

Seventh Annual  
**TRUTH IN LOVE**  
LECTURESHIP

Theme:  
**Jesus “Spake  
Unto Them  
These Words”**



*May 14-18, 1997*

**PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR**

Hosted By The  
**East Hill Church Of Christ**  
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# INTRODUCTION

Our fervent desire is to faithfully serve our heavenly Father and assist others in learning the truth, obeying the truth, and remaining faithful to their Lord. Satan is our militant enemy. He seeks to distract, discourage or destroy us.

The challenging goals mentioned earlier are accomplished in many ways and through many efforts. The printed page, television, radio, video, classroom, worship, and certainly not least, in the home are but a few places where we can be taught the Word of God.

The **TRUTH IN LOVE** publication is a bi-monthly sixteen page teaching tool used throughout the United States. Over 24,000 are currently printed each issue. Over 10,000 of this number go into local Giles County homes, with the balance being sent (mostly in bundles) to hundreds of cities in many states.

The **TRUTH IN LOVE** lectureship is an annual teaching and learning opportunity, conducted the third week in May, hosted by the East Hill Church of Christ.

It has been, and continues to be, the fervent desire of the East Hill eldership, her preacher, and membership, to remain faithful and sound. We do not want to remove the “*ancient landmarks*” nor to go too far to the right or left. We do not want to bind where God has not bound, nor do we want to loose what God has bound. We sincerely desire to walk the “*strait and narrow*” way of our Lord (Matt. 7:13-14).

Satan has aggressively sought to destroy the followers of God from the beginning of time. He continues today in his militant pursuit of the destruction of all who would follow God. Especially in recent years Satan, and his servants, have sought to “*change*” the glorious

church of our Lord into a mere denomination, a religion among many religions. The doctrine of Christ has been attacked, mocked, and ridiculed. The “*old paths*” have been the blunt of many joke and/or comment.

In view of these facts, we seek in this volume to state emphatically a few truths taught by our Lord and Savior. We plead with you to read and study these chapters of valuable, basic, fundamental truths.

***A Brief Overview Of Our Series*** ~ After establishing Jesus Christ as the Lord, Master, and Savior of our life (lesson by *Joe Cox*), we will hear the Holy Word of God proclaimed as inspired, complete and THE authority in all matters of religion, by *Danny Gully*. The beautiful bride of Christ, the glorious church of our Lord will be exalted highly in the lesson by *Wayne Lankford*. An examination of what is acceptable in worship vs. perverted worship will be made by *Tom Bright*. Though persecuted, tempted and tried, Christians can be victorious ~ a lesson will be delivered by *Dave Miller*.

On Thursday, we will learn that throughout the history of mankind many have compromised or totally rejected the instruction of God. *Joe Cox* will discuss attitudes toward compromise today. *Tom Bright* will expound on the great topics of grace, law and works as demonstrated in the Bible.

Friday evening, the Lord willing, *Bobby Duncan* will speak on true, undenominational Christianity. Then, *Robert Taylor* will challenge us with an examination of our homes ~ are they paradise or torment on earth?

On Saturday, *Danny Douglas* will provoke our minds in a study of church growth as God demands vs. the way many today would have us increase. *Allen Webster* will thoroughly discuss what Jesus taught on marriage, divorce and remarriage. *Robert Taylor* will

emphasize the teachings of our Lord on the authority of elders in the Lord's church. *Albert and Zelma McDaniels* (during the same hour) will discuss what the Bible teaches about the men and women's role today. *Bobby Liddell* will challenge and frighten us with the warnings our Lord issued. *B. J. Clarke* will teach concerning what the Lord taught/wrote the seven churches of Asia about problems they faced.

On Sunday morning, *Dave Miller* will reflect the teachings of Christ on how we can overcome the obstacles of life. To bring the series to a close, *Bobby Liddell* will exhort all to be faithful to the end.

Whether you attended these lessons and heard the oral presentation, or merely reading this volume after the series concluded, we pray they will encourage you to so live as to receive heaven as your eternal reward.

Paul Sain  
Lectureship Director

## DEDICATION

We express a portion of our highest esteem and sincere appreciation to the following two faithful workers and diligent soldiers in the service of the Master.



We dedicate this ***Truth In Love*** lectureship volume to them.

Thank you brethren for your years of loyal service and faithfulness to God and His Word.



**Curtis A. Cates**  
Director of the  
Memphis School of Preaching

**Garland Elkins**  
Faculty member,  
Memphis School of Preaching.

Brethren, we remember “...without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” (I Thess. 1:3).

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# **Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”**

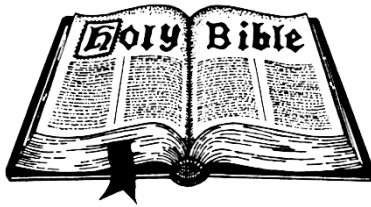
(Matthew 9:18)



**Concerning  
Jesus, God’s Son,  
And His Authority**



# Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”



Seventh Annual  
**TRUTH IN LOVE**

LECTURESHIP  
PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

Hosted By The  
**East Hill Church Of Christ**

## Chapter 1

*Jesus "Spake These Things Unto Them"*

# Lord, Savior, Master And Friend

*Joe E. Cox*



A native Texan • Has preached the gospel for almost twenty five years • Presently working with the church in Beeville, Texas • Conducted gospel series in dozens of counties of Texas • Frequent speaker in numerous brotherhood lectureships • Extensive experience in radio and television work • Author of several Bible study workbooks • Paula and Joe have four children.

**W**hat a joy it is to be able to be with my friend, Paul Sain and the good faithful brethren at the East Hill congregation in Pulaski, Tennessee! Very few things bring me as much joy as being able to preach the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ and to have the precious fellowship of my beloved brethren in the Lord.

The topic assigned to me for tonight's lesson has also brought me a considerable amount of joy and satisfaction and has even caused me to find new appreciation for the work and greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly Jesus filled a multitude of roles, and the appellations and titles of Christ number well over a hundred. Among those that stand out to us as we read through the Bible are those listed in the title of this lesson: Lord, Savior, Master and Friend. It is my responsibility in this lesson to help all to see not just the importance of these titles but also the necessity of them.

Perhaps in doing this you will not only gain knowledge but a new appreciation for the tremendous sacrifice and work accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Each one of these names and titles of Christ carries a particular importance to the work or office of our Lord. Since it would be impossible to try to list them in order of their importance, I'll take these in the order that they appear in the title of this lesson.

I. The first title mentioned is that of Lord. And the Lord said unto them:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

The Lord Himself acknowledged that He was indeed the rightful heir of the title Lord. The word Lord from the original language meant “*supremacy*.” It was used to describe one to whom things belonged, the possessor, owner, or the disposer. It also served as a title of honor expressive of respect and reverence. The apostle Paul through inspiration said:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and

things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

One of the most beautiful hymns declares:

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall!  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

By the decree of God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ is indeed Lord of all things. This includes being the Lord over all creation. This is pointed out in some Greek texts in John 1:11: "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*" When Jesus appeared on earth, He indeed came to "*His own things;*" He came to His own creation, for in His eternal pre-existence as the Word,

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:2-3).

All nature was subject to His will and command in the days of His flesh. In fact the Bible states: "*But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him*" (Matt. 8:27)! He is the Lord of creation, as Paul stated:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (Col. 1:15-17).

In one of the most awe inspiring verses in the New Testament it is spelled out that Jesus alone will one day make His appearance, and then all men will know assuredly that He is Lord and King. The Bible says: *“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”* (I Tim. 6:15).

### **Jesus Is Lord Of The Holy Scriptures**

While the great revelation was taking place before the eyes of John on the isle of Patmos, the Bible records:

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

The very life-breath of the Holy Scriptures is Jesus the Spokesman and Lawgiver of the New Covenant:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

The Old Testament was the shadow of things that were to come, but these were also the words concerning our Lord Jesus Christ:

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (Luke 24:44).

Jesus delegated to His apostles certain authority and power. Before Jesus gave Himself to be offered on the cross of crucifixion, He left His apostles with this promise:

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:25-26).

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26).

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).

The apostles were going to speak the words provided for them through inspiration. It was not their words but the words of Christ Himself they would be speaking and writing.

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost (Mark 13:11).

And yet, we already know the Holy Spirit would not speak of Himself, but He would speak the words of Christ. The Scriptures both Old and New owe their integrity to our Lord Jesus Christ because as Christ fulfilled the Old to the nth degree, He has forever given

us assurance that the New will also be fulfilled. *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

### **Jesus Is Lord Of The Church**

Jesus Christ is also the only *“head”* and authority of the church which is His body. As Paul announced:

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:19-23).

Reigning over the church is one Lord, and church is the one body of the Lord. The intrinsic unity of the church is demanded because there is only One body and One Lord. Jesus gave His life’s blood to purchase the divine institution known as the church.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

On the isle of Patmos the apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and heard behind him a great voice as a trumpet (Rev. 1:10). As he turned to see the voice that spake, he saw seven golden candlesticks, and

in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks he beheld,

...one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire (Rev. 1:13-14).

And in His hand He held seven stars. When John saw this sight, it states that he fell at His feet as one that were dead. When Christ spoke to John He told him the meaning of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks, saying:

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).

The only glimpse that we have of Christ after His ascension to the Father (Dan. 7:13-14) is of Him appearing unto the apostle John as He revealed the apocalypse to him. The fascinating thing about this appearance is that He was standing in the midst of the churches. Christ is still Lord of His church, and we have His own Words as assurance that He will always be gathered with His people: *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matt. 18:20).

### **Jesus Is Lord Of Our Lives**

Jesus is Lord of our life by invitation only. By that I simply mean that Jesus takes no one by force in the Christian age. *“And he said to them all, If any man will*



*come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”* (Luke 9:23). Many choose to make other things and people the lords in their life, and this is certainly their choice to make. No one else can make that choice for them. The acceptance of Jesus as being Lord of lives is the same choice we each must make concerning salvation. In Paul’s letter to Titus he acknowledged that the responsibility rests entirely on man because God has done His part in the plan of redemption:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

It is amazing for me today to look around our great brotherhood and see what the Lordship of Jesus Christ has come to mean to so many. In our list of priorities Jesus is probably struggling to cling to fifth or sixth position. People seem far more interested in jobs, hobbies, recreation, families, friends or television. Getting people to devote even one hour a day to the study of the Words of salvation has become increasingly harder to achieve. In fact many don’t even have a prayer life separate and apart from Sunday or Wednesday night. Oh, we’ll raise our voices to the rafters while we sing the words:

Take my life and let it be Consecrated,  
Lord, to Thee;  
Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart, it is thine own,  
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord,  
I pour At Thy feet its treasure-store  
Take myself, and I will be Ever, only,  
all for Thee.<sup>3</sup>

But I guarantee you that many who will sing that song with great gusto and bravado don't mean a single word they are singing. Their idea of having Jesus as Lord of their lives means, "*Lord, whatever you want me to do, I'll do it; just let me do this or that first, and Lord, I'll give you all the time that is rightfully Yours just as soon as I do this or that.*" God has blessed our lives beyond the scope of our imaginations time and time again. We have more, own more, do more and are blessed more than any generation that has ever lived on the face of planet earth. Yet, we have grown hard and selfish, miserly and unthankful, refusing to recognize that everything we possess including our time is due to the blessing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I don't know what you grew up with, whether rich or poor, strong or weak. But I know what I grew up with. We lived in a box-and-plank house with window casings that had to be stuffed with rags and old newspapers to keep the winter winds from frosting our nose-hair. The old linoleum on the floor of that house would take on a life of its own when a norther blew in. It would rise in the middle, puffing up from the gusts of winds that would blow. It would creak and groan and sound like someone was walking across it. The only heat we had was from a fireplace and a kerosene heater. The very best china that we possessed was bought from the five-and-dime or came out of an oatmeal box. Our crystal consisted in a set of snuff glasses that we received when my great-grandmother has consumed all the snuff out of it. In the

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summer time we often slept outside to take advantage of the breeze because we would literally be covered with sweat if we tried sleeping in the house. The winters were too cold, and the summers were too hot. The only air-conditioning we had depended on how fast your arm moved and how long we could keep it up as we waved that funeral-parlor fan back and forth. To take a trip to town took all day; we didn't run in and buy a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk. People worked for what they had and truly recognized the importance of remembering Who was responsible for the blessings they enjoyed.

People may say that Jesus is the Lord of their lives, but saying and doing are two different things (James 1:25). When we let the word of our Lord suffer because we are more worried about making boat payments, car payments and trying to buy every new gadget that comes along, who is Lord of our lives? When we have missionaries that are willing to go and brethren who have the ability to send but refuse to give back unto God as they have been blessed—who is Lord of our lives? When we have people living within a block of our buildings who have never heard the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ and yet we are so busy doing the devil's work we don't have time to teach them, I know the lord of their life; I don't even have to guess!

Letting Jesus be Lord of our life means that we recognize His sovereignty over us. Living a life of dedication to His service, we surrender our will to His will. Taking up the cross has reference to the crucifying of one's own desires, goals and life and letting Jesus rule in every domain within our physical, mental, and spiritual sphere. Listen carefully to these word from the apostle Paul:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

That's what it means to let Jesus be the Lord of your life! Giving up, giving over, and letting go, of our life for His.

II. Now the next in our study is that of Jesus being the Savior. And certainly the words of inspiration bear this out: "*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*" (I John 4:14).

Indeed the picture the Bible presents of Jesus includes the most precious of all; that of our salvation from damnation of hell itself. Paul in the book of Romans, says of his transgressions and of ours: "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). We have all fallen short of the glory of God. The doctrine of evolution teaches us that we have evolved upward to become what we are, yet the truth of the matter is contrary to this teaching. We have not grown upward; we have fallen! Transgression became the common lot of man, and the blanket of universal condemnation hangs like a mist over every man, woman and child above the age of accountability. Not because we have inherited sins as Calvinism teaches, rather it is because each one of us has violated the sacred and holy commandments of God Almighty. We are the transgressors, the law violators, criminals in the eyes of God.

The sin we committed became a barrier, a great gulf that separated us from God because the perfect righteousness of God will not tolerate the unrighteousness of man. This gap was so vast that the Scriptures teach

that God would not even hear our prayers. The great prophet Isaiah lays down all these principles in four short verses of the Old Testament:

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity (Isa. 59:1-4).

In God's righteousness it was impossible for Him to save man in his sin, so this great gap had to be bridged in some way if man was ever going to be saved.

And the fact is that if any one of us were to give his life and body to be burned for a sacrifice for the sins of the world, it would profit nothing. All we have to offer God is a blemished imperfect sacrifice. We have stained the garments of our righteousness; we have destroyed the protection that was ours when we were born into this world by the committing of sin. It was not within the power of man to save himself. I cannot offer sacrifice for my sins any better than you can for I am as blemished as you are. This is the reason that the Scriptures teach us: *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (I Tim. 2:5).

The gap can only be bridged through that one redeemer, our only Savior Jesus Christ. It must have come as quite a shock to a group of shepherds one night as they were grazing their herds in the Judean hills, to

hear the announcement that was proclaimed before them. But the shock quickly turned into the joy of the ages. The Scriptures tell us that:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:8-11).

John the Baptizer announced to the world that this barrier of “sin” (singular, that separated us from God) would be taken away by the one known as Jesus the Christ. *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Jesus forever settled the question of there being any other avenue of salvation when He announced that He was the **only** way to the Father.

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

Anyone who has ever been in a life threatening situation knows what it means to be saved from certain destruction. Whether it be from an auto wreck, drowning, or being in the line of fire from weapons, we realize the sacrifice and unselfishness that takes place when someone

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prevents our physical death. But, how much more thankful we should be when someone has given their life to save us from an eternity in damnation. *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt. 10:28).

Again the song writers have expressed these thoughts so beautifully in words that touch our hearts and make us realize the true value of having a Savior:

He left the Father, with all His riches,  
With calmness sweet and serene,  
Came down from heaven and gave his life-blood  
To make the vilest sinner clean.  
O what a Savior, O hallelujah,  
His heart was broken on Calvary;  
His hands were nail scarred, His side was riven,  
He gave His life-blood for even me!

Man’s hope of salvation lies nowhere else but in Christ Jesus our Lord and only Savior. Without obedience to His blessed will we will be forever lost in the devil’s hell. Jesus said in words that are uncompromising: *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15).

III. Over sixty times in the Gospel accounts you can find Jesus being either referred to directly or indirectly as Master. In the King James Version of the Bible the word master is derived from two different Greek words. The Greek word **didaskalos** is translated some forty times as teacher, ten times as master, and seven as doctor. The word is most often defined as *“one that teaches the things concerning God.”* The other Greek word translated Master is **kathegetes**. While it is only found three times in the Greek New Testament, it is always translated into English as Master. And it means *“a guide or instructor, or teacher.”*

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But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ (Matt. 23:8-10).

Indeed Christ is the only Master, He alone is the spokesman for the New Covenant, and none other has been granted “*all authority*” as has been given unto our Lord (Matt. 28:18). One of the most incredible events in the history of man took place even before the death of our Lord in the Palestinian hills away from the city of Jerusalem. This event holds not only a great deal of mystery but also reveals to us the true Master, on whom our attention should be focused. The Gospel of Matthew gives us this account:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Matt 17:1-8).



Everytime I read this beautiful account, awe and wonder sweep over my soul. The glory of our Lord was being revealed before the very eyes of the three disciples. The effulgence of the Godhead made His face luminous and shone through His garments. Truly Christ was God in human form. Long after this glorious event occurred, the apostles still stood in amazement. In fact John wrote:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Peter too, held his eyewitness account of this event, a sacred and wonderful privilege as he recorded for us these words:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (II Peter 1:16-18).

Peter’s suggestion that day on the holy mount was a wrong assumption on his part, but it was made in fear and in the excitement of the moment. In fact the inspired writer Luke added to his account of this even the words “*not knowing what he said*” (Luke 9:33). Peter was still thinking of Jesus **and** Moses or of Jesus **and** Elijah, or of Jesus **and** both of them. In other words, it appears that Peter was suggesting some kind of equality for Jesus to share with the great law giver, Moses, and the great prophet of God, Elijah. There was no need for Jesus to

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rebuke the mistake of Peter because “*while he was yet speaking*” the cloud overshadowed them, and the voice to still all voices rolled out of the clouds to announce the resignations of Moses and Elijah and the Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Hear ye Him*” is all that needed to be said then or forever. The true Master, the Teacher of the ages, was here to announce the terms and conditions for entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of Heaven.

When the three looked up, the text states “*they saw no man, save Jesus only!*” The writer of the letter to the Hebrews encourages us with these words:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

No teacher ever touched the hearts of the world like our Lord Jesus Christ. Time after time the Scriptures reveal that the people were “*amazed*” or “*astonished*” at His teaching. Although I am one of those people that would like to be able to go back in time and just hear the voice of our Lord and to see Him while He inhabited His fleshly body, I am convinced that it was not His voice or manner of speech that attracted the people to Him, nor do I believe that it was His charisma and charm. It was not **how** He was speaking; it was **what** He was speaking.

