to the Gentiles until we come to Acts chapters 10 and 11. We rejoice to read of the first Gentile converts (Acts 10:33; 11:14; 15:7-ff). Peter

was the spokesman that God sent to Cornelius and his household. Peter testifies of those great events saying, “If then God gave unto them (Gentiles- jlw) the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:17-18). Look just eight verses later, “...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26d).

Why is the name “Christian” not first used in Jerusalem on that day of Pentecost (Acts 2)? The “new name” of Isaiah 62:2 would not be given “...until her righteousness go forth, as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth” (Isa. 62:1). When the Gentiles received His righteousness, it was only then that the new name could be given; the glorious name—“Christian.”

Cornelius lived in that period of transition between the Old Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ. God utilized three miracles to make His Gospel known to the Gentiles: (1) the appearance of an angel telling Cornelius to find an “earthen vessel” (Acts 10:3-8); (2) the appearance of the Lord to Peter, a Jew, to convince him that it would be appropriate for him to become that “earthen vessel” (Acts 10:9-16); and (3) the gift of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). Notice please, the falling of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his house was *not* for salvation. Peter answered, “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...” (Acts 10:47-48). If receiving the Holy Spirit was “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), then why were Cornelius and his household commanded to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ?

Let your fingers do the walkin’ and let the Bible do the talkin’. “And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:28-29). King Agrippa was well acquainted with the scripture and knew what he would have to do in order to be saved. He must become a “Christian.” If he ever did so, such is not recorded for us in the divine volume.

Finally, “but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Pet. 4:16). Paul and Barnabas were not ashamed for having been beaten brutally and then placed in a jail cell in Philippi (Acts 16:19-25). Stephen was not ashamed to preach the whole counsel of God to his accusers, even though they ended up stoning him to death (Acts 6:9-7:60). Jesus was not ashamed of being called “the Christ.” I would be *afraid* to be *ashamed* of Christ my Lord, and I would be *ashamed* to be *afraid* to own Him as my Savior!

Jesus Christ declared, “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). Let us remember that we will suffer in wearing the name Christian. Who has suffered more than the apostle Paul for the cause of Christ. Hear his words, “For which cause, I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

It was the late, great brother Marshall Keeble, whom I had the privilege to hear on several occasions, who preached, “...brethren look at the name Christian. If you take only the last three letters you find that you have “ian”, and those letters remind us that without Christ, “I Ain’t Nothing.”

Let us never be ashamed to glorify God in that new name—Christian.

"The Body, The Church"

Fred Dennis

The word "church" does not occur in the Old Testament. It is distinctly a New Testament term. The first time it is used is Matt. 16:18. Here Jesus states that He is

going to build His church. That was a year or so before the church became an accomplished fact. The Lord always does what He says He will do. He said He would build His church. He built it. He did not say a word about building some other church. He never mentioned any church but His own. Men have built many "churches." The Lord built one. It is that one about which we are concerned in this study.

Men build churches, and then they make converts to their churches. A lot of honest people are deluded into believing when they have gone into some human organization they are Christians. Nothing under heaven will make a Christian except obedience to the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ makes Christians only. The Lord has never added anyone to a human denomination. He never will. When the Lord adds folks, He adds them to His church. He does not add anyone until that person is saved, and that person is not saved until he obeys the Lord. When thus he does, the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). Just preaching the gospel of Christ will never cause anyone to think that he ought to "join" some human denomination. It will cause him to understand that he ought to obey the gospel of Christ. He will understand that when he does this he is saved, and that the Lord takes care of the addition to the church.

It is absurd to think that the Lord would add one person to one church and another to some other church. It is also absurd to think that God would command one person to do one thing to be saved and another person to do something entirely different. To make anything but a Christian, something besides the gospel will have to be preached, and some book will have to be used besides the New Testament. If a man wanted to start a congregation of Mormons, he would have to take along another book besides the New Testament. If he wanted to start a Methodist congregation, he would need some other book besides the New Testament. The same could be said, and should be said, of every human denomination on earth. When it dawns upon folks that the gospel only makes Christians only, they may take more time to learn the gospel of Christ.

The New Testament says in so many words that there is one body (Eph. 4:4). If any doubt whether this "one body" is the church, all he has to do is to investigate the truth. In Colossians 1:18 we are informed that Christ is the head of the body, and then it is explained that this body is the church. In Ephesians 1:22-23 we learn that Christ is head over all things to the church, and then we are told that the church is His body. In Ephesians 5:23 we are taught that Christ is the head of the church, and that He is the savior of the body. The body of Christ is the church of Christ, and the church of Christ is the body of Christ. These terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament.

The one verse referred to above (Eph. 5:23) is enough to teach us where the saved are. They are in the church. The Lord is the Savior of the body. Folks will say that the church does not save; it is the Lord Who saves. That is true, but one cannot be saved out of the church, for the simple reason that the same thing that saves him makes him a member of the church. If we want to be saved, we must get into position where the Lord can save us. This position cannot be had out of the church.

