

# The Gospel Preceptor

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

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## “We're All Sinners”

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And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her (John 8:3-7).

When one condemns sin in the life of another, the retort is usually hurled that, “We're all sinners. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” That smug reply **assumes** that Jesus does not condemn sin in men's lives because all have sinned and, therefore, no one else can condemn sin either. This passage **does not so teach**.

Verse 6 gives the reason for their question to Jesus: “This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.” Their intent was not to mete out justice and follow the Law of Moses, but to discredit Jesus. They thought they had Him in a dilemma. C.E.W. Doris wrote,

The dilemma they wished to get him in was somewhat like that of the tribute money. To affirm the binding validity and force of the law of Moses would be to advise a course of action contrary to the Roman law. On the other hand, if he set aside this law it would make him liable to the charge of breaking this law which would be an aid in killing his influence with the Jews. In one case they would accuse him to the Romans and place him under civil authority; in the other they could denounce him as setting aside the law of Moses (David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on The Gospel by John*, Edited With Additional Notes by C.E.W. Doris, 1964, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, pp. 121, 122).

Adultery was punishable by death under the Law of Moses. “And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:10). “If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel” (Deut. 22:22). Punishment was to be inflicted on **both** parties to adultery—not just the woman. The validity of the charge had to be established by at least two witnesses, and the law required the witnesses to cast the first stone (Deut. 17:7).

Jesus neither set aside the Law of Moses, nor condoned the woman's sin. The scribes and Pharisees failed to bring the **man**, who was also guilty of adultery, to Jesus. If she was caught, “in the very act” of adultery, as they charged, then they should have brought the man also. When Jesus said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” He invoked the Law of Moses' requirement that the “hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death.” “He that is without sin

among you” did not mean the first stone could not be cast if any of them had sinned in any fashion, but referred to those who had **witnessed** the adultery and were not parties to it. In this instance, those witnesses were “without sin.” When they tried to entrap Him, Jesus presented **them** a dilemma. **They** claimed the woman committed adultery. **They** said she was caught in the act which they, obviously, had to observe. Therefore, Jesus merely followed Moses’ law, saying that the witnesses must cast the first stone at her.

The latter part of this incident is generally used to imply that Jesus condoned the woman’s sin.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more (John 8:10-11).

Jesus was meticulous in His observance of the Law of Moses. His reply that, “Neither do I condemn thee” was a **legal** response consistent with the Law. He had not witnessed her adultery and, therefore, could not condemn her to death under it. Had He done so, He would have violated the Law Himself. Neither did He condone her sin. He told her to, “go and sin no more,” indicating that she had, indeed, committed sin.

The scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman to Jesus slunk away when He refused to fall into their trap. They knew they had no case under the Law of Moses without the man who was as guilty as the woman, and the witnesses refused to execute her in violation of Roman law. That is prima facie evidence of their intent to discredit Jesus—not to respect God’s law—and they were entrapped in their own dilemma.

John 8:3-11 does **not** mean that since, “We’re all sinners” we cannot condemn sin in the lives of others. It teaches just the opposite. Sin **can**—and **must**—be condemned in the lives of all, as Jesus condemned it in the scribes, the Pharisees and the woman taken in adultery.

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## A Conversion Account

Lee Moses

“Come in!”

Carol and I had just pulled into the parking lot of a church building, and she urged me to follow her. Although the car was parked, I was presently moving forward to a major fork in the road. Little did I know how the course of my life would forever change as I approached that fork.

But perhaps it would be beneficial to say how I had come to this particular point.

At that time, I was a college student in my twenties at the University of North Texas. There I was an active member of a social fraternity, which was renowned for its Thursday night beach-themed “Margaritaville” parties. These parties typically featured large crowds and loud music. One particularly raucous Thursday night, the police visited the fraternity house and issued a noise citation. As I was the president, the ticket was made out to me. Although the fraternity paid the fine, I personally was required to perform community service as part of the deferred adjudication that came with the ticket.

As it happened, a family friend in Houston was the Republican party chairman of her precinct, and she needed someone to accompany her as she went door-to-door in her somewhat sketchy neighborhood. So, one Sunday afternoon, Carol and I did just that. We spent a few hours driving through the neighborhood and speaking to residents, and I was able to fulfill my community service requirement.

As the afternoon grew late, Carol unexpectedly drove into the parking lot of a church building. I did know she was fairly involved at the church she attended; so, as she parked and began to get out, I assumed she needed to run in and quickly take care of some matter in the office, or something similar. I figured I would wait in the car a few minutes in the meantime. But she stuck her head back into the car and urged, “Come in!”

I followed her into the building, wondering whether someone might be there she wanted me to meet, or if whatever she was doing was going to take too long to leave me in the car. I followed her around a couple of turns in the hallway and through a door.

And I found myself standing in a worship service in progress.

It had not even occurred to me that a worship service would be in session, much less that we were about to enter one. As we seated ourselves, I was thinking to myself, “That dirty dog! She planned to do this to me all along!”

But as I looked around and listened, my interest was piqued. Why was there no instrument of any kind to accompany the singing? Were these people so poor that they couldn’t even afford a piano? But those in attendance seemed to participate more heartily in the singing than I was used to, perhaps because the sound depended entirely on their participation.

When the preacher preached, everyone followed along in his own Bible. And I do mean his **own** Bible. At the denominations I had grown up attending, Bibles were placed in the backs of the pews with which anyone could follow along, if one so chose. However, the preaching typically featured such little actual Bible that those Bibles typically remained on the backs of the pews. But here, everyone clearly had brought his own Bible with him; and they were clearly well-acquainted with those Bibles, as they quickly rifled through the pages from one end of the Bible to the other. And they had to move quickly through the pages, as the preacher was throwing out more Bible in his sermon than I had probably ever heard in any five combined sermons previously. I observed people writing notes and underlining verses in their Bibles as the preaching continued. This was a level of studiousness during preaching with which I was unacquainted. These people were listening to every word, and closely comparing it with what they found in their Bibles.

Not only were they hanging on every word—I found that I was as well. This was preaching unlike any I had ever heard. The preacher was not simply telling stories or providing recollections of his past. He was speaking of matters pertaining to eternity, and proving directly from the Bible the truth of the points he made. I no longer recall the exact subject matter of the sermon, much less its title. But there was one statement the preacher made that shook me to the core. He said, “The purpose of your life is to do what’s necessary to go to heaven.”

When I relate that statement to people who have been reared in the church of Christ, they say, “Well, of course.” This is something they have heard their entire lives. But I did not hear it as I was growing up; not in the sermons, not in Sunday school, not in confirmation class. I was primarily reared as a Presbyterian; and although we were taught very little doctrine, I can see now that the doctrines of John Calvin underlaid what we were taught—and what we were not. This is why we were not taught that the purpose of one’s life is to do what is necessary to go to heaven—according to Calvin’s doctrines, whether or not one will go to heaven has already been predetermined. According to Calvin’s doctrines, once one has been saved, that person can never do anything to lose that salvation. So according to Calvin, your decisions and how you live your life ultimately have no effect on whether or not you will go to heaven.

But my religious upbringing was not limited to the sermons I heard as a youth, or to the Sunday school and confirmation classes I attended. As a preteen, I spent far more time reading the Bible than your average preteen. And I recall thinking when I was young, “Why does what I hear preached and taught at church seem so different from what I read in the Bible?”

But as I listened to this sermon, I wanted to exclaim, “Now that’s what I read in the Bible!” Carol would inform me later that the one preaching was no longer the regular preacher there, but had retired from full-time preaching and was filling in. From what I later learned about the regular preacher, the fact that I was able to hear this particular preacher was a very—shall we say, Providential (?)—turn of events. After the worship service, everyone wanted to meet me. Not to say that the denominational churches I attended were unfriendly, but this was an unexpected level of friendliness. Everyone smiled in a genuine way and shook my hand. Several said, “It’s good to know you,”

as if we had made some lasting connection, as opposed to the more common but fleeting, “It’s good to meet you.” As we left, I had all sorts of questions for Carol about the church of Christ. When I got back to my parents’ house, I told them all about my visit there. And what had occurred would remain firmly in my mind for some time to come.

Over a year had passed since I had first—and last—visited an assembly of the church of Christ. That visit had made an impact on me, but that impact was nowhere visible in my life. When I was with my parents in Houston, on Sunday mornings I usually went with them to the Presbyterian church where they attended. Back at college in Denton, Texas, I visited a Presbyterian church with my girlfriend, who had also been reared in a Presbyterian home. But we only visited it once during that entire time. I was more typically found playing honky-tonks as a country and western musician, and living the party life to the full. Although I had been raised primarily Presbyterian, I was unquestionably living the life of a hedonist.

I knew I needed to do better. My roommate Matt and I would often say to each other, “We need to be in church!” But when Sunday mornings rolled around, our aching heads seemed incapable of straight thinking and we were not likely to turn our blood-shot eyes toward heaven.

But finally, one Sunday morning it happened—we were both awake at home at a decent hour and truly willing to attend a worship service—somewhere. But where? I still had thoughts in my mind about the church of Christ I had visited in Houston, and visiting a church of Christ in Denton would have been my first choice. But Matt said, “I’ve heard good things about Denton Bible Church.” At that time, to me any “church” was church, so his suggestion met my approval. I called them up to see what time their worship service was, and there was a problem—or was it Providence? Their worship service was at 11 a.m., and Matt had to be at work by noon; so the time was not going to work. I suggested, “Let’s call a church of Christ.” There were several in the phone book, and somehow or other I happened to call the only one in town that was doctrinally sound. I asked the young man who answered the phone what time their worship service was, and he responded, “It’s at ten.” Perfect! Or was it Providence?

I still have clear memories about our first visit to the Pearl Street church of Christ. We both felt somewhat out of place. I made an off-color joke to Matt as we found a seat. As with the church of Christ in Houston, there was that singing with no instrumental accompaniment. There was that preaching with all that Bible. When the Lord’s supper was passed around, Matt had a tray with unleavened bread on his lap, and he leaned over to me and asked me out of the corner of my mouth, “What am I supposed to do?” I chuckled and told him; but I only knew because I had observed what those around us did.

As we walked out of the assembly, I could not say with certainty what our likelihood was to return. However, as in Houston, we encountered such warm hospitality in the foyer as to guarantee our return. As we left, several people said to us, “Hope to see you tonight!”

“Tonight”? We had only intended to punch our card by attending once per week, Sunday morning. We saw that as a major improvement over our preceding attendance record. Nonetheless, we soon found ourselves regularly attending multiple times per week. We regularly attended Sunday evening worship. We attended the Wednesday night Bible class, our group being comprised of college students and others in their twenties. We found ourselves participating in in-depth discussions on Biblical passages and doctrinal and moral issues, the likes of which I had never experienced before. But every time we walked out the doors of the building, we went back to living the way we had before we ever entered.

One afternoon, I was coming up the back stairs of the fraternity house where I resided. I had gone downstairs to use the ice machine to fill the ice chest I was carrying, loaded with a beverage that I did not need. As I came to the top of the stairs, I saw Matt coming up the opposite stairs, accompanied by the two elders from the Pearl Street congregation. I quickly set the ice chest in my room, shut the door, and led Matt and the two elders down the back stairs.

We were standing in the large room where most of the fraternity's parties were centered. As we spoke, behind the elders was the large D.J. booth from which loud music emanated on a typical weekend night. The elders were talking about the church at Pearl Street: "As you can see, we are a conservative congregation." They were asking us to place membership with them. I knew the preacher usually asked any who wished to place membership to come forward at the invitation, but I was largely unfamiliar with how this was done. I asked, "What do we do?" One of the elders responded, "You're a big boy— you can do it."

I was out of town on the Sunday night when Matt went forward to place membership at Pearl Street, but I went forward the following Wednesday night. Not being sure exactly what to do, I handed the preacher the card indicating my desire to place membership, and I stood next to him as I continued to sing the invitation song.

Now that we saw ourselves as members, our attitudes changed—even if our lives away from the church building did not. Matt in particular began involving himself in the work of the church. Then after services one Wednesday night, the elders came up to us as we sat in the pew and said, "Can we talk?" Of course we were willing to talk, although we had no idea what the subject would be. One of the elders asked us, "What is your religious background?" I said, "I grew up mostly Presbyterian, but my family sometimes attended Baptist and Lutheran churches." Matt responded, "I went to a Catholic school for a little while, but I grew up... whatever." He had not grown up attending a church of any kind.

The same elder was shaking his head. He said to me, "We saw one of the visitor's cards you filled out where you said the church you regularly attend was St. Thomas Presbyterian Church in Houston." Matt and I had been attending Pearl Street for a couple months now, and I had indicated the same on several visitor's cards. I nodded my assent. He proceeded, "I'm sorry. You have to be baptized into the church of Christ to be a member. We shouldn't have asked you to place membership. But you two dress right for worship and are always on time, and we assumed you were members."

They were obviously indicating that they no longer were considering us members. I was not tremendously bothered by this, perhaps in part because of my discomfort in my personal "placing membership" process. I could tell the elders were highly embarrassed to be in the position they were in and to be telling us what they were telling us; but I assured them, "That's fine—don't worry about it." However, when I looked back at Matt, I could tell that he did not feel the same.

Matt and I were no longer regarded as members of the congregation we had been attending. Of course, we had never even done what the Bible teaches is necessary to become Christians, but we did not quite understand that. So late that Wednesday night after we were informed of our new status—or lack thereof—Matt loudly lamented, "They ganked our membership!" He was at least half joking; but it was not the last time that refrain would pass his lips.

We continued attending as we had previously, and we were learning more as we went. Matt noticed some peculiarities (from our denominational point of view) that had escaped my attention, such as the absence of any crosses displayed in the "sanctuary" and of any observance of Christmas. I recall the fear struck into me the first time I heard the song "Almost Persuaded," with the ominous warning at its close:

"Almost" cannot avail;  
"Almost" is but to fail;  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail  
"Almost—but lost!"

Gary and Barb Summers, the preacher and his wife, invited Matt and me over to their house for supper more than once, after which we would have a short Bible study.

During one such study, Gary was showing us that, in the Bible, baptism always refers to immersion. I asked him somewhat confrontationally, "So do you think my Presbyterian baptism is baptism?" Of course, Presbyterians typically sprinkle water on a person, most often on a young child, and never for the remission of sins (against Acts

2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; I Pet. 3:21; et al.). Most of the Presbyterian sprinkling ceremonies I observed were essentially “baby dedication services,” where the parents committed to providing their child a Christian upbringing. When I asked Gary the aforementioned question, I expected him to back off or apologize—but he didn’t. He simply and honestly said, “No.” That frankness was what I needed.

I was soon attending Bible class and worship at the Pearl Street congregation by myself. Unfortunately, Matt’s attendance gradually waned until he stopped coming altogether. I had a girlfriend I had been dating for almost three years, and she never attended with me (we did break up around this time). I tried encouraging some of my fraternity brothers to attend with me. One agreed to go with me, but after a late Saturday night, I could not wake him up on time on Sunday morning. My perseverance in attempting to wake him prevented me from making Pearl Street’s worship service that morning.

He then talked me into attending “Sunday Morning on the Square.” This was a “nondenominational” (read “loosely Baptist”) worship service held in the old downtown theater at 11, a time apparently selected to entice hungover college students. As we entered and took our seats, I could not help but notice that I was the only person there wearing a coat and tie. Their idea of spiritual songs was a rock band on stage playing “Spirit in the Sky” and an instrumental “Sweet Home Alabama.” The “sermon” was a 5-minute “Don’t-Worry-Be-Happy” pep talk. As we left, my fraternity brother was raving about the enjoyable worship service. I was disgusted. A year earlier, I may have had no problem with a worship service like that; but I knew better now. From then on, I was going to be at the Pearl Street church of Christ, even if I had to go alone.

I was forming bonds with some of the members at Pearl Street. Outside of regular meeting times, I began getting together with a few of the members to play old-time country music at one of their homes. Observing them and their conduct showed me a different way to live, a way that harmonized with the sermons I heard preached from the pulpit.