When the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to arrest Jesus, they came back empty handed. And it

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was not because they did not find Him; He was in plain sight. Returning without Jesus, the chief priests and Pharisees demanded to know why. The reason given for His absence is not only astute but it is also the truth of the ages: *“The officers answered, Never man spake like this man”* (John 7:46). And such is the truth of the situation; no man had ever spoken with the authority or character of our Lord. And in His own words He forever made it clear that He and He alone is Master and Lord: *“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am”* (John 13:13).

IV. Of all the appellations and titles given to our Lord perhaps none is as familiar to us and as meaningful to us on an everyday basis as that of Friend! Friendship means so much to us in the flesh. When I use the word friend, I do not take it lightly. Rather when I use it, it has a definite meaning and weight behind it. I know literally thousands of people by acquaintance, by name or face. Some I am intimate with; some I merely recognize. But out of all the thousands of people I know, only a handful do I count as my friends. Perhaps I’m using a different definition than you, or perhaps my standard is different than the one you use. However, if I were to ask you to list the names of all the people in this world that you can count on day-in and day-out, without fail, perhaps to guard a secret that you possess, or that you would be willing to place your life in their hands, or that would be willing to take your place in front of a firing squad, how many names do you really come up with? This is the definition that Jesus used: *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13).

Of the many promises that Jesus left us, none brings

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us more peace and tranquility than the one He made shortly before He ascended back to the Father: “...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

The writer of the epistle of Hebrews put it in these words:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5).

Through trials, tribulations, distresses, and even death, Jesus is there! He is the friend of sinners offering them refuge from their sin-filled lives. To the drunkard He offers sobriety, to the fornicator He offers peace, to the thief He offers pardon, to the murderer He offers forgiveness, to the downtrodden and depressed He offers hope. To the sinner He offers salvation. And all of this can be ours if we will but obey His blessed will because He is indeed our Friend of Friends:

The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7:34).

This portrayal of Jesus was given by His enemies, but part of it was right! The sinner never had a better friend, nor the common man anyone he could depend on more, than Jesus. Yet, there is something else about the friendship of Jesus that must be discussed in this lesson. In the beautiful book of Proverbs there is a statement made that gives us a clue as to what it takes to have a Friend like Jesus. The inspired writer said:

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

In order to claim Jesus as our Friend, we must also be a friend to Him! In fact this is one of the qualifying statements that Jesus Himself pointed out: “*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*” (John 15:14).

The greatest example of this that is recorded in the pages of inspiration is that of Abraham:

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God (James 2:23).

In fact if we ever hope to have Jesus as our friend, we must understand that all friendship with those things that God opposes must be severed! We cannot be a friend and cling to the allurements of evil, the sin and defilements of this world. The book of James also records this stern and fearful warning:

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

Paul said in his letter to the church at Ephesus: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11).

There is no sweeter song that we sing than the one entitled “What A Friend We Have In Jesus.” No other song to me either in words or melody provokes such a feeling of our failure in being as loyal a friend to Jesus as He is to us:

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear;  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer.  
Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged:  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful,  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

Jesus is our friend, and He proved it to the world when He laid down His life on the cross of crucifixion, suffering the humiliation, shame, pain and anguish that He should not have received. He gave His life that we might have ours in eternity. What a friend we really have in Jesus! Have you given unto Him anything that He did not require of Himself? Have you sacrificed anything to Him that He did not first sacrifice for you? Isn't it time that we recognize the fact that we have not been very good friends with Jesus and ask for His forgiveness and render all the obedience that He demands of us? What a friend we have in Jesus if we will only take advantage of the friendship that He offers!

## Chapter 2

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# The Scriptures: Inspired, Complete!

*Dan Gulley*



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**T**he Bible has repeatedly proven to be the Book that can't be buried! Almost two thousand years ago the apostle Peter challenged readers in his generation with the indestructible nature of the Word of God,

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (I Peter 1:24-25).

The Bible is indestructible. Throughout the centuries skeptics and unbelievers have repeatedly sought to bury it under an avalanche of criticism and opposition. But the Bible is tough and tenacious. It just won't be buried. As Bernard Ramm said, *“A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays*

*put. No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.”*

### **Not Of Human Origin**

**Galatians 1:6ff** finds the apostle Paul riled up and speaking very strong words:

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. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

A study of Galatians reveals Judaizers in Galatia were suggesting the gospel was insufficient to save people. As a result they sought to attach riders and amendments to it! Some were also seeking to discredit Paul as an apostle. Galatians 5:1-4 and 6:12-13 effectively summarize the problem – these teachers had a low view of the gospel. They denied its inspiration and completeness. They wanted to supplement the gospel with a return to circumcision and other tenets of the law of Moses. In effect these teachers felt the gospel as Paul preached it was insufficient and irrelevant. They wanted a revised, amended gospel that allowed for the ideas, teachings, philosophies, and traditions of men to be equal in authority to the gospel.

But Paul will have none of it. By suggesting the gospel was incomplete the insufficient these teachers were

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troubling the church and perverting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7). And they also poked Paul in the eye and riled him up! The result is the smoking gun we know as Galatians. In this passage Paul calls down a curse from heaven itself on anyone who would tamper with or alter in any way the gospel as preached by himself and other inspired spokesmen. Paul will not allow for a watered-down gospel that exalts the opinions and ideas of men while denying the inspiration and all-sufficiency of the gospel of Christ.

Paul’s words are especially relevant in our own time. The church today finds herself surrounded by a pluralistic, choice-oriented culture that lives and dies by public-opinion polls and surveys. The religious world in general and some churches of Christ have been influenced by modern day Judaizers who would have us believe the gospel is no longer sufficient or complete. There are some who advance not just a change in methods or techniques in spreading the gospel, but changes in fundamental matters as relates to the plan of salvation, the leadership of the church, and the nature of New Testament worship in spirit and in truth. After all, times have changed, people have changed, things have changed. Therefore, we are told, we must also change.

But Paul demands in Galatians 1:6-9 that we examine the goods before we buy them. What are we being asked to change – method or message? We must preach the same gospel Paul preached. Preaching that gospel will no doubt offend some, as it did in his day. But not preaching it, or preaching a perverted gospel will offend God and bring down heaven’s curse!

It is imperative we preach the word of God for two reasons: first, it is inspired. And second, it is complete.

## **The Scriptures: Inspired!**

The Scriptures are inspired of/by God! You can't go to a book store and buy a book like the Bible! Paul vigorously asserts in Galatians 1:11-12:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12).

The Bible is not of human origin. Paul didn't formulate his message by taking opinion polls or listening to church growth experts. And he didn't get it by studying at the feet of some brilliant human theologian who invented or discovered the gospel by means of human logic and intellect. No, Paul says the gospel is the result of revelation on the part of Jesus Christ. Therefore men have no authority to change, alter, or amend it.

Paul's high regard for Scripture as inspired by God is plainly and forcefully stated in II Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

In this passage Paul points to God as the source and origin of the Scriptures! How much of the Scripture is inspired by God? **All** of it! Old and New Testament, all sixty-six books, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21! "*Scripture*" (Greek *graphe*) was commonly used in the early church not only of the Old Testament but also of God's word as revealed in the New Testament. Jesus said in John 12:48-50:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:48-50).

The words of Christ in the flesh are the words of God the Father. In this passage Christ makes clear that the message/words He spoke originated not on Earth but in Heaven. They carry the highest authority possible – that of the Father who sent Him. They are all-authoritative and will be present at the Judgment Day. Therefore to reject Jesus’ words is to reject God’s word.

Scripture is “*given by inspiration of God.*” The Greek term *theopnuestos* literally means “*breathed out by God*” or “*God-breathed.*” *Theopnuestos* is a combination of two Greek words – *theos* meaning “*God*” and *pneustos* meaning “*breathed.*” Thus, according to B. B. Warfield in **The Inspiration And Authority Of The Bible** (p. 133),

What it says of Scripture is, not that it is ‘breathed into by God’ or is the product of the Divine ‘inbreathing’ into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, ‘God-breathed,’ the product of the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them...When Paul declares, then, that ‘every Scripture’ is the product of the Divine breath, ‘is God-breathed,’ he asserts with us as much

energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically divine operation.

Thus the Scriptures are of a unique kind of inspiration not to be confused with or compared to the inspiration of human authors as Shakespeare, etc.

It is especially helpful to note the extended context of Paul's words in II Timothy 3:16-17. Beginning in 3:1ff we gain insight as to the kind of moral culture and atmosphere surrounding Timothy (to whom Paul was writing) and the church in Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3; II Tim. 1:2). Timothy (as a preacher) and the church at Ephesus were truly in a difficult situation. However, Paul clearly does not despair but has great confidence in Scripture's ability to sustain the church! He clearly seeks to boost Timothy's view of and confidence in Scripture's ability to profit the church in spite of problems she faces from inside and outside!

**II Timothy 4:1-5** is an often quoted passage containing the famous phrase, "*Preach the word.*" That command takes on new meaning for our own day when we realize the original context in which they were spoken. Paul was not writing to a preacher and church who lived/preached in a "faith-friendly" environment. Paul warned "*perilous times*" were coming (3:1ff). And he also warned

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Tim. 4:3-4).

In the face of these very real problems, how can Timothy and the church cope? Should they take a survey and adapt their message? Should they compromise the

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message lest they fail to attract the masses? Perhaps tone down the high demands of the gospel and appoint a committee to study ways to make the worship services more “user-friendly?” In his efforts to equip and empower Timothy, Paul uses none of the approaches and displays none of the concerns which have become so commonplace in modern times. His focus is on the all-sufficient nature of Scripture – it is inspired of God...it is profitable...it will completely equip the man of God for every good work. Therefore, according to Paul, the need of the hour in the face of perilous times is for preachers to “**PREACH THE WORD**” – concentrate on making the gospel available and don’t worry about making it acceptable.

**II Peter 1:20-21** gives further evidence of the fact that the Scriptures are inspired by God. Peter said,

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:20-21).

These verses point out the absolutely trustworthy nature of the word of God. Men did not manufacture prophecy and/or Scripture! No prophecy of Scripture was of any private interpretation! “*Interpretation*” here is from the Greek word *epilusis* and means explanation or exposition. *Epilusis* comes from the root word *epiluo* which primarily signified to untie a knot, to unloose a bundle so as to disclose what it contains. The bundles the prophets untied and disclosed did not come from their own mind or explanation. Rather “*they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” *Moved* is from the Greek word *phero* which means to bear or carry along as a sailing vessel

before the wind or as a stick of wood upon a stream of water.

Peter asserts that the writers of Scripture were borne along or impelled by the Holy Spirit's own power, not acting, speaking, or writing according to their own wills but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by the Holy Spirit. This is verbal inspiration! It is affirmed by Peter that men spoke but that what they spoke was from God and guided by the Holy Spirit. This same truth was affirmed by Paul in **I Corinthians 2:13** –

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:13).

How God did this moving and guiding is not altogether revealed. But we must not allow the mystery of the “*how*” to divert attention from the reality of the “*what*” – God's word to man is revealed in the Holy Bible! What Scripture says God says and what God says Scripture says! Because of these truths we can be sure the Bible will always be relevant and bring to bear upon life information that is unchanging and always effective in its application to the human situation! Scripture is relevant and trustworthy in every generation because it originated with and is inspired by God! According to Brother B. C. Goodpasture, the Old Testament contains more than 2500 expressions such as “*Thus saith the Lord,*” “*God spake,*” “*The Lord testified,*” etc., (Tract – “*The Inspiration Of The Bible,*” by B. C. Goodpasture, p. 1, Gospel Advocate Company).

The continued existence of the Bible bears powerful testimony that it was and is a Book from God! It has been said that the devil would not write such a book as

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the Bible, that man could not write such a book – therefore God is its author! The Bible lives on generation after generation in spite of repeated and relentless efforts to ban and burn it. Like the famous Timex watches, the word of God takes a lickin’ and keeps on tickin’! Like the energizer Bunny, the Bible just keeps going and going! Man has made repeated efforts to destroy and be rid of the word of God. In Acts 12 Herod beheaded James and locked Peter up in prison intending to kill him also after the Passover. By the time chapter 12 of Acts closes, Herod has died a miserable death, struck by an angel of the Lord and eaten of worms. *“But the word of God grew and multiplied”* (Acts 12:24). And so it goes with those who oppose the eternal and all-powerful God who authored and inspired the Bible. In A. D. 303 the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to destroy Christians and their Bible. The persecution that followed was brutal and many Christians died. Over a burned and extinguished Bible Diocletian built a monument on which he wrote the triumphant words, *“The name Christian is extinguished.”* Twenty-five years later, Diocletian was dead and the new Emperor Constantine commissioned fifty copies of the Bible be prepared at government expense.

In 1776 Voltaire, the French philosopher boldly asserted, *“One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible left in all the earth except one that is looked upon by an anti-quarian curiosity seeker.”* One hundred years later, Voltaire is dead and his own house and press were being used to print and store Bibles by the Geneva Bible Society. One hundred years from the day of Voltaire’s prediction, the first edition of his work sold for 11 cents in Paris but the British government paid the

czar of Russia \$500,000 for an ancient Bible manuscript.

In every century – from the first to the present – critics and enemies of the Bible and the cross have sought to crucify, bury, and drive nails in the coffin of the word of God, to bury them once and for all. However, if we are wise, we will note that the powerful rulers who once dared defy God are all dead and gone – the Pharaohs, the Nebuchadnezzars, the Herods, the Pilates, the Neros – but the Bible goes on and on! In modern times we need look no further than India, Russia, and Eastern Europe. Hitler is dead. Mussolini is dead. Kruschew is dead. The Iron Curtain that once sought to lock the gospel out of Russia and the former Soviet block countries has rusted! The Berlin Wall has collapsed. The Cold War has thawed. Those who for decades in this century endured the heavy hand of communism are begging for Bibles!

History has proven Peter's claim that the word of the Lord is indestructible – the word of the Lord endures forever (I Peter 1:25)! *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psm. 119:89). *“...the scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35). *“Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”* (Jer. 23:29). To listen to some Christians would lead us to believe the word of God is in danger of being crushed. Some spend much time and energy wondering out loud what is going to happen to the church and the Bible. The message of Scripture and the testimony of human history is that nothing is going to happen to the word of God! It is inspired of God and it is indestructible! Our concern ought to be for those who oppose and ignore and neglect the word of God – in the church and out! As an unknown author has eloquently written:



Last Eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.  
“How many anvils have you had,” said I  
“To wear and batter all these hammers so?”  
“Just one,” said he, and then with twinkling eye,  
“The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.”  
And so, thought I, the anvil of God's word,  
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;  
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed...the hammers gone.

### **The Scriptures: Complete!**

The Bible is not only inspired by God, but it is complete and comprehensive in the spiritual provisions it brings to mankind! Jesus made a sweeping promise to His apostles in John 16:13 –

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).

John 17:17 identifies the truth the Holy Spirit would guide them into as the word of God! Jude advanced the same idea when he called on every Christian to be a defense lawyer for the gospel and to “...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). “*The faith*” in this passage stands for the gospel – that objective body of truth revealed to man by God in the New Testament by means of inspiration and is the “one faith” spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 4:5 (see also Gal. 1:23; Phil. 1:27, etc.). II Peter 1:3 asserts that God's,

...divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (II Peter 1:3).

Taken together, these passages present the highest possible view of Scripture. They make clear that the body of truth delivered to mankind through the apostles would be authoritative – its origin was God. And it would be complete and comprehensive – encompassing all truth. Therefore, as it relates to life and godliness, to salvation and serving and worshipping God, the Bible serves as a complete and authoritative guide.

The church of Christ must not forget this fundamental truth. God needs no advisers or modern day experts to bring Him up to speed and make Him more in touch with what human beings need and want in worship and religion. The modern day church finds herself living through an era that demands a user-friendly religion. A convenience-oriented culture wants a church that preaches a lite-gospel and a user-friendly cross. And, pollsters and church growth experts tell us, if the modern man and woman are expected to take time to get up on Sunday, dress the kids, and get to church on their only day off from work, what they get when they get there had better be relevant if we want them to come back.

And the church in some places is responding to these demands. Although we preach that the Bible is the inspired and complete word of God, some trivialize the message by reducing it to a self-help manual on how to feel good about yourself, how to find high self-esteem, how to find self-fulfillment, how to win at life, how to succeed in business or how to arrange your daily schedule or how to do a hundred other things. We can find books

and courses and advice on how to do all these things. What we cannot find, except in the Bible, is an inspired, infallible complete revelation from Heaven telling us how we, as frail and sinful human beings, can be saved from our sins and reconciled to a holy God.

### **Answering Life’s Most Perplexing Questions**

The Bible gives a clear and complete answer to three questions men have pondered throughout the ages – where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going? As to the first question the Bible says,

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...So God created man in His own image...male and female created he them (Gen. 1:1, 27).

Some of the world’s most brilliant people are paid hundreds of thousands of dollars per year to use seven and eight syllable words to explain man’s origin from a pile of inorganic material or a slimy primordial chemical soup. But evolutionary theories are incomplete and unfounded on fact.

As to the question why am I here the Bible again comes through loud and clear –

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

Scriptures like these give man a high and holy calling – one that brings not momentary fulfillment based on fleeting and temporary things, but a calling that brings purpose and meaning to this life and beyond. We are

here to know and glorify God and enjoy fellowship with Him – now and forever!

As to where life is going the Bible is again clear and complete.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (II Cor. 5:10).

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

Preaching and worship that fails to repeatedly press these issues upon the hearts of men and women may be trendy and popular, but it is not relevant and it is incomplete!

### **Answering Life's Most Urgent Questions**

The Bible is an amazing and awesome book. It addresses many important issues. It contains teaching and counsel on everything from happiness to marriage. It helps us deal with stress, problems, and pain. It contains sound and solid teaching that will help you deal with your emotional, biological, and psychological needs as a human being. The Bible will lead you to be a good citizen and a good neighbor.

But there is one question the Bible raises again and again and again – so often it is obvious that is a big issue with God. That question is, *“What must I do to be saved, to be right with God, to have forgiveness of my sins, to save my soul?”* God’s word not only raises this question repeatedly – it clearly and completely answers it.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in

Christ Jesus (II Tim. 3:15).

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Psm. 19:7).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

God’s word deals with issues which concern the soul and where it will be for eternity. The church (and gospel preachers) has heard lately from some even inside her membership that we are not answering the questions people are asking. That accusation reminds me of the story of a man who came to a city street corner. He took his place beside a man with a dog sitting beside him, waiting for the traffic light to change. *“Does your dog bite?”* he inquired of the man. *“No”* came the quick reply. So the questioner reached down to pat the dog on the head and barely got it back in time to avoid the vicious snarl and bite. *“I thought you said your dog doesn’t bite!”* the first man protested loudly. *“He doesn’t,”* stated the second man unapologetically. *“But that’s not my dog.”* The church has never been called by God to answer all the questions the world is asking. The world is constantly asking the wrong questions! What we are called to do is to preach a glorious message about a God who came seeking us in Jesus Christ and who has acted to save us from our sins. We are called to preach a message the world cannot get anywhere else in town – the message

that tells people how to be saved. The church is relevant so long as she is raising and answering the questions God pressed upon men in Scripture. We must not diminish the gospel of Christ by attempting to win people by asking and answering a different set of questions than the one the Bible happens to answer!