There are some things we must do to get into this body. Many fall far short of doing what it takes to get into the church. They think faith alone will save. It will not. One cannot be saved without faith, but he may believe in a way that Christ is the Son of God, but refuse to do what He says. Even faith plus repentance will not put one into a saved condition. There is only one way under heaven to get into the body of Christ, and that is to be baptized. As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Christ is put on in baptism. He is not put on one minute before. We are all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). You may get into many bodies without being baptized, but not one can get into the body of Christ without being baptized into it. And when we intelligently obey the Lord and the "other fellow" does the same, we are in the "one body" together, and in the same body that every other person is in that has obeyed the Lord.

The Lord did not leave us in the dark about how to be baptized. We do not have to guess about this. We do not have to take the word of preachers for it. One preacher will sprinkle a little water on a person and call it "baptism." Another preacher will use a little more water, perhaps pour it on, and call that "baptism." But the good Lord makes it so plain that the most humble can understand it when He says we are "buried by baptism" (Rom. 6:3-5). A humble disciple can hold his ground with the most learned

sectarian bigot if he will just cleave to the word of God. Just hold that false teacher to the issue. Hold him to the subject. Just tell him that the Lord said we are "buried by baptism." Surely we can remember three words, and surely we can turn and read those words. If that is not enough, remember that the Lord said that we have our bodies washed. (Heb. 10:22). The forehead, or the top of the head, would not be the "body." When one is scripturally baptized, his entire body is washed. Yes, we are "buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12).

This one body has many members. They are many members, yet but one body (1 Cor. 12:20). The physical body has many members. The spiritual body has many members (Rom. 12:4-5).

One cannot be saved without being a member of the body, but one can be *lost* and be a member of the body. One *can* depart from the living God, The doctrine of once in grace, always in grace, is not a Bible doctrine. The idea of "once saved, always saved," is foreign to the word of God. If one is going to teach such doctrine, he will need another book besides the New Testament. The New Testament would be of no use in trying to teach such stuff. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). You will note that one can depart from the living God. Yes, the "brethren" can do this. Thousands have done it. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul knew that his going to heaven depended upon keeping his body under control. He knew he could be a castaway. One can preach the truth to others, and then go to hell himself.

The members of the body who are faithful unto death will go to heaven after a while (Rev. 2:10). "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). You cannot do His commandments and remain out of the body. Just as sure as you do His commandments He will add you to this body. You cannot enter heaven without doing His commandments. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Catholic Papal Claims Examined

Michael Hatcher

Roman Catholicism rests upon certain foundational premises: (1) the primacy of Peter, (2) apostolic succession, and (3) the infallibility of the pope. They, of course, claim that Peter not only occupied a place of prominence in the New Testament, but that he was foremost among the apostles and the foundation upon which the church was built. If these claims are true, then the Roman Catholic church is true. However, these claims are not true as we will notice.

The Catholic Church claims that Peter was always given a preeminent or primary place among the apostles. Whenever the apostles are listed as a complete group, Peter's name heads the list (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:12; Acts 1:13). With but a couple of exceptions, when just a few apostles are considered (Peter, James, and John). They would claim that when Peter is listed as the last name (1 Cor. 9:5-6), that there is an ascending scale of importance. When Peter's name is listed in second position (Gal. 2:9-13), then there is a pyramid type of arrangement giving special emphasis to the person at the top of the pyramid as indicated by listing his name second. As one can see by their explanations, it does not matter where Peter's name is listed, they will have some contrived way to explain where his name is listed.

They have appealed to Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." They claim that the rock upon which the church is built is Peter. There are some translations which give support to this false claim. *The Contemporary English Version* says: "So I will call you Peter, which means 'a rock.' On this rock..." *The Good News Translation* says: "And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock,

and on this rock foundation..." *The Message* says: "And now I'm going to tell you what you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church..." Then *Young's Literal Translation* has: "And I also say to thee, that thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will..."

When one examines the text, it shows a distinct difference in *Peter* and *rock*. Both words are from the same root but they are a different gender giving them different meanings. "Peter" is the Greek *petros* which is masculine gender while "rock" is the Greek *petra* which is feminine gender (the feminine cannot refer back to the masculine). *Peter* means a rock but is applied to a detached fragment of rock such as a pebble or stone. *Rock* is applied to a large bedrock or immovable ledge. The Catholic counter to this by claiming that Jesus spoke in Aramaic on this occasion and used the neuter *kepha* for both "Peter" and "rock." However, there is no evidence either from biblical or secular history for accepting that Jesus spoke in Aramaic on this occasion. Actually, there is evidence to the contrary. When the Bible records a direct quotation from another language, we find a phrase such as, "being interpreted" (Matt. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22; et al). It is interesting to note that the Latin Vulgate (which is the Roman Catholic Church's authorized infallible version) makes a distinction in the gender just as does the Greek. The Vulgate has *Petrus* (masculine) for Peter and *Petram* (feminine) for rock. However, Matthew, as is true of all New Testament writers, wrote by inspiration of God in the Koine Greek language and he made a difference between the two words.