I was understanding more and more of what I needed to do. I had previously thought I was a Christian. As do most people, I assumed that simply considering oneself a Christian made one a Christian. But I had never done what the Bible teaches is necessary to become a Christian. And I was seeing that my life was sorely out of harmony with what the Bible teaches is the Christian life. There was no “holy” in the life I was living. I needed wholesale change.

Months continued to go by, and I was understanding my need to change more and more. But even though I continued to attend regularly, my life outside the church building remained largely unchanged. I understood that Christianity was an all or nothing proposition, and I was not quite at the point of giving all. However, in my mind, I was drawing closer. Surprising many, I gave away and threw out several possessions pertaining to my old life. I was getting ready to become a Christian.

Then all at once, several things happened which hindered my forward spiritual progress. As the school semester drew to a close, I decided to suspend my college education indefinitely. I took a short vacation with Matt and another friend to Lake of the Ozarks. I got a new serious girlfriend. I started a new full-time job. The country and western band I was in re-formed in a new iteration to play the North Texas nightclubs. I moved out of the fraternity house into an apartment. All of these things happened within a few weeks. Perhaps none of these things, individually or collectively, truly stopped my obedience to the Gospel. But they were distractions.

When I returned home from my vacation, I vaguely decided I would not go back to Pearl Street until I was ready to be baptized. I had missed several church services, and I was too embarrassed to face the members and answer the inevitable question, “Where have you been?” Because, in my mind, the potential question pierced deeper than my physical location. Where I had been was the same place I would have been when the question was asked—lost. I knew Christianity was an all-or-nothing proposition, and I had been “almost persuaded” to give all. I had no doubt it was worth it. But somehow, I chose nothing.



It would be almost two years before I would set foot in another assembly of the church of Christ.

I had quit attending the church of Christ I had been visiting for the previous several months. I was now back to living full-time in the world—Sundays and Wednesday nights included. But one significant thing had changed from before I started attending—now, I knew better. Before, I knew that I needed to be “in church.” Now, I knew not only that I needed to be present on Sunday morning for worship services in a church building of some kind, but I knew that I needed to be a member of the church of which one reads in the Bible.

And a large part of me wanted to know better yet. I began reading the Bible from cover to cover. I studied whatever Bible literature I could get in my hands. At work, I had internet access, and thereby was able to read Gary Summers’ bulletin articles online. I wanted to understand the Bible; I wanted to know the Truth; I wanted to be able to make the right choices in life.

Another part of me was looking for an easy way out. The church of Christ was demanding large scale lifestyle changes from me that I was not ready to make. Surely I could find a less demanding church where I could still please God—couldn’t I?

An old friend was encouraging me to attend church with her. She and I would occasionally discuss religious matters, and she strongly held to Baptist doctrine. Even though I was not as equipped with Biblical answers as I should have been, I knew that much of what she was advocating (including salvation by faith only and once-saved-always-saved) did not harmonize with the Bible. I attended with her once at Denton Bible Church, the place where Matt and I had first planned to attend before our schedule conflicted. I thought the preaching there was reasonably thought-provoking; but I knew the worship, featuring instrumental music and solos, was not right. I certainly knew their “plan of salvation” was unbiblical.

I attended the Methodist church a few times with my girlfriend. I recognized some of my former fellow-students from the College of Music singing with the church chorus and playing with the brass band. I wanted to think they were there because of their convictions, but I knew that at least some of them were only there because it was a paid gig. One time as we were walking through the parking lot, a group of protesters was there. They were protesting because the local abortion “doctor” attended that Methodist church. I smiled and said, “Hi,” to one of the protesters as I passed, as was my custom when I encountered a fellow human being. However, my girlfriend was quite irate with me.

Abortion was one area where we disagreed. Prior to my attendance at the Pearl Street church of Christ, I was fairly ambivalent on the issue of abortion; but after considering the matter from a Biblical perspective, I had become strongly “pro-life.” My girlfriend was not. She and I disagreed on other matters where the Bible came into play. I had come to understand that men are to take the leadership role in the home and in the church, but she disagreed. To make her point, she would speak of the husband-wife team that “pastored” the Methodist church she attended in Kansas when she was young. As it turned out, the members preferred the wife’s preaching to the husband’s preaching, which eventually led the husband to commit suicide. I never could understand how this was an example in favor of female leadership in the church.

Nonetheless, by and large, my girlfriend and I got along very well. I re-enrolled in college, and the two of us graduated at the same time. It seemed inevitable to all that knew us that we would eventually be married. The two of us felt the same; and as we closed the “College” chapter in our lives, I was preparing to move toward beginning the “Engagement” chapter.

However, there was something I knew I had to take care of first. Even though it had been over a year and a half since I had attended an assembly of the church of Christ, I knew at some point I had to become a Christian. Not merely a nominal “Christian” as the world uses the term, but a Christian as defined by the New Testament. And I knew I could not wait until after marriage to do this. I knew my girlfriend’s problems with certain Biblical teachings. I knew my becoming a Christian would make our relation-

ship significantly more complex, and to obey the Gospel after marriage would have been to throw a monkey wrench into our machinery.

Furthermore, I was genuinely worried about my soul. I had completed reading the Bible in its entirety, and I knew that it called me to swift obedience rather than perpetual procrastination. I knew that delay was playing with fire; I knew that if the Lord were to return, I was unprepared. On a Wednesday afternoon in February, I stopped by the church building at Pearl Street to see if Gary Summers was in. I needed to talk with him, but I was nervous. Passages such as Hebrews 6:4-6 weighed on my mind:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened...and have tasted the good word of God...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

I mistakenly thought such passages could possibly mean that it was too late for me to obey the Gospel, since I had essentially rejected it when I had heard it before. I wondered if hope for me was gone.

### **CORRECTION**

Earlier in this account, I had stated that the time I ceased attending the Pearl Street congregation was the same time I suspended my college education and began working full-time. Upon reflection, I realize this occurred a year earlier. I was never enrolled as a full-time college student while attending Pearl Street, although I remained living in the fraternity house throughout my initial period of attendance at Pearl Street.

On a Wednesday afternoon, I approached the Pearl Street church building after almost two years away. I wondered if hope was gone for me. I wondered if Gary Summers, the preacher there, would send me away when he saw me.

This obviously was not the case. He received me warmly, and we discussed what had happened to me and where I was spiritually.

That evening, I attended Bible class there. The students in the “college and young marrieds” class were almost—if not entirely—different than they had been when I attended previously. I noticed a young lady with pretty blue eyes who had on a little more make-up than the women at Pearl Street usually wore. Afterwards, the college and young marrieds class met at a new ice cream parlor on the square, and we were spread across several tables. I was sitting at a table with Gary and Barb Summers doing some catching up. The young lady with the pretty blue eyes and the makeup came up to our table. Gary and Barb introduced us, saying to me, “This is Kelley.” I never would have imagined this was my future wife.

In the meanwhile, I was trying to prepare my present girlfriend for the changes that were coming to my life and to our relationship. She tried to be supportive, even if she did not see eye to eye with me.

I attended Pearl Street the next Sunday morning and evening. I noticed Kelley was not there. The following evening, I visited Gary at his house. There were a few uncertainties in my mind that I needed to clear up, and through looking at the Bible, we arrived at clarity. I asked him, “When are people usually baptized?” He informed me that many choose to do it by responding to the invitation during an assembly, but other people are baptized at other times. I responded, “How about now?”

The night had grown somewhat late, but Gary and Barb were able to call an elder and a few other members to meet us at the building. I was riding with Gary in his car; and as I was somewhat nervous (those who have ridden with Gary will understand), I was silently praying, “Please, Father, just let me be baptized first before I die.”

The genuine joy I experienced when I emerged from the baptistery waters has never been surpassed in my life. I remember the happiness I felt when the elder present welcomed me as his “brother.” I felt relief at knowing I was free from my Everest of sin.

But not everyone shared my joy. Although they were generally happy for me, my parents seemed somewhat perplexed initially as to why I had done what I had done. My girlfriend said, “A cold chill ran down my spine,” when I informed her. Her premoni-



tion was correct. We remained a couple for another nine and a half months; but our relationship proved incompatible with my Christianity. This became especially clear once I seriously began considering becoming a Gospel preacher.

The Wednesday following my baptism, as I sat down in the college and young marrieds Bible class, I could feel an electricity in the air. Those present were chatting excitedly. I asked, “What’s going on?” One young lady turned to me and said, “Kelley was baptized!” As it turns out, the reason Kelley had been absent the previous Sunday was because she had traveled down to the area south of Fort Worth where her extended family lived.

Although she had been reared in a Baptist home, when she was around the age of nineteen, she attended a church of Christ with her extended family. After observing the worship and hearing the teaching, Kelley had many questions; and she began studying the Bible in depth with her extended family. When she moved to Denton for college, they encouraged her to attend Pearl Street. She began understanding and appreciating more and more what she needed to do, so she decided to be baptized at the congregation where she had first attended, where the extended family who had taught her the Truth could be with her for the most important occasion in her life.

After the young lady said that Kelley had been baptized, Gary spoke up and added, “Lee was also baptized.” The hubbub went silent, and every eye turned toward me.

After class, Kelley caught me in the hall, and said, “We have to talk!” Indeed, we did.

### **Epilogue**

I have long entertained the thought of writing about my conversion. Other brethren to whom I have told portions of this account orally in the past have told me they found it encouraging and helpful. Some of them suggested that I should write or speak publicly about it. A few things have hindered me from writing about this previously: (1) It bears similarities to the denominational practices of “giving testimony” and of relating one’s “experience” as proof of the genuineness of one’s conversion; (2) It could suggest that my conversion is somehow more important than those of others; and (3) I could not write honestly about my conversion without alluding to my past sins.

I finally decided that there was enough potential value in writing of my conversion to overcome these hindrances.

With regard to (1): While similarities are there to the aforementioned denominational practices, clear differences exist as well. Nothing in my conversion account serves as proof of my conversion except where my actions agree with what God’s word says is necessary for conversion—hearing and believing the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 10:17), repenting of sins (Acts 3:19), confessing Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and being baptized (Rom. 6:3-5). Nothing in this account is intended as authoritative; no one should pay more heed to what I say because of what has happened to me—one should only pay heed to what I say as it agrees with God’s word (Acts 17:11).

As for (2), every true conversion to Christ is infinitely valuable (Matt. 16:26)—I am simply better able to speak with regard to my own. To be honest, this series turned much more verbose than I ever envisioned.

Regarding (3), speaking of my past sins is something with which I am uncomfortable. Paul asks, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death” (Rom. 6:21). This is not to say that I have been perfectly sinless in every way, but I wholly abandoned the particular sins mentioned in this series when I became a Christian. But my intent was not to write an autobiographical hagiography; my need was to be honest, and my intent was to be helpful. Completely glossing over my sinful past would fail on both accounts.

What lessons might be gleaned from this conversion account? First of all, that some lost souls who have never heard the pure Gospel will heed if given the chance. Secondly, that patience (“longsuffering,” 2 Tim. 4:2) and understanding are necessary when dealing with human beings and bringing their lives into harmony with God’s word. Finally, and most importantly, it is my hope that someone who is in a similar

lost state such as I was in will read this account, and realize that it is not too late to be saved—but it is of utmost urgency.

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## The Church Was Not an Afterthought

Dub McClish

Many anti-Scriptural concepts of the church exist (e.g., denominationalism, that one can serve Jesus apart from His church [*Jesus, yes—the church, no*], that the church’s principal work is to supply the physical and/or social needs of mankind, etc.).

Another egregious misconception depicts Jesus’ church as a mere afterthought in the mind of God. This error is part of the premillennial theological system. It alleges that Jesus will return before (thus pre) He establishes an earthly kingdom that will exist for 1,000 years (thus millennial). Premillennialists argue that Jesus intended to establish an earthly kingdom at His first advent, but His fellow Jews prevented Him from doing so by rejecting and crucifying Him.

Amazingly, they say that God did not expect this rejection, and in scrambling for a backup plan for this emergency, He came up with the church to suffice until Christ could return and establish His kingdom. This doctrine makes of the church a mere afterthought to God, a substitute for the kingdom of the prophets. This concept denies at least the following:

- **God’s omniscience and foreknowledge:** If God was “surprised” by Jesus’ rejection, He is hardly omniscient and foreknowing as the Bible consistently declares Him to be. No, God was not surprised; He had Isaiah prophesy seven centuries before Jesus’ birth that He would be “despised and rejected” (53:3).
- **Jesus’ veracity:** He repeatedly told the apostles that the Jewish leaders would crucify Him (Luke 9:22. et al.). Yet He stated forcefully that His **kingdom** would be established in the lifetime of His contemporaries (Mark. 9:1). Did He fail?
- **The kingdom’s nature:** When John and Jesus came preaching, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” the Jews inferred a glorious and powerful earthly kingdom, such as David’s and Solomon’s. The people sought to force such a crown upon Jesus, but He refused it (John 6:15). He plainly told Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (18:36).
- **The kingdom-church identity:** When Jesus promised to build His church, He immediately called it “the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 16:18–19; cf. Heb. 12:23, 28). The kingdom existed in the first century (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:9). The church is no **substitute** for the kingdom—it is the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth, which He came to build, and over which He now reigns.
- **God’s eternal purpose:** Paul stated that the church is part of God’s “eternal purpose” through His Son (Eph. 3:10–11).

Those who aver that the church is some secondary, spur-of-the-moment entity err grievously, fundamentally—and fatally.

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## “Faithful Children” (KJV)

Ron Cosby

One that ruleth well his own house, **having his children in subjection with all gravity**; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Emph. rc).

Titus 1:6. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, **having faithful children** not accused of riot or unruly (Titus 1:6, Emph. rc).

Timothy and Titus present to the reader parallel concepts. Both of these passages reflect upon the father’s stewardship in rearing children. They teach that a man’s children must be trustworthy to him as their father. *The New Life Version* mistranslates

the verse, saying, “Their children must be Christians.” Modern versions do not accurately translate the meaning that Paul seeks to convey when they say “his children are believers” (RSV). Conversely, the verses emphasize the ability of the father to rule his children while caring for his household; a qualification that may be determined by their behavior toward the father’s oversight.

### Word Study

Some seem to leave the impression that the Greek word “faithful” always means being a Christian. A studied review of the word demonstrates it does not. When the Bible declares that “God is faithful,” it does not mean He is a Christian (1 Cor. 10:13). God or Christ is acknowledged as faithful in about a dozen verses where the word is used.

The word of God is declared *faithful* more than a half dozen times; it does not mean it is a Christian (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 1:9; 3:8).

Here are two passages that speak of a person's faithfulness:

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:11-12).

I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service (1 Tim. 1: 12).

The word *faithful* **cannot** mean Christian. No one would classify the person who is “faithful in the unrighteous mammon” as a Christian imitator of Christ, and Paul had been found *faithful* by the Lord **before** his conversion. How was Paul faithful when he was disobedient to the Lord Jesus Christ’s commands? He was not. The passage is not speaking of him as a Christian! Instead, it indicates that he faithfully adhered to the Law of Moses.

Additionally, here are 20-plus passages where *faithful* does **not** indicate a Christian (Matt. 24:45; Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 12:42; 19:17; 1 Cor. 1:9; 4:2; 7:25; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24, 2 Thess. 3:3, 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 2:13; Titus 1:6, 8; Heb. 10:23; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 John 1:9, Rev. 1:5; 19:11; 22:5-6).

In summary, more than two-thirds of the 67 verses that occur show that the definition for the Greek word does **not mean Christian**.

Scripturally, the understanding of *faithful* may, in some passages, be synonymous with being a believer. However, this is determined **because of contextual consideration**, not because the word means Christian. Becoming or remaining a Christian requires one to be faithful to God. No one questions that. The primary or first meaning is *trustful*.