The urgent question of salvation is raised and answered clearly in the Bible. Acts 2:1-47 records the very first time the gospel was preached after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. And analysis of that masterful sermon reveals that it was: (1) 2:22 – Christ-centered – at least 21 direct or indirect references to Christ in the 16 verses from 2:22 to 2:38! (2) It was Bible-based (2:17-21; 2:25-28; 2:34 – all quotations out of the Old Testament) – Peter obviously didn't mind quoting Scripture in his sermon! (3) 2:22-23 – It was controversial in content and subject matter! Jesus of Nazareth was the most controversial of topics at this time! Peter obviously had not heard the church growth gurus' advice that preachers should avoid controversial topics from the pulpit if you want the baby-boomers to keep coming! The gospel addresses controversial topics. Jesus addressed controversial topics. Let me challenge you to think of one sin that is not controversial and does not have at least some advocates who are seeking to legitimize and normalize it! The question for preachers and elders and members of the church is not what are culture, the public, or church growth experts saying about controversial subjects like adultery, homosexuality, abortion, drug abuse, pornography, marriage, divorce, etc. The question is rather what does the word of God say and demand that we say? (4) 2:23, 36 – It was direct and aggressive in

delivery! Peter’s approach was not based on pop psychology or the audience’s need for good self-esteem! This preacher obviously was out to confront his audience with the seriousness of their situation – they were in sin and only by trusting Christ and obeying His gospel could they escape their predicament! That message is always relevant! (5) 2:40 – It was a long sermon! Peter’s intention was not to “share a few devotional thoughts” nor was he seeking to help his audience feel better about themselves after a week in the rat-race. He is facing men who are in an urgent situation and he is urgently pressing the claims and commands of Him who is the only way out of sin! Peter is taking time to be holy even as the world (and perhaps some of the brethren) rushed on! (6) 2:37-38 – It was a sermon that raised and answered life’s most urgent question! It is worth noting what Peter did not say in response to the crowd’s question, “*What shall we do?*” He did not tell them to have faith or believe or simply trust Christ or say a prayer or come forward and get some literature. To put it bluntly he did not say any of the things preachers today commonly tell people who believe in Christ and who want to be saved. His answer is,

...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Though a controversial answer, may we never forget this is an inspired answer! The apostles are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2:1ff)! Life’s most urgent question is what must I do to have remission of sins and be saved? And Heaven’s inspired, clear, and complete answer is,

...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

## Conclusion

There are many other important matters about which the Bible gives an inspired and complete answer. When discussing sin, salvation, heaven, hell, worship, the church or Christian living, the Scriptures are our final, complete, and authoritative guide. We have no authority from God to declare anything about God and His nature, His gospel, His church, nor the worship and service He desires except what we have heard from Him in the gospel.

Jesus said, “...Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Paul told Timothy at first century Ephesus, a pluralistic culture much like our own, to “preach the word” (II Tim. 4:2). Why? Because the Scriptures are inspired and complete. We must strive more to bring Christ to the whole world and worry less about bringing the whole world to Christ. We must always seek to make the gospel available and not worry about making it acceptable. We must be ambassadors of God’s will – even when preaching it creates ill-will among men.

There is a story credited to holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, that brings our task into sharp focus. Wiesel tells of a just man who comes to Sodom hoping to save the city. He pickets. What else can he do? He goes from street to street, from marketplace to marketplace, shouting, “Men and women, repent. What you are doing is wrong. It will kill you. It will destroy you.” They laugh,



but he continues to shout and preach until one day a child stops him. *“Poor stranger,”* said the child. *“Don’t you see it’s useless?”* The man replies yes. *“Then why do you go on?”* the child asks. *“In the beginning I was convinced I would change them,”* the man replies. *“Now I go on shouting because I don’t want them to change me.”*

Someone will change someone. We have the inspired and complete word of God. May God help us use it to change this world – one sinner at a time – even as we preach it to keep the world from changing us.

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever (Psm. 12:6-7).

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matt. 24:35).

**Jesus “Spake These  
Things Unto Them”**

(Matthew 9:18)



**Concerning  
The Church**



## Chapter 3

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# **The Church, His Bride, The Glorious Body**

*Wayne Lankford*



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**T**here are many subjects today which we should preach often with fervor to every generation until Jesus comes. One of these subjects is the truth about the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles stressed and emphasized in their teaching and preaching the importance of the church. When something is stressed over and over by the apostles, such should indicate to us the importance of our emphasizing it repeatedly in our day also. Matthew records the words of Jesus who gave the apostles a promise concerning the importance of his church.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter

answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:13-18).

The church is God’s new creation (II Cor. 5:17). It was established by the authority of Christ (Matt. 16:18; 28:18); and built upon the foundation of Christ (I Cor. 3:11). No man has the right to build another, nor can any man build anything equivalent to it. Christ’s death (Rom. 5:8), the shedding of His precious blood (I Peter 1:18-19), and His glorious resurrection (Matt. 28:1ff) evoking His high position with a “*name that is above every name*” (Phil. 2:9). So great is His name that the apostle Peter said:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Beginning at Pentecost people were added by the Lord to this church as they heard and believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and were baptized “...*for the remission of their sins...*” (Acts 2:36-47). Baptism was essential to being saved and being added to the church because Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16). In baptism one vividly pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-4). Being saved and added to the church is a simultaneous event. It is a glorious privilege, honor, and blessing from heaven to be a member of the heaven born (John 1:13), blood bought (Eph. 1:7),

and heaven bound (Phil. 3:20) church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan and his ministers (II Cor. 11:15) have opposed the church from Pentecost when the church came in its established state (Acts 2:47). This opposition will continue throughout her existence upon the earth until Jesus comes to carry His bride home to glory. There, no sin will mar her beauty, nor can Satan ever again tempt her through his subtlety as he did mother Eve (II Cor. 11:3). Here on earth the church through her human element is often weak, but there she will be perfect because of our Saviour who has cleansed her of every spot and stain by His precious blood (Eph. 5:27).

### **The Church That Jesus Built**

The church of Christ is unique because it was built by Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18). He built it the way He wanted it and did not consult with any man or group of men as to how it should be built! We are hearing today (even in our pulpits) some who are advocating the expression: *“The church of Christ is a denomination.”* Some who are not being properly taught the word of God view the church as a denomination which teaches and practices the truth much closer to the Bible than others. However, we need to understand that the church which our Lord promised to build is not a denomination; it is the family of God on earth (Eph. 3:15); it is God’s kingdom. The kingdom was not an *“afterthought”* with God.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

It is made crystal clear in the New Testament that this kingdom was to come on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you,  
That there be some of them that stand here,  
which shall not taste of death, till they have  
seen the kingdom of God come with power  
(Mark 9:1).

Again, Jesus promised the apostles: “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...*” (Acts 1:8). We find in Acts 2:4 that the apostles were “*filled with the Holy Ghost...*” Therefore, the kingdom which Jesus promised came on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two.

Concerning His kingdom Jesus said:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the  
kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt  
bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and  
whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be  
loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19).

Jesus did not build one thing and then give the apostles keys to something else. So the “*church*” and the “*kingdom of heaven*” are what Jesus promised to build. The Lord’s relationship to His church is that of head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). His relationship to the kingdom is Lord, ruler, and King (Rev. 19:11-16). There are other unique features of the church.

### **The Church Is Universal**

The church is made up of all the children of God upon the earth. The world and denominationalism looks upon the church as the body of Christ which includes all the various denominations who believe in Jesus as the

Son of God. However, nothing could be farther from the truth! When the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16) was first preached in its fulness on Pentecost, folks who believed, repented, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ “for the remission of sins” were added to this church (Acts 2:38,41,47). This church was the one Jesus promised to build (Matt. 16:18). The Lord continued during the first century to add every saved person to that church, and He continues to do the same today for those who will obey Him (Matt. 7:21). Therefore, there are no saved ones outside the church or body of Christ (Eph. 5:23).

### **Salvation In The Church**

The world denies the relation of salvation to the church of our Lord. However, it is clearly shown in scripture that one must be a member of the church to be saved (Acts 2:47). The apostle 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... (Acts 4:11-12).

Picture a contractor building a house who has laid the foundation, and then he rejects the stone which had been cut for the corner which makes the building complete. The Old Testament prophecy of Christ was that of a foundation stone.

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation... (Isaiah 28:16).

Also, the apostle Peter wrote regarding Christ, *“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious”* (I Peter 2:4). The Jews



had rejected Christ in their spiritual structure and Peter put them in the ridiculous position of rejecting the chief corner stone of a building.

Since salvation comes only through Christ (John 14:6), and since Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18), then it follows therefore that salvation is obtained by complying with the terms which the Lord has set forth. Jesus made it crystal clear that sinners must believe in Him (John 8:24), repent (Luke 13:3), confess with the mouth faith in Him (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16) “*for the remission of sin*” (Acts 2:38). Only those who have accepted these conditions of pardon have been saved (Matt. 7:21). The scriptures clearly show that only such are those whom the Lord adds to the church (Acts 2:47). Therefore, salvation cannot be found outside the Lord’s church.

It is further seen that baptism is the point wherein the sinner is brought into a new relationship with Christ. Paul taught that in baptism we are united with Christ i.e. the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-4). Paul had been accused by his Jewish enemies of teaching sinful conduct based upon his statement in Romans 5:20 “*...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*” Evidently some were saying that Paul was teaching “*more sin for more grace!*” Paul’s reply is an emphatic denial: “*...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid...*” (Rom. 6:1-2). These passages show that baptism is *into* Christ (wherein are all spiritual blessings, Eph. 1:3); we are baptized *into* His death (i.e. the benefits of His death where His blood was shed John 19:34), which cleanses and redeems one from sin (I John 1:7; Eph. 1:7); it is accomplished by a burial in water (Acts 8:36-38; 10:47-

48); and one begins at that point to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4).

In baptism Paul says there is a “*likeness*” of Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:5). It is in baptism that we obey a form of this teaching regarding His death, burial, and resurrection, and are “*made free from sin*” (Rom 6:18). Therefore, when we become Christians we must obey “*that form of doctrine*” based upon the “*good news*” (gospel) of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4). Christ died, we die to sin; He was buried, we too are to be buried in baptism; Christ was raised, we too are raised to “*walk in newness of life.*” Those who have obeyed this teaching have become separated from their past life of sin, and are made new by the power which is in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

### **The Pillar And Ground Of The Truth**

While Timothy had lived and preached in the city of Ephesus with its Temple of Diana which had 127 pillars, Paul wrote:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15).

The church is designed to be the very support of God’s truth. Today many fail to understand the purpose of the church. The Lord’s church is clearly seen in scripture to be the instrument by which the truth is to be taught through which men are made free (John 8:32); and to uphold that truth as men continually reject it and offer “*another gospel*” (Gal. 1:6-9). Many feel the church is nothing more than a social gathering of people, and it’s main function should be that of “*fun and games!*” There

is nothing wrong for Christians to enjoy fun times together, in fact when a congregation only meets for worship and no relationship is sustained outside the “*assembly*,” such is in danger of drifting apart from one another. However, when focus is entirely upon social gatherings we cease to be that “*pillar and ground of the truth*.” A gradual dramatic shift in thinking is evident today as we see some congregations getting entirely away from gospel meetings, lectures, etc. Some are suggesting the cancelling of evening services for Christmas. Brethren, how long will it be before some cancel for the fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Washington’s birthday, etc.. How long before we see the cancelling of the Sunday evening and mid-week services? Some today are putting the focus upon “*family needs*” by suggesting that folks need to spend more “*leisure time*” with their family. However, when that “*leisure time*” takes away from the edification of the saints we have missed entirely the correct focus on the family. The early church (consisting of families also) “...*continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). When our focus is away from this we cease being the “*pillar and ground of the truth!*”

Today our focus is also on numbers. Numbers do represent souls, and souls are valuable (Matt. 16:26). But, in what manner are we trying to reach the souls, and what are we trying to offer to them to reach them? In the first century, churches were edified i.e. built up in the faith. But, this doesn’t seem to interest our present day generation. Some attract others from another congregation by emphasizing that they have so much more to offer than the congregation which they are presently attending. These fail to see that they are hurting

that congregation and have not used their effort to spread the gospel to lost souls, but simply “swell” their attendance by taking someone from another congregation and making them feel they have been offered so much more than their present congregation could offer. Often these do no more for the Lord’s cause than where they had previously attended. In the early church, edification came as a result of walking in the fear of the Lord, preaching the truth, and enjoying the comfort of the Holy Spirit by following the inspired word (I Thess. 4:18). By this same means today we are more likely to attract *serious minded* folks to the church. When Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to the new church at Antioch, he came exhorting the church to “*cleave unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:23). The result was “...*much people was added unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:24). It is from the heart that men do such cleaving, and the result today will be the edifying of the church (Eph. 4:16).

This is the church for which Jesus died. In His death Jesus shed His blood (John 19:34) which purchased the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, since His blood paid for His church, and since He shed all His blood for the church (John 19:34), then it must be understood that not one drop of Jesus’ blood was shed for any man-made denomination on earth. The apostle Paul writes that Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). That church is not a denomination built by man nor governed by the rules of men. It was built by Christ and is subject unto Him alone (Eph. 5:24).

Second, the church is seen in the scriptures as being local. “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth...*” (I Cor. 1:2) does not mean that Paul is addressing a letter to a denominational “*church of God.*” It simply means

the church which is located geographically in Corinth. Paul is writing to the redeemed i.e. all the saved in that area. The same can be said about other letters Paul wrote to the churches such as Philippians, Colossians, etc. When we speak of the church in Tennessee we are speaking of all the saved in this state who are in fellowship with God. I may not know all who compose this church individually, but God does. Those who “*walk in the light*” are in fellowship with God (I John 1:7). If you and I are in fellowship with God it is because we are walking in the light, and therefore we are in fellowship with one another. We do not have to agree on matters of expediency (such as Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-40), but we must agree in matters where the Lord has plainly spoken regarding the plan of salvation, worship, organization, Christian behavior, etc. During the first century the church often met in homes of the members. In some of Paul’s letters he referred to the church as being “*in their house*” (Rom. 16:5). When a new congregation begins it is still part of the universal church which Jesus built.

Third, the church can be seen in another sense i.e. of coming together for the purpose of worship. I do not subscribe to the view that all we do as a Christian is worship. First, our Lord gave the essential elements of acceptable worship as being “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). Both elements must be involved in order for one to worship acceptably. The worshipping church (Assembly) can be seen in I Corinthians 11:18. Paul says, “*...when ye come together in the church....*” It can clearly be seen that such was “*And upon the first day of the week...*” (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2) when the church assembles and among other avenues of worship observes the “*Lord’s*

*Supper*” (I Cor. 11:20, 23-29). When a Christian is on the job he is a member of the church i.e. in a universal sense. Also, he is a member of the local church at the same time. However, if he chooses to go out on the hillside alone on the Lord’s day during the time the church has come together to worship, he is not a local church by himself. The local church has come together to worship while he has chosen to be absent from the assembling of the saints (Heb. 10:25). How can the above described person “*teach and admonish one another*” (Col. 3:16)? How can we remember the Lord’s body on the cross which was given for His spiritual body the church? Therefore, it is important that we understand the meaning of the church which is to “*come together*” to worship God. The Lord’s church looks forward to coming together with the saints on the Lord’s day to worship according to God’s will.

### **The Lord’s Bride**

One of the most beautiful pictures conjured in the mind is that of a bride. The bride of Jesus is His church (Rev. 22:17). In a wedding the building will perhaps be beautifully decorated, the groom, best man, and all attendants have entered with their best attire, but when the bride enters all eyes focus upon her as the audience stands dazzled by her radiant beauty coming down the isle. The groom does not mind this attention (as the audience stands in her honor) because he loves her. In the same way Christ loves His bride, the church (Eph. 5:25). As the bride (and groom) vows before God and the witnesses her loyalty to her husband, Christ’s bride (the church) has promised fidelity to Christ (Eph. 5:24). God’s people have always been special to Him.

## **A Holy Bride**

Following Israel’s bondage in Egypt, Moses brought God’s people to Sinai where he went up into the presence of God to receive God’s laws for His people.

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exod. 19:3-6).

God wanted His people to be a holy people who would trust Him and obey His laws. He told Moses:

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy (Lev. 19:2).

Just as the groom is happy over receiving his bride, God rejoices over His bride, Israel.

For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee (Isa. 62:5).

God’s special relationship with His bride (His chosen people) is conditional upon their being that holy nation. The Jews did not maintain that relationship in the Old Testament. God asks:

Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me

days without number (Jer. 2:32).

We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies... (Psm. 106:6-7).

Remembered not means they forgot all that God had done for them – His faithfulness to His promise to them. Yet, God still loved them. *“And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy”* (Psm. 106:10). *“They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel”* (Psm. 106:13). When our faith is shallow we soon forget God. They did not forget in the sense of a memory lapse, but in the recognition of God as their leader and king. Rather than wait for God’s counsel they often trusted their own judgment. In the wilderness Israel murmured upon different occasions (Exod. 16:2; 17:3). The book of Hosea shows an image of marriage which was to be a lesson to Israel (and us today) about a woman who bore Hosea three children and then she deserted him and became a prostitute. Hosea had to buy her back from a slave market (3:1-2)! Israel had committed *“spiritual adultery”* by turning to idols which led to moral decay of the nation.

In the New Testament the church is God’s holy bride.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an **holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2:9).

The word holy means *“to be separate, set apart, or consecrated”* (See II Cor. 6:14-18). Boundaries are set

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which must be observed if we are to remain Christ’s holy bride. In baptism we put on Christ (Gal. 3:27); but we must understand this does not maintain holiness. We must be willing to surrender our will to Christ.

### **A New Identity**

In marriage there is a new identity especially for the bride. She now wears the name of her husband. This honors him and identifies her as belonging to him and no other. In marriage the husband and wife become one (Matt. 19:5-6). In our conversion we become one with Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

“...*The churches of Christ salute you*” (Rom. 16:16). “*Of*” identifies who the church belongs to – Christ and no other.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).

Just as the wife looks to her husband as head and provider (I Tim. 5:8), the bride of Christ (church) looks to Christ as Head and Saviour (Eph. 5:22-24). In the story of Cinderella, a girl who has been shamefully mistreated (by her step-mother) marries a Prince who gives her a new identity with luxuries she had not known before. When we belong to Christ we have access to “all spiritual blessings” which are “*in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).

## Loyalty To Christ

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy:  
for I have espoused you to one husband, that  
I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ  
(II Cor. 11:2).

In marriage there is a commitment made, a covenant has been entered which requires loyalty and love. Paul was concerned that the church at Corinth would turn from the true gospel to another (II Cor. 11:4) by listening to those “*false apostles*” (v. 13). For the church to remain loyal to Christ we must accept no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), nor any other doctrine (II John 9-11) than Christ’s. When brethren fellowship denominations (which are not of God) are they being loyal to Christ? When we fellowship the world by living like the world are we loyal to Christ? When brethren engage in fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, etc., are they loyal to Christ? “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11). We must be loyal to Christ in doctrine, but also in Christian behavior. Our loyalty must be to Christ alone (Luke 6:46).