In verse nineteen the Catholics claim that Jesus was giving to Peter exclusively the keys to the kingdom. *Key* signifies the right of authority, thus, according to their claim, Peter was given the authority pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever Peter decided to bind or loose on earth would be accepted and bound or loosed by God in heaven. First, we would note that what is here given to Peter is elsewhere given to others. This power to bind and loose is given to all the apostles in John 20:23; and in Matthew 18:18 it is either given to all the apostles or to the church as a whole (I personally think it is given to the whole church here, but understand those who say it is only given to the apostles).

Second, the understanding which the Catholics give to this does not harmonize with what Jesus actually stated. *Bound* and *loosed* are in perfect passive participles in the Greek. The perfect tense is a tense which describes an action which has been completed in the past once and for all and does not need to be repeated. As is used by Jesus here it indicates that what Peter bound or loosed on earth shall have already been bound (or loosed) in heaven. Thus, Jesus is telling Peter that he could preach (bind or loose) what God gave him to preach without change or alteration.

We then should consider how Peter understood what Jesus told him here. Did Peter understand himself to be the rock upon which the church would be built, or did he consider Jesus the rock? Peter writes, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:4-8). Peter said that they had come to a living stone (Greek *lithos*) who is Christ. Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16 which is a prophecy concerning Christ. This stone (*lithos*) has been made the "head of the corner." Thus, Christ is this stone (*lithos*) upon which everything is built, but then Peter says that this stone (*lithos*) of stumbling (to those who are disobedience) is a rock (*petra*) of offense. Thus, the stone (*lithos*) is the rock (*petra*), and since the stone is Jesus the rock is Jesus also. So Peter understood that Jesus was the "rock" (*petra*) and not himself.

One last thing we would point out showing the error of the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is the apostle Paul. Galatians 2:6-14 shows Paul confronting Peter to his face because he was to be blamed. If Peter had the right to bind and loose whatever he

desired, then there is no way that he could have been in such error so as anyone could confront him. If the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is correct, then Paul was in error when he “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (2:11). Paul, writing by the direction of the Holy Spirit, gives a detailed list of the offices and servants in the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16). Yet, in these lists there is never a mention of the papal office or the primacy of Peter. In fact, there is never a mention of either of these in the Scripture. If they are so important to the existence of the church and its spiritual well-being, why the omission?

These things, along with many others, show that the Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter is a false theory. If the doctrine of the primacy of Peter falls, then the doctrines of apostolic succession and the infallibility of the pope also falls. When those doctrines fall, then the whole system upon which they are built (the Roman Catholic Church) also falls. While we love the souls of those involved in this false religious system, we must speak the truth concerning it and expose it for what it is.

Logical Answers To Some Very Unusual Questions: What Saith?

Johnny Oxendine

Because people are often looking for a way into something without having to do what is actually required for entrance, many have asked me the question: “Can you be taught wrong and baptized right?” In response, I have thought (and sometimes asked), “Can you be taught wrong and hear right?” “Can you be taught wrong and believe right?” “Can you be taught wrong and repent right?” “Can you be taught wrong and confess right?” If we cannot do these things, then what makes us think that we can be taught wrong and baptized right? The bottom line is that God has clearly identified the purity of purpose for baptism. There is no reason for someone not to know what the purpose of baptism is when he is baptized, and if he is not following the purpose that God has clearly set forth, he is just getting wet.

When we really get down to the truth of the matter baptism is an act of faith. When a person is baptized, he must believe that baptism is for the remission of their sins—that is the act of faith. In Colossians 2:12 the Bible says, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Without that act of faith involved in baptism, one is merely getting wet. If a person is just baptized “to obey God,” what is the act of faith? Where are you putting your trust when you are baptized “to obey God?” One might say, “I am putting my trust in God.” Great! So what are you putting your trust in God to do? When faith trusts God, it trusts God to do something (Rom. 4:20-22; Heb. 11). Baptism does not need to show that one merely believes God; confession accomplishes that. Baptism is not just a restatement of one’s confession. It is much more than that. Notice what Peter says on the matter of baptism. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Please notice what is said in that passage (1 Pet. 3:21): (1) Baptism saves us. (2) Baptism is not merely taking a bath. (3) Baptism is the response to God of a good conscience. (4) Baptism saves by the resurrection of Jesus. Notice item number three. When we are baptized, we have to have a good conscience about it—**we must do it with the right purposes in mind**. The good conscience when taught properly is going to understand that baptism is necessary for salvation and is going to motivate the individual to take the appropriate action. To say that one can be baptized correctly without understanding the purpose of baptism denies the role of the conscience in baptism.

There is nothing magical in the waters of baptism. The water is just water. So dunking a person under the water just for the sake of dunking someone under the water is not going to cut it. If the proper motive and purpose is not present, it is meaningless, just like all the other steps of salvation. If a person is not baptized for the proper motives and purposes, he is just getting wet. The Bible clearly teaches that the purpose of

baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

This is why we must insure that those we teach clearly understand the purpose of baptism. One cannot feel safe just because he went through the motions, and we should not feel that this has somehow relieved us of the need for more thorough and detailed teaching before baptism. We do people no any favors by putting them in the baptistery if they have no real appreciation for the fact that their sins are being forgiven.