There is nothing in Titus 1:6 that forces, or even indicates, that *faithful* ought to mean Christian. In addition, it is an unwarranted conclusion to say it means fidelity to God as well. The thought of the text is the man and his family, **not** God and His family are under consideration. There is no evidence for the more modern interpretation. None! Here is the one argument that is presented: *Faithful* sometimes indicates that the text is talking about Christians. Some interpret Titus 1:6 to mean faithful “as children of God.” Okay. Why didn’t Paul say it? He does in other verses. Where the reference is to being faithful as children of God, it always contains a stipulation indicating that is what is meant:

1. “Faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1). Why add the stipulation if it meant a Christian? You would not.
2. “Faithful in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 6:21). Same question.
3. “Faithful to the Lord” (Acts 16:15). Same question.
4. Paul had to go out of his way to address the “faithful brethren” instead of just saying “brethren.” His phraseology emphasized his address for brethren who are *faithful* (Col. 1:2).
5. Revelation 2:10 describes the concept of being faithful, and the context makes it clear unto whom.

## 6. “Faithful minister” (Col. 4:7, 9).

Regarding their interpretation, it is important to explain why Paul failed to follow his normal practice and place a simple stipulation within the text of Titus 1:6.

One last thing as far as the word *faithful* is concerned. It may help if we take note of how the idea is used outside of a Christian context. The moon is a faithful witness of the sun. Yet, no one thinks that the moon is a Christian. The world speaks of a husband being faithful to his wife. We know what that means. It is not automatically synonymous with being a Christian. A number of our unfaithful politicians illustrate the need of being a faithful husband.

### Paralleling the Two Verses

Though the passage in 1 Timothy gives the reasoning for the qualification of submissive children, both express the relationship of the child to the father. Note the sections we have in boldface:

1. 1 Tim. 3:4-5: One that ruleth well his own house, **having his children in subjection with all gravity**; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?).
2. Titus 1:6: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, **having faithful children** not accused of riot or unruly.

If the stipulation in Titus 1:6 means that they must be Christians, then the verses have no parallel. No big deal, just an observation. On the other hand, by acknowledging the parallel, the meaning in Titus 1:6 becomes clear.

If the phraseology *faithful children* means *Christians*, Paul would not need to add the addition “not accused of riot or unruly,” since being a Christian means a follower of Christ. On the other hand, if the phraseology means faithful to the father, then the additional condition equals two issues instead of one. The first issue addressed is whether the father is able to rule his own house. The second issue is whether, after they leave the household, the children's actions will reflect upon his work as an elder. Being wicked children leaves the father open to blame in the community, and in the church. Eli's sons exemplify the problem.

### A Deeper Look at the Reason for the Qualification

This qualification of faithful children is one of four qualifications (cf 1 Tim. 3:6; Titus 1:9-11) that has a reason given for its need of being possessed by the man who desires the work of an elder. Understanding **why** Paul gave the qualification will help us determine its meaning.

For the sake of this discussion we will assume for the moment everybody acknowledges the two passages are parallel. Paul's reason for the stipulation is “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5). Eli's failure to restrain his sons, who were “children of God,” helps us to understand how to use the qualification (1 Sam. 3:12-13). He said of Eli's house, “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and **he restrained them not**” (Emph. rc). If Eli the judge of Israel had sought to restrain his sons, God would not have blamed him for their disobedience. Men like Eli should never be appointed elders because **they have shown that they cannot govern the family properly**.

### Conclusion

Brethren are able to determine a man's family capabilities by seeing how his children **respond** to his fatherhood. For children to simply be baptized does not determine the father's ability to rule his own house. It may more reflect the mother's influence than it does the father's (2 Tim. 3:14-17). And, the fact that they might not be Christians does not determine whether he was able to rule his own household.

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# A Sincere Question and a Bible Answer

**Jess Whitlock**

A few years ago, a man came to me and said he wanted to ask me just one question. He then asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

In Acts chapter 16 Paul and Silas have been put in prison. Around midnight there was a great earthquake. The foundation of the prison was shaken and the doors of the prison were opened. The jailer saw the doors all open and feared the prisoners had escaped. He drew his sword and was prepared to take his own life. Paul called out, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here" (Acts 16:28). The jailer called for lights to see for himself. It was true and he trembled with fear before Paul and Silas. Now, watch this: "he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So, they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" (Acts 16:30-31). Did you take note of the question the jailer asked? It is our question of consideration is it not?

Some years ago, I received a tract written by a preacher. It was called "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" It was based upon the account of the jailer in Acts 16. He printed out Acts 16:30-31 and then, in bold print, the tract stated, "STOP READING RIGHT THERE, THERE IS NO NEED TO READ ANY FURTHER." The tract then ended abruptly, saying that all you must do to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the message of multiplied thousands of preachers all across the world. Why did the tract say "stop reading" there?

Perhaps we can find a clue in the very next verse: "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house" (Acts 16:32). We know that faith comes by hearing the word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17). That "word" certainly included teaching about God (Acts 16:34). That "word" had to include knowledge of Christ and Him crucified, plus a "word" about the controversial subject of New Testament baptism. How can we know that?

Instead of stopping our study at verse 31, let's take a look at verse 33: "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his were baptized." If Acts 16:31 teaches that one is saved by **belief only** or **faith only**, then I want to ask **only** one question: "Why were the Philippian jailer and his household baptized?" The jailer's question of Acts 16:30 has been called "The Greatest Question of All Time."

Have you ever wondered why the jailer rejoiced that night? He had asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" He had received the correct answer from an inspired apostle. His entire household had been baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Thus, they were rejoicing! What must **you** do to be saved? Precisely what the jailer did. "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).

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## The Word Divided

**Foy E. Wallace, Jr.**

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The divine injunction couched in the inspired aphorism, "Preach the word," is quite commonly called "Paul's charge to Timothy." But fundamental to this charge and certainly of equal importance is the admonition to rightly divide the word. And prefatory to both of these is the command to study the word. The charge to Timothy, then, is in reality composed and delivered in three parts--study the word, rightly divide the word, and preach the word. The solemn charge was not meant for Timothy only. We, too, should study to rightly divide the word of God, prompted by the holy purpose enjoined—"to show thyself approved unto God."

**Handling the Word**

The caution to rightly divide or handle aright the word of God implies that it may be



subjected to a wrong division or an improper handling. Indeed, some men in the apostles' day were charged with perverting the gospel (Gal. 1:7); corrupting the word (2 Cor. 2:17); making merchandise of the truth (2 Pet. 2:3); wresting the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16); and of handling the word of God deceitfully, in craftiness and dishonesty (2 Cor. 4:2). A perverted gospel cannot save. Jesus declared that it is the knowledge of truth, not the belief of error, that makes men free (John 8:32). Though a perverted gospel may have in it all the elements of the true gospel, its power to save is lost in perversion. Bread is God's power to quell the hunger, but the admixture of a poisonous element—a spoonful of arsenic, for instance—in a loaf of bread would destroy its power. Water is God's power to quench the thirst, but the admixture of salt will destroy the quenching power of water. The gospel is God's power to save the soul, but its admixture with error—the doctrines and commandments of men, when heard and believed—destroys its saving power. Hence, Paul's alarm concerning the perverters of the word at Galatia: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6, 7). Error preached, error heard, and error believed cannot result in the truth obeyed. No man can accidentally obey God. The truth preached, the truth believed, and the truth obeyed makes a Christian. Nothing else does. How important, therefore, is the word of God, and how careful men should be in their handling of it!

### **Rightly Divide the Word**

In the third chapter of Galatians the right division of the word is based on the three grand divisions of the Bible, commonly called the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, but Scripturally known as the promises, the law, and the gospel. The promises were to Abraham. The law came 430 years after, through Moses, and was "added because of transgression" until Christ should come. The law was not added to the promise God made to Abraham—it "came in besides"—that is, between the promise and its fulfillment. The promise was that Christ, the seed of Abraham, should come, and through him all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:8-14, 17, 19). Since the law was added only until the seed should come, "which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16) it follows that the law automatically ended with the coming of Christ. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24, 25). Upon this plain and proper division of the word, Paul affirms the abrogation of the law in numerous references. We are not under the law (Rom. 6:14); we are dead to the law and delivered from it (Rom. 7:6); Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4); and Christians are not to be judged by the law (Col. 2:14-16). It is in obedience to the gospel, therefore, that men are saved today. The Acts of the Apostles—their preaching under the commission of Christ—plainly reveals the terms of our salvation.

### **Preach the Word**

We do not wonder, then, that Paul's final charge to Timothy from prison environs was to "preach the word." But if it is a dead thing, as theology and the creeds teach, and conversion is wrought in some weird and mystic manner, why preach it? God's word is not dead. It is the living word. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It is the powerful word. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). It is the saving word. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Jas. 1:21.) The gospel is God's power to save and God's power to condemn. Preach the word!

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## **Rationalizing a Sinful Lifestyle**

### **Nathan Brewer**

It's a lifestyle we hear a lot about. The Supreme Court, state legislatures, cable TV, presidential candidates, "the world's largest retailer," and even some churches approve



of it. But what does the Bible say?

According to God, sodomy has always been wrong. Before God formalized and systematized religion, as He did with Judaism and Christianity, He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, at least in part, because of the prevalence of this behaviour (Gen. 19).

When God called Abraham's descendants from Egypt and gave them a law through Moses, He stipulated that homosexuality was unacceptable (Lev. 20:13). Today, under the law of Christ, it remains condemned (Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Jude 7).

The prohibition against homosexuality is not—strictly speaking—a religious law. It's a **moral law**. Just as murder was condemned before the existence of either Judaism or Christianity (Gen. 9:6), so homosexuality is an immoral behaviour that has always been—and will always be—sinful.

### Arguments In Favor

Apologists for homosexuality give various reasons for God's supposed approval of that lifestyle. Here are a few of them:

**“God created us this way.”** There is no scientific evidence that anyone is born with a predisposition to homosexuality. The so-called “homosexual gene” remains elusive. **If** God created homosexuals that way, He needs to apologize to the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah for destroying them for behaving the way He created them.

**“God loves everyone.”** Indeed He does! So much so that He sent Jesus to die for the world (John 3:16). But not everyone will be saved, because many are unwilling to live as He commands (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Thess. 1:6-10). God prohibits sodomy, and violators **won't** go to heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

**“The Bible's prohibitions against homosexuality were only cultural.”** This is merely an assertion with no proof. It was wrong in the Middle East around 2,500 B.C. and 1,500 B.C. (Gen. 19; Lev. 20:13). It was wrong in Greece and Rome in the first century A.D. (1 Cor. 6; Rom. 1), and it remains sinful in America in 2003.

**“God wouldn't condemn anyone for being in a loving relationship.”** Not if we're talking about a man and woman who are scripturally married. But **scriptural evidence** that God approves same-sex unions can't be found. On the contrary—as we have already shown—God condemns them.

**“God wants me to be happy.”** Yes He does, and that's why He limits our behaviour. The drunk is happy when he drinks, but God condemns his behaviour too (Gal. 5:21). The “happiness” argument can be used to justify any activity that brings self-gratification. The ultimate happiness comes in heaven after a life of obedience to God. Jesus calls those who will follow Him to self-denial—**not** sinful self-indulgence (Luke 9:23-25).

The church of Christ at Corinth had members who had lived immorally—even as sodomites (1 Cor. 6:9-11). But they turned away from those sins before they obeyed the Gospel and were forgiven. Sodomy is sinful. Those who engage in it and do not repent will spend eternity separated from God. God loves homosexuals and calls them to repentance—like the Corinthians—so they can go to heaven.

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## The Lord Hates Hands that Shed Innocent Blood

Nana Yaw Aidoo

If you are an ardent or avid reader of *The Gospel Preceptor*, you would have noticed that of all the staff writers, I am the only one who isn't American. However, I particularly have an interest in America. First, for the fact that the men who, out of love, brought the gospel of Christ, and thus Christianity, to Ghana were Americans. Denominationalism preceded Christianity in Ghana but denominationalism is **not** Christianity. Second, because of my brethren—America has the largest number of Christians in the whole world—and third, due to the fact that when “America sneezes, the whole world catches a cold.”

Due to my interest in the “land of the free,” I also have developed an interest in her politics. I watched quite a number of the speakers at the recently held Republican National Convention 2020, and was impressed by each and every speaker I listened to. However, the speech that caught my attention the most was that which was made by Abby Johnson, former Planned-Parenthood director, turned pro-life activist. I cannot put into words how I felt when she spoke these words:

...but the tipping point came a month later, when a physician asked me to assist with an ultra-sound guided abortion. Nothing prepared me for what I saw on the screen – an unborn baby fighting back, desperate to move away from the suction. And I’ll never forget what the doctor said next; “beam me up Scotty (??)” The last thing I saw was a spine twirling around in the mother’s womb before succumbing to the force of the suction.

Please consider this for a moment. Here was a baby, a living soul, helpless, scared and terrified, hoping that he would not be made a victim of the violence of abortion. To a man, I sincerely wonder how abortion “doctors” are able to sleep at night. And to those who earnestly contend that the pre-born are not living beings, pray tell how a non-living thing can fight back, be desperate to move away from the suction and possess a spine? If the words of Abby Johnson do not perfectly describe a human being, created in the image of the Almighty God, then I must confess that I have no comprehension ability.

Most importantly, there is One whose Word is the only one that matters. The Great I Am reckons life at conception (cf. Jer.1:5; Luke 1:31-44) and thus abortion is the **murder** of the most vulnerable members of our communities. The wise man wrote that the Lord hates “...hands that shed innocent blood.” (Prov. 6:16). How more innocent does it get than the pre-born? There is a day coming when the Judge of all the earth shall make everything right (Acts 17:31) and God help all who are involved in or support the heartless, barbaric, satanic, and monstrous practice of abortion.

Every abortion stops a beating heart. Every abortion ends a life. Every abortion robs the world of someone who could have made a real difference to others. And every abortion robs a person of the opportunity to live life. Everyone reading this was **not** aborted (Physicians for Life).

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## The Church and its Worship

**Doug Post**

The New Testament texts indicate the early Christians were regularly συνερχομένων (coming together) ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (in church) on Sundays (1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 14:23; 16:1-2; Acts 20:7). These same texts followed with instructions for how they were to conduct themselves when gathered together. Called to salvation by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), the early Christians were God’s people, “in Christ” (1 Thess. 2:14). Their new relationship with God was the result of being “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13), the church (Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4), because “to be in the church is to be in Christ, and to be in Christ is to be in the church” (Welch, 165). Some take exception, demanding one is baptized into Christ, then added to the church, even in the face of the clear and unmistakable expression, “baptized into one body.” This is not an either/or proposition as some try make it. When one is baptized into Christ he is baptized into His body, and vice versa. What is ascribed to one (Christ) is ascribed to the other (body). Quite simply, Luke’s inspired, “added to the church” (Acts 2:47), is defined Paul’s inspired “baptized into one body” (1 Cor.12:13). Different expressions meaning the same thing. Moreover, the previous verse must be considered: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). Paul is contrasting the physical body and the spiritual body. Just as the physical body has many members yet is “one body,” so also

the spiritual body. Having many members with varying roles, the church is still “one body” but “so also is Christ.” Here is an example, among many in the New Testament, of metonymy. Within the context, the terms *Christ* and *one body* are synonymous.

Now, being one “in Christ” by virtue of their obedience to the gospel (1 Pet.4:17), first century Jews and Gentiles shared a new identity, “sons of God” (Gal. 3:26-28; cf. Eph. 2:13-16). Collectively, these early Christians expressed their salvation, serving as examples for how our salvation in Christ is to be properly expressed. That is, if we practice what they practiced, doing what they did, then we will be what they were (Christ’s church) and receive what they did (eternal life). Much like the Jews who assembled in synagogues on the Sabbath, the early Christians were coming together on the first day of the week. Interestingly, the term *συνερχομένων* (coming together) is related to the word *συναγωγή* (synagogue). While the early Christians came together on Sundays (in one place), expressing the salvation they enjoyed as one body, we now focus on the primary reason for their assembling together—worship.