## Special Provisions

Just as a husband provides for his bride the necessities of life, Christ makes special provisions for His bride. The most important provision is salvation (Eph. 5:23). Christ provides the church salvation because He loves the church (Eph. 5:23, 25). “*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church*” (Eph. 5:29). “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4:19). Christ’s bride enjoys His protection, care and special provisions (Rom. 8:28). Why

would anyone not want to be a part of this beautiful bride? The only answer I could offer is that they simply do not understand the nature of Christ’s church.

### **The Glorious Body Of Christ**

While Christ was upon the earth He lived in a body which God had prepared for Him (Heb. 10:5). Christ still has a body on earth today called the church.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to **the church**, Which is **his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22-23).

### **The One True Body**

The Bible makes it perfectly clear that there is but one true body.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:4-6).

The body of Christ on earth is the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28); and He is “*the savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23). Today, I would be totally rejected were I to teach there are many true gods, and we may accept the one of our choice. However, I would be fully applauded (even by some in the church) were I to teach there are many true churches from which we may choose. Yet, no promise was ever made by Christ to save anyone but his body (Eph. 5:23). Therefore, I want to live and die in His body faithful to Him as the head (Col. 1:18). “*For the body is not one member, but many*” (I Cor. 12:14). “*But now are they*

*many members, yet but one body*” (I Cor. 12:20). No one who obeys the gospel of Christ becomes a member of any denominational body. Nor does anyone who becomes a member of a denomination become a member of the body of Christ. The Lord adds all who obey Christ’s gospel to His body which is the church (I Cor. 12:13). Responses to human doctrine (teaching) produces human bodies, and these collectively do not compose the body of Christ but only man made bodies! Can you imagine a head with a multiplicity of bodies? Yet, this is the picture which many hold of Christ and His spiritual body. Kingdoms of men rise and fall; fads of men come and go; man’s wisdom is often inconsistent. Yet, the word of God does not change; it is as dependable as God. The book still says, “*There is one body...*” (Eph. 4:4).

### **Spiritual In Nature**

Christ’s body is spiritual in nature and composed of all the saved (Eph. 5:23). Just as our spirit within our physical bodies results in life (absence of the spirit is death – James 2:26), so the Spirit of God in the body of Christ (the church) gives it life, and it is therefore a living organism. The body of Christ has **eyes** to see needs in the world (John 4:35). It has **ears** to hear His word and heed His commands (Rev. 2:7). Its **tongue** speaks His word and sings His praises (Col. 3:16). Its **feet** bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15). It has **hands** that work to serve others (Eph. 4:28). To be a Christian means to be a functioning member of the body (Eph. 4:28). To be a Christian means to be a functioning member of the body (Eph. 4:16), to do Christ’s work, and to do it in love (v. 15). Such will manifest the unity which our Savior prayed for (John 17:20-21). To

claim to be Christ’s body and fail to look to him as “*sole authority*” is to be a body without a head! Just as there are needs today for hospitals, ambulances, fire halls, police stations, etc., there is a great need for the body of Christ, the church. Its purpose is to live and serve as Christ’s spiritual body.

Next, Christ is its only head (Col. 1:18). Just as a living physical body has one head, so it is with the spiritual body of Christ, His church. The head controls the body as a result of brain power in the head. Christ controls His body in the one way He has chosen for all i.e., through the word which the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles and other inspired men (John 16:13; II Tim. 3:16-17). “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...*” (Col. 3:16). Christ is to dwell in the heart by faith (Eph. 3:17). Faith comes from hearing the word (Rom. 10:17). Many today simply fail to consult the right source regarding the truth of the Lord’s body, His church.

## Chapter 4

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# True Undenominational Christianity

*Bobby Duncan*



In forty-six years of preaching Bobby has served under only two elderships in local work • Has been with the Adamsville congregation for a quarter of a century • Bobby attended Freed-Hardeman College, Jacksonville State, and Southern Christian University • He is the author of “**The Elders Which Are Among You**” • Lois and Bobby have two children and two grandchildren.

**I** realize the title of this lecture sounds redundant, because true Christianity is undenominational. There is no such thing as true Christianity which is denominational. But because so many religious groups now claim to be undenominational, it is in order for us to set forth in our preaching and teaching what it means to practice true undenominational Christianity.

As we begin our study, let us take a look at the word **denomination**. Some people equate the word denomination to the word **church**, just as they equate the words **preacher** and **pastor**. The other day I answered the phone in my study at the meetinghouse, and a lady said, “*I would like to speak to the pastor.*” I told her we have five pastors, but none of them were available at the moment. I explained that I do what little

preaching we have, and asked if I might help her. Her very next words were, “*Pastor, I want to tell you about....*”

People are that way when it comes to the use of the word *denomination*. If someone inquires about our religion, more often than not he asks what denomination we are associated with. It is difficult for the average person in America to conceive of one's being a member of any church that is not also a denomination. The reason for this is faulty thinking with reference to what the church of Christ really is. Most people believe the church of Christ is made up of all the different churches men have started. Imagine that I draw a big circle on a chalkboard, and I tell you that circle represents the church of Christ one reads about in the Bible. When one is saved he becomes a member of that church. So far so good. But the faulty thinking begins here. The commonly accepted idea is that that church is the invisible church, that is, it has no organization here on this earth. But inside that circle are a number of other circles, some of them quite large and others somewhat similar. These circles represent churches people join after they become members of the church of Christ.

The word *denomination* itself signifies something that is a part of the whole. For example, I have here in my hand three coins. If you wanted to know what those coins are worth in relation to a dollar, you would ask, “*Of what denominations are those coins?*” If I tell you one is a fifty-cent piece, you know that it is one half of a dollar. If I tell you one is a twenty-five-cent piece, you know it is one-fourth of a dollar. And if I tell you one coin is a dime, you know it is one-tenth of a dollar. The word *cent* itself is a reference to the fact that the dollar is divided into one hundred parts. So it is when one

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refers to a church as a denomination, he is signifying that he believes each church constitutes a part of the invisible church of Christ.

Now, there are at least two things wrong with that kind of thinking. In the first place, those who have become members of denominations, as a rule at least, have not done what the Bible teaches one must do in order to be saved and be a member of the church of Christ. In other words, the circles representing denominations should be drawn on the outside of that large circle rather than on the inside. In the second place, when one becomes a member of the church of Christ by obeying the gospel of Christ, he is a member of the only church he ever needs to belong to. He is not a member of some part of the church, some denomination of it, or some sect. He is a member of the church of Christ.

In more recent times the term **undenominational** has come to be used by those who have started churches which they perceive to be a part of the church of Christ, but which are not affiliated with any of the nationally or regionally organized churches. But since they consider their churches as being a part of what they think of as the invisible church of Christ, then they are denominational in the same sense that the larger organizations are denominational.

We do make a mistake, however, when we insist that every man-made or false religion is a denomination. There are false religions that do not consider themselves as a part of anything, but as the only true church. While it is true, as we will show, that there is such a thing as true undenominational Christianity. Claiming to be undenominational does not make a group undenominational, and claiming to be Christians does



not make people Christians. It needs to be pointed out also that accusing one of being a member of a denomination does not make him a member of a denomination.

## **True Undenominational Christianity Eternally Purposed**

Ephesians 3:10-11 says,

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).

This passage shows clearly that the church – the only one we read about in the Bible – was planned and purposed by God from all eternity. It was to be a demonstration of God’s “*manifold wisdom*.” The word *manifold* means “*many-faceted*” or “*multi-colored*.” Think of the multitude of hues and shades one would see in looking at a beautiful, multi-colored flower garden. The wisdom of God is said to be manifold, and one way His manifold wisdom is demonstrated is by the church which He purposed from all eternity.

The church was not an afterthought on the part of God, as is claimed by our Premillennial friends. They say Christ came into the world to set up His kingdom, but was not able so to do because the Jews rejected Him. When God saw the Jews were going to crucify His Son, He decided to establish the church, and to postpone the establishment of the kingdom until Christ comes back again. In other words, the kingdom was God’s Plan A, but when He saw Plan A was not going to work, He set

in operation Plan B, which was the church. All of this, of course, flies in the face of plain Bible teaching. The church was not Plan B; it was in the eternal purpose of God. Those who know what the Bible teaches know that the church and the kingdom are the same. Furthermore, the rejection of Christ by the Jews was not a surprise to God. Isaiah had prophesied, saying,

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa. 53:3).

In fact, the entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ at the hands of the Jews. God knew that Jesus was going to be rejected and crucified. This is what Peter meant on Pentecost when he declared in Acts 2:22-23:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:22-23).

In other words, while the Jews thought they had defeated and put an end to Jesus of Nazareth, God up in heaven knew everything was going exactly according to plan.

Now I ask this question: If one today should become a member of that church which was eternally purposed of God, and if he should become a member of no other church, would that not be true undenominational Christianity?

## **True Undenominational Christianity Foretold By The Prophets**

When Daniel interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, he uttered a prophecy concerning the church, the eternal kingdom of God:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

Isaiah also prophesied of the setting up of the church when he wrote:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

If there should be any question with reference to what the “*mountain of the Lord's house*” is, please let the Bible itself tell us. I Timothy 3:15 says,

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15).

The house of God is the church.

These are just two of the many Old Testament prophecies concerning the church which was to be

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established by Christ. And while the word *church* is not used in the Old Testament, it is obvious that these and many other prophecies of the Old Testament referred to the church.

Now, I wonder if being a member of the church spoken of by the Old Testament prophets would be the same as being a member of some denomination? Certainly all would agree it would not. To be a member of the church spoken of by the prophets, and that alone, would be true undenominational Christianity.

### **True Undenominational Christianity Promised By Christ**

Matthew 16:13-18 contains an account of the Lord's promise to build His church:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:13-18).

Referring to this same church in another passage, Jesus said,

...Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of

death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1).

Again, in Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus said:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matt. 18:15-17).

When Jesus spoke these words the church had not yet been set up, but Jesus knew it was going to be set up, and that these disciples would be members of it.

In these and other passages where Jesus makes it plain He anticipated the establishment of His church, was He thinking about some denominational church? If one became a member of that church Jesus promised to build, would he be involved in denominationalism by so doing? Is it not the case that those who become members of that church and that church alone are engaging in the practice of true undenominational Christianity?

### **True Undenominational Christianity Was Bought By Christ’s Blood**

To the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Was the apostle speaking of some denominational institution? Did Jesus shed His blood to purchase a denomination or a group of denominations? To the church overseen by these elders the apostle wrote, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*” (Eph. 5:25). This means simply that Christ gave Himself to be crucified in order to bring into existence the church. Did Jesus give Himself to be crucified to bring into existence some denomination?

If people became members of that church for which Jesus gave Himself, the one He purchased with His own blood, and no other, would they be members of a denomination? Or would we not affirm they were involved in true undenominational Christianity?

### **True Undenominational Christianity Was Ushered In By The Holy Spirit**

Before Jesus was crucified He promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles. He said in John 14:26,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Again, in John 16:13, He said:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

A few minutes ago we referred to Mark 9:1, where Jesus promised that the kingdom would come “*with power*” during the lifetime of some of those present on that

occasion. After He was raised from the dead, He said to His apostles,

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 in Acts 1:8 He told them when they would receive this power: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you....”* Notice, please, that the kingdom or church was to come with power; they would receive that power when the Holy Spirit came. On Pentecost Day of Acts 2 the church’s coming into being was accompanied by a mighty demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Was the church that came into being on that day a denomination? Was it a sect? A part of something larger? We all know the answer to that question.

We have shown that the church we read about in the New Testament was (1) eternally purposed by God, (2) foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, (3) promised by Jesus while He lived on this earth and walked among men, (4) purchased by the blood of Christ, and (5) that its establishment was accompanied by a magnificent demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Not one of these five things can be said about a single denomination in the entire world. God did not have a single one of them in His eternal purpose. Not one of them was seen or foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, and not one of them was promised by Christ while He lived on earth. He certainly did not shed His blood to bring any one of them into existence, and they all came into being by the power of the men who founded them, and not by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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It is, therefore, quite obvious that there is a difference between denominations started by men and the undenominational church we read about in the New Testament.

### **Some Facts About Denominations**

In order to appreciate fully the nature of true undenominational Christianity, there are four facts we need to remember. I will discuss each one of them briefly, and then we will be ready to bring this lecture to a close.

**Fact Number One:** The Lord's church was in existence hundreds of years before the first denomination came on the scene. This means that for centuries people were Christians and members of the church, but were not members of any denomination, for not one denomination existed. The New Testament mentions the church at Jerusalem, the church at Antioch, the church at Ephesus, the church at Cenchrea, the church at Corinth, and on and on we might go. The members of those churches were Christians, but they were not members of any denomination. In other words, Christians in New Testament times were not in denominations, for no denominations existed. I do not believe anyone here or anywhere else would take issue with that statement.

Now notice **Fact Number Two:** The New Testament does not lead people to become members of any denomination. If one will follow the teaching of the New Testament, doing precisely what it teaches, he will thereby become a member of the church we read about in the New Testament, but he will not thereby become a member of some denomination. The New Testament teaches people to believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who so do are added by the Lord to His



church. Acts 2:47 says of those who had become obedient to the gospel that the Lord added them to His church. The church at Corinth was made up of people who had obeyed the gospel, and obeying the gospel had made them members of the church. Acts 20:17 speaks of “*the elders of the church*” at Ephesus. Where did the church come from? Why, it came into being as a result of the fact that the gospel of Christ was preached in Ephesus, and people became obedient to the gospel. Read Acts 19 and see if that is not the case. But which denomination did their obedience to the gospel make them members of? None! Obedience to the gospel of Christ does not lead one into any denomination. Not one person in any denomination can say he was led there by the New Testament. I believe this also will be agreed upon by all serious Bible students.

**Fact Number Three:** Since the New Testament does not lead one into any denomination, then the only way one can get into a denomination is by leaving the teaching of the New Testament and following something else. Those who are in denominations got into them by leaving the teaching of the New Testament and following some other teaching. II John 9 says,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

The American Standard Version says,

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

Abiding in the teaching of Christ will make one a faithful

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member of the church of Christ we read about in the New Testament. In order to get into some church other than that, one must go onward and not abide in the teaching of Christ. Those in denominations, then, got into them by transgressing or going onward, and abiding not in the teaching of Christ.

Some who formerly believed and affirmed they were members of the church one reads about in the New Testament are now affirming that the church of which they are members had its beginning with the American Restoration Movement, and that it is not the church of Christ one reads about in Scripture. Their actual statement found in the Purpose Statement in the very first issue of **Wineskins** magazine is,

Our background and commitment is to the Church [capital C] of Christ that was born of the American Restoration Movement. Our goal is to move that group closer to the church [lower case c] of Christ revealed in Scripture.

I confess that I was not present when these became members of whatever it is they are members of; therefore, I cannot testify as to what they did. I do know, however, just exactly what I did to become a member of the Lord's church. I heard and believed the same gospel that was preached by the apostles of Jesus Christ. I repented, which simply means I made up my mind to do the will of God. Then, upon confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, I was buried in baptism so that my sins would be forgiven. People we read about in the New Testament who did those exact same things were added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47). Yet, we are told that those of us who have done these things today are not members of the church of Christ one reads about in

the New Testament.

I certainly do not claim perfection, and, to my knowledge, neither do any of my brethren. But I would certainly be interested in knowing just what it is that we could do which we have not already done, and which would make us members of the church of Christ one reads about in Scripture.

When one affirms that he is not a member of the church he reads about in the Bible, then he is implying he knows he has not done what one must do to become a member of that church. If that is the case, then why does he not correct that situation? Does he not wish to be a member of that church? Does he prefer to be a member of some man-made church? Remember, Jesus was talking about man-made religious institutions when He said, *“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up”* (Matt. 15:13).

If I am not a member of the church of Christ one reads about in Scripture, then I am not in God’s family, because the *“house of God”* is *“the church of the living God”* (I Tim. 3:15).

If I am not a member of that church, then I have not been purchased by the blood of Christ. Acts 20:28 says,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

If I am not a member of that church, then Christ is not my Savior, because *“he is the Savior of the body”* (Eph. 5:23-25).

If I am not in that church, then I am not in the

Lord's kingdom, for the kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18-19).

If I am not in the church, then I have not experienced the new birth, because John 3:5 teaches that being born of water and the Spirit places one inside the kingdom, which is the church.

Jesus did not purchase some man-made church with His own blood. He is not the Savior of some church which began during the days of the American Restoration Movement. It is not some denomination that constitutes the kingdom of God. And the new birth does not put one into some denomination.

What I would like to know is this: If what I did to become a Christian did not make me an undenominational Christian, then what can I do to correct that situation? Obviously, some of my brethren must know the answer to that question, for they emphatically affirm that they and we are not members of the church of Christ we read about in Scripture. If they know that to be the case, then it seems they must also know exactly what is lacking. At least they must know something is lacking. I challenge them to tell us exactly what it is.

**Fact Number Four:** Those who are in denominations should get out of them. Why should one want to be a member of any institution he can be a member of only by leaving the teaching of the New Testament? We have shown in the first place that undenominational Christianity is possible, because it existed hundreds of years before the first denomination ever came into being. We have shown in the second place that the teaching of the New Testament does not lead one into a denomination. It follows, in the third place, that one must leave the teaching of the New Testament

in order to get into a denomination. That being true, those in denominations, including the publishers of **Wineskins**, should get out, and come back to following the teaching of the New Testament.

When people follow the teaching of the New Testament, and that alone, they become Christians, and nothing more. That, dearly beloved, is true undenominational Christianity.

## Chapter 5

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Church Growth: As God Desires

*Danny Douglas*



Danny worked with the Eastside congregation in Lawrenceburg, TN before working under/with the East Hill church • Presently he is working under the East Hill church elders in Pulaski, TN, preparing to move to the Ukraine in June, 1997, for a two year work • Danny is a diligent student, an excellent proclaimer of the Word of God.

I am thankful before God to have the honor of discussing this important topic from the Word of God. All of God's faithful people are surely concerned with church growth, but only the kind which is according to God's will. The only kind of church growth that is really valid is that which God approves. Therefore, to understand the church growth that God desires, we must go to His all-authoritative Word.

The greatest church growth plan ever laid is in the book of Acts. It can be conclusively said that everything in that grand treatise regarding the growth of the Lord's church was based on the doctrine of Christ. John states concerning the teaching of our Lord:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

Thus, any church growth that is not by the all-authoritative doctrine of Christ is transgression, and wholly without the sanction of the Almighty. Regardless, then, of how many people may fill a church building because of a growth scheme, if it is not based upon the Word of God, it is sin. Although this scheme may be filled with elements that appeal to “*babyboomers*,” and young people by the multitudes, if it is not according to truth it will not save a single soul, but will, in fact, cause souls to be condemned.

It is precisely the disciples’ continuance in Christ’s doctrine and the principles therein that brought about the rapid spread of New Testament Christianity in the early days of the Lord’s church:

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:42,46-47).