Right Road Or Wrong Road?

Ken Chumbley

A number of years ago, a preacher that I knew was back in the States from Australia where he had lived for some time. Late one night he got onto the interstate leaving Abilene, Texas. He had gone about 50 miles when he realized he was on the *wrong side* of the road traveling in the *wrong direction*! In all that time, he had not met another vehicle. Yes, it is possible in the physical realm to be on the right road but going in the wrong direction! Under such conditions, clearly, no progress has been made. In the spiritual realm, it is also possible for one to have gotten on the right road—the way that leads to life—but have turned back from following that way and, thus, he does not make progress in his spiritual journey but instead he is, by the u-turn he made, now going in the wrong direction, thus going away from that life that he had once sought.

C. S. Lewis wrote: “We all want progress, but if you’re on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.” Jesus said: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). If you have looked back, turned back, there is only one way to make progress toward the heavenly home. You need to do an “about face” and return to going in the right direction, without looking back. Our Lord also, said: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). The right way—the right road—is a narrow road; the wrong way—the wrong road—is the broad way that leads to destruction. Sir Winston Churchill, in one of his speeches to Parliament, made the following statement that changes the metaphor but has a great point:

I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet.

Churchill made the statement on March 24, 1938, relative to the appeasement of Hitler and Nazi Germany prior to World War Two. This statement illustrates the way it is with the “broad way” of which Jesus teaches. It starts out fine and beautiful “the pleasures of sin,” but as one travels in that way its finery decreases until it is a way that is rough on the feet because those “pleasures” are indeed but “for a season” (Heb. 11:25). If you are traveling the “broad way,” we would plead with you to make those changes that are necessary that you might be able to enter the “narrow way that leads to life” by your obedience to the Gospel through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Remember, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). We plead with you, don’t come to end of life’s journey only to find that you have taken the wrong road and your soul is lost.

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“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”

W. R. Craig

This is a question that all of us have asked ourselves at one time or another. Many have sought earnestly to find the answer, but have quit their search in utter confusion. They went out seeking the answer to the question which was uppermost in their minds and were given many, and conflicting, answers. Now, we're not interested in what men think has to be done to be saved, but we want to know what the Bible teaches on the subject. It shall be our purpose in this article to speak only where the Bible speaks, and only *when* it speaks.

After Jesus had died on the cross for our sins, after his burial and glorious resurrection and His ascension to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit to His apostles as He had promised. When the Holy Spirit came, Peter, filled with it, stood up and began to preach. He preached with such eloquence that the people became aware of the fact that they were sinners and needed salvation. Realizing this, they cried out and asked what they should do in order to be saved. These people believed as a result of Peter's sermon. His sermon produced faith in them. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” So, in order to be saved according to the scriptures, we must hear the word of God and, hearing, we must believe it. So then, in order to be saved we must have faith. We are told by the writer of the Hebrews letter that without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6).

Well, is faith all that is necessary to obtain salvation? The inspired Peter didn't seem to think so on the day of Pentecost. He told them to repent. So, the Bible teaches that after one believes, he must repent of his sins (Acts 2:38).

What else did he tell them to do in order to be saved? He told them to be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). So, the Bible teaches that in order to be saved, one must be baptized for the remission of sins.

“Do you mean to tell me,” objects one, “that I can't be saved until I've been baptized?”

I don't mean to tell you anything. That's what Peter, an apostle of the Lord, tells you! Hear him again: “...baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Could he have spoken more plainly?

Therefore, we conclude that in order to be saved, the Bible teaches us to hear the gospel, believe it, repent of our sins, and be buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4).

Salvation By Faith

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

A passage frequently quoted by the faith alone advocates is John 1:12. It reads: “But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Great stress is laid on the last words, “even to them that *believe on*, his name.” But John 1:12 is like Romans 1:16—the same order is in it. First, is the believer; second, between the believer and the *sonship* is the “power” to *become*; third, when the believer uses the power he becomes the son of God. Strange, indeed, that men will quote this passage to prove that a believer is saved the moment he believes, when the passage itself says that the believer must “become” a son of God. The use must be made of the power that lies between that believer and sonship.

Another effort for faith only is made on Romans 5:1-2. They attempt to drag it into service. It reads: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Of course, the emphasis is on *faith*, and the assumption is that Romans 5:1-2 teaches that the sinner is saved the moment he believes—assumption, and nothing else. First, Paul bases salvation on faith. Second, he states that faith gives the believer access into “this grace.”

The word “access” is defined to mean “admittance or approach to a person or place; means of approach or admission.” Inasmuch as faith gives “access” into the grace, then

the believer, is not in the “grace” the moment he believes. He gains access by faith, that is, *after* he is a believer.