### **A Preview of New Testament Worship**

The book of Isaiah begins, drawing attention to a new era and the coming of the New Testament church (Isa.2:2-4), and then ends in similar fashion as Dub McClish notes:

Chapter 65 begins with the great prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles: ‘I am inquired of by them that asked not for me. I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name’ (Isa. 65:1). This is an undeniable reference to the beginning of the Christian age when the gospel was to be taken to all the nations, to all the world, and to the whole—manifestly to the Gentiles (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15) (Brown, 349).

Isaiah is contrasting physical Israel and spiritual Israel, or the “new Jerusalem” (65:18), which later Paul identifies as the Jerusalem from above (Gal. 4:26), the Israel of God (6:16), and church (1:2). Continuing his focus on the New Covenant and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, the church of Christ, Isaiah writes:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. (Isa. 66:22-23).

The “new heavens and the new earth”—an idiom for a new away or new system—will consist of “all flesh,” meaning Jew and Gentile (Acts 2:17, 39), coming together for worship in this new system. Isaiah is saying all mankind will be coming continually to worship God. Foreshadowing this new era of worship, Isaiah utilizes the terms *New Moon* and *Sabbath*, representing fixed times, which coincided with Jewish worship. These occasions, which were of a collective nature, prefigured the worship under the New Testament. The term *from (mid-dê)* is repeated, emphasizing a continual procession of worship. As the Jews gathered congregationally at fixed times, so would spiritual Israel—the church. This predictive arrangement not only flies in the face, but hits between the eyes, of those denying the collective or congregational aspect of worship. A fringe element has arisen insisting worship is of an individual nature only. Some are even demanding that, while worship is a “good thing,” it is optional. However, Isaiah was unaware of such things and his prediction was clear concerning a regular collective gathering for worship:

Concurrent with the fact that there will be a new church age, Isaiah predicts that worship then will be completely in agreement with God’s commands (cf. Isa.56:6). Isaiah clothed this new spiritual truth in the idiom of his day, but the new age will allow “all flesh” to worship in a patterned way (John 4:23-24) ... Under the Old Testament system, worship was at prescribed ‘moons’ and ‘Sabbaths.’ So, in the ‘new heavens and new earth,’ worship will be prescribed, faithful, and regular. Those today who say there is no pattern for the New Testament church and her worship need to explain how Isaiah could prophesy an age of patterned worship? Did Isaiah miss it, or do the ‘new

hermeneutic' advocates of a no-pattern New Testament miss it? (Ibid., 334).

A few points must be considered before proceeding. The context, in which Isaiah 66:22-23 finds itself, is between qualities God desires and eternal punishment to transgressors. At the beginning of the chapter, God says: "*even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*" (66:2). Then at the end, He says: "for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." (66:24). To transgress means "to go beyond, go out of, go away, or step over." When a football player catches the football but steps on the white boundary line, then he has stepped out of bounds. He has transgressed the boundary, leaving the field of play. When applied spiritually, it means leaving the boundaries of God's Word, stepping out of its confines (Matt. 7: 13-14; 1 John 1:7; cf. Psalms 119:105), the cause of which is from carelessly handling God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). While a contrite heart has a healthy respect for God's Word or "trembles" at it, the defiant are those who willingly step out of bounds, having little regard for the authority and boundaries of the faith (cf. Jude 3).

### Worship Woes

In the 1800s, in the formative period of the Restoration, our people were coming out of denominationalism, restoring the Ancient Order by preaching the primitive Gospel. But for the past forty years, our "progressive" brethren have been wanting to go back into denominationalism, acting and speaking like them. Many have already added instruments to the worship of God. Some—in what is termed the Egalitarian Movement—allow women to preach and teach, and even serve as elders. Others are making a mockery of the Lord's Supper by making a common meal out of it. Other false teachers have even minimized the requirements of salvation, by minimizing the essential nature of baptism. Many argue that in order to retain the young, and keep them from leaving the church, they have to make an appeal to denominationalism. But, taking the route that appeals to heresy will **never** retain the souls of anyone. Being at odds with God is not the way to have a relationship with Him. Folks cannot be called out of the world if they go back into it, where denominationalism is.

Turmoil exists in churches of Christ today because of careless regard and disrespect for the authority of God's Word. While claiming worship to be a significant aspect in the life of the church, "progressives" do not tremble at God's Word, going beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). By *progressing* out of the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), they have actually minimized the worship they claim is significant. When confronting the Pharisees and their various false doctrines, Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). False teaching, especially in adding innovations to the worship of the church, through perverting the Word of God, will nullify and make void one's worship, regardless of how heartfelt it may be.

There are, indeed, eternal consequences for those who rebel against the Lord (66:24). Setting aside God's Word, while claiming to worship Him, simply brings unintended consequences where "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," an image used by Jesus, Himself, describing eternal punishment (Mark 9:42-48). Moreover, some of our brethren have become indifferent, seeking "balance," while ignoring the boundaries of fellowship. Some, with a cavalier attitude toward Bible authority, have become enthralled with every new doctrine that comes down the pike. Notable brethren, with self-exalting craftiness and trickery, happily twist the Scriptures as they lead multitudes to destruction. Others, having banal obsessions, promoting their pet doctrines, are causing endless divisions. In describing all of these Paul says "they received not the love of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10).

### Worship Involves Truth, Truth Involves Pattern

The idea of loving the truth and trembling at His Word is, in part, found in John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." Jesus reveals that there is such a thing as **true** worshipers, implying there **is** such a thing as **false** worshipers. Worshiping God in "spirit and in truth" is what makes the difference. Jesus had already given this Samaritan woman bad news, and some may be

shocked to learn that He told the woman that she and her people were ignorant, saying to her, “Ye worship ye know not what” (4:22). What had she and her people been doing all this time? Quite simply, they were not offering God true worship, implying they were **not** true worshipers. The Samaritans had not been worshipping God correctly for centuries, worshipping at Mount Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem. From their perspective, they drew near to God with their mouths, but, from God’s perspective, they only provided lip service (cf. Matt. 15:8). Again, worship and/or worship actions are fruitless when folks are disobedient in other areas. The Samaritan woman and her people were deficient, and it was not unkind or unloving for Jesus to say what He did to her. Worshipping is significant and, worshipping **correctly** does matter! While we must worship in spirit, in genuineness and sincerity, we must also worship God according to truth—His Word (John 17:17; cf. John 8:31-32).

Recognizing worship must be in accord with truth is as vital to the Lord’s church as is truth itself. While God’s Word is designed to regulate and control our behavior, we must submit to its authority. As finite beings, we have the proclivity to make wrong choices, often because of the desires of the heart (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23; 17:9). This is certainly true when it comes to spiritual matters, including worship. The book of Colossians demonstrates this with a case study:

In his letter to the Colossians Christians, Paul addresses a heresy that was a threat to their faith. It consisted of a variety of elements, including Judaism, Gnosticism (a pagan system claiming supernatural insight), the worship of angels, etc. One component of this philosophy, strongly condemned, was called “will-worship” (2:23). Exactly what is will-worship? J.H. Thayer notes that will-worship is, “worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed by Christ” (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 168). Or, as W.E. Vine observes, will-worship is “voluntarily adopted worship, whether unbidden or forbidden” (*Expository Dictionary*, IV, p. 236). This New Testament admonition is totally at variance with the modern notion that worship is unregulated” (Jackson, 112).

Like the problem mentioned in Colossians 2:23, there are some in churches of Christ, today, who are willing to leave the confines of the truth regulating our worship, and worship God according to their own whims and desires. The progressives among us are self-willed, imposing worship practices completely foreign to the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The fact is, in rejecting the Truth, they reject the pattern of the New Testament. As the church cannot be separated from Christ (and vice versa), neither can pattern from truth (and vice versa).

While truth is designed to regulate human behavior, it is also designed to be understood and followed. But, again, we must handle it correctly (2 Tim. 2:15). Concerning the church at Corinth, Paul said he “planted” and Apollos “watered”: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase...as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Cor. 3:6-11).

Jesus said He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). He laid the foundation, but the work continued, involving others who followed, including the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20-21; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28). The construction continues and Jesus continues building His church through the agency of His church (Eph. 3:10-11). The blueprint to follow has been provided, namely His Word (John 12:48; cf. 8:31-32). Following His blueprint, we can be sure we are building the way He desires. When the church began on Pentecost, the new disciples “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). They devoted themselves in acts of worship, vital to the church, and continually devoted themselves in the apostles’ doctrine (cf. 2 John 9), adhering to their inspired teaching. New Testament doctrine is the basis of the New Testament church, which is why Paul said “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2).

When it comes to preaching and teaching the Truth, we must not go to the left or to the right (Josh. 1:7), or go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). We must speak exactly as God speaks in His Word (1 Pet. 4:11), or more literally, speaking **“just as the oracles of**

God.” Doing **just as** or **exactly** as the Father commanded, is what Jesus did: “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:31). The word exactly derives from the Greek word *kathōs*, which is also found in 1 John 2:6: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as (*kathōs*, DP) He walked.” Since Jesus is our example in everything, we can do no less, in doing exactly as He did. Therefore, we must speak and do exactly what is taught in Scripture. The New Testament, or the faith, is the blueprint of the church for all we teach and practice.

The apostle Paul directs our minds to authority, saying: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). The phrase “in word or deed” refers to teaching and practice. The word *deed* is the same word for *works*, which some declare are not essential for salvation. However, Paul specifically says we must do only authorized work, contradicting those who say work(s) are not essential for salvation. To say, on one hand, that doing only authorized work is essential, then, on the other, say the work we must do is not essential is a blatant contradiction. Paul specifically says that “whatever” we **do** “in word or **work**” that we do only all those things that are authorized or “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Doing what is authorized relates back to allowing “the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16). When we allow God’s Word to rule our hearts in all spiritual matters, we will do only that which is legislated.

### New Testament Worship

When it comes to understanding the Bible and interpretation, many folks quickly become anti-logic, anti-reason, and anti-implication, confusing rational thinking with “Rationalism”. God communicating His Will to mankind through direct (explicit) statements, examples, and implication, is antithetical to some since the use of reason is involved. Reason is “kryptonite” to all anti-logicians. Paul reminded Timothy to “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me” (2 Tim. 1:13), and seven verses later he says: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men” (2 Tim.2:2). He taught Timothy the pattern and he intended for Timothy, and all faithful Christians, to commit the same pattern to others. This implies a perpetual pattern to be taught and followed. The pattern of sound words serve as our authority for all matters of faith and practice. The very fact Christ and the apostles are examples, inherently involve a pattern or blueprint: “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. 3:17).

We know there is such a thing as ignorant worship because Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “Ye worship ye know not what” (4:22). In that same encounter we learn there is wrong worship since the Samaritans were worshiping God in Gerizim rather than Jerusalem. Paul told the Athenians they were ignorant, worshiping a God they did not know, and such ignorance would not be overlooked (Acts 17:23, 30). Jesus said there is such a thing as “vain worship” (Matt. 15:9), and Paul said there is such a thing called “will-worship” (Col. 2:23). Of course, we also learn there is such a thing as **true** worship, as well as true **worshippers**. Worship is either acceptable or unacceptable, but what makes the difference? Worship must be done in sincerity and genuineness of mind (“in spirit”), with a willingness to do only that which accords with God’s Word (“in truth”).

We find a clear pattern in the New Testament in its teaching and example, “in word or deed.” We can clearly see what they did and did not do. What we find lacking, is the church assembling for the purposes of offering animal sacrifices, the burning incense, having priests mediate between man and God, and all other Old Covenant worship practices. But we do read about them coming together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), finding them praying, singing, preaching and teaching, giving, and sharing the Lord’s Supper. In one passage, alone, we find three acts of worship: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Here we find teaching (doctrine), the Lord’s Supper (the breaking of bread), and prayer, being offered up as acts of



worship. An act of worship is something done, collectively, upon being assembled together, with the intent of paying homage or honoring God. The most common Greek word for worship is *proskuneō*, which means “to kiss the hand toward,” to do obeisance,” “to prostrate oneself,” which is closely akin to the Hebrew word, *shachah*. These terms convey the idea of bowing or prostrating oneself before a superior or before Deity. It is a sign of respect, reverence, and honor.

Worship is often viewed in the imagery of sacrifice. Collectively, Christians are priests and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), and are referred to as spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16)—the church of Christ. As priests and a holy nation, Christians offer up sacrifices, but these sacrifices may not be just any kind of sacrifice we wish to offer. On the contrary, we are to “offer up spiritual sacrifices **acceptable** to God” (1 Pet. 2:5, emph. DP). Those who do not offer acceptable sacrifices are said to be “disobedient” (2:8, cf. 2:2). We get a glimpse of worship as a sacrifice from the life of Abraham. His offering up of Isaac as sacrifice was called *worship*. Here we see worship involves an act, or acts, dedicated to God. Worship, therefore, is something we do, which has a beginning point and an ending point. Some contend that all we do in life is worship, but here we see that there is an obvious distinction between what is termed *worship* in the sacrifice of Isaac, with what Abraham and Isaac were doing before reaching the place God told Abraham to go (Gen. 22:2-5).

The book of Hebrews offers much regarding the imagery of sacrifice. We learn “singing” is called the “sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, the fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15). The absence of mechanical instruments of music is obvious in the New Testament. Ephesians 5:19 literally says, “...singing (*aeido*) and plucking (*psallo*) the strings of your heart to the Lord.” However, a good rendering is “singing and playing your heart to the Lord.” The word *aeido* means “to sing” and *psallo* means “to pluck the strings,” and when used with *aeido*, it means to play. When used alone, *psallo* could mean *sing* or *play*, depending on the context and if *aeido* was present. However, Ephesians 5:19 specifically provides the instrument to be played—the heart—which excludes the use of any other instrument. The Hebrews writer also tells us that acts of benevolence (giving) are also sacrifices Christians offer up to God (Heb. 13:16; cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:13; Phil. 4:18). When it comes to prayer, the Hebrews writer provides the imagery of the High priest offering up gifts and sacrifices for sins and, as such, we may approach the throne of grace with our needs and desires (Heb. 4:14-5:1). The Greek word for *prayer* is *proseuchomai*, which is a derivative of the Greek word *proskuneo*, the very word for *worship*. Therefore, when Christians either assembled or not, offer prayer to God, they are worshipping Him. Of course, the Lord’s Supper is all about sacrifice, and remembering by partaking of those emblems representing His body and blood.

This, again, is an act or something that is to be **done**. Moreover, like the priests of old, and in sacrificial form, we are to: “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. Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” (Heb. 10:22-23). Finally, we are told that the Word is living and powerful, able to influence the inward man (Heb. 4:12). Paul says we are to “Preach the word...” (2 Tim. 4:2). The Hebrews writer speaks of the Lord’s will, as found in the “second” Covenant, (New Covenant) is that will that sanctifies, along with the sacrifice of Christ, His blood of the New Testament (Heb. 10:9-10; Matt. 26:28). It is to this covenant that we are to hold and proclaim (Heb. 2:1-4). Proclaiming the good news of the New Covenant or Testament, for which Christ died (Heb. 9:15-17) is the message that brings about salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:21), designed to influence the conscience or inner man, in order to effect the appropriate spiritual sacrifice of self denial and taking up one’s cross to follow Christ (Matt. 16:24). And so, the church of Christ comes together to worship the Lord.

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## The Bible

**N.B. Hardeman**

The Bible records events from the beginning of creation down toward the end of the first century. Many of the things reported therein transpired long before the pyramids were built along the course of the River Nile. Let it be remembered that the songs of David and Solomon had been sung; and they had gone to their rewards before the great classic poet of Greece had given the account of the Trojan War and the wanderings of Ulysses. Many of the books of the Bible were complete before the first public library was built in the old, historic city of Athens; and all the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, had given us a vision of future events and had passed away before the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were announced. Two thousand years have passed since the Holy Spirit laid down the pen of inspiration to grasp it nevermore, during which time wonderful things in the earth have been wrought. And yet it is strange to say that the Bible is just as applicable to the people of this hour as it was to those of the first century, when fresh it came from the hand that penned it.

I think it interesting, further, to study the character of the writings, and also of the writers, because of the peculiar and unique features thereof.