We note the further advancement of the kingdom when early disciples were dispersed upon the persecution of Stephen. Luke records,

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:4-5).

It is the thesis of this presentation that growth of the Lord’s body can only be accomplished by the presentation of God’s Word, and that this is most

effectively accomplished when members of the church are faithful and Christ-like.

The remainder of this lecture will deal with two basic questions: (1) What kind of church growth does God desire? (2) How may the growth which God desires be accomplished?

### **What Kind Of Church Growth Does God Desire?**

First of all, it is God's will that every member in the church grow spiritually, which in turn will effect the spiritual strength of the body collectively. For example, after Saul's conversion he "...*increased the more in strength...*" (Acts 9:22). Paul himself expressed concern over the development of babes in Christ and new congregations that had been established during the first missionary journey. The inspired historian records,

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas,  
Let us go again and visit our brethren in every  
city where we have preached the word of the  
Lord, and see how they do (Acts 15:36).

There are numerous passages in the New Testament which command the Christian to grow spiritually. For example, the apostle Peter states,

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our  
Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be  
glory both now and for ever. Amen. (II Peter  
3:18).

It was Paul's desire for the Philippians to "*abound yet more and more*" in their love (Phil. 1:9), and for the Colossians to increase in "*the knowledge of God*" (Col. 1:10).

God is deeply interested in the spiritual growth of

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His children. In fact, in the sacred epistles it is spiritual growth that receives the emphasis, implying that this will accomplish numerical growth. Therefore, every Christian should be impressed with his own need for spiritual advancement, as well as that of his fellow Christians. Indeed, God knows that if Christians grow spiritually, then the numerical growth of the church will be imminent.

Jesus declares the divine directive for spiritual progress in terms of “*fruit*,” “*more fruit*” and “*much fruit*” (John 15:2,5). Then, it is the Lord’s will that His people will grow in Him, and consequently increase in fruitfulness.

Secondly, it is God’s will for His kingdom to increase and for multitudes to be saved. His desire for man’s salvation is seen in various statements regarding the mission of His Son in coming to earth.

And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent (Luke 4:43).

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10; cf. Matt. 20:28; John 12:31-33).

Jesus further emphasizes the weight of this mission in commanding His disciples to go and proclaim the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-47). Therefore, church growth is not mere growth for numbers’ sake, but involves the supremely important purpose of bringing souls to Christ and thereby glorifying God.

### **How May The Church Growth Which God Desires Be Accomplished?**

#### **By The Truth Dwelling In Every Member**

John speaks of the truth as “...*that which dwelleth*”

*in us, and shall be with us for ever*” (II John 2). The truth is none other than the Word of God (John 17:17). The apostle Paul commanded the Colossians,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

Of course, this principle applies to all who would live under the new covenant, and not just those of the first century.

In order for the truth to dwell richly within us requires diligent effort on our part. The Bereans “*searched the scriptures daily*” (Acts 17:11). The sweet psalmist of Israel declares of the righteous, “*But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*” (Psm. 1:2). Paul commands the young Timothy:

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

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (I Tim. 4:13).

God’s Word has that which we all need to make us strong in the faith and equipped to be effective soul winners. The Bible is replete with references to this fact.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12; cf. Matt. 4:4; Acts 20:32).

As a matter of fact, the Scripture is that which we need to make us complete spiritually. Paul states in II

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Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Truly if a congregation is to be alive and active she must be filled with the Word of the Lord. Jesus declared, “...*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63).

No, we do not need another church growth specialist or high-gearred workshop to teach us how to grow. What we need in the brotherhood today is to get the Word of God into the hearts and lives of church members, who will thrive and feed upon the Word of God as did Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16). In fact, the inspired apostle Peter demands this spiritual hunger when he says,

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (I Peter 2:2).

Brother Guy N. Woods appropriately comments in regard to this passage:

Babes (brephe) in the text signifies children of the earliest infancy; and the words “long for” (epipotheo) suggest great eagerness and an ever-recurring desire for the word of God such as is characteristic of infants in their passionate longing and yearning for the milk which alone constitutes their food. As babes instinctively turn to their mothers’ breasts as the only source of their life, so are all the children of God here admonished to desire the spiritual milk which is “without guile,” and which alone can sustain their spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus promised that if one yearns for righteousness he will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the answer to the soul's deep need. When one comes to Christ by faith (Heb. 11:6), and is obedient to His Word, he becomes His disciple (Heb. 11:6; 5:9; Mark 16:16). Consequently, he becomes a partaker of Jesus and the life He offers. Jesus announced in John 6:51:

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

God's Word is righteousness (Psm. 119:172), and only by obeying that Word may we be righteous (I John 3:7). This is to be the grand object of life, to continually endeavor to be loyal subjects of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ (I Tim. 6:15; Matt. 6:33). In this way, we come and take His yoke and learn of Him, and hence, find rest unto our souls (Matt. 11:28-30).

In view of these truths, it becomes apparent that a major factor in the unevangelistic spirit and spiritual weakness that prevails among many brethren today is ignorance of God's Word, and a lack of emphasis on Bible study. Churches of Christ today would do well to heed the warning stated by God to Israel, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...*" (Hosea 4:6).

One of the greatest things that elders can do is encourage diligent Bible study in the flock. Paul declares in Acts 20:28,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Thus they should do all within their power to see that the members are fed spiritually during public worship and Bible classes, and intensely urge them to be involved in serious personal Bible study, that they may be built up in the *“most holy faith”* (Jude 20). There is no way that this can be accomplished apart from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Also, preachers, by their very example, either encourage or discourage Bible study. A steady diet of fables, human psychology and philosophy from the pulpit, as opposed to the plain, powerful preaching of the Word, will serve to weaken knowledge and respect for the Bible in a congregation.

Only Jesus and His words can safeguard and content people against the allurements of the world. Only He can provide the *“living water,”* that whosoever drinketh thereof *“shall never thirst”* (John 4:10,14). If brethren turn from His Word, there is no where else to go for eternal life. This is reminiscent of the time that many of the Lord’s followers *“...went back, and walked no more with him”* (John 6:66). Jesus responded by saying to the twelve, *“...Will ye also go away?”* (John 6:67). Then Simon Peter replied most appropriately,

...Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69).

Would to God, that many of our brethren would realize that, truly, there is no where else to go but to the Lord!

### **The Likeness Of Christ**

When the powerful Word takes root in a sincere and obedient heart great things begin to happen. Of course, one’s initial obedience to the gospel brings him

into Christ (Heb. 5:9; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 1:16), but his continued faithfulness to the Word helps to form him more and more into the image of Christ.

The inspired Paul presents a beautiful figure in II Corinthians 3:18,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now the Spirit has provided for us "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). By this Word we may continually gaze upon Christ in love and admiration, and as a result, grow into His likeness. The New Testament is quite explicit in emphasizing God's desire for His people to "*be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Rom. 8:29; cf. I John 3:3; Gal. 4:19). Paul enjoined, "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 2:5). For this to be accomplished without the indwelling of Christ's Word, in which we know all that may be known of God's mind, is impossible.

When people begin to think as Christ thinks, His priorities will become their priorities. His attitude will become their attitude. His willingness to sacrifice, serve and even to suffer will take hold of them. They will love as He loved, forgive as He forgave, and yearn for closeness to the Father as He did. They will long for the salvation of lost souls, and further, will be willing to pay the price to accomplish it. Jesus loved and hungered for God's Word, and so shall all who have the mind of Christ. His purpose was in doing the will of the Father and thereby glorify Him. In like manner shall it be to all who are conformed to the image of His Son, even to the point of suffering as He did.

Peter writes,

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (I Peter 2:21).

Jesus declared,

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23).

The denial of self is the basic need today in eliminating the doctrines of men, human innovations in the brotherhood, and insubordination to the authority of Christ, Who has all authority (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18). When one follows the instruction of Jesus in Luke 9:23, he will be ready to give up anything to be a faithful follower of the Lord. This is essentially what occurred in the life of Paul, who became so enthralled with Christ that he stated:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

In like manner, it was Paul’s desire to magnify Christ even if it meant death to him. He wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome:

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20-21).

In magnifying Christ, Paul did not seek to “enlarge”

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the One who is the all-sufficient Savior in the sense of betterment, but to make Him more visible thus, exalting Him. In so doing, he had a tremendous impact upon those around him. In fact, by the time he wrote to Philippi from Rome, there were already saints in Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22).

Once the story was told of a young preacher on his first Sunday with a congregation. During the invitation an older gentleman, who the brethren had been trying to convert for years, responded in obedience to the gospel. Afterwards the elated young preacher asked the man what he had said in his sermon that provoked the favorable response. The new convert told him that it was actually the godly life of one of the men in the church who had lived as neighbors to him for years that was the major influence in leading him to Christ. In order for the church to grow as it should, the combination of sound preaching in the pulpit and godly living by those in the pew is essential.

The principle of conformity to God rather than this world (Rom. 12:1-2), is in sharp contrast with that espoused by people who would make the church more like the world, and turn it into nothing more than an institution for promoting self, and the satisfaction of perceived social and emotional needs. The New Testament warns of self-seeking individuals who would uphold alluring doctrines for their own personal belief. Inspiration demands that those of this class should be marked and avoided:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus



Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Indeed, self-denial and obedience to God enters into every area of life. One’s example, personal morals, attitude, manner of life, marriage relationship, and even the way he worships, must be in harmony with the truth. In order to “*walk in truth*” (III John 4), one’s total existence must be founded on God’s Word. Churches and preachers may increase attendance and boost the contribution by bringing fanciful messages and popular human innovations, but they are not doing one whit to “*populate*” heaven. Any preacher or church that is not advancing God’s truth is not accomplishing the growth that God desires, but rather promoting the darkness which He abhors! Remember, the Lord loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Heb. 1:9), and only the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), not the inventions of men.

When people abide in the doctrine of Christ they enjoy a close and joyful relationship with God and His Son. The peace and contentment that comes from being in Christ is great and cannot be derived from anything of the world (Phil. 4:7; I Tim. 6:6; John 14:27). This can only come from the abiding presence of God with the Christian (John 14:21,23; Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11-13). When this is manifested to the world about us, it is very appealing to those caught up in the bondage of sin who seek a more abundant life, which Jesus came to give (John 10:10).

In connection with this thought is the command of Paul in Titus 2:10 to “...*adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*” The Greek word, *kosmeo*, translated

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*adorn*, means: "...*primarily to arrange, to put in order,...to ornament...metaphorically of adorning a doctrine, Tit. 2:10.*"<sup>2</sup> There is nothing that anyone could ever do to improve on the all-sufficient doctrine of God. However, the idea here is to live in harmony with God's doctrine so the world may be able to see just how beautiful, powerful and wonderful God's teaching really is, and thereby be attracted to New Testament Christianity. Implied is the fact that Christians are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22), and are to live in harmony with the gospel (Phil. 1:27), regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

It is inconceivable that any disobedient individual would ever consider himself like the One Who declared,

And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him (John 8:29).

The Hebrew writer pronounces that only those who would be like Jesus in this way can know salvation:

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:8-9).

### **Holy Living**

In conjunction with the previous consideration is the fact that God's people must live holy and godly lives if they are to win souls to the Savior. It should be a major concern of all Christians to be a proper example and influence to the world around us. By abstaining from worldliness and living a life in harmony with Christ, the Christian will help others obey God and glorify Him

in the day of visitation (i.e. the judgment day).

Peter declares:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (I Peter 2:11-12).

One of the greatest problems holding back church growth today is lives that are inconsistent with the truth. When members of the New Testament church live as the world lives, the body of Christ is reproached and souls are lost! How can one expect to convert those within his realm of influence when his own life is no different than theirs! Brother W. A. Bradfield relates the following story:

In a meeting in Detroit, a young lady, who was a member of the church, was attending with her husband, who was not a member. The wife said to her husband one night, “John, I wish you would obey the gospel this week and be a Christian just like me.” To this, John was completely surprised and said to her, “Mary, there is very little difference between us now. I go with you to church on Sunday. You go with me to everything else all the week. The only difference as I see it now is that you eat the Lord’s Supper and I do not. You want me to be baptized so that I can eat the Lord’s Supper and be a hypocrite like you.” He did not obey the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Peter urges Christian wives to so live that they will win their unbelieving husbands to Christ.

In I Peter 3:1-2 Peter says,

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Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

The terms *holy* and *sanctify* are both from the same Greek root, *hagnos*. These terms signify separation from sin and evil, and consecration to God.<sup>4</sup> Again and again, throughout the Bible, God reminds His people that they belong to Him, and must not become like the world.

Paul expresses this principle to the Thessalonians:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour...For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness (I Thess. 4:3-4,7).

He also warned the Corinthians, saying:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 6:17-7:1).

Further, he wrote to Titus:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

One of the greatest challenges facing preachers and elders today is that of keeping the church “*holy and without blemish*” (Eph. 5:27). Although preaching against dancing, social drinking, immodesty (including mixed swimming), gambling, adultery and other forms of worldliness is rare and unpopular, faithful gospel preachers will not shrink from declaring the “*whole counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). Those who fear God and value their own soul’s salvation will take seriously the solemn and divine responsibility given to them:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Tim. 4:1-2).

The Spirit of indignation against sin that permeated the preaching of the ancient prophets is sorely needed in brotherhood pulpits today. For example, Isaiah proclaimed,

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins (Isa. 58:1).

Moreover, the principle of the watchman stated in Ezekiel is applicable to church leaders in our age:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me (Ezek. 3:17).

In fact, the watchman is admonished that if he fails to warn the people of impending danger, that the blood of any who are taken “*...will I require at the watchman’s*”

*hand*” (Ezek. 33:6). On the other hand, those who faithfully declare the whole counsel of God will, like Paul, be “*pure from the blood of all men*” (Acts 20:26). Indeed, shepherds are responsible for those precious souls committed to their oversight. The Hebrew writer states,

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

Overseers who warn the erring to repent and stand behind preachers who do the same are to be commended. However, it needs to be taken a step further. If, after loving and prayerful pleas for repentance, the unfaithful remain impenitent, the elders should see that they are withdrawn from. This is a command by the authority of Christ (II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:3-5,13). Of course, there are those who will argue that such action will cause the church to lose members, will incur disfavor in the community, and may even produce antagonism among family members. However, none of these arguments nullifies the commandments of Almighty God. Even if the church did suffer at the hands of men, she would still enjoy the favor of God, and the kind of growth that God approves would be accomplished. Brethren should not be concerned about losing sincere and devout people when they do that which is right, but need to be exceedingly concerned about the little leaven that “*leaveneth the whole lump*” (I Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9), if they allow wickedness to exist in the fellowship!

As a matter of fact, the high standards of the early church in Jerusalem enhanced her growth. For example, Luke records the amazing results of the action taken by

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## God and the church against Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10):

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) (Acts 5:11-14).

Brother J. W. McGarvey very aptly observes:

If the Jerusalem church had tolerated Ananias and Sapphira, by retaining them in their fellowship after their exposure, doubtless the “ways of Zion would have mourned,” and sinners would not have been turned to the Lord. But the sudden punishment visited upon them by the Lord, and the abhorrence of their deed manifested by burying them without ceremony in the clothing in which they died, and while their bodies were scarcely cold, made the whole community feel that here was a people among whom sin could not be tolerated. It was a safe place for a man who needed holy companionship to help him in the effort to live a holy life – a place in which he might expect every false step to be promptly corrected, and through which he might confidently hope to make his pilgrimage to a better world. People who wish to make a compromise with sin, and who join a church merely because they are afraid to live without some appearance of religion, will always avoid such a church; but those who are in earnest about the desire to save their souls

and to do good, seek just such a church as their spiritual home. Let the shepherds of the flock give an answer, as they remember that they must give an account to God concerning the souls committed to their care.<sup>5</sup>

### **Love And Unity**

One who abides in the doctrine of Christ will endeavor to “...keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). From the teachings of Jesus we understand that love and unity among His followers is impressive to a hateful and divided world. In fact, it will be exceeding difficult to make converts when division and disunity prevail. Jesus states that one way His people will be identified is by emulating His love, a serving and sacrificial love the like of which the world had never seen (John 13:34-35).

Later Jesus prays fervently for unity among His followers that the world may be convinced of His deity and of the identity of His true people (John 17:21-23).

Some brethren have “wrested” this text and promoted a doctrine which is wholly foreign to the will of Jesus. They have taught a false form of unity, which is not based on the truth. The following is an excerpt from a speech by Jeff Walling, which not only condones compromise and religious division, but expresses contempt for the great body for which Jesus died:

The first odd thing ... Jesus doesn't say ... the obedient might be one ... that the “church of Christers” might be one ... He prays for those who will believe in me ... put their faith and trust in me ... the text says “believers” ... I'll tell you what, in order to preach the text, we can't get into this lesson without appreciating



the fact that Jesus asked that we would throw the caltrops around all of those who just believe in Him, and pray and work for the unity of all believers.<sup>6</sup>

How shallow! What a mockery of the oneness between the Father and Son. It is totally incomprehensible that God and Christ would ever disagree in regard to purpose, aim, action and teaching, and yet this is what false brethren are teaching by implication. To espouse such teaching is to disparage the Biblical doctrine of obedience (Heb. 5:9), and the divine injunction to “*speaking the same thing*” (I Cor. 1:10), and to “*walk by the same rule*” (Phil. 3:16). According to the fallacious reasoning of brother Walling, all believers should be in fellowship with the demons, because they “*...also believe, and tremble*” (James 2:19).

The unity that Jesus prayed for is not based on the commandments of men, but on obedience to His word, springing forth from those who love God with all of their very being (John 14:15; Matt. 12:30; Gal. 5:6). Such a love and devotion will consequently cause us to put others before ourselves, and to “*...love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (I Peter 1:22; Mark 12:31).

The oneness and brotherly love that existed in the early church was unmistakable. They were benevolent minded and concerned with each other’s needs. God’s history book reveals this of them (Acts 4:32).

Only when people have the mind of Christ will they manifest such a loving and kind spirit. We read of the humility, obedience and sacrifice of that servant mind in Philippians 2:8. Only by having that mind can we “*shine as lights in the world,*” and effectively hold forth the “*word of life*” (cf. Phil. 2:14-16).

## Faithful Teaching And Preaching Of The Word Of God

The early church grew because the members had the Word of God deeprooted in their hearts. When disciples were scattered upon the persecution of Stephen they “...went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). They knew the truth that had freed them from sin (John 8:32), and it created such conviction and courage in them that they could not help but tell the good news of Christ to others.

The story is told of an old preacher who said to his preacher students, “Boys, don’t preach if you can help it.” The principle that men who are able to live and be happy without preaching the gospel should not be preachers is one worth emphasizing in our brotherhood today. Men in the pulpit who can hold back much-needed truth need to repent or give the worthy task of preaching to someone who has conviction like the prophet Jeremiah.

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay (Jer. 20:9).

Such courage and conviction is desperately needed in the pulpits of the land today. The brotherhood and a lost world is crying out for preachers like Paul, who declared,

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake (II Cor. 4:5).