The use of the word “access” may be further observed in a comparison with Ephesians 2:18: “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” In verse 16 the apostle had shown that “by the cross” the pathway to reconciliation unto God had been opened up to both the Jew and the Gentile. Then, in verse 18, he declares that both have “access” by the one Spirit unto the Father. In chapter 3:12, the apostle says that in boldness we have “access” and confidence “by the faith of him.” Now, *the faith* of Christ is the gospel. So by the gospel we have access—into what? Verses 12 to 21 give a list of the blessings of the gospel, and it was by faith that the Ephesians had obtained the access into all of these blessings. Though believers, they still had to use their faith in order to enter these blessings. So it is in Romans 5:1-2. Faith gave the believer access into the grace, and he was not saved out of the grace but in it, therefore the believer is not saved at the moment of faith. He is saved when he uses it as the access, the means of his admittance, into the grace of God. Anybody ought to be able to see that Romans 5:1-2 is fatal to the faith only theory, which would have a believer saved outside the grace, saved without grace. That is a new thing, indeed!

Other passages in the Roman letter settle the faith alone issue. In Romans 3:22 we read of “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” And again, in Romans 3:26, “that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” He is the justifier of whom? The one who has already believed in Jesus. If God justifies one after he is already a believer in Jesus, then how can salvation be coincident with faith? If salvation is instantaneous with believing, how can God justify the one who has already believed in Jesus? But Paul says he does that. Therefore salvation is not instantaneous with faith; it is not co-incident with believing. At this point Romans 4:16 comes in to settle it: “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” Here Paul puts “might be” right between faith and salvation by grace! How could he say that a believer *might be* saved by grace if he was already saved the moment he believed? Thus in the Roman letter Paul uses four chapters to lay his premise that the law of Moses could not save, and in the fifth chapter he gives his conclusion that we are justified by faith because it gives us access into the grace of God. But to gain this access, faith must be used. How is faith used? This question is extended into the sixth chapter where he describes how the believer is “baptized into Jesus Christ,” and is therefore “buried with him by baptism into death,” that as Christ was raised “even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The doctrine of the Roman letter is not the doctrine of faith alone salvation.

A sectarian sugar stick is claimed for Galatians 2:16. It reads: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the, faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” We are told this passage teaches, first, that “not by works of the law” excludes baptism; and that “justified by the faith of Christ” means salvation the moment one believes. To this we reply: (1) Baptism is not a work of the law. To class baptism as a “work of the law” is to deny believer’s baptism, for “the law is not of faith” (Gal. 3:12), and the one baptized, furthermore would be under a “curse” (Gal. 3: 13), and would come under the “wrath of God” (Rom. 4:15). That is consequence number one of such reasoning. (2) Paul contrasts the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The first is “the law” and the second is “the faith.” The law is the Jewish system. The faith is the gospel of Christ, for all the world. (3) In the passage there are two names—“faith” and “the faith of Jesus Christ.” They are not the same. The word, “faith” refers to the state of mind in the person, when one says that he believes. The phrase “the faith of Jesus Christ” refers to the gospel of Christ. Certain ones had believed in Christ, they had “faith” but was that enough? No. Faith alone left them short of justification. Why? There stands the “might be” of this passage between the believer and justification. Paul puts down into this record this order: First, we have believed in Christ; second, that we might be; third, justified by the faith of Christ. If salvation was coincidental with believing, if salvation comes the moment one believes, there could be no room for the “might be” between belief and salvation. But Paul puts this “might be” in Galatians 2:16. Between the believer and salvation there are conditions. That is why the “might be” is there. If the

believer obeys Christ, he is baptized into Christ and comes into “the faith of Christ.” Here the “might be” disappears, but as long as he has “faith alone” the might be stares him in the face.

Faith alone teachers can never harmonize their doctrine and the scriptures. While it is true that the apostles taught the doctrine of justification by faith, do not overlook the fact that Galatians 2:16 says that the believer is justified by “the faith of Christ.” Why is this? Because the personal faith, the faith of the individual, prompts him to obey the gospel, to be baptized. Thus he “by faith” accepts “the faith”—the entire teaching of Christ—and is baptized “into Christ.” Can anyone be foolish enough to say that the sinner is saved “by faith” the moment he believes, and is saved again “by the faith” when he accepts the faith in baptism? To such an absurd position all who teach the doctrine of salvation by faith only are driven by Paul's Galatian argument.

Many times I have traveled from Oklahoma City to Los Angeles on the railroad. The energy in steam moved the train. “How did you travel?” some one asks. “I came by steam,” I would reply. Who could misunderstand that? Steam was in the boiler of the locomotive before we left, Oklahoma City. But the train did not move until the energy in the steam was released in the engine of the locomotive; then energy was converted into motion, and away we went. The question was not whether there was energy in steam, but when does the energy get us to the destination. Now, on the human side of salvation, the energy that saves is in faith, but the question is: When are we saved by faith? Paul settles that question for us. He says: “We believed in Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.” The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the gospel.

Is God Obligated To Accept Whatever Man Offers Him?

Lee Moses

Man was created and placed upon the earth to worship God. The apostle Paul noted that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth . . . That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:26-27). Of all the wondrous life God placed upon the earth, only mankind has the capacity to desire God, to seek God, to appreciate God, to love God, and to adore God. And indeed man has worshipped; from the dawn of time until now, upon every corner of the globe. So universal is the concept of worship that many have concluded that man is created with a “God hole” in his being, which he will incessantly attempt to fill with all manner of worship. Today one can observe mankind attempting worship in many ways; from reverent prayer to wild hand clapping and dancing, from preaching of the Gospel to elaborate theatrical presentations. But is God obligated to accept whatever one offers Him?