In this one library or collection there are sixty-six books, penned by practically forty different writers, stretching over a period from first to last of 1,600 years. And I ask: Who are they? Not a people surrounded by the advantages that characterize modern times, with all our equipment and facilities for learning, but descendants of a people that had been in bondage 430 years, whose lives were burdened, and whose tasks were exceedingly difficult under the overseers and masters that used them to fill the already overflowing coffers of the great Egyptian government. They passed out from under that bondage by the hand of God and the leadership of Moses and wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Under Joshua they crossed the River Jordan and drove out the enemy, and finally took possession of the land promised unto their fathers. Untutored and unlearned though they were, not a literary folk by any means, scattered over a period of sixteen hundred years, writing about the same events, in a country not much larger than the county of Davidson, Tenn., yet when their products are brought together and woven into one complete whole, there is not a contradiction or discrepancy of serious consideration found in the entire collection.

The Jews have never been known as a literary people in fact. I think it well worth saying that outside of the book of God and perhaps the history written by Josephus, there is not a literary production from the pen of a Jew that occupies first rank in the literature of the world. As a nation, they have disintegrated and have scattered to the four quarters of the earth; their very name has become a byword among the people; and yet they have lived and have given to the world a book that is found in every civilized land 'neath the broad expanse of heaven, that occupies the first place, challenges the sincerest thought of the best of all the earth; and I suggest that it is not amiss to wonder, in passing, how account for matters of this kind?

Sometimes we are asked: "Is the Bible a book noted for its science?" Is it of scientific value? Let it be modestly said that, in the commonly accepted sense of the term, it was never intended as a treatise of that kind and character; but out of all the books ever scanned by mortal man, let me say, without fear of contradiction, that it is the only one ever written of which every word is dependable and absolutely reliable. Let me say, further, that there is not a real scientific principle known that is in violation of, or contradictory to, the word of God. I know that throughout the ages the enemies of the word of the Lord have sought to find discrepancies. They have endeavored to discount God's volume on the ground that it is contradicted by scientific research, but they ought to bear in mind that science is yet in its infancy—that the accepted theories of yesterday

are contradicted by those of today.

Due to a failure to understand one or both, the Bible and science have been considered by many contradictory, and the fight has been on between them. But I have an idea that in the not far distance pseudo-scientists will have reached their limits, and then real science and the Bible will set out on convergent lines that will by and by come together.

I have noted as a historic fact that the civilization of every land has had to go back, despite the claims and progress of humanity, to the foundation laid by God in that wonderful document given to Moses, and upon that the governments of earth rest. Moreover, in the special relationships of man to man, let it be understood and forgotten not that we go back to the Sermon on the Mount to find the philosophy of life, and the passing of the centuries has failed to record improvements upon that found there.

I suggest this thought just now, in passing: that out of the great chaotic condition that exists in the nations of the earth there is a star of hope rising from its far-distant home a hope indicative of better things; and that hope is this: that when man, in all his boasted vanity, has proven a failure, when the nations of this earth have gone their limits, when business men of every type shall come to themselves, they may all recognize their dependence and accept the golden rule laid down by the greatest of all teachers—viz., that we must do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Then peace and tranquility, happiness and prosperity, will once more smile upon the earth

I call your attention next to this particular characteristic: The Bible, unlike all books written by man, does not become obsolete with the passing of the years. That is a statement that particularly belongs to the Bible, and to it alone. It is a boasted declaration of this generation that, due to progress and learning, our textbooks used a few years ago are no longer found in the schoolrooms of today. Where is the old blue-back spelling book? Where are McGuffey's old readers? Where are Smiley's arithmetics and Barnes' series of histories? They have yielded to the mutations of time; and, therefore, the books that we study today were unknown a generation ago. The very textbooks in our schools on science will give way tomorrow for those with different theories. There must be the adoption of a more modern book. The Bible knows no such thing as passing while the ages come and go. It is ever fresh, like unto a mountain spring from which all our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers slaked their thirst in generations gone by; and still, to us, the same spring offers that drink afresh, and it will continue to offer it to those yet unborn. While it treats of the most sublime problems known to man—of God and of Christ, of heaven and of hell, of salvation and redemption—yet the passing centuries have never added one single thought unto the statements therein found. Scientists cannot get ahead of it. Human progress cannot overtake it or get beyond it. Every generation born upon the earth finds the Bible waiting for it, with its fresh and never-failing stores of wisdom touching everything that affects the welfare of humanity.

Another characteristic of the word of God is the fact that, unlike most, if not all, of the books written by man, it can be translated into different languages and lose none of its power. I take it that this explains why the Greek and other classics of days gone by have remained in the language wherein they were penned. It has been demonstrated that a change to other tongues is but the depreciation, the sounding of the death knell, to the writings and productions of man. But here is a volume that seems to run freely into other languages. It has been translated into more than five hundred different tongues and dialects, and yet it is so plain and clear in its declarations that when we read it we scarcely stop to think that we are reading a book penned in a language other than our own.

But let me announce a stranger fact still. Of all the books the world has ever known, there has never been but one that has incurred the hatred of mortal man. Many books have been disliked, but they had only to be let alone in order to pass out of existence and to be numbered with the past. But the Bible has had a persistent and murderous enemy ever on its trail, seeking to annihilate it, to wipe it from the face of the earth. Had you ever stopped to think of the reason for such a feeling manifested toward it?

The Bible has a supernatural enemy who has experienced its power, and ever since he was “knocked out in the third round” the devil has marshaled all his forces to rid the world of the sword of the Spirit.

But there is perhaps another reason which I suggest for your study, and that is this: The Bible draws an appalling picture of man. It does not proclaim his career as one of progress, ever reaching toward holy realms, but rather the reverse. It suggests his course as one of darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. It does not picture man as having come into adverse conditions of life by no fault of his own, nor does it represent him as using all the powers of his being in trying to overcome a situation; but it says: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Gen. 5:1.) And then, coming down the ages to the New Testament, as revealed in Romans 1:29-31, the Bible pictures man as,

...being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. And the picture further describes him as having gone astray and walking according to the course of this world and according to the spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

His wisdom is ridiculed and his deeds condemned. He is without God and without hope. When a man looks upon that appalling scene, it is anything but encouraging and inviting; and, therefore, to rid the world of a portrait like that, the enemies have kept up the fight.

But that is not all. Let me say to you, the Bible is the only thing in all this wide world that claims to exercise authority and dominion over man. That very claim is contrary to our disposition and our nature. We are a democratic people, and love to boast of liberty, of absolute freedom; and I repeat: God’s word is the only thing that comes to us and proposes to hold us accountable and amenable for our deeds and for our steps along the pathway of life. Neither does the Bible consult us nor advise with us as to how we would prefer to have it; but it speaks, indeed, as one having authority—not upon a plane or level with mankind, but superhuman, and issues its decrees and its edicts in the form of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.” Thus it speaks to the governors and kings, to fathers and to mothers, to masters and to servants, to the rich and to the poor, to the bond and to the free, circumscribing, therefore, our liberty and holding us in check.

The disposition of the world is to break all bonds and to know no limitations, to yield to the appetites, the passions, and the lusts of our own being; and could the enemies of the Bible get rid of it, the man of sin would be revealed and anarchy would reign triumphant over the splendid land in which we live.

But this is not all. There have been ambitious schemes and hellish purposes harbored by men—yea, by governments and by empires—to exercise dominion over other nations, regardless of their wishes and contrary to the principles of holy writ.

Half a century ago the imperial German Government, prompted by such hellish intent and desire of world-wide power, started out to subject the peoples of this earth. Have you ever studied their tactics along this line? They first undertook to get rid of the book of God, and by legislative enactment they drove it out at the back door of the school-room and said: “We will train a generation of boys and girls, not under the influence of the God of the Bible, but under the influence of the god of war.” And let me say to you that but for the fact that the power of the Bible was driven out and eliminated, the black crimes and the atrocious deeds that characterize historic pages could never have been possible. When I say to you that their propaganda started forty years ago, that it spread through their government, and that its influence reached the proud land of America, I but state that which all of us have come to recognize as a fact.

That no influence can be in its way, the enemy has sought to destroy the Bible from the

face of the earth. May I suggest to you, as a matter of history, some of the efforts that have been made along that line? At first it was tried by physical force. The powers of church and state have been united to rid the earth of every book that bears the name of Jehovah upon it. Officers have been selected and empowered to make a detailed search into the homes to find God's word, and, if it were found, to confiscate it and bring it unto the powers that be for its absolute destruction. Edicts and decrees went forth, laws were passed, and those persons found with the Bible were subjected to fines and imprisonment—yea, unto death itself. But the devil and his cohorts failed in a matter of that sort. Then they turned and called to their support the intellect and learning, saying: “By that means we will rid the earth of that hateful book which holds in check our ambitious schemes and desires.”

The Bible has, indeed, been an anvil on which many a hammer has absolutely been worn out. Old Voltaire, in the generations gone by, proudly boasted that while it took twelve men to write it up, he would show the world that one man could write it down, and predicted that before the close of his century there would not be one found upon the earth. Following in his tracks, our own Tom Paine, who did so much for the cause of liberty and freedom during the darkest days of the Revolution by bringing out the various issues of *The Crisis*, became puffed up and inflated and turned his attention to the writing of a wonderful book that he called *The Age of Reason*. This spread like wild fire all over the land, and tauntingly and proudly its author and his friends boasted that in fifty years the Bible would be found only in some of the museums of earth. But be it remembered that thrice fifty years have come and gone; Tom Paine has also gone the way of all the earth; his book is scarcely mentioned, read, or heard of; while every year there flows from the presses ten million copies of the book of God.

How do you explain this remarkable fact? What the philosophy? I think there is but one explanation, and that is found in the declaration of the peerless apostle to the Gentiles, when he said in Hebrews 4:12 (ARV): “The word of God is living and active.” This is corroborated by Peter's declaration that the word of the Lord lives and abides forever. And in that is a peculiar remark well worthy of our consideration. I am conscious that we live in a land characterized by death; that all the things beheld by the natural eye have death and decay written thereon. I wonder, is it a fact that in this wide world of ours, that has become a veritable charnelhouse of death, is there one thing which the forces of corruption have been unable to touch or to destroy? I am made to understand and to believe that the word of God still lives in that inexhaustible and inextinguishable manner—yea, it lives with a life superhuman and nothing short of Divine. It is comparable unto nothing, save, perhaps, the Word that was made flesh.

Jesus, the Christ, had no special marks about him to distinguish and differentiate him from the rest of his fellows. Yet he declared that in himself was life. The world believed it not. The evidence of it was not his splendid teachings nor the very fine precepts by him given, but it was that he was able to burst the bars of death asunder and to rise triumphant over the powers of the Hadean world.

The Bible does not “behave” itself, if you please, unlike other books. There is nothing about it that is especially distinguishable, and yet there is that difference between it and all the writing of man that there was between Jesus, the Christ, and the rest of the world that lived in his age.

I submit to you, further, that God's word has never been equaled by the literature of any nation the world has ever seen. Strange indeed that in the career of Greece and of Rome, or in the great Elizabethan Age, some collection of literature was not penned that would transcend in prominence and influence the word of God. Man did not write it. I want, as his counsel, to put in the plea of “not guilty.”

Let me say also that the Bible belongs not to any period or to any age. It belongs to all classes of mankind and to every condition of life wherein humanity may chance to dwell.

The Bible appeals to the common characteristics and impulses of every man and woman upon the face of the earth. It comes unto the humble, unto those of contrite spirit, unto broken hearts, and gives unto them a halo of hope and a glittering star to guide

every footstep further on; it comes to every man, in whatsoever station of life he may be, and challenges the very best thoughts of his being.

Indeed, the Bible is the miracle of the ages. Despite the attacks of pagans, infidels, philosophers, and pseudo scientists, the Bible still stands forth against all such, and is more widely read, more highly respected, and more influential today than any other book in all the world.

Since its inspired and immortal truths were penned thousands of years ago amid the quiet hills of Palestine, wonderful changes in the affairs of men have been wrought.

I think of once lordly Egypt that has been forced to pass under the dominion of a foreign foe. The orators, the poets, the painters, the sculptors, and the architects of once glorious Greece have long since passed away, and their works have slowly, but surely, yielded to the mutations of time. Imperial Rome raised her head sublime, and from the seven-hilled city spread abroad her power and her influence over all the nations of the earth, then humbly bowed her head and ceased to be. Desolation marks the site of old Carthage. Tyre and Sidon no longer send their ships to distant ports. The proud fleets of Spain, laden with the rich treasures of the Aztecs and of the Incas, have long since ceased to sail the seas. The picture of worldwide dominion painted by the ambitious schemes of Napoleon has long since faded, and the “man of destiny” died amid the lonely scenes of Saint Helena. Empires have been overthrown, dynasties have fallen, and the meteoric light of would-be reformers has flashed across the arched sky, only to be swept into oblivion and forgetfulness; while the Bible, a Divine product, woven into the texture of human thought and history by the gradual unfolding of the ages, still stands, bidding defiance to every wave of infidelity, giving comfort and hope to Christians, and pointing sinners to the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. It is the Book of books, that Book that outshines all other books in the literary firmament, as the sun outshines the splendid planets that in their orbits revolve around him.

It is, indeed, the mariner's north star. It is the compass of every Christian to guide his frail bark across the tempestuous sea of life and finally induct him into those scenes that we expect to burst upon our enraptured visions over there. It is, indeed, a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. It lives and abides forever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

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## There is No Other

### Forrest Darrell Moyer

The Gospel way has received more criticism because of its exclusiveness than for any other distinctive feature. Some would have us believe that it is too narrow to teach that there is only one way into heaven. Aren't all religious people headed for the same destination? Does it really matter which road we travel to reach that destination? While such questions are asked almost every day, the gospel remains the same for every generation; and it teaches an exclusive way. May we observe some of these features that are exclusive?

### There is No Other God

When Moses was given the ten commandments, one of them was: “I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Ex. 20:2-3). This teaching had been so indelibly impressed upon the Jewish people in Jesus' day that a scribe said unto Jesus, “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he” (Mark 12:32). By inspiration, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). He likewise said to the Ephesians: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:6). These passages are positive in their teaching that there is only **one God** — there is no other!



Hence, it should be easy to recognize the sin in making an idol—a false god of wood, stone, or metal. “We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device” (Acts 17:29). Some, however, who would never be guilty of bowing down before an idol do, nevertheless, worship a false god. Maybe it is a mental image—a god that has been manufactured in the imagination of some man's mind. Quite often this is true. People are heard to say, “The god whom I serve is too good to give punishment to any person.” This is a false idea concerning God. It is in reality **another** god; but there is **no other** than the true God. Let us serve the one true God of the Bible in His own appointed way.

### **There is No Other Christ**

While Jesus was here, He warned that there would arise false Christ's: “For there shall arise false Christ's. and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before” (Matt. 24:24-25). Paul also warned against such: “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached...” (2 Cor. 11:4). Why? “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Therefore, there is **no other Christ** than Jesus of Nazareth.

But some “preach another Jesus, whom we have not preached.” Modernists tell us that Jesus was only a man—a good man, to be sure, in fact, the world's best man—but only a man. This is **another** Jesus, for the Jesus of the Bible claimed to be more than just a man; He claimed to be the Divine Son of the Living God. He told the formerly blind man in John 9:35-38 that He was the Son of God and accepted worship from him. He said to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Now if Jesus claimed to be the Divine Son of God and was not, He made a false claim with the intent to deceive. One who is a liar and a deceiver is not a good man; most certainly not the world's best man. This is another Jesus.

### **There is No Other Gospel**

Paul's purpose in writing to the churches of Galatia is expressed in Gal. 1:6-8:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

When someone preaches something other than that which is revealed in the New Testament, he is preaching another Gospel. But Paul informs us that there is **no other Gospel!** There is only one Gospel and that is the one which Paul preached. It did not originate with him or any other human being. “For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12). To preach the Gospel is simply to preach what is revealed in the New Testament. How often is preaching politics, social ethics, etc., palmed off as genuine Gospel preaching! Gospel preaching will draw the line sharply and clearly between truth and error. We need more Gospel preaching! It is an exclusive gospel; there is not one for me and another for you. There is “one faith” (Eph. 4:5). Truly, there is no other!