What the brotherhood needs is not another “storyteller,” but men who will speak only “as the oracles of God” (I Peter 4:11). The conviction to please God (I Cor. 1:21)

is necessary for the development of sound congregations. Congregations that “*Hold fast the form of sound words...*” (II Tim. 1:13), and whose members reject the “*wisdom of this world*” (I Cor. 3:19), are the only ones that will grow as God desires.

The zeal for truth stated in Acts 8:4 implies that the early church as a whole went about communicating saving truth, and not just the apostles, preachers, prophets and public teachers. The Word was like a burning fire in their bones and they could not hold it in. Can a sincere heart, who has come to the knowledge of the truth, do any less? This occurs when the Word of God is proclaimed. Luke expresses it thusly:

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand...But the word of God grew and multiplied...So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 4:4; 12:24; 19:20).

When the apostle Paul came to Athens, Luke states of his reaction to this great city filled with false religion in Acts 17:16. The church of our Lord today desperately needs this kind of love for Christ and the souls for which He died. The early church had such fiery zeal because of the conviction the Word had produced in their hearts. Luke speaks of Jesus’ reaction to Jerusalem’s rejection of Him, and hence their lost condition in Luke 19:41, “*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and **wept** over it.*” The Greek word translated “*wept*” expresses the idea of one wailing or crying aloud, and not just a subdued whimper. This term is “*used of any loud expression of grief, especially in mourning for the dead.*”<sup>7</sup> Beloved, we ought also to be stirred over the souls of lost people.

These sentiments are in harmony with the great commission of Jesus to “...go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The preaching and teaching of the gospel of Christ is the key to expanding the church of Christ and the salvation of precious souls. For indeed, the gospel of Christ is “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16).

In the parable of the sower, Jesus describes the seed as “*the word of the kingdom*” (Matt. 13:19), “*the word*” (Mark 4:14), and “*the word of God*” (Luke 8:11). Just as the sowing of tomato seeds 2,000 years ago produced tomatoes, the sowing of God’s Word continues to bring forth Christians and congregations of the Lord’s people, just as it did in the book of Acts. Therefore, it is God’s earnest desire for His people to be deeply involved in sowing the seed of the kingdom, God’s Word by which man is born again (I Peter 1:23-25).

When one ponders those who have led him to Christ and have nurtured him spiritually, he must consider people who have made the sacrifice to know God’s Word, and to take God’s Word out into the world. To those of us who enjoy “*all spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places*” (Eph. 1:3), and the “*unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Eph. 3:8), were their sacrifices worth it? Certainly, and when we are tempted to allow personal evangelism and visitation to “*take a backseat*” to earthly matters, we ought to stop and consider that a hopeless soul somewhere is depending on us to bring them the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:5). The church can never grow as God desires where an unevangelistic spirit prevails and personal work is lacking.

In view of these matters, we all ought to do what we can to “*be fellowhelpers to the truth*” (III John 8).

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There are various ways this can be done. One may be like Gaius and extend hospitality, encouragement and support to those who are proclaiming the truth (cf. III John 1-8). It is so vital that brethren support, encourage and hold up the hands of those who faithfully proclaim the gospel of Christ.

One thing that every saint should do is pray, because the “...*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16). To the Colossians, Paul said that Epaphras is “...*always laboring fervently for you in prayers*” (Col. 4:12). We need to pray for gospel preachers at home and all over the world. Prayer is much needed for those who teach Bible, whether in personal evangelism or Bible classes. We also should pray for faithful and godly elders who have such a weighty responsibility. God’s people should approach the heavenly throne for the lost and erring that they might come to God. We need to pray for church growth at home and in all places, that God may be glorified and souls saved. We should pray for opportunities to reach people for the Savior. Furthermore, let us, as Jesus commands,

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest,  
that he will send forth labourers into his  
harvest (Matt. 9:38).

Please do not forget to pray for the furtherance of the gospel and its faithful messengers.

Paul declared in II Thessalonians 3:1-3:

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

## **Mission-Minded Congregations**

Churches, who have a love for the truth and lost souls, will be interested in evangelizing the lost. This will require a people who are not content to lavish the Lord's money and their time only on themselves by turning inward, but who consider the command of our Lord to go into all the world and "*preach the gospel to every creature*" not as optional, but mandatory. Sacrificial and unselfish support for missions in other parts of the world will have an impact on reaching the lost at home, as well as preaching Christ to those who have never heard the gospel. Jesus emphasizes the urgency of reaching the lost:

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest (John 4:35).

Furthermore, Paul expresses his compulsion for preaching Christ to those who had never heard the truth:

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand (Rom. 15:20-21).

Is it not the will of God for His people to have this sense of urgency for the lost, wherever they be? For indeed, they cannot believe and obey One of whom they have not heard (Rom. 10:14-15).

Personally, I am thankful for the East Hill church of Christ and her fine elders, who have shown their love for the lost, not only in word, but in deed. In a few weeks (from the time of this writing) they will be sending me

to Sevastopol, Ukraine, to do full-time mission work. It is especially outstanding that they have assumed the sponsorship of my entire salary. I am thankful to have these good brethren behind me, in the work of the Lord. This reminds me of the words of John, *“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”* (I John 3:18).

### **Benevolence And Good Works**

It is of the utmost importance for us to care for the suffering, if we would grow. Jesus impresses upon us the need to visit and care for those having difficulty (Matt. 25:34-46). It should be noted in that passage that those who fulfilled His will in being compassionate were on His right hand and consequently welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.

However, those who did not do these benevolent things were told, *“...Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41). Jesus declares further, *“...Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me”* (Matt. 25:45).

Then, if we would grow in spirit and number, let us be compassionate and do all the good we can as did our Lord, *“...who went about doing good”* (Acts 10:38). The inspired apostle Paul enjoined,

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

If we would find opportunities to make valuable contacts for the Lord we must get started and do what we can. On numerous occasions it has been observed

that a Christian would go out to make a visit in the nursing home or hospital and encounter several good opportunities. Indeed, a benevolent call often turns into an evangelistic opportunity. When one begins to feel “*down and out*” he ought to go to some of these places and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. He will soon discover there is much good that he can do.

Benevolence toward those who are in legitimate need, whether saints or not (Gal. 6:10), is a strong growth factor. When those of the Lord’s church manifest compassion toward the downcast and needy, it exemplifies the spirit of Christ and creates interest in the gospel we preach. Benevolence and good works will open doors to those who are lost and strengthen the reputation of the church in the community.

There are many good works that can be done to open gospel doors. A telephone call, a card, a brief visit, a “*word fitly spoken*,” food to the sick and bereaved, or numerous other acts of kindness, may seem small to us, but to the recipient it means a great deal. These things are pleasing to our Lord (Matt. 10:42).

One of the greatest things that we can do to exemplify the mind of Christ is to reach down and help the “*helpless*.” How could anyone ever show contempt toward helping widows and orphans? Beloved, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven, we cannot afford to neglect these! James declared,

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

Jesus said,



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Paul said that brethren should, “...*be ready to every good work,*” and “...*be careful to maintain good works*” (Titus 3:1,8). Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, “*we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...*” (Eph. 2:10). A congregation or church member that is lacking in good works can never grow as God desires!

### **Practical Considerations**

**1. Have a training program** whereby church members are trained to visit, teach, and make contacts for Christ. One of the best ways to train is to team up the inexperienced member with one who is skillful in visiting and/or personal work, that one may gradually learn and gain confidence. Paul expressed the principle of training others to teach (II Tim. 2:2). This principle may also be applied to private teaching. Note to preachers: Taking a zealous learner and training him to teach privately and/or publicly is time well spent.

**2. Maintain a priority list** in making new contracts for Christ. Here is an example of some who should be on that list: the unfaithful (James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1-2); visitors to church services; newcomers to the community or to the neighborhood of a church member. (A list of newcomers to the city/county may possibly be attained from government workers, public utility companies [power, gas, telephone], realtors, etc., especially if Christians are employed in any of these areas. Others are: military people or college students away from home; those who have recently suffered trouble in their lives; and always, those who desire a Bible correspondence

course or personal Bible study, and those regularly attending church services, who are erring or unconverted, should receive top priority. May we remember the stirring words of James,

Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:20).

Put out the word in the congregation for the members to supply names and as much information as possible for those on this priority list. These should be visited if possible, but if visitation is not possible, they should be contacted in some other way. Of course, the main goal in contacting them is to set up a Bible study and win them to Christ. This should be done promptly and urgently, because if the Lord's people do not reach them, be assured, the false teachers will! Remember: *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise"* (Prov. 11:30).

**3. A working visitation program is expedient.**

There is an organizational benefit in this, as it serves to insure that no one is overlooked in visitation, and that a record is kept for the congregation. Also, meeting and discussing assignments as a group promotes fellowship, and lends encouragement to those involved.

**4. The regular Bible teachers** in a congregation should keep records on their Bible students. Information such as name, telephone number, address, attitude, receptivity to teach, or any other pertinent information should be noted. Of course, the teacher should pray and care for all of his/her students, but the teacher should look for special opportunities to influence students who are not Christians and their families. Some ways this

may be done are: Make a point to talk to the student before or after class; when they miss, telephone or write a note to them; communicate with the parents of the student's progress; send birthday cards; arrange an outing for the class; look for opportunities to visit in the home; and endeavor to set up a personal Bible study. Certainly, all Bible teachers should emphasize salvation in Christ, obedience to the gospel, and the plan of salvation during Bible classes. As Paul declared, “...*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (II Cor. 6:2).

**5. Have a Bible school for children on a weekly basis** is one of the most effective ways to establish new converts, as well as make a good impression on non-members. This requires a solid commitment and sacrifice from all the workers involved, but the benefits are well worth it. Not only do precious children learn about Jesus, but a bond is established between Christian teachers and the children. And furthermore, a strong rapport is created between the children's families and the people of the Lord. When non-Christians begin to trust and feel comfortable with members of the congregation, and become accustomed to entering the church building, it makes it easier for them to visit during Sunday school and worship services. Furthermore, because of the acquaintances that are made, they usually become more approachable for Bible study and home visitation. There are various ways such a school may be organized. Some congregations have Bible school on Tuesday and/or Thursday, or some other weekday morning, during the morning hours for pre-schoolers. Some may have a school on Saturday, or after school on weekdays, which would include a broader age group. The main thing is that

precious young souls are taught the Word of God, and they and their families are influenced for Christ and His Church. Remember the words of Jesus (Matt. 19:14).

**6. Utilize every means possible to communicate the saving gospel of Christ** to a lost and dying world. There are several ways to get into people's homes and hearts with the gospel. Following are some ways this may be done, and some advantages of each:

**Radio Broadcasts.** Some advantages of this are that people may hear the gospel at home, in the car, at work, or other places, and people who are blind or illiterate may hear (Rom. 10:17).

**Television Broadcasts.** Some benefits are that the speaker may be seen as well as heard, and that we live in a visually oriented society.

**Doorknocking.** In this there is eye-to-eye contact, and if one has a Bible question or desires personal Bible study, this may be provided "*on the spot.*" (In preparation of gospel meetings, vacation Bible schools, Bible lectureships, or any time is good to provide tracts, information about the local church, or to engage people in Bible study.) Brethren, we should not throw in the towel to the Watchtower Society and the Mormons, but let us continue to practice doorknocking, because souls are still being converted as a result of this work.

**Evangelistic Campaigns.** Bringing in a trained and zealous group from a sound preaching school, Bible college, or other congregations, working together with local members, could possibly move church growth ahead two or more years. This is most effectively done in connection with a gospel meeting or vacation Bible school. In addition to the Bible studies conducting during this

period, valuable contacts are made, sound written media is distributed, and the local congregation is influenced to be more evangelistic.

**Newspaper Articles.** This is effective due to wide circulation, and the fact that people may refer to the article repeatedly. Also, there is the effect of the community reading a good Bible article in mass, or at the same time, and discussing it with each other or with members of the church. Also, this is an effective way to communicate relevant information about the local congregation, such as: time of services, telephone number, location, address, etc.

**Telephone Evangelism.** An advantage of this is the broad spectrum of the community that may be covered, and also the fact that one who would be apprehensive in making door visits to a stranger might be willing to make a telephone call. Invitations to Bible school and worship periods, and offers of Bible correspondence courses and personalized Bible study may also be extended.

**Mail-outs.** This may very well be one of the most capable means of contacting non-Christians with whom we are not acquainted for the truth. Today, there are a number of mail-out services available at a reasonable price. This is an efficient means of covering an entire town or section of a metropolitan area. Many people read practically all of their mail, and again, as with other printed media, they may return to the articles and information over and over again. In mail-outs, the Word of God may be communicated in a way that will touch the hearts and relate to the problems of people, and thus influence them for Christ. Also, young people may be targeted, especially teens and college age. Adolescents

enjoy receiving mail addressed to them.

**Gospel Meetings / Vacation Bible Schools / Bible Lectureships.** The importance of these worthy endeavors was implied earlier in this presentation, in connection with preaching and teaching the Word of God. How sad it is to hear brethren make such statements as, *“The days of gospel meetings are over.”* In gospel meetings, Bible schools and Bible lectureships sound and effective preachers and teachers help to persuade and educate souls for God and His Word. Add to this the prayers, singing and fellowship of saints and indeed, the power of these efforts for good is quite significant.

### **Conclusion**

It is the duty and privilege of the Lord’s people to see that His Word is preached and taught in a private and public way. The beloved apostle Paul is a prime example of this. We read in his address to the Ephesian elders, *“...I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house”* (Acts 20:20). The gospel is what this old world needs, because therein is the answer to man’s salvation. As Paul declared in Romans 1:16,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:  
for it is the power of God unto salvation to  
every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and  
also to the Greek.

At times we may become discouraged at the small number who obey the truth, but let us always bear in mind the words of Isaiah:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow  
from heaven, and returneth not thither, but

watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:10-11).

It should be the primary purpose of every true child of God to exalt Christ, and to do all within his power to lead precious souls into that body for which Christ died, the church. There is no way we can get closer to the heart of God than to give our all to the church of His Son,

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).

### Endnotes

1 Guy N. Woods, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1976), p. 54.

2 W.E. Vine, **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), p. 32.

3 W.A. Bradfield, **Bradfield's Sermon Outlines**, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1966), p. 94.

4 Vine, pp. 225-226, 317.

5 J.W. McGarvey, **New Commentary on Acts of Apostles** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1892), pp. 89-90.

6 Goebel Music, **Behold the Pattern** (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Publications, 1991), p. 200.

7 Vine, p. 206.

## Chapter 6

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Acceptable Worship Vs. Perverted Worship

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**I**n the fourth chapter of John, the apostle of love records an interesting conversation that transpired between Jesus and a woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria. She said unto him, *“Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”* (vs. 19-20). Jesus responded with those words we must never forget.

Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 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 (John 4:21-24).



For our lesson, we want to focus specifically upon the words of verse twenty-four. Here, Jesus clearly sets forth two aspects of acceptable worship we must never overlook. Since God is a spirit, He must be worshipped in “*spirit and in truth.*”

Worshipping God in **spirit** has reference to worshipping Him from the heart. It is worshipping Him rationally and sincerely. It is an intelligent worship, purposed by the worshipper.

The notion of worshipping Him in **truth** refers to that which must be according to God’s revealed will, “*...the word of the truth of the gospel*” (Col. 1:5). If man attempts to worship God in a way not authorized by inspiration, then such actions are fruitless. He has not worshipped because God has refused to accept it. He has become guilty of the very thing Jesus condemned in Matthew 15:8-9,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Both “*spirit*” and “*truth*” are essential. One without the other results in vain worship. Thus it is essential for us to not only understand what constitutes **worship**, but also to understand what comprises in **spirit and in truth**.

### **Worship Defined**

There are almost a dozen Greek words translated **worship** in our English Bible. However, the most prominent one is **proskuneo**, and is found sixty times in the New Testament. Thayer defines it as:

1. to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence 2. among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence 3. in the NEW TESTAMENT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication 3a. used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear the idea of reverence, honor, and homage are predominant in the word.

Add to this the thoughts expressed by Crannell and we have the word clearly defined. He wrote:

Honor, reverence, homage, in thought, feeling, or acts, paid to men, angels, or other 'spiritual' beings, and figurative to other entities, ideas, powers or qualities, but specifically and supremely to Deity.<sup>2</sup>

### **Worshipping God In Spirit**

Our worship is to be "*in spirit.*" This refers to the attitude of the worshipper's heart. It is honor, reverence, and homage which flows from the one worshipping to the One who is worshipped. Consider the words of Bro. Woods:

'True worshippers' are those who worship God sincerely, genuinely and intelligently, as opposed to those who worship mechanically, ceremonially and ritualistically. True worship has as its object the Father and is rendered 'in spirit and in truth,' sincerely and in harmony with His will. Only those who thus do are acceptable. This shows us not all worship is pleasing: it is possible to worship God, and yet not worship in spirit and truth, and thus

unacceptably. What constitutes acceptable worship is indicated in verse 24.<sup>3</sup>

In today’s world, the emphasis has been changed. Accent is now being placed primarily on the worshipper rather than the object of our worship. The concern is now focused on appealing to the passions of men rather than the approval of God. In connection with our worship, we hear much about “*refreshing*,” “*fresh winds*,” “*culture*,” “*free*,” and even a blasphemous reference to a “*holy wow*.” These labels stand in contrast to what some like to call “*dull*,” “*boring*,” “*tasteless*,” “*traditional*,” “*outmoded*,” and “*dry*.”

These ideas are from the “*Change Agents*” running rampant through the New Testament Church. They advocate change, Change, CHANGE—everything must be changed. When they are through, they will possess something foreign to the New Testament. It will be a semi-religious institution that will change with every wind of desire from man. What it is today is not what it will be tomorrow. Everything will be in constant flux. These “*changers*” will ultimately come to a “*everything goes, no-holds-barred*” religion. What God wants, as revealed on the pages of inspiration, is not considered. It is a religion designed to appeal to the nature of man.

“*Yes*,” we are told, “*we must change or die*.” We must **change** to keep pace with our changing world. In order to grow (you guessed it), we must **change**. **Changes** must come to reach the “*unchurched*,” we are told. If we are going to keep the new generation from continuing to leave, we must **change**. If we want to mature Christians and equip them for ministry, **change** must be a part of our future.

In this realm of **change** for which many are

clamoring, understand that worship is central to that which **MUST** be changed. These liberals want to act as if the areas they want to change are merely areas of **personal judgment**. Please be assured, their advocacy passes through the realm of personal preference and soon begins to clash with the clear dictates of Divine inspiration. In their rush to **change** in areas where no man has the right to legislate for others, they soon find themselves in areas where Deity has already spoken. So, in essence, these self proclaimed “*agents of change*” are now “*agents of perversion.*”

### **Worship God In Truth**

As we begin this section, I would like to right here inject a rather lengthy quote from the pen of Guy N. Woods that applies to the previous section as well as this one. It is worthy of consideration. He wrote:

The American Standard Version at Matthew 2:8 has a reference to a footnote defining the word **worship** as follows: ‘The Greek word denotes an act of reverence whether paid to a creature (see ch. 4:9; 18:26), or to the creator (see ch. 4:10).’