What is Worship?

Worship is man's means of approaching God. The English word is effectively a contraction of “worthy” and “ship”; thus implying the worthiness of the Recipient of worship. The Old Testament word used for worship (*shachah*) means “to bow down, to bow down before God, to worship, to pay adoration, even without prostration.” [\[1\]](#) The New Testament word for worship (*proskuneoo*) is a compound word, taking the Greek *kuneoo*, “to kiss,” and *pros*, meaning “toward.” Taken together, this compound word signifies an act of reverent adoration toward a Divine Object. Following are a few of the ways worship has been defined:

The outgoing of the human spirit toward God.

A group of specialized activities in which we draw near to and commune with God in an extraordinary manner.

Worship is man's response to God's revelation of himself.

The overflow of a grateful heart under a sense of divine favor.

The outpouring of a soul at rest with God. [\[2\]](#)

To further see what worship is, let us see how worship has been offered. Cain and Abel

brought offerings to the Lord (Gen. 4:3-4). Job “rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings . . . continually” (Job 1:5). As the Lord passed before him, “Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped” (Exod. 34:8). Jehoshaphat the king of Judah “bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD” (2 Chron. 20:18). Jesus worshipped the Father in prayer and song (Matt. 26:30; Luke 11:1); observing the worship instructions given in the Old Testament under which He lived (Matt. 26:17-20; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 9:16-17), and setting forth worship instructions that would be observed under the New Testament following His death (Luke 22:19-20). From the establishment of Christ’s church, those who obeyed the Gospel “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Is There Unacceptable Worship?

To ask the above question is to answer it for one familiar with the Bible. Oftentimes mankind has offered worship to unworthy objects. Very shortly after their deliverance from Egypt, the people of Israel were found offering worship to a golden calf they had made themselves (Exod. 32). This brought the fierce wrath of the Lord upon them. It is also significant that when the object of their worship was changed, their conduct surrounding their worship changed: “And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. . . . the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies” (vv. 6, 25). The word for “naked” holds the idea of moral unrestraint, demonstrating the moral collapse that usually takes place when the one true God is not the object of worship (cf. Romans 1:22-31).

Years later, the descendants of some of these people had given themselves over to false and revolting worship practices and objects:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon [Jerusalem], the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods . . . They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind (Jer. 19:3-5).

But even worship intended toward the correct Object can be unacceptable. In the first recorded acts of worship, Abel’s offering was accepted, but Cain’s was rejected (Gen. 4:3-5). Shortly after their sanctification as priests, Aaron’s two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, attempted to offer “strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not”—for which they were immediately incinerated by searing flames from the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2). When King Uzziah sought to burn incense before the Lord, a task reserved for the priests, he was instantly smitten with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:18-19). The Lord pointedly asked the people of Israel regarding their animal sacrifices, “Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand?” (Mal. 1:13). Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, the spiritual leaders of Israel, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Ananias and Sapphira attempted to lie to God in what they offered, for which they were both struck dead (Acts 5:1-10).

It is undeniable that there has been unacceptable worship in the past, whether in object or in action. There is no reason to think that there is not unacceptable worship yet today. Considering how God views such worship, one should proceed with the utmost caution to ensure that his worship does not fall into this category.

Who Sets the Terms of Worship?

God created man a worshipful being, and He also created man an intelligent being. But does this mean that man innately has the ability to determine what should be offered to God?

Throughout the pages of holy writ, a recurrent theme is that self-directed man is also misdirected man. At the conclusion of the book of Judges, a book depicting Israel’s repeated failure, comes the summary, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (21:25). It is not stated that they knew

what was right, and chose wrong instead. They merely had individual *human* standards of right and wrong, which proved to be no standards at all. Solomon wrote, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Jeremiah recognized, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). The apostle Paul wrote, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18).

These passages make clear that man needs Divine direction to “*direct his steps*”; “*to perform that which is good*.” Would not this especially be true of worship, as it is man’s means of approaching God? Would not this especially be true of worship, considering man’s long track record of unacceptable worship?

Consider the first recorded acts of worship: Why was Abel’s offering accepted, but Cain’s was not? “*By faith Abel* offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4, emphasis added). Since “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), Abel clearly offered as God had instructed while Cain did not.

What was the problem with Nadab and Abihu’s worship? They “offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not (‘which he had not commanded them,’ American Standard Version)” (Lev. 10:1). It was not that Nadab and Abihu were given the prerogative of choosing how they would worship God, and made a wrong choice. It was not even that God had specifically forbidden them from offering the fire that they did. It was that they offered “strange,” or unauthorized, fire that God had not told them to offer. God sets the terms of worship. Worship is for God, it is to please God; and no man or woman can conceive in his mind what pleases God unless God reveals it in His word: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11).

While created intelligent, able to discern that he *needs* to worship, man needs God’s revelation to know *how* to worship. And thankfully God has given His revelation for today, the New Testament, that man can understand how to worship God acceptably (2 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 5:17).