### **There is No Other Name**

Speaking to the high priest, the rulers, and scribes, Peter declared:

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:11-12).

Do you say, “There is nothing in a name”? Then reread this passage. To say that there is nothing in a name would be to say that we could be saved in the name of Beelzebub as well as in the name of Jesus. We all know that such is not so. This eliminates my name. It eliminates Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Mary Baker Eddy, Joseph Smith, et al. Only through the name of Jesus—the name which is above every name—can we be saved. There is no other!

### **There is No Other Foundation**

All people build their religious houses upon some sort of foundation. Some specifically state that their churches are founded on men such as Wesley. The Catholics claim to build upon Peter. But the true foundation is fixed with iron-clad certainty in 1 Cor. 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Is there any other foundation? Paul says there **is no other**. Are you building upon Him? or upon the crumbling sand of humanism ?

### **There is No Other Church**

When we come to consider the church, most people say, "Well. I think that one church is just as good as another. After all, I think a person can be a member of the church of his own choice." To teach that there is only one church is considered so narrow-minded and bigoted that it is not even worth consideration. Only a sneer is often the answer to such an idea. But have you considered what holy writ says? The Bible teaches that the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Language could not be plainer. Now, how many bodies does Jesus have? "There is one body" (Eph. 4:4). Here, friends, we have the unmistakable answer of inspiration. There is **only one body** and that **one body is the church**. Jesus built His church. Then as centuries advanced, men built churches. Now which is right? The one built by Jesus or those established by men? The only worthy answer we can give is that Jesus' church is right—there is no other!

### **There is No Other Way of Salvation**

Jesus positively declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Is there any other way? No, there is none. So, unless I believe in Him, I shall die in my sins (John 8:24). Jesus, who is the truth, said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). And His commanding authority requires us to "believe and be baptized" and we "shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Do you mean that I must be baptized to go to heaven? Consider this for a moment: Jesus is the way, the **only way**. To go to heaven, I must be in the way (which is Jesus). How do I get into Jesus (the way)? Paul answers: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Hence, I get into Christ (the way) by being baptized. Baptism is essential because of this. Are you in Christ ? There is **no other way**!

### **There is No Other Time to Obey the Gospel**

When should I become a Christian? The answer is, **now**! We cannot do so yesterday, for yesterday is past and gone forever from our grasp. Nor can I safely postpone it until tomorrow. "Boast not thyself of the morrow." The morrow may bring death.

Go to now, ye that say. Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not which shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away (Jas. 4:13-14).

Tomorrow you may lose your desire to obey. Remember Felix's sad answer to Paul's message: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).

The great word of the Bible is **today**. "Today if ye will hear his voice" (Heb. 3:7). "But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Yesterday is gone forever; tomorrow may never come; today is all we have. There is no other time to obey the gospel! Will you not do it today?

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When the apostles and other inspired men told inquiring sinners what to do to be saved, the sinner did not stop to puzzle over God's part in the matter, but promptly did what they were told to do. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." They had not been blinded by being told that man could do nothing...On God's part, salvation is wholly a matter of grace; on man's part, salvation is wholly a matter of works.

- R.L. Whiteside -

# Evidences: The Historical Christ

Benjamin Franklin

## **Proposition I—There was such a person as Christ.**

This proposition we mention, not so much to argue it, as merely to refer to it as a universally admitted fact. Christ could not have been a mere fictitious character, manufactured in modern times; for an immense variety of writers, both friends and enemies, mention him in every century of the Christian era, and among them all there is no evidence to the contrary.

Any position stated and admitted by writers in every age, where not only no contrary evidence is found, but no contrary opinion is expressed, must be indisputably true. This is the case with the real existence of such a person as Christ; it is mentioned and admitted by an immense variety of writers in every age, with no evidence to the contrary, and not even a respectable opinion in opposition.

## **Proposition II—Christ lived at the time stated in the Bible.**

This proposition is not denied by infidels; but if any one should deny it, we know that it is true, because he is mentioned by numerous writers, both friends and enemies, in every century back to the time when the Bible says he lived. He could not have been mentioned by men who wrote before he lived, unless they were prophets. He is mentioned by many who wrote soon after he came into the world. This shows when he lived, for he must have lived before the first mention of him. For instance, we read of General Washington in many books, written at various periods between our time and the day when he lived. He must have lived before the writing of the first book in which there is mention of him, for no writer could have mentioned him before he lived.

In the same way, the numerous references to Christ, by various writers, who gave the date of his birth, without any material variation, or any contrary opinion, establishes the time of his advent beyond dispute. In this argument, the allusion to him of an enemy is as good as that of a friend. It is a fact known and admitted by all well-informed men, that Christ is mentioned by numerous writers, in an immense variety of ways, both by friends and enemies, in every century back to the time when the Bible says he lived; but he is not mentioned by any one who wrote before that time, except by Jewish prophets, and by them always as a person yet to come. This fixes the time when he lived beyond dispute.

## **Proposition III—Christ lived in the place where the Bible says He did.**

This is not denied by unbelievers; but if it should be, we know that it is true from the fact of the agreement of all writers, both ancient and modern, and no evidence to the contrary. All writers who have alluded to him, could not have agreed in his location, unless guided by some certain evidence. This is a great point in Christian evidence.

Whatever doubt, and however serious the doubt may be with reference to some points of evidence, there is not, and has not been, at any period, the least doubt from any quarter that could command respect, as to the place where the Lord lived and died. This is a great and a well-settled point, as admitted on all hands.

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## Editor's Travels and Writings

The editor and his wife “dodged a bullet” in September and were forced to worship at home on Sept. 6. Our daughter, who teaches at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, was exposed to the Wuhan virus by a student and we had visited her after her exposure. She later tested negative and we were, thankfully, safe. On Sunday, Sept. 13, we were at Willow, Okla. for morning worship and at Yukon, Okla. that evening. We were with the London and Macomb church in El Reno, Okla. Sunday morning, Sept. 20, again at Yukon that evening and at Chillicothe, Texas Sept. 27.

Requests continue to come in for our latest book, *“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy* and we are grateful for them all. The book is in its Fourth Printing and is mailed **free of charge** to anyone who requests it. The **postage is also free**.

Work also continues on the second volume of the book, the revised and enlarged edition, which should be ready for printing in late Fall or early Winter. It will contain a large amount of material on “mainstream churches” and their preaching schools, and an in-depth look at the use of pornography in Freed-Hardeman University art classes.

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## **“What Saith The Scriptures?”**

**Harrell Davidson**

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** As no question was submitted to brother Davidson this month, he is taking a sabbatical. Since he is the author of *Over the Vast Horizon*, the biography of Guy N. Woods, it is fitting that we consider brother Woods' answer to a question from the Freed-Hardeman College Lectures Open Forum in the 1970s.

**Question: Did the witch of Endor actually call up Samuel from the dead, or did she deceive Saul by trickery? (1 Sam. 28:1-25).**

Neither. Yet, Samuel undoubtedly came forth from the spirit world and conversed with Saul on that occasion. Saul, king of Israel, out of favor with God and man, having forsaken God and having been by Him forsaken, seeks help from a source he earlier would have regarded with the greatest contempt: a woman with “a familiar spirit”—a witch. The depths of his despair are indicated in the fact that by his own direction many who practiced the art of witchcraft and similar deceptive matters had been put to death because of their influence over the people; and now, with no one on earth to turn to, he remembers the godly Samuel whose wisdom he had disregarded in life, and longs for advice from him! And to obtain it, he seeks assistance from a witch.

What amazing irony there is in this. He who had expelled all he could find from the land, or caused them to be killed, now consults one of them for help he could get neither from God nor man. Moreover, there is also strange irony in the fact that he longs for one more chance to listen to the words of his friend and advisor of happier days. How often, in this life, is this situation found. It is truly one of the tragedies of life that the advice and counsel of the good and great is valued by many often when it is no longer available.

The woman did her usual incantation, common to such seances, and Samuel appeared. That it was a real appearance and not an apparition accomplished by trickery by the woman, is clear from the fact that she had not expected Samuel to appear, and she was therefore wholly unprepared for what occurred. It is clear from the narrative that Saul had more faith in her ability to call up Samuel than she did! Samuel actually appeared; this appearance was neither by the powers of the woman nor the agency of the devil; it was a real occurrence designed to rebuke both the woman and Saul.

Positive and irresistible proof of the genuineness of the miracle, for such it was, is to be seen in the message which Samuel delivered to Saul on the occasion: “Jehovah will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me...” (1 Sam. 28:19). In addition to chronicling the loss of the kingdom to Saul, Samuel made two predictions: (1) the Philistines would triumph in battle over Israel; (2) Saul and his sons would die on the morrow following this interview. These details neither the woman, neither Satan, nor his agents, could have known, and must therefore have been delivered by inspiration. Thus, Samuel did actually come up before king Saul, not by witchery, but by divine interposition, and the account may therefore be regarded as an actual description of what occurred on that day.

**Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at**

**[harrelld@charter.net](mailto:harrelld@charter.net)**

# What Must I do to be Saved?

H. Osby Weaver

No more important question could be framed in human language and uttered by the tongue of men than the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer thereto transcends the elements of time and determines the eternal destiny of men's souls.

This question might be asked by those occupying different relationships to God. The answer to this question when asked by the faithful child of God is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Emphasis here must be placed upon the word *faithful* with all that it involves. This question might also be asked by the erring child of God; one who has departed from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1) and made shipwreck of it (1 Tim. 1:9). The answer comes back, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent" (Rev. 2:5). "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). This question might be raised by the alien sinner; one who has never been born again into the family of God; who has never been saved from his sins. This is the one with whom we are primarily concerned in this discussion.

The salvation mentioned in this question might be discussed from different points of view. It might have reference to salvation in heaven or eternal life. Eternal salvation is not enjoyed in this life except in hope and promise. This salvation is said to be "reserved in heaven...ready to be revealed in the last time," regarding which salvation Christians have been begotten again "Unto a lively hope" (1 Pet. 1:3-5). This salvation is received in the world to come (Mark 10:30).

Next, the salvation mentioned in our question might have reference to past sins. The forgiveness which one enjoys in being translated out of the power of darkness and into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13); the salvation which is necessary in becoming a child of God. Of course, eternal salvation could never be enjoyed in the world to come unless one first received remission of sins in this world. Hence, we are discussing the question on behalf of one who has never received remission of sins and is not, therefore, a child of God. What must that one do to be saved from his sins and become a child of God?

Many need to ask this question who do not realize their need. They do not know they are lost. They think they are saved, because they have followed some plan given by man and just supposed that it was from God when the truth of the matter is, God never even heard about it!

In Mark 16:15, 16 the Lord laid down the terms of salvation for the alien sinner. To the apostles he said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth (the Gospel) and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not (the Gospel) shall be damned." In the book of Acts we have a number of examples in which these terms of salvation were met. In Acts 2:37 after hearing the gospel preached by the apostle Peter and being convicted of its truthfulness, the multitude expressed their belief in asking, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In answer, Peter told them what to do to obtain remission of sins. At the time this question was asked by the multitude, they were believers. Unbelievers would not be cut to the heart by Gospel preaching and be led to ask, "What must we do?" and still be unbelievers. As believers, they were not saved the moment they believed. Peter told them what to do in order to receive remission of sins, after they became believers.

Whatever Peter said in response to that question then, is the same answer to that same question today. Remember, Peter was guided by the Spirit. Whatever Peter told them to do, then, is **God's answer** to that question. What did he tell those believers to do in order that they might be saved? The answer is so simple that one wonders why there should ever have been any argument about it. Yet there are a great many preachers today who will not tell an audience to do what Peter told those people to do. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). This then is the order: (1) Peter preached the gospel. (2) They heard. (3) As a result of hearing, they believed. (4) They were then told to repent and (5) be baptized (6) for, or in order to obtain, the remission of sins.



This then is the answer to the sinner's question, "What must I do to be saved?" Are you saved? You are not unless you have done what these did. This is God's answer to this important question and apart from it one can never become a child of God and can never be saved either in this world or the one to come! Why must one repent? For the remission of sins. Why must one be baptized? For the remission of sins. Whatever repentance is for in this passage, baptism is for the same thing. If these were saved before they were baptized, then they were also saved before they repented. And if they were saved before repentance and baptism, then they were saved before they obtained remission of sins, for that is why they were to repent and be baptized—**for remission of sins**.

This was to be done in the "name of Christ," that is, by his authority. Jesus authorized repentance and baptism in order that the believer might receive remission of sins. If you have been baptized for any other reason, then you have done so without the authority of Christ. Therefore, you did not receive remission of sins. Some people are taught to be baptized because they are told they are already saved. If one is baptized while believing he is already saved, then it stands to reason that he was not baptized for remission of sins, and if he were not baptized for remission of sins, then his baptism was not authorized by Christ, and he is still unsaved.

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Men have turned that around and said, "He that believeth is saved and shall be baptized." Jesus said, "Shall be saved." Man says, "Shall be baptized." Man has changed the tense of both the verbs of Mark 16:16 and inverted the passage. That is too much change for anyone who respects the word of God. Any change at all would be too much!

Jesus said, "He shall be saved." He who? He that believeth? No. He that is baptized? No. Well, **what he**? The he that believeth **and** is baptized, that is the **he** that shall be saved and no one else. *And* is a copulative conjunction connecting words, phrases, or sentences of equal rank. Baptism is of equal rank with faith in saving one. "He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved." In the light of the simplicity of these answers, there is absolutely no excuse for one not knowing what to do to be saved from sin, or for being carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error.

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## Increase My Faith!

David Ray

In Luke 17:5 the apostles asked Jesus to "increase our faith." How did they expect Him to respond? How would **you**? Many religious folks would probably expect it to be done for them in some direct and miraculous way, the Holy Spirit somehow "injecting" them with faith. However, as usual, Jesus didn't answer a question the way we might expect Him to. Ironically, increasing their faith is the very thing He was already trying to do.

In verses 1-10, He taught them four things that were involved in increasing their faith, enhancing their lives on earth, and getting them to Heaven, and all four require humility (toward others and toward God). While the direct and miraculous option may be more appealing for some, anyone interested in going to Heaven ought to be interested in what Jesus said.

### Humility Toward Others (v. 1-4)

Within the first four verses we find the first two important actions required of us if we are going to grow in faith. The first is to **not be an offense or occasion of stumbling to others**. Jesus said, "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." "These little ones" refer to followers of Christ.

It is impossible for stumbling blocks to not exist. It's sad, but there are stumbling blocks (offenses; opportunities to sin) everywhere. "But woe to him...!" There will **always** be people who want to hinder a person from pleasing God and going to Heaven.



Contextually, Jesus is talking about the “offensive” Pharisees (16:14) who refused to obey God and tried to stop others from doing so. His point applies to anyone who causes a follower of Christ to sin. It will happen, but woe (grief) to the one who causes it! Be aware of the things **you** say and do that could cause a follower or potential follower to stumble. Jesus gives a good example of this in verses 3-4—failure to forgive.

The second act of humility Jesus expects His followers to show to others is to **forgive**. He said, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”

Take heed (be cautious, attentive) to yourself (this is very important)! We should always be ready and willing to forgive rather than holding a grudge. But Jesus gives two prerequisites: we must **rebuke** the offending brother (i.e., make sure he understands his sin) and he then must **repent** (change his mind, which should result in a change of action). Sometimes a “forgiving” person wants to forgive prematurely, without talking to the offending brother, and he offers forgiveness to someone who doesn't want it and hasn't repented of his sin. Jesus says he must first repent. Consider also Colossians 3:13: “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” We must forgive **as Christ forgave us**; and we weren't forgiven until we repented (Acts 2:38; 8:22).