1. Worship, then, involves an **act**. It is incorrect to say that worship is simply and solely an attitude of heart. Inasmuch as worship consists of **acts**, it follows that such acts are as much involved in worship and are as essential to it as the attitude which prompts them.

2. The Greek word for worship denotes an act...**paid**. Worship involves an attitude, but an attitude which expresses itself in acts which find acceptance in the will of another. Worship, therefore, necessitates acts. The effort to

disassociate acts from attitude in worship was born of the desire to escape the opprobrium of adding unauthorized practices to the worship of God...What does the New Testament authorize us to do in worship? The early church, under the guidance of inspired men, continued ‘stedfastly’ in the apostles’ teaching, which included singing, the Lord’s supper, the contribution and prayers. These divinely given items are specifically said to have been the means by which the first Christians worshipped (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). Less than these we cannot offer him and be in conformity to his will; more than these is an unwarranted and officious intermeddling with the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

As you can see, these wise words are applicable to our theme of Acceptable Worship Vs. Perverted Worship. They should always be before us.

When we worship God “*in truth*,” we are worshipping according to the once and for all delivered faith (Jude 3). God has never allowed man to worship Him in whatever way he pleases. Cain found this out (Gen. 4). His brother, Abel, worshipped God in the way prescribed by Jehovah (Heb. 11:4), thus his was accepted. Cain’s worship was refused because he did not follow the prescription given by God.

Nadab and Abihu learned this lesson early.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (Lev. 10:1-2).

This is a lesson these “*Change Agents*” need to learn. The

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two sons of Aaron offered fire which God had not commanded them to offer. They were not guilty of violating a positive command. They were guilty of adding something about which God said nothing!

These items God has authorized in worship to Him are clearly taught in the New Testament. We worship Him in singing, praying, the Lord's supper, giving, and in being confronted with His Word. But the agents of change want to set this aside. They are malcontents, arguing that God's ways are not sufficient for the twentieth century. We must change, Change, CHANGE!

Consider the following:

The tired, uninspiring event called worship in our churches must give way to an exhilarating experience of God that simultaneously exhibits and nurtures life in the worshippers.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the first question we ask is: How long has our worship been a *"tired, uninspiring event?"*

If this is true today, and if we do today what our forefathers in the faith have done for generations, then their worship was a *"tired, uninspiring event!"* The only way this statement could not be true is for the judgment standard determining what constitutes a *"tired, uninspiring event"* to have changed. And that is the position the Change Agents must take!

Surely they will not say our forefathers in the faith were just not smart enough to know that their worship was a *"tired, uninspiring event."* It is that we must change to appeal to the *"unchurched"* (we are told). To do this, we must make our worship an *"exhilarating experience."* Thus, society and its standard is that which determines what we do and how we do it. These *"changers"* will be constantly changing what they do. Friends, this is why

some among us are contending that the desire of these “*Change Agents*” is to turn the Church of our Lord into another denomination.

The next question is: How long will it be before these agents of change are led into “*holy-rollerism?*” If there is no absolute standard to follow, then anything goes. The climate of the world today will soon demand a “*football championship*” atmosphere to induce this desired “*exhilarating experience of God.*”

### **Drama**

We now hear of the use of drama to help put Biblical lessons into proper perspective. Consider the following:

Using song and drama to communicate the message of the Cross in a way that gospel meetings cannot do has proved successful for the minister Dace Delaney, Fifth and Pine Church, Rector, AR...But his principle hope is to encourage church members to stop being afraid of entertainment as a way to communicate the gospel...<sup>6</sup>

First of all, I suggest that God did not know this on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Just think how successful He could have been had He intertwined just a little bit of **drama** in the message of the apostles! Why, there might have been another four or five hundred to obey the gospel on that day if God had just been wise enough to inject a bit of **drama** in Peter’s sermon!

Furthermore, was Paul not less than wise for never starting the “*Jerusalem School of Drama and Entertainment*” to take the gospel to a lost and dying world? Think what Stephen might have done with **drama** and **entertainment** instead of “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the*

*Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye*" (Acts 7:51). Why, he probably would have outlived the apostle John!

Second, why should a Christian "*be afraid of entertainment as a way to communicate the gospel*" if there is divine authority for such? I urge that if God had wanted such to be used in spreading the gospel of Christ, surely He would have made it clear.

However, biblical authority for what is done in worship is the farthest thing from the mind of many. The standard they use is, "*What does man want.*" I suggest they join with the denominations and have banners, choirs, instrumental music, and dance groups. Surely, if its good enough for them, it should be good enough for us! We say—utter nonsense!

### **Solos, Quartets, and Choirs**

It comes as no surprise to learn these emissaries of change are now openly advocating the use of **solos**, **quartets**, and **choruses** in worship. The justification for such actions are interesting, to say the least. In reference to special **musicians**, Alexander wrote,

I will not argue the case here, but will grant for the purposes of this paper that such activities, if properly carried out, do not violate biblical teaching and may be a legitimate avenue of teaching and admonishing one another in song.

But the thing that Alexander forgot is that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 set forth reciprocal singing.

At the same "*Christian Scholars Conference*," Langford states:

We don't really know whether the admonitions of Paul in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16



enjoin congregational singing, individual praise, or the fellowship in song among two or three Christians. The passage could apply equally well to solos as to group praise.<sup>7</sup>

This is nothing less than agnosticism. It is based on the basic philosophy that we cannot really know anything for certain. We reject it without apology.

In his paper, Langford stated, *“In fact, a few years back the late Don DeWelt made a fairly convincing case for the utter lack of scriptural authority for congregational singing.”*<sup>8</sup> Then the very next words from his pen read as follows, *“While I do not question our authority for congregational singing...”*<sup>9</sup>

Now, if *“a fairly convincing case for the utter lack of scriptural authority for congregational singing”* exists, how can one say, *“...I do not question our authority for congregational singing...?”* The answer seems to me to be very simple – Bible authority is subjective and relative or Langford is thoroughly confused! Regardless of which it is, **he must be rejected and resisted!**

## Women In Leadership Roles

As our liberal brethren continue to rush to mimic the denominations, it comes as no surprise the role of women in the worship hour has become a major issue in the New Testament Church. In 1989 the Brookline church of Christ in Boston revealed it had used women in such roles for years. The same year, the elders of the Bering Drive congregation in Houston, Texas began using women to lead singing, to lead prayer and to serve communion. The Nashville Jubilee came under fire the same year when it was revealed that women taught classes in which men were present.<sup>10</sup> In 1990, the Cahaba Valley

congregation in Birmingham, Alabama announced they would appoint male and female deacons, as well as using women in leadership roles in the Sunday morning worship period.<sup>11</sup> In February, 1992, Carroll Osborn, Bible professor at Abilene Christian University, affirmed at the A.C.U. Lectureship that “...women in the first century church with apostolic approval preached to the general assembly of the saints on the Lord’s day and directed public prayers.”<sup>12</sup>

Space forbids a lengthy discussion of great women mentioned by inspiration’s pen. But such names as Sarah, Rebekah, Deborah, Hannah, Mary (mother of Jesus), Elizabeth, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, Priscilla, and Phoebe readily come to mind. Others could be named. However, none of these can logically be used to confirm what the liberals attempt to prove by them.

The doctrine of Christ does not discriminate against women. Rather, the opposite is true. It elevates them to a place never enjoined by women prior to the institution of New Testament Christianity. It bothers me considerably to hear those who should know better to belittle the cause of Christ for its supposed “*intolerant*” and “*defaming*” views of women.

God has established principles that are to exist in the home. Paul wrote:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Eph. 5:22-24).

Levels of authority do not constitute inferiority. Do you think for a moment the apostle Paul ever considered himself (Paul the man) as being superior to any other person? Indeed not! But relative to his apostolic authority, he did not apologize for it for a second. In fact, he argued it when the need existed.

The wife is not **inferior** to her husband. In the very next verse, Paul told the husbands to love their wives “*as Christ also loved the church*” (v. 25). Notice, in the relationship of husband and wife, each one’s responsibility is paralleled to the connection of the Church to its Head.

Paul was not a “*woman hater*.” He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, who revealed God’s will concerning women in the family, in the Church, and in society. Never had **womanhood** been elevated to such a high and noble position as when the gospel of Christ was revealed.

God has also established principles that are to exist in the Church. Paul wrote, “*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*” (I Tim. 2:12). This is clear enough. Truly, a person needs help to misunderstand it.

Again, this is not inferiority. Just as my willing submission to the elders of the local congregation does not suggest they are **superior** to me, so a woman’s willing submission to the man does not suggest she is inferior. Paul wrote,

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (I Cor. 11:3).

I have heard the argument made that an eldership has the right to allow a woman to publicly teach men.

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This argument shows a woeful lack of respect for, or ignorance of, God's authority. An eldership has no authority to allow that which God has forbidden. Nor do they have the power to forbid that which God permits. Simply stated, a woman is not to teach men in a public assembly; neither is she, at any time, to have dominion over the man. No eldership, nor any group of men, has the right to change this arrangement.

### **Instrumental Music**

Anyone with a cursory knowledge of the Restoration Movement knows the temple of God was torn asunder by mechanical instruments of music. But as someone has well said, "*The only thing man learns from history is that man does not learn from history.*"

In the last century, man was determined to bow before his idol. He did and the New Testament Church was divided. It is no different today. Man is determined to introduce them into the worship of the Church today—indeed, has already done so!

Regardless of the many arguments made in the defense of instruments of music in worship, the employment of such in Christian worship is sinful. The fact there is no direct prohibition against such does not authorize their use. If "*silence*" (no direct "*Thou shalt not*") is permission, this allows praying to Mary, circumcising babies, etc. We urge those who use this argument to ask Nadab and Abihu what they thought about adding that which God has not commanded.

The use of such instruments in the Old Testament does not give us authority to do so. The law of Moses was fulfilled by Christ (Matt. 5:17). It is not our standard.

Neither does the fact they are mentioned as being

in heaven give us authority to implement their use. The very argument overlooks the fact the book of Revelation was highly symbolic and figurative (Rev. 1:1). Such reasoning would allow the burning of incense (Rev. 5:8). This argument is “*no argument.*”

The fact is, Paul clearly sets forth what is authorized in Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16. In short, it is specified that we are to **sing**. Whatever one must do to **sing** is all we are authorized to do.

As we sing, we are to “*make melody.*” This is translated from **psallo**. The basic meaning of the word is to **pull, pluck, twang, cause to vibrate**. Some have argued from this to show we are permitted to use mechanical instruments. However, inspiration named the instrument upon which the **psalming** is to transpire—the human heart! That forever settles the matter.

However, in the minds of some the only thing that will settle anything is to have what they want. Many have determined to have the man-made instrument, and they will have them regardless of what God has said. Though they will deny it, we affirm these “*Change Agents*” have no respect for, nor concern for, having Bible authority for anything. In many instances, they swallowed the denominational swill spued out by denominational professors. Others have sat at the feet of some of our “*brethren*” who have been taught by these sectarian professors. Regardless of where they received their education, they have capitulated to the onslaught of Satan’s devious “*New Hermeneutic,*” and now openly advocate this error.

The philosophy which advocates **drama** to communicate the message of the cross is the same one that accepts **solos, quartets, and choirs**. This same

ideology will allow women to serve in every capacity the man serves. It is this same attitude that seeks to employ mechanical instruments of music. It is this mindset, my friends, that constantly harps on change, Change, CHANGE!

The changes they advocate are “*doctrine changing*” and soul damning. They pervert the simplicity of New Testament worship in attempting to appeal to the flesh. The standard is no longer “*What God desires,*” but “*What man desires.*”

### Conclusion

That which distinguishes acceptable worship from perverted worship is the word of God. Inspiration tells us that worship must be **in spirit and in truth**. If either of these is absent, the worship is unacceptable. Honest intent may well be present. But **honest intent** is not the determining factor.

Let each of us determine that our worship will be acceptable to God. Let us not be fearful to examine that which we now practice. If it needs to be changed, let us change it. If, in the areas of **opinion** it can be improved, let us do so.

But on the other hand, let us be wary to change something just because someone is constantly urging us to **change**. Change is not sinful, neither is it mandatory. Let us be just like Samuel who said, “*...Speak; for thy servant heareth*” (I Sam. 3:10).

### Endnotes

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5 Shelly, Rubel and Harris, Randall J., **The Second Incarnation** (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub., 1992), p. 13.

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## Chapter 7

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Leaders In The Church: Their Authority

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*



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**I**t is due to the special kindness of Paul Sain, the fine elders here and the East Hill congregation that I am privileged to present this assigned topic on church leadership, elders especially, and whether authority inheres that work or not.

Word experts inform us that authority means,

...the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction...the position of one having such power (a person in authority) (**Webster**).

Other consulted dictionaries say basically the same.

Leaders and authority go hand-in-hand. It is the height of absurdity to reject such and seek their severance. Authority inhering leadership is true in governmental circles. Presidents, governors, congressmen, state legislators, county and city officials are leaders and are invested with proper authority to do their assigned work.



It is true in the business world. Presidents, chairmen of boards, managers, foremen, etc., are leaders and are invested with authority. It is true in the educational world. Presidents of colleges and universities, boards of trustees, chairmen of various disciplines (departments) and professors in classes are invested with authority. It is true in high schools, middle schools and the lower grades. We have superintendents, boards of education, principals and teachers. Each of these is invested with delegated authority. It is true in the family. In a family of six – parents and four children – all six cannot be household heads. It is true in the church of our Lord. Authority inheres the Godhead for a surety. It inheres their Words – the Holy Bible. Authority inheres apostolic testimony. Authority inheres the very nature of the eldership though far too many preachers, professors in our colleges and pew packers deny such with vehemence. But it is there nevertheless! They, the dissenters, are not the final arbiters relative to authority and where it has been positioned.

Authority is not an IN word with the masses unless they are on the giving end and then it is perfectly fine. When they are on the receiving end authority is odious from stem to stern for them. Anarchy would inundate our world quickly if all vestiges of authority vanished completely. Chaos would send its curses upon us with amazing rapidity. Authority is an intense imperative for an orderly society.

I have frequently been asked in Open Forums and Question and Answer periods what I deem to be the greatest problem challenging churches of Christ in the closing part of this century. Uniformly, I have answered, “*A lack of respect for the authority of God’s Word.*” This

is the taproot from which spring ALL our other problems and perils. Will any informed person deny it? Surely not!

## **The Great Head Of The Church And Authority**

From the beginning of His ministry to its triumphant conclusion Jesus Christ was an authoritative figure. In the temptations of Satan Jesus commanded the devil to LEAVE Him in Matthew 4:10 and in 4:11. The devil LEFT Him! The inspired Matthew, an apostle, gave this assessment of Jesus at the close of the Sermon on the Galilean Mount. *“For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”* (Matt. 7:29). In a number of demon expulsions during His ministry He commanded or charged the devilish imps to depart their targeted victims and depart they did promptly (Matt. 4:24; 12:22-32; 15:21-31; Mark 5:1-18). His auditors in Luke 4:32 *“were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”* Authority inhered His wonderful words of weight and wisdom. Subsequent to His resurrection and prior to His return to the Palace of the Universe on high He laid claim to all power (KJV) or all authority (ASV) in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). The origin of His authority was from heaven (from God the Father); its realm of reception was here on earth where then He was and where His cause would be established.

A lesson I have taught hundreds of children in pew packer classes in local work and gospel meetings throughout the country relates to five things Jesus is to His church. (1) He is the builder; (2) He is the foundation; (3) He is the purchaser; (4) He is the head; (5) He is the Saviour. These foundational principles, if kept in memory

and in practice, will gauge their whole future and determine destinies. Jesus Christ, not a Pope, a council, a synod, a group of creed writers or even change agents, heads the church. Jesus Christ is exclusively in that realm. He promised the building of it in Matthew 16:18 and kept that precious promise with full fruition in Acts 2 on memorable Pentecost. Paul established His headship in such passages as Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; and Colossians 1:18. He has the divine right to command and the divine power to enforce said obedience. This we had better not forget!

### **The Apostles And Authority**

These were the initial leaders on earth of Christ's church as we see exhibited in the early chapters of Acts. Jesus promised Peter binding and loosing powers in Matthew 16:19 and extended it to the twelve in Matthew 18:18. Whatever they bound on earth had already been bound in heaven; whatever they loosed on earth had already been loosed in heaven. This is the precise Greek construction of this apostolic binding and loosing. They were but earthly echoes of what already had been decreed by Deity in Heavenly Courts of ultimate or fullness of authority. Peter in Acts 5:1-11 exhibited authority relative to Ananias and Sapphira. Their authority is seen in how they dealt with a murmuring problem in Acts 6. Their authority is exhibited in how they handled the Judaizers at the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15 and Galatians 2. Apostolic authority was on the front burner as Paul dealt with Elymas the sorcerer in Acts 13, with Corinthian problems in I and II Corinthians, with false teachers in the three evangelistic epistles, I and II Timothy and Titus, and with Hebrew apostasy in the book of Hebrews.

It is further seen in how John dealt with the anti-Christ in I and II John and with the daring Diotrephes in III John 9-10. The New Testament books written by Matthew, John, Paul and Peter, all apostles, are punctuated with authority through and through!

### **An Ancient Error In Rebellious Revival**

Thirty-five centuries ago while Israel was in the wilderness there was a rebellion of deep import raised against Moses and Aaron. It was led and fueled by king-like Korah, daring Dathan and arrogant Abiram. These three self-appointed captains of mutiny against Moses and anger leveled against Aaron were joined by 250 overly disgruntled Israelites. Their stock-in-trade arguments were thread bare yet have a familiar ring to them. They arrogantly argued that Moses, lawgiver and deliverer, and Aaron, first high priest of the Levitical order, took too much authority on their shoulders. They espoused the popular view that EVERY Israelite possessed equal authority with the two Hebrew brothers. This sounds like disgruntled members today who dislike the authority inhering the eldership where they attend. Relative to the rebel rousers in the wilderness Jehovah exhibited His prompt disapproval allowing the earth to open swallowing the ranting rebels. Fire flowed down from an aroused Jehovah and devoured the 250 conspirators. The modern sons and daughters of Korah, Dathan and Abiram are still very much with us. They deny any special authority to elders. They say elders have no more authority than does any other member. These modern counterparts claim that elders are void of any power or authority to make a decision that has not been made already by members at large. Their flawed concept of elders is that of rubber

stamping what the congregation wants to do. Wise elders will get insights and feedbacks from members all right but decisions of judgment and expediency are THEIRS to make and when made, members are to honor them without becoming modern Korahs, Dathans and Abirams.

Just how do these modern rebels against authority seek to establish their case? They glaze it over with a measure of marketable popularity. Here are some seven ploys they have used.

1. They say elders have no authority except as ensamples or examples of the flock. They like to park at the doorsteps of I Peter 5:3 which prohibits an eldership from lording it over Jehovah’s heritage. Interestingly enough, Peter issues an authoritative edict that they (elders) be ensamples or examples to the flock. Elders are to receive the authoritative communique. Likewise, members are to receive the same. These modern rebels find it real convenient to do a gigantic PASSOVER relative to verse 2 in this context wherein Peter commands (sounds authoritative) elders to FEED (KJV) or TEND (ASV) and take the OVERSIGHT of God’s flock which is among them. Tending, feeding and overseeing reflect authority for a surety!