Conclusion

If most people were to be asked the question, “Is God obligated to accept whatever man offers him?”, the answer would certainly be no. Most people would acknowledge that God holds the prerogative of setting the terms of worship. Most people recognize that there is unacceptable worship, though they have varying definitions of what constitutes unacceptable worship.

But yet if the same people would consider their own worship practices in light of these plain facts, they might be shocked.

Where in the New Testament does God say that rock and roll bands constitute acceptable worship? Where does He say that theatrical presentations constitute acceptable worship? Where does He say that a piano constitutes acceptable worship? Where does He say that partaking of the Lord’s Supper on a day of one’s own choosing constitutes acceptable worship? Where does He say that a divided assembly constitutes acceptable worship? Do not such practices put one in the class of Cain rather than of Abel? Do they not put one in the class of Nadab and Abihu rather than of Moses?

Is God obligated to accept whatever man offers him? Jesus Christ said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Let us be thankful that we can know the truth (8:31-32), and that we *can know* that we are worshipping God acceptably.

“And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:21-22).

End Notes

1. William Wilson, *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d), p. 490.

2. Quoted by E.C. Meadows, “The Nature of Worship,” in *The Church Today: Current Issues, Problems, and Challenges*, ed. William Woodson (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1975), pp. 133-134.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

“What’s wrong with listening to a group sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and is it wrong to sing such songs accompanied by mechanical instruments?”

This is not only a good question, it is one that is vital. Let us look at two familiar passages: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19) The second passage says, “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” (Col. 3:16).

May I ask a question just here? When one listens to a group such as a quartet or a choir sing spiritual songs, what thoughts are going through one’s mind? If the thoughts lean toward spiritual matters, we are attempting to worship in vain (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7-8). All spiritual, acceptable worship appeals to the mind. It is a function of the mind. It is not subjective, or according to one’s feelings. Are we listening for entertainment purposes? If the latter is the case, then we are using God’s name and spiritual songs in a way void of sound reasoning and we are in sin, being void of scriptural authority. We would say again that such is vain worship. Worldly things are to be put out of the mind. To listen to spiritual songs set to music is worldly.

The second part of the question is clearly defined in the two passages before us already. We are commanded to, “sing and make melody in the heart.” To sing spiritual songs with the instrument anytime or anywhere is without Divine authority. Can you imagine us singing, “The Old Rugged Cross” set to mechanical instruments when He Who died on that cross authorized only singing? It is like slapping the Lord in the face!

Instrumental music was never used by a congregation of the Lord’s people in the first century. In fact, instrumental music was not introduced in any worship service until the 13th century. The Greek Orthodox Churches in Greece still do not use the mechanical instrument. They understand that the word *psallo* means simply to sing. The only instrument that is to be played is the heart of man. To participate in the way the questioner asked is, indeed, a sinful practice.

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

God's Law Of Exclusion

Ed Johnson

Although the Bible does not specifically teach it in so many words, God’s *law of exclusion* is taught in principle. Many times when we, as Bible teachers, point out that a certain practice cannot be included in worship, we are told, “But it doesn’t say *not* to.” It’s as important to respect the *silence of the scriptures* as it is to respect what is spoken. We must “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent” That principle is taught time after time in the scriptures.

God told Noah to make the ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). God didn’t need to tell Noah *not* to use oak, ash, or any other kind of wood. Noah knew that God instructions to use gopher wood *excluded* all other kinds of wood. The Bible says that Noah did, “according to all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22). Noah was a great builder because he respected God *law of exclusion*.

In Leviticus 10:1-2, we conclude that God had given Nadab and Abihu instructions

(commanded) what He wanted or would accept in worship to Him. This command would exclude anything other than what God said He wanted. These two sons of Aaron offered something different, something that was *excluded*. They offered up “strange fire” before Jehovah and lost their lives as a result. This was strange fire which, “Jehovah had not commanded.” The fire they offered was excluded under God’s *law of exclusion*.

Elisha instructed Naaman that his leprosy would leave him if he would wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman’s feelings were that the rivers Abana and Pharpar in Damascus were, “better than all the waters of Israel” (2 Kings 5:12). Whether or not Naaman’s evaluation of the rivers was correct, the point was that Elisha’s instructions to wash in the Jordan *excluded* all other rivers. Naaman washed in the Jordan and God cleansed his leprosy. Naaman was cleansed because he respected God’s law of inclusion (the Jordan River) and God’s *law of exclusion* (all other rivers). In our worship of God, what the New Testament authorizes automatically excludes what men may want---“that which Jehovah had not commanded” (Lev. 10:1).

...The observance of the Lord’s Supper is to be on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). By identifying that day, God automatically *excluded* any other day on which we may observe the Lord’s Supper. The fact that man may prefer another day for the sake of convenience, makes no difference. Any day other than Sunday, the first day of the week, is *excluded*.