If he sins against you seven times in a day and each time repents, continue to forgive him! Clearly Jesus did not mean the number seven literally; He meant indefinitely (cf. Matt. 18:21-22—“seventy times seven”). There's never a time when you aren't to forgive **if** he repents. This is important to you, too. Forgiveness of others is a prerequisite to your being forgiven: Matt. 6:12—“Forgive us our debts, as (or **when**) we forgive our debtors.” Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness from God and to place upon it the condition that we forgive others. In other words, “if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (v. 14-15).

Contextually, think about how your failure to forgive a penitent brother, or potential brother, (v. 3-4) can be a stumbling block to him (v. 1-2). This is a serious problem. Congregations divide, fall apart, and close their doors because of this. Non-Christians who are seeking the truth turn away forever because of this. Forgive one another!

### **Humility Toward God (v. 5-10)**

The next two lessons that strengthen our faith have to do with, and require, humility toward God. First, **we are to trust God** (v. 5-6): “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”

As He explained in Matt. 13:32, a mustard seed is the smallest seed, but grows into a large tree. Faith as a grain of mustard seed may appear to be small, but can accomplish great things for God.

Is Jesus' promise literal or figurative? His example is **miraculous** (i.e., uprooting a tree using no physical force). This **could** be literal in the first century, since they had miraculous gifts. But did this ever happen? Or were mountains ever literally moved (Matt. 17:20)? Did the apostles not have enough faith to do so? The real question is, did they ever **need** to do it? No. This wasn't His will (cf. 1 John 5:14).

His promise was figurative in its example (there was no literal reason for trees or mountains to move). However, the application to the apostles to whom He was speaking was miraculous in nature. If these men had faith, they would (and did) perform many supernatural acts.

So many people misunderstand what Jesus was saying here (and to whom He said it). They think faith is simply to believe He **can** do something; then they misapply this to themselves, even though they recognize that they cannot perform miracles. But faith isn't believing what He **can** do; it's knowing and believing what He **said** He would do. And, while He said the apostles would accomplish miraculous feats, He also taught that this ability was limited to the first century (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8f). To believe otherwise is to display **lack** of faith, since our faith comes from what He **said** (Rom. 10:17)!

By our faith today, we can also accomplish great things for Christ. Our faith comes from Scripture, and the things He wants us to accomplish are found in Scripture. This includes the actions necessary to become a Christian, as well as what's necessary to live and be pleasing to Him as a Christian. So, having the faith He's talking about here comes from reading His Word and doing it.

Again, Jesus is increasing their faith by teaching them His word. The message is “hear God and trust Him.” This requires humility.

The second part is that **we are to humbly obey God** (v. 7-10). Notices verses 7-9:

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by (“immediately,” DR) when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow (“think,” DR) not.

This master is not being rude. And this doesn't mean that a master can never thank his servant. He's saying that this is the agreed-upon arrangement: “you're the servant, I'm the master (or employee/employer); you make my meal, then yours, and I pay you for it (room and board, clothing, medical treatment, etc.)” The servant is simply doing his job.

This passage is almost humorous because of how it goes against the expectations of our society. We expect recognition and reward just for doing the job we're paid to do. We're offended if we get a pen as a 20-year service award. Did you ever think to acknowledge your employer for keeping food on your table for the last twenty years? Maybe **he** should get a pen! Acknowledgments and thanks aren't wrong, but should they be required for simply doing that which your employer **paid** you to do.

Unfortunately, this attitude can spill over into religion. Someone might feel he's owed something special for his Christian work or if he thinks he's better than others (cf. the Pharisee praying—Luke 18:11f). But Jesus said (v. 10), “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

Just because you obey God doesn't merit you special favor, as if God were indebted to you; you've simply done your duty. It requires humility to accept this. But most everything in Christianity does. Consider again these instructions Jesus gave here in order to increase one's faith: don't be a stumbling block, forgive others, trust and obey God, and don't expect recognition. **All** of these require us to stop focusing solely on self and have love for God and others. Taking self out of the way is the key ingredient in increasing one's faith. And it's something we all can—and must—continue to work on our whole lives.

### What Must I do to be Saved?

**Believe** – John 8:24; Acts 16:31; Heb. 11:6.

**Repent** – Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31.

**Confess faith in Christ** – Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37.

**Be baptized** – Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

## Who is Allah?

### Ron Boatwright

What religion today practices the pagan rites of the moon-god? **Islam**, the fastest growing religion in the world. Many times it has been a violent religion in which one has one of two choices: either convert or die. As its focus of worship, the religion of Islam has a deity by the name of *Allah*. Allah was a pagan moon-god in Arabia during pre-Islamic times.

Moon worship has been practiced in Arabia and the Middle East since about 2000 BC. The crescent moon is the most common symbol of this pagan moon worship. The moon-god was also referred to as *al-ilah*. Originally this was not a proper name of a

single specific god, but a generic name meaning “the god”. Each local Arab tribe would refer to their own local tribal pagan god as *al-ilah*. *Al-ilah* was later shortened to Allah before Mohammed began promoting his new religion in 610 AD. Mohammed retained almost all the pagan rituals of the Arabs at the temple, Kabah, and redefined them in monotheistic terms. Today Islam is a false monotheistic religion with its roots in polytheistic paganism.

The Old Testament regularly forbade the worship of the moon-god and other false gods. When the children of Israel came out of Egyptian bondage they were warned, “a man or a woman who have been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant, who have gone and served other gods and worshipped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven...then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones” (Deut. 17:3-5). When Israel fell into idolatry, many times it involved moon-god worship. There are remnants of pagan moon-god worship in the Koran where we have examples of Muslims swearing by the moon. “Nay; I swear by the moon, And the night when it departs, And the daybreak when it shines;” (Koran 74:32-34). Muslims fast during the month that begins and ends with a crescent moon.

The pagan Arab nations worshipped 360 gods, one for each day of the year. The moon-god was a male god and the sun-god was a female goddess. The moon-god was called by various names, one of which was Allah. The Arabs believed that the moon-god was the greatest of all gods. In worshipping their moon-god, Allah, they prayed toward Mecca several times a day, made pilgrimages to Mecca, ran around their moon-god temple called Kabah, kissed the Black Stone, killed animal sacrifices for their moon-god, and fasted for the month which begins and ends with the crescent moon, etc, just as the Muslims do today.

They believed Allah, the moon-god, was married to the sun goddess. Together they produced three goddesses who were called “the daughters of Allah.” Allah’s three daughters, Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat, were viewed as intercessors between the people and Allah and were also worshipped at the Kabah in Mecca. The daughters of Allah, along with Allah’s wife the sun goddess, and Allah were viewed as “high” gods.

Mohammed was raised to worship the moon-god, Allah. The Quraish tribe into which he was born was particularly devoted to Allah. The literal Arabic name of Mohammed’s father was Abd-Allah and his uncle’s name was Obied-Allah. These names show the devotion that Mohammed’s family had to the worship of their moon-god, Allah. When Mohammed proclaimed his new doctrine: “There is no God but Allah,” he was not trying to introduce a new god, for his pagan countrymen already knew and acknowledged this pagan deity along with their other 359 gods. The crescent moon was an ancient pagan symbol used throughout the Middle East to represent Allah and adopting this symbol helped Muslims to convert people throughout the Middle East to Islam.

Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 AD. In 610 AD he declared himself a prophet. At a temple called “ka’aba” in Mecca 360 idols along with a Black Stone were worshipped. Prior to Islam the people prayed each day facing Mecca since that was the place where their idol Allah was located. Each Arab tribe used “Allah” as a generic term to refer to its own particular high god. When Mohammed began propagating his new religion he was run out of Mecca in 622 AD. He then went to Medina where he successfully began his new religion, Islam, and even became the ruler of that city. In Mecca Arabs worshipped a moon-god called Hubal at their temple called Kabah. Hubal, being their highest ranking god, was also known by other names such as Allah. When Mohammed came along, he dropped all references to the name “Hubal” but retained the generic *al-ilah*, which had been modified to Allah.

In 630 AD Mohammed again entered Mecca and captured it. He declared Allah to be the supreme god and was the one true god that all men should worship. Mohammed claimed to have had his “vision” and “revelation” from the angel Gabriel. Mohammed destroyed all the 360 idols at Mecca except the Black Stone, which they believed had

come from the moon. Muslims continue to worship and kiss it today. Mohammed declared that Allah alone should be worshipped. He forbade the worship of the daughters of Allah. Mohammed retained almost all the pagan rituals of the Arabs at the temple, Kabah, and redefined them in monotheistic terms. To this day, a crescent moon can be found at the front of every mosque, acknowledging that Allah was—and is still—their moon-god.

Mohammed went one step further than his fellow pagan Arabs. While they believed that Allah, their moon-god, was the greatest of all gods and the supreme deity, Mohammed decided that Allah was not only the greatest god but the only god. The worship of the moon-god, Allah, helped Islam to be successful in propagating their religion among the Arab nations. Allah was neither an unknown nor an unimportant god to the Quraish when Mohammed began preaching his doctrine at Medina and Mecca. The fact that Islam was conceived in idolatry is shown by the many rituals performed today in the name of Allah which were connected with their pagan worship that existed before Islam.

The crescent moon, as the symbol for Islam originated when Allah was worshipped as the moon-god in Mecca, is placed on the flags of Islamic nations and on the top of mosques and minarets and displayed on hats, flags, rugs, amulets, and even jewelry. This explains why the crescent moon is the symbol of Islam today. Some flags of Muslim countries have the full moon placed inside the crescent moon to emphasize all the phases of the moon. Other flags have one or more stars or the sun placed in the crescent of the moon.

Many people have been falsely taught that Allah is simply another name for the God of the Bible. This is not true. This is stated to try and give Islam some credibility. Satan has used this lie to lead people away from the one true God so they will be eternally lost. This lie is believed not only by Muslims but also by many non-Muslims.

History reveals that Islam is nothing more than a reformed revival of the ancient idolatrous moon-god paganism. Most Muslims have been kept in the dark concerning the history of their religion. The average Muslim does not know he is worshipping a moon-god or why the crescent moon sits on top of his mosque.

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## **“Almost Thou Persuadest Me”**

**Richard Donley**

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:27-28). The apostle was trying to persuade men to become such as he was himself, and the term that Agrippa used to define such a one was *Christian*. We believe that many people who recognize the value of being a Christian do not understand how to become and remain such. It is not strange that there is confusion on this subject, for there is much conflicting teaching. There are hundreds of differing sects and denominations, and each one has a different definition of *Christian*. I want to avoid teaching my own opinion, or that of any other man. If I should offer my opinion it would merely add to the confusion that already exists. My purpose is to point out what the Bible says on this subject.

We begin with a self evident fact: Before a thing can be, there must be a beginning. Some people are Christians, and others are not. Before the non-Christian becomes a Christian there must of necessity be some kind of change. To find that change defined in scripture is our first problem. Whatever the change is, it is preceded by teaching. When Jesus sent his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19). At another time Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man there-

fore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me” (John 6:44-45). Notice Jesus said, “They shall all be taught of God.” None can come to Christ, except as they are drawn of God. But how does God draw? He **draws by teaching**. A statement recorded in the eleventh chapter of Acts shows the necessity of teaching.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, to seek Saul: and when he found him he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

Disciples are obedient learners. Barnabas and Saul taught much people. Those who received the teaching were disciples, and they were called **Christians**.

To become Christians people must be taught, but not every kind of teaching causes people to be Christians. “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” If one follows the teaching of the devil to perfection, he will only be like the devil. Much of the teaching that is done by religious people is in reality only the teaching of men. If one follows such teaching perfectly, he will only become like the men whose teaching he accepts. To become a Christian one must be taught the doctrine of Christ. “And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

The New Testament tells us what Paul preached to the Corinthians. He first preached certain facts concerning Christ:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Paul was determined to know only Christ and Him crucified, but that knowledge included the death of Christ for man's sins, his burial and resurrection according to the scriptures. Now we have definitely established the beginning of teaching that leads people to become Christians: it is first of all that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried and rose again.

As we proceed, step by step, we learn exactly how one becomes a Christian. There must be teaching; the teaching must be the doctrine of Christ; and the doctrine of Christ included man's need for a Savior, and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross to meet that need. One may hear this much, believe it, and yet not actually become a Christian; for a Christian is a disciple, and discipleship requires obedience. There must be something in the teaching of Christ that one can obey. Disciples are obedient learners. Christ saves the obedient. “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:9). “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). Freedom from sin follows obedience. The gospel of Christ begins with facts for the heart to believe, but it also contains commands that man is to obey. It is not necessary that we should be ignorant of the obedience required by the gospel of Christ.

Paul determined not to know anything among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Of his preaching at Corinth, it is written, “And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). “And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (v. 11). When people hear the word of God taught, those who believe it are moved to be baptized. A preacher by the name of Philip once preached to a city of Samaria, and the record says, “But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). When Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, he

was preaching Christ, for we read, “And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5).

He who preaches Christ must preach the command of Christ to the alien sinner to be baptized for the remission of sins. This is why people who hear and believe the teaching of Christ want to be baptized. Baptism is the beginning of obedience. It is the beginning of discipleship. It is the beginning of the new life in Christ. “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). Yes, it is in baptism that one is raised with Christ. It is at baptism that one becomes a Christian. He is not a Christian before being taught. He is not a Christian before believing. He is not a Christian before obedience. The obedience required of the alien sinner is baptism for the remission of sins. Let us not forget that baptism is the beginning, and not the end of the obedience required by Christ. Being a Christian requires a beginning point. That beginning point is baptism.

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## **Led by the Holy Spirit**

**Roy J. Hearn**

Romans 8:14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Everyone interested in salvation should understand how this is accomplished. Due to false teaching, it is often shrouded in darkness, and people fail to investigate God’s word and are thus deceived.

The church of Christ is often misrepresented. Opponents say God must do the converting and accuse us of denying that. They also say one must be converted by the Spirit and power of God and imply that we also deny that. Some say the heart is changed by faith and that faith is a gift from God and accuse of denying that. But we believe all these things to be true. There is no difference on what God does, but how He does it. To the law and the testimony (Isa. 8:20), and let that decide.

### **Faith is Produced by the Word of God**

Jesus prayed for a certain class of people—those who believe on Him through the words of the apostles, His personal representatives on earth (John 14:26; 16:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). John 20:30-31 shows that saving faith comes through the written word of God. Peter said that the Gentiles believed by hearing the word from his mouth (Acts 15:8).

The apostle Paul testifies that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), but that one must hear before faith can be produced (Rom. 10:14). There is no belief without first hearing the word. All these witnesses agree. The only difference is that now the word that produces faith is written in the New Testament.

Paul told Timothy to preach the things that he had heard from him with many witnesses (2 Tim. 2:2). Further, he said we should stand fast in the word he had taught whether by word or letter (2 Thess. 2:15), and that any who would teach a different doctrine would be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

### **How the Holy Spirit Gives Faith**

As shown above, in reference to John 16:13-15, the Spirit was sent to the apostles to guide them into all truth. First Peter 1:12 says they preached the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Acts 2:1-4 reveals the coming of the Holy Spirit, and that the apostles began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. In Revelation 2:1, Christ says, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, write...” And verse seven says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. So the Spirit speaks through the written word.

Where is all this found? In the New Testament. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Scripture furnishes all one needs for perfection. Second Peter 1:3 says that everything that pertains to life and godliness comes through knowledge, and for that reason one should study (2 Tim. 2:15).



### **How People are Converted by the Power of God**

Romans 1:16 says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes it, and faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). This word was given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13).

Paul said the gospel came to him by revelation (Gal. 1:11-12), and Peter affirmed that the Gentiles were purified by faith which was produced by his preaching (Acts 15:7-9). Furthermore, Peter says one purifies his soul in obeying the Truth (1 Pet. 1:22).

Without doubt, therefore, the Scripture teaches that faith is a gift of God, but that it comes from a study of God's word, not in some mysterious, direct means.

### **This is Demonstrated by Divine Example**

Acts two reveals that the Holy Spirit spoke to the multitude through the apostles (Acts 2:1-4, 22). When they heard the word preached they were pricked in their hearts—made believers. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) which was wielded by the apostles and other preachers (Acts 2:1-4, 22-27; 8:4-5, 12). When the people on that Pentecost day heard the word preached by the apostles, they were pricked in their hearts—convicted of sin.