Likewise, in our worship in song we are given a directive. We are to “speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Without belaboring the subject, a careful and accurate analysis of these two verses makes two points: 1) Vocal music is the kind *authorized*. This *excludes* the only other kind of music—instrumental. 2) These verses describe the action being taken—singing—as “speaking to yourselves” and “admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.” This indicates a reciprocal action, making the singing mutual. These verses *exclude* any other kind of music, such as instrumental. They also exclude any other form of delivery such as solos, duets, quartets, or choirs. And this would certainly *exclude* singing those “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”—a form of worship—as entertainment. No where in God’s word is worship authorized as entertainment. A saving faith must be based on hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17) and respecting that word’s *law of exclusion*.

Hell Is Real

Paul Vaughn

One of the most unpopular, unpleasant, unattractive, and politically incorrect topics in the Bible is the subject of hell. It is perhaps the least discussed of all biblical subjects. Some consider it poor taste and others deny its existence. People do not want to speak of it or hear about this most dreadful place. Most prefer to talk about the love of God or the grace of God. God’s love and grace are marvelous topics to discuss and study, but that does not mean that there is no hell.

Hell is real! It is the place of eternal punishment for the unrighteous. It is written, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15). It is a place of pain and sorrow. Jesus, warning about hell, said, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44). Hell is a place where one drop of water on the tongue could bring relief from the pain. Jesus told of a “Rich Man” in torments who begged for just that very thing. It is written: “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). It is a place of eternal punishment (Mat. 25:46).

Hell need not be the eternal home for anyone. God has made provision for man to escape the pain of hell. It is through His Son, Christ Jesus. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus is the one and only way to heaven, the one and only way to escape the pain and sorrow of hell. That leaves out everyone and everything else. We must choose to serve God and

eventually live with Him in heaven or choose to turn our backs on God and eventually suffer the anguish of hell. God has always given man the right to choose. Joshua said:

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

Dear friend, the choice is ours to make, choose wisely because hell is real.

Personal Responsibility

Ron Cosby

The word “responsibility” is not in the Bible. Neither is the word “obligation.” However, the concept fills the Bible. Ezekiel taught, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son...” (Ezek. 18:20). Paul *also* taught that we have obligations: “For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Every Bible command, every Bible charge, and every duty recorded in Scripture indicates someone's responsibility.

Failure to accept blame for one's actions permeates our society, as in the following:

In February of last year, a criminal that was wanted in Florida ran from police and hid in the woods of Maine. After spending at least three nights in the outdoors, he got frostbite and lost a few toes. What makes this story interesting is that, following his arrest, he threatened to sue the detective for not having arrested him promptly (Mary Anne Lagesse, “Flight From Law Leads To Frostbite, Threat Of Lawsuit,” *Bangor Daily News*, Feb. 27, 2002, as reported in overlawyered.com).

We are not surprised when bad men fail to accept their responsibilities. Because of political pressure, Pilate sought to wash his hands of his appointment as the judge of justice and fairness (Matt. 27:24). Even good men fall prey to this deadly neglect of responsibility and seek to pass the buck. Aaron blamed his failure on the people (Ex. 32:22-24). Avoiding one's responsibility is not new. It started in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3). Adam blamed God for giving him the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent.

Lack of courage and acknowledgment of wrong doing will not go unnoticed by God. He will hold all of us accountable for our actions (Matt. 16:24-27), our words (Matt. 12:34-37), our very thoughts (Jer. 17:10; Matt. 5:27-28), and the way we treat others (Prov. 24:11-12; Ezek. 33:2-7).

Not all debts and recompense for evil are in this life (Rom. 2:4-8). Though it may appear that men can avoid dire consequences when they fail in their God-given charge, the end results are not always visible or immediate. Pilate's neglect cost Jesus His life. Aaron's neglect prevented him from entering into the beautiful land of promise. Though we are not guilty of Adam's sin, when he shoved his responsibility to the side, sin and death entered into the world (Rom. 5:12). Only our *own* sins will separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). And after death, that separation will be for an eternity.

What are our obligations to God? Search the Scriptures and you will find them. “Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

Bible Facts – Chapters And Verses

The Bible has 66 books, divided into 1189 chapters consisting of 31,173 verses. The Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton about 1228. The Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan in 1448 and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551. The first printed Bible into verses was an Old Testament Latin edition by Pagninus, printed in 1528. The first complete English version of the Bible divided into verses was the Geneva Bible, printed in 1560.

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| 3) Matthew 18-24 | 14) Acts 1-7 | Thessalonians |
| 4) Matt. 25-Mk. 4 | 15) Acts 8-14 | 25) 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 |
| 5) Mark 5-10 | 16) Acts 15-20 | Timothy |
| 6) Mark 11-16 | 17) Acts 21-28 | 26) Titus, Philemon, Hebrews |
| 7) Luke 1-6 | 18) Romans 1-6 | 1-9 |
| 8) Luke 7-11 | 19) Romans 7-16 | 27) Hebrews 10-13, James |
| 9) Luke 12-18 | 20) 1 Corinthians 1-9 | 28) 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John |
| 10) Luke 19-24 | 21) 1 Corinthians 10-16 | 29) Jude, Revelation 1-11 |
| 11) John 1-7 | 22) 2 Corinthians | 30) Revelation 12-22 |