### **The Pentecostians Led by The Spirit**

Their change, or purification, was begun, and the effect was produced by the Holy Spirit. They were led by the words spoken by the apostles. But where? They were led to cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter answered and said, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37-38).

With this example, it clear that to be led by the Spirit, to receive faith, and be saved by the power of God is accomplished by the written word now. Please observe that the whole process of conversion was begun in preaching the gospel, and hearing the gospel which produced faith and repentance, and obeying the gospel which in baptism which consummated salvation.

### **Is Something Besides the Word of God Needed?**

How do you know Christ is the Son of God? The Bible says so. Don't you need some other proof? No, for the Bible says so. How do you know there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be avoided? The Bible says so. Do you not need other testimony? No, the Bible is enough.

If one were to hear Christ say, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” how would he know he was pardoned? Christ said so. Would you need other proof? No, for Christ said so.

The same Christ says that in order to be saved one must:

1. Believe in Him as God's Son (John 8:24).
2. Repent of sins (Luke 13:3); Acts 3:19).
3. Confess Him before men (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37).
4. Be baptized to be saved (Acts 2:38; 10:48; Rom. 6:3-6).

Christ promises to save one who obeys His word. Why fight it?

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## **Holy Spirit Baptism**

**Jerry C. Brewer**

Everything the Holy Spirit did in and upon men in the first century was for the accomplishment of His mission on earth. When that mission—the complete revelation of the plan of salvation and God's will for His people in this age—was accomplished, the Holy Spirit ceased to directly function on earth. Jesus had told His apostles that the Spirit would guide them into all further truth than He had taught them and would miraculously recall to their minds what He had taught them (John 16:12-13; 14:26). It was for that purpose that the apostles received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4).

Holy Spirit baptism was promised, and given, only to the apostles. It was the apostles to whom Jesus said, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry

ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). “...and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4-5). When Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas as an apostle, the scripture says, “...and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26). Then, the next chapter of Acts says,

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

It is to be observed that the last word of Acts 1:26 is, “apostles”, and Acts 1:1 says “**they** were all with one accord...” A pronoun has a noun as its antecedent, and the antecedent of the pronoun *they* is the noun, *apostles* in the last verse of Acts 1. *They* can mean no others. Acts 2:2 says, “where **they** were sitting”, Acts 2:3 says, “...there appeared unto **them**, cloven tongues”, and Acts 1:4 says, “**they** were all filled with the Holy Ghost” and the “Spirit gave **them** utterance” (All Emph. JCB). No other persons before or since that day had—or have been—recipients of Holy Spirit baptism. Holy Spirit baptism was an overwhelming of the apostles in power (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8), and that was God’s chosen way to qualify them to reveal to man every truth necessary to please Him and go to heaven. He who claims he has Holy Spirit baptism today should be able to demonstrate that power as did the apostles, but no one can.

When John came preaching in the Judean wilderness, vast numbers of people from Jerusalem, Judea, “and all the region round about,” came out to hear him, “and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matt. 3:56). But others came who were not baptized. Those were the rebellious Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7ff). To that mixed multitude of those who had been baptized, and those who had not, John said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire...” (Matt. 3:11). John’s was a general statement. He did **not specify the individuals** who would be baptized with either the Holy Spirit or fire.

The baptism of fire was to be the destruction of the wicked and rebellious, symbolized by the destruction of fleshly Israelism when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D.

It remained for Jesus to specify who would receive Holy Spirit baptism in His last instructions to his apostles before his ascension.

...and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4-5).

John’s general thesis in Matthew 3 was defined and narrowed by Jesus in Acts 1. John had referred to those in his audience who would be apostles and it was those to whom Jesus promised Holy Spirit baptism. No man before that time, or since, was ever promised Holy Spirit baptism, and none but the apostles, before or since, ever received it. Holy Spirit baptism was a **promise** made only to the apostles. It was **never** a command to them or anyone else. No promise is a condition of salvation, and, hence, can never be obeyed. Therefore, the baptism of the Great Commission, which men must obey in order to be saved (Mark 16:16), is **not** Holy Spirit baptism.

Those who claim Holy Spirit baptism today should be able to work “the signs of an apostle” as Paul did (2 Cor. 12:12), and should be able to infallibly recall everything Jesus taught while He was on earth (John 14:26). Those are the things Holy Spirit baptism empowered the apostles to do and any person today who makes such a claim should be able to do everything the apostles of Jesus Christ did in the New Testament. Do not be deceived by their phony claims.

# The Sin Against The Holy Ghost

A.W. Dicus

This is a much controverted subject and one in which many have been misled. Because of the danger of the erroneous teaching it is a serious one. An unpardoned sin should not be mistaken for an unpardonable sin.

Alford says, "Sin against the Holy Ghost is not one sin but a state of sin. A willful determined opposition to the power of the Holy Spirit." Lang says, "Open and full rebellion to conversion. Rebellion is opposition to ones better knowledge and conscience against the manifestations of the Holy Spirit." Such conceptions, though coming from intelligent men, are biased by sectarianism and lack of sufficient study of the Divine Scheme of Redemption.

Paul says that where no law is, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15). John says, "Sin is the transgression of the law" and "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law" (1 John 3:4). Hence where sin is, a law has been transgressed and offense comes to the maker of the law. A civil government can be offended. A temporal parent can be offended. Heavenly authority can be offended.

God decreed. Christ delivered. The Holy Spirit revealed. The Holy Spirit did not give commands, neither in the days of Christ nor since. His duty was to reveal and to confirm, and not to command; for in John 16:13, we read, "He shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak." Even His directing of the apostles was from higher authority for Jesus says, "The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16; 15:20). The Holy Spirit was sent by God (John 14:25) and was to be sent **in Christ's name**, by Christ's authority, and He was not sent until after Christ received such authority (Matt. 28:18). The direct guidance as taught by some is unfounded for the Holy Spirit brought to the Apostles **those commands previously given by Christ**. God speaks through his Son, not the Holy Spirit (Heb. 1:1). If the Holy Spirit didn't bring to the Apostles anything different, how can one expect a special revelation since the days of the apostles? If the Holy Spirit gave commands and the doctrine of direct Holy Spirit guidance was true, then a transgression of this guidance would be not only a sin, but an unpardonable sin. This is a dangerous faith and a dangerous position to take on the Sin against the Holy Spirit.

The Law of Moses could be transgressed. This was a sin against God. The command of God delivered by Christ could be rejected which was rebellion against God and Christ. To transgress a law given by God, delivered by Christ, and revealed by the Holy Spirit is complete rebellion against the Godhead from which there is no escape, neither in this world nor the world to come. God was patient with the rebellious Jew and sent his Son to plead with him. Even after the Son was rejected and His teachings ignored, God sent the Holy Spirit as the third member of the Godhead. This is the last member, hence the last agent. To reject the third member is final. The New Testament teaching is the Law of God. At the time this statement was made to the rebellious Jews (Luke 12:10), it was the law of Christ. God was speaking through His Son. After the law was revealed on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became involved and to reject it now is to reject all hopes of pardon.

To infer that a sin against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable is to intimate a greater crime in transgressing a law of the Holy Spirit than one given by God or Christ for such sins can be forgiven. This would be placing the Holy Spirit in supremacy in the Godhead. But Paul says we are Christ's, and Christ God's. The one thing not put under the feet of Christ is God. Now if the Holy Spirit is subject to the one that sent Him and Christ is subject to God and the Holy Spirit came by the authority of Christ, why should a sin against the Holy Spirit be a greater crime than a sin against either other member of the Godhead. God reserves the Omnipotence; even Christ is to deliver up the kingdom. The religious world professes to believe this but to accept the general idea of the sin against the Holy Spirit is to deny the omnipotence of God.

What then, must we conclude? The direct operation of the Holy Spirit is unscriptural. If it were true, a violation of such would be unpardonable, and to admit such rejects the omnipotence of God. God decreed, Christ delivered and the Holy Spirit revealed. We now have the revealed command in printed form, the New Testament. To reject this is to reject the Godhead bodily, hence no pardon in this world nor the world to come.

***“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy, Volume 2, Revised and Enlarged*** is now in preparation and should be ready for publication in the Fall. It will include a lot more material documenting the apostasy of mainstream churches of Christ and—like the first volume—will be **free of charge**

# Receiving the Word and the Spirit

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

A dodge hardly worth the notice has been attempted by connecting Acts 2:38 with the following verse 41, which reads, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized”—and we are told that if receiving the word is receiving the Spirit, then they received the Spirit before they were baptized! Only a tyro could emit such sophistry.

The word in verse 41 where they gladly **received** the word, is *apodechomi* which means to **welcome**, but in verse 38 “shall receive the gift” is *lambano* which means **to take**.

Another example of the first word and its meaning is in Luke 8:40, where the people **gladly received** Jesus—they welcomed Him—the same word as in Acts 2:41. But another example of the second word is in Galatians 3:2, where the Galatians **received** the Spirit through the hearing of faith—and that is the same word as in Acts 2:38. Of course the word is not the Spirit, but it is the medium through which the Spirit operates upon and dwells within us, therefore the medium of reception.

After all that has been said on Acts 2:38 from any worthy pen—McGarvey's or any other—that the gift of the Spirit means the Holy Spirit “as a gift,” the quotations still fall short of proving the assertion that it is received or dwells within us **apart from the word**.

## The Gospel Preceptor

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# Cain and Abel—A Contrast

R.L. Whiteside

Sometimes a man's confidence is in himself and his own way, rather than in Jehovah and His way. That was the trouble with Cain. He believed in the existence of Jehovah, but he undertook to worship Him in his own way. He thought to make improvement in His worship, or else he thought his way was as good as God's way. His confidence was in self, not in God.

Abel did what God said because he had faith in God. Any man now will seek to follow God's way if he has faith in God. Faith never seeks to improve on God's way, nor offers any substitute for what God requires. There are too many Cains in the religious world.



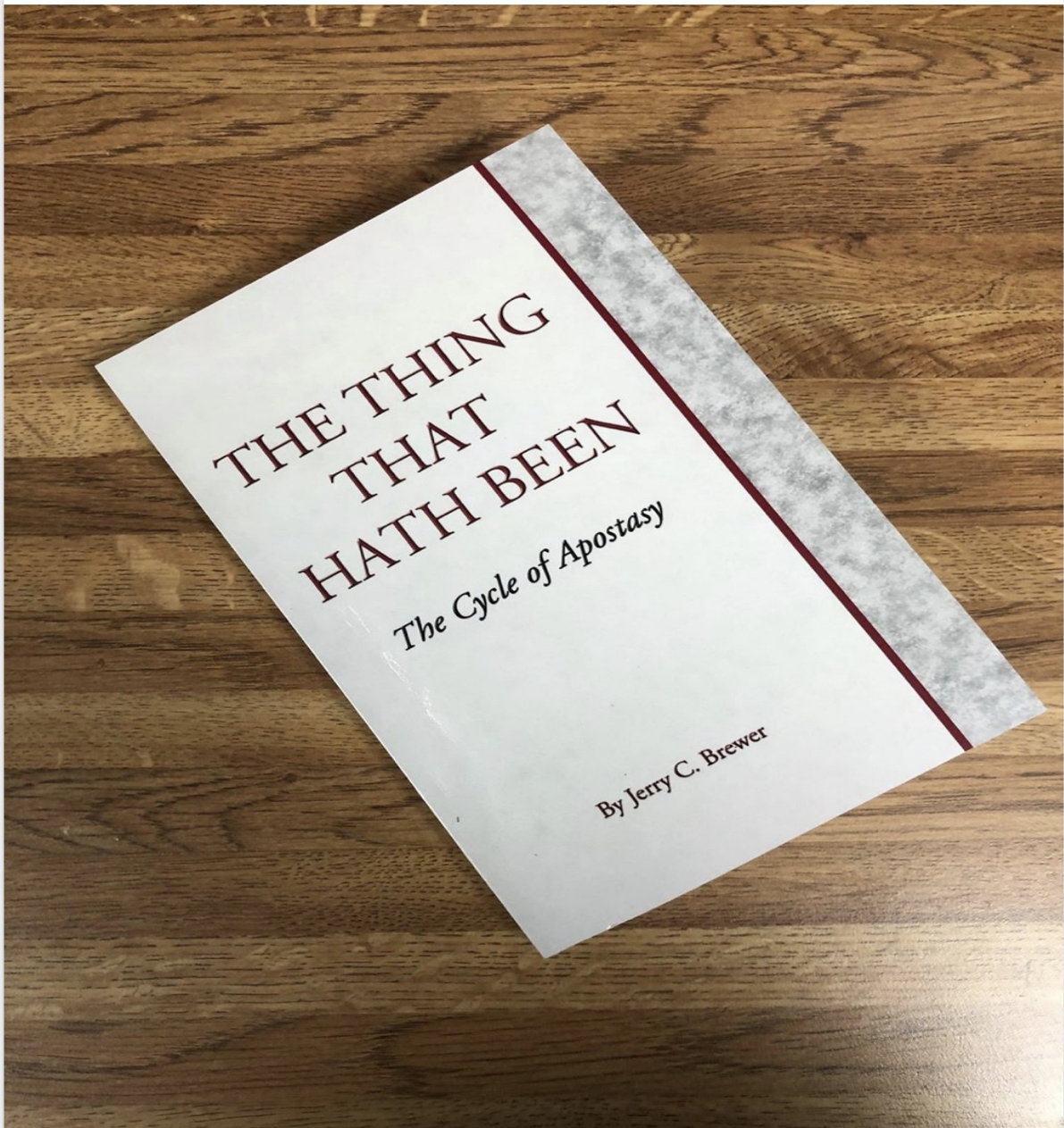
# “The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



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April 18 at 1:24 PM

*The Thing That Hath Been* is the latest book from the pen of our brother, Jerry Brewer. Subtitled, *The Cycle of Apostasy*, it is a blockbuster of 216 pages that every member of the Lord's church needs to read. In it our brother traces and documents the historical parallels between the digression/apostasy of the last half of the 19th century with the same sad drifts/departures the church has suffered in the latest 4 or 5 generations. You will find it hard to put it down once you have begun reading. Published in February, the book is already in its third printing. It is offered **free of cost** (\$3.00 p/h requested). When you receive/read yours, I think you'll want to order to give to others. Order it from Brewer Publications, 308 S. Oklahoma Ave., Elk City, OK 73644, or by email at [txjch@att.net](mailto:txjch@att.net).



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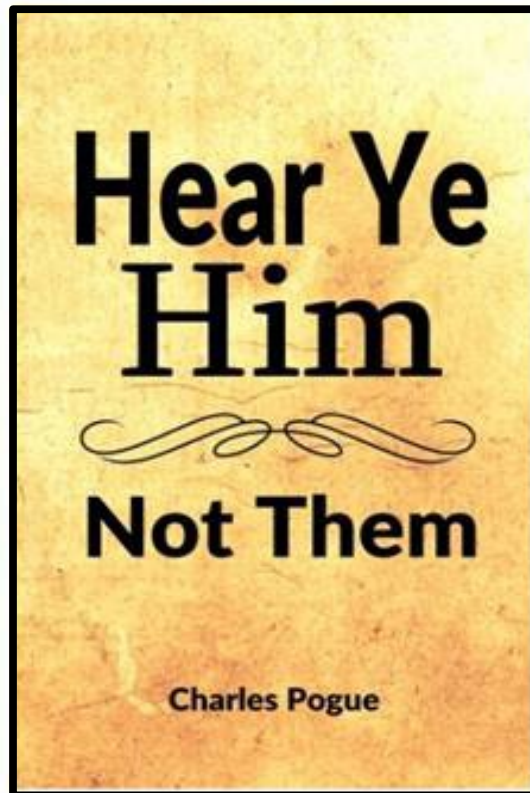
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We have known Charles and his wife, Linda, for many years. Charles is a faithful Gospel preacher and a man of conviction, and we recommend his new book to all who have a love for the Lord and His Word.

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