2. They are especially fond of quoting Jesus in Matthew 28:18 to the effect that He has ALL authority which leaves NONE for elders. Are they so very, Very, VERY naive that they have NEVER heard of original authority and delegated authority? God has original authority; He granted ALL authority to Jesus. Christ, in turn, has delegated authority to apostles and prophets (which belonged to the first century of Christianity and still does in their writings) and to elders which were to be part and parcel of every succeeding generation of His

people. By their own premises where do they get the authority to tell us there is no authority inhering the eldership? Inconsistency is written all over this assertion of theirs as they hurl forth an authoritative dictum that there is no authority within the eldership. One professor/preacher who is on this no-authority-for-elders bandwagon has been vocal for years in telling elders what they can and cannot do about perverted Bible usages in the pulpits and Bible classes they oversee. From where came his authority to sit in judgment over elders in various congregations? Yet he continues to wield it!

3. This "*no authority*" faction, and this is what it is, fondly goes to Matthew 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-45 wherein Christ told His followers that they were to be servants and not like Gentiles who exercise dominion and authority over others. Jesus is discussing true greatness in said passage – not elders and their overseeing the flock! If a servant is minus any and all authority, which is their implication, Jesus Himself is stripped of any and all authority because He portrayed Himself as servant or minister in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. Likewise, this warped explanation, scholarly exegetes of Scripture they are NOT, would leave no particle of authority for apostles who were His very auditors at this time! This is a classic case of taking a text out of its context thus making it a mere pretext!

4. They deny there are any expressions depicting authority in any Bible passage relative to elders. The remnant of our study will show the flagrant falsity of this baseless charge.

5. They say elders should make no decisions on their own but rubber stamp what congregational desires suggest. By their very premises, from where does

congregational authority in decision making derive? This question needs an answer from these modern day Korahs, Dathans and Abirams!

6. They claim that authority residing in elders is just another one of what they style “*Church of Christ traditions.*” Such begs the question. They assume as true what they have utterly failed to prove and furthermore cannot prove. Authority inhering the eldership derives from apostolic tradition or teaching (cf. I Cor. 11:2, ASV; II Thess. 2:15; 3:6). To label something as tradition is insufficient either by way of defense or refutation. It needs to be determined whether said practice is divine tradition or human tradition. It should not be difficult for them to recognize human tradition for in such they are majoring.

7. They assert the decisions should come just as much from deacons, preachers, various committees in the church, the women, youth directors, the young people in aggregate or any other church group as from elders. But an assertion is not a synonym for support or an argument for acceptance. Assertions are not valid arguments for a surety!

All seven of the foregoing are assertions and each one is pointless of proof.

### **The Eldership: Negative Views Of Their Authority**

Elders do not possess powers to add to God’s Word or subtract from the same. They have NO authority to set aside any of the commandments of Christ – the Great Head of the church. Note now some specific areas by way of the negative.

They do not have the power to dispense with any

of the acts necessary in becoming a Christian. They cannot tamper with the new birth – the birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:3,5,7). For instance they could not tell a person who has responded to the gospel call,

The water in our baptistry is cold tonight due to a malfunction of the heater. Therefore we are dispensing with the essentiality of an immersion for you. For this occasion it is much more convenient for us to sprinkle you or pour a small amount of water on your head in lieu of immersion. By the authority of this eldership we so charge and so command. Fellow candidate to our cause and congregation here, let it now be executed promptly. Brother Preacher, proceed with all haste in accomplishing the same.

Such would be totally beyond the pale of authority delegated them by the Great Head of the church. This would be nothing but a daring, blasphemous and officious intermeddling with the Lord's crystal clear will touching the proper action of New Testament baptism. Neither could they dispense with repentance, confession and baptism in the plan opting for the popular Protestant ploy of faith only. The gospel plan of salvation has been given by the Christ. He is the One and only Lawgiver in such matters as per James 4:12. Doctrine has been established already by Christ and is not subject to change by an eldership or any other group. Elders are charged to execute His plan – not rewrite it for one of their own preference.

Elders possess no powers to dispense with one or more of the acts of Christian worship. For instance, they cannot change the time of the Lord's Supper from its weekly observance, the Biblical pattern as per Acts 20:7,



to a daily, monthly, quarterly or yearly observance. Some years back I spent almost an entire afternoon trying to convince an older couple that they were in error in observing the Supper once a year and on a spring Thursday night at that. They tried to pick out the time that would correspond to the Thursday night Jesus instituted it and said that is the correct time and the only correct time to observe it. It was a futile study from the word go. They were adamant even though most of their lives they had observed it faithfully on each Lord's day. I had conducted many gospel meetings for the congregation where they had their membership. They had been reading after a false teacher and he had sold them a pack of lies about the Lord's Supper and they had bought it hook, line and sinker. Elders have no right to beef it up and make it an occasion where sins are absolved among the participants. They have no right to change its name, remove the cup from the members allowing only the wafer or bread to be eaten or turning it into a bloodless mass as Romanism with Papal approval had done on a mass scale. Elders have no right to change congregational singing in worship and adopt and adapt special music, solos, choruses, quartets, etc., in its place. Elders have no right to move the piano, organ or a ten-piece brass band into Christian worship where there can be a combination of vocal and mechanical music.

Elders have no right to move women into the pulpits, a mixture of men and women in a Bible class, as prayer leaders, as song directors, as officiants at the Lord's Supper or serving the bread and fruit of the vine to the audience. They have no right to put her into the eldership or to serve the congregation as a deacon. Both an elder and deacon must be the husband of one wife. It would

be quite interesting for change agents along these lines to tell us just how a woman – any woman – can be the husband of one wife. This would be a biological phenomenon and then some!

Elders do not have the power to change the nature of the church or its mission which God has charged it to fulfill. They possess no power to change a single syllable of the Great Commission. They do not have the power to water down the gospel thus making it more palatable to the tastes of worldly weaklings. Sometimes they will seek to muzzle their preacher to tone it down and keep it toned down while patting ungodly members on the back who give liberally each time the contribution basket is passed. Such men, when they do it as elders, are a signal disgrace to the office they hold, the work they are authorized to do. Sound preachers and solid Bible teachers deserve something FAR better than intimidated elders who allow the affluent to call the congregational shots about what can and cannot be preached or taught. Elders are charged to see that what should be done is done and done correctly. They are not charged to withhold tough truth from those who insist on having a watered down gospel which will never cross their worldly ways and lascivious lifestyles.

### **The Eldership: Positive Views Of Their Authority**

The very names ascribed them reflect authority inhering their work. They are called **Elders** or **Presbyters**. During the New Testament era they were reverently viewed as presiding over the assemblies of the saints. These two terms derive from *presbuteros* and refer to men of spiritual age, ripe judgment and maturity

handling congregational matters. Authority inhered their work as elders or presbyters. **Bishops** and **overseers** derive from *episkopos*. Thayer’s **Greek-English Lexicon** describes a bishop as:

...an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done correctly, a curator, guardian or superintendent.

Authority inheres each one of these defining terms for a surety. They are overseers of ALL the work of the church ALL the time. They are UNDER the Chief Shepherd who is Christ; they are OVER the flock in a congregational setting where they have been Scripturally appointed to serve. **Pastors** and **shepherds** derive from *poimen* which means to feed or tend. The analogy is drawn from the Oriental Shepherds of that era. Did such a shepherd have any power, any authority? Could he lead his sheep to a place where there was grass and water? Could he protect his sheep if wolves or robbers approached? Palestinian shepherds would laugh at a tourist today who would hint that no authority inheres their role as shepherds and rightly so. Greek studies reveal that *poimen* means, “to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep...to rule, govern” (Thayer, p. 527). Feed, tend, keep, rule, and govern all reflect authority. It is passingly strange that some of our professors/preachers who claim such Greek proficiency have missed these elementary points – points they should have picked up the first year they studied Greek. It just goes to prove that some of them do not know nearly as much as they think they do or as much as they want the rest of us to think they do! Their Greek proficiency is frequently flawed. Bishops are styled stewards in Titus 1:7. The Greek word, *oikonomos* means

an "administrator of God's house." Administration requires authority.

In I Timothy 3:4 Paul uses the Greek term *proistemi* which is rendered "ruleth" both in the KJV and the ASV. The term means to "stand before, to be over, to rule, to superintend, to preside over." Most of us know that being over, ruling, superintending and presiding are punctuated with authority. Too bad some of our PhD's are not in the know here! If I were on the popular bandwagon of promoting the doctrine of no-authority-for-elders, which I have never been, am not now and never expect to be, I would find these terms exceedingly difficult to harmonize with my pet theory.

In I Thessalonians 5:12 Paul refers to those who admonish and are over you in the Lord. Both terms reflect authority. Elders have the authority to admonish and as members we sustain the obligation to be receptive and submissive to said admonitions. They are OVER us in the Lord which implies we are UNDER them in the Lord. Being OVER and UNDER are hard to explain if one eliminates all vestiges of authority from both terms. Paul did not remove authority from either term. Perverters come along and do what Paul dared not do. Truth takes a back seat to them as they are more interested in redefining terms that coincide with their totally subjective views.

Some interesting Greek terms are found in Hebrews 13:17. The passages reads,

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

There is *hegeomai* which means “to lead, preside, govern.” It is translated as rule. It is used of Jesus in Matthew 2:6 as the one who shall be Governor of God’s people and of Joseph by Stephen in Acts 7:10 as Governor over Egypt. Did the term have any authority in it relative to Jesus and Joseph? If so, and it did, it has authority in Hebrews 13:17 relative to elders over the flock. A leader has authority; a presider has authority; a governor has authority.

The Greek word for obey in this verse is *peitho* and means “yield to, assent to, obey.” James used this word in James 3:3 relative to the obedience the horse gives his rider or driver. There is authority in bridle and bits. I learned this in working with horses and mules while a lad on a farm in West Tennessee. The horse or mule was many, many times stronger and faster than I, yet I could control where he went and how rapidly. There is authority embedded in the word obey in Hebrews 13:17, all the no-authority-for-elders faction to the contrary notwithstanding!

The Greek word for submit is *hupeiko* and means “to yield under or submissively.” How can there be a yielding to minus authority? How can there be a submissive response minus any and all authority? Godly members of a congregation recognize such authority and act accordingly.

The Greek word for watch is *agrupneo* and means “sleeplessness, keep guard, be wakeful.” Does the sleepless guard on duty possess any authority? If not, what profit attaches to his role as watchman?

It seems to me a person would have to have a great deal of misguided help from a liberal to misunderstand any of these terms and especially all of them in the

aggregate! In view of all this overwhelming evidence, how can anyone fail to see that authority inheres the work of elders – not legislative authority in doctrine but authority to see to it that all work of the church is done correctly and in matters of expediency that they can make binding decisions on the flock they oversee? Yet, there are devious, devilish and diabolical ways of seeking to circumvent the crystal clear picture as this study has set forth. Another devious maneuver will punctuate the next segment in this study.

### **The Authority Of Elders And The Word Exousia**

The Greek word for authority or power is *exousia*. It is translated both by authority and power in the ASV and the KJV. By my count it occurs about 100 times in the Greek text of the New Testament. Some twenty years ago Jack Lewis, of the Harding Graduate School in Memphis, wrote an article dealing with this word. He told of its numerous occurrences in the New Testament, how it is rendered in both the KJV and ASV, its usage in both noun and verb forms and the people to whom it applies as employed in the New Testament. He concluded that the noun and verb forms are used in connection with God, Jesus, the devil, earthly rulers, the apostles, an evangelist, and ordinary Christians in their varied relationships. He said the word does not occur in usage toward elders or in reference to our attitudes toward them. When I wrote the book, **The Elder And His Work**, nearly twenty years ago, brother Lewis gave me permission to use his conclusion which reads,

Before we divide the church over the implications of a word that does not occur in

the Bible in the context with which we are differing from each other, would it not be rational to give thought to the possibility of the need for a more Biblical pattern in which to express ourselves? If we use Biblical terms we might not find ourselves so far apart after all.

Observations are in order. In the first place, no true lover of God, His Word and His church desires division. Sinful divisions will not materialize if we all follow the Book. They occur when we do not follow the Book. In the second place, there are at least a dozen other Greek words that brother Lewis should have done some word studies on which reflect authority in the eldership. In the third place, divisions, if they occur over this, cannot be laid at the feet of those who teach that elders rule and toward them to whom we are to be obedient or submissive. The divisions will come, if they occur, because of those who deny elders are to rule and members are to be obedient to the same. In the fourth place, *exousia* is not used relative to parents over their children. I have examined all of the approximately one hundred usages of *exousia* in the New Testament and not a single time is this term used relative to parents and their children. Does this then mean parents have no *exousia* (authority, power) over their children? Does this mean children have no responsibility in obeying or submitting to parents? According to the Lewis premises parents have NO *exousia* authority or power over their children. But they do. Paul proves that conclusively in Ephesians 6:1-3 and in Colossians 3:20. Mothers are to guide or manage the house (children) as per I Timothy 5:14. Authority inheres her guiding or managing the household. Likewise, elders have *exousia* power or authority over the flock. Such is amply evident from the fact that they are OVER us,

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RULE us, and WATCH in behalf of our souls. Such is further evident from the fact that we are to OBEY them and SUBMIT to them.

Incidentally, I proposed a question to brother Lewis in a personal letter after he was appointed an elder at the White Station congregation in Memphis. In essence I asked,

If elders have no authority, except as ensample or examples, how will you and your fellow elders ever remove an unsound or immoral preacher or a false teacher from the pulpit or Bible class respectively should such develop down the line?

I am still waiting for an answer and mail does flow back and forth from the two towns where he and I live – Memphis and Ripley respectively. I would be interested in hearing from anyone on how an eldership void of all authority, except as examples, could ever fire an unsound, immoral preacher or remove a false teacher from a Bible class.

### **The Apostle Peter Does Not Cancel Out Authority**

The no-authority-for-elders faction among us is fond, very fond of hearkening to I Peter 5:3 wherein Peter prohibits elders from lording over God's heritage and being ensamples or examples to the flock. In verse 2 Peter had commanded his fellow elders to tend or feed the flock of God among them. This was an authoritative directive issuing authority to its recipients – elders. Surely Peter did not give elders authority to do their work in verse 2, tend or feed the flock and take the oversight thereof, only to remove it in verse 3! It is a deceitful



handling of the Scriptures (II Cor. 4:2) to overpark on verse 3 and do a gigantic PASSOVER of verse 2. Christ and the apostles were examples but such did not cancel out their authority and neither does it with elders. Brother Roy Deaver has stated so well, *“Example does not preclude authority.”*

### **Conclusion**

Elders do have authority. They do not have the authority the Godhead has or that the apostles had in the first century, and still do through the Word. They do not have legislative authority; they do not have dictatorial authority such as Diotrefes craved in III John 9-10. But they do have authority in seeing what should be done is done correctly. In expedient matters they possess authority, make decisions and we had better respect them for such.

Yet, it seems the height of ingratitude when a preacher spends years in a local work, building it up, elevating the elders and defending their authority against all who would usurp it and then for those same elders to turn around and fire that preacher because a worldly and wicked element wants him gone YESTERDAY due to his strong sermons against their pet sins. Yet it has happened far too frequently and continues to happen with inexpressibly sad frequency. Wisdom suggests discipling the worldly and holding up the hands of the faithful preacher and the solid Bible teacher in class work.

## Chapter 8

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Grace, Law, And Works

*Tom L. Bright*



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One of the great doctrines of the Bible is “*Salvation by grace.*” While not meaning to detract from other great tenets of the Bible, the concept of the great grace of God manifested through Jesus Christ is profound, to say the least. When one stops to consider all the Bible says about this subject, it surely creates in one the desire to praise the great I AM.

Nonetheless, just as he has done to so many precepts of the one faith (Eph. 4:5), man has perverted the idea of “*salvation by grace*” to the point it is nearly unrecognizable. A person once said to me, “*We are saved by grace and grace alone. I need nothing else.*”

It is sad the denominational world has perverted the beautiful doctrine of “*Salvation by grace.*” But even more sad is the fact that many of our brethren are now actively advocating these denominational ideas. We are now hearing things from false teachers among us that

we would not have thought possible forty years ago.

For instance, a friend of mine was talking to a New Testament Christian that was confused on the subject of **grace**. When asked, “*How often must one repent?*” he responded, “*Oh, every two or three months.*” If it were not so serious, such would be hilarious!

We often hear the argument that **grace** and **faith** cannot have anything to do with **law** and **works**. It is taught by some that since **grace** and **faith** are a part of God’s scheme of redemption, then **law** and **works** have no part at all in His plan. They are “*mutually exclusive,*” we are told. Thus, the contention is that it is wrong to teach that in the same purpose which includes **grace** and **faith** there is a legitimate claim for **law** and **works**.

An example of this can be found in the writings of Rubel Shelly. In the context of the subject of **grace**, he wrote,

It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation (Article from Love Lines, weekly bulletin of the Woodmont Hills church of Christ, October 31, 1990, entitled **Arbeit Macht Frei**).

We must kindly, but firmly, disagree with his thoughts. If Shelly had said it was “*scandalous and outrageous to teach that salvation arises solely and totally from human activity,*” we would agree. But to say that we do not contribute one whit to our salvation is nothing more than denominational error.

I have never believed one can “*work*” in the sense of **earning** salvation, of placing God in the position of being “*indebted*” to save man. But that one must choose

to become a Christian and determine to live faithfully to the Divine will, cannot be successfully denied. Paul wrote,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

This forever settles the matter.

However, this does not negate the fact that man must appropriate that proffered (to offer for acceptance) grace. God's grace, and everything included in the term, has been offered to all men (Titus 2:11). Nonetheless, man must accept that which has been offered by the Lord. God does not force anyone to accept it. He does implore man to accept His grace, but man must ultimately make that decision.

Let us look closely at what the Bible teaches about **grace** and **faith** and **law** and **works**. Let us strive to understand what God has to say about these vital subjects. Then let it be our determination that we follow only His will, not ours.

### **“Grace” Defined**

In our English Bible, the word “*grace*” is used in different ways. But we want to define it as,

...that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, when we speak of God's grace, we understand that nor far away is always the idea of His mercy, kindness, and compassion in offering us the remission of sins. It is through God's grace we enjoy every spiritual blessing

in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

**Grace** is not “*some better felt than told*” something or other. It is not something that “*happens to you.*” It suggests that kindly disposition which manifested itself in the offering of salvation to the fallen creature.

Salvation is not by grace alone. Neither is it without grace. The very fact that God offered salvation (and all that pertains to it) to man bespeaks of His grace. But this **grace** is not forced on us unconditionally. We must accept it by obedience.

### **Grace Always A Part Of God’s Dealings With Man**

Some seem to think the concept of God’s grace to man was never known in any sense prior to Christ. With this thought, I must disagree. Certainly the fulness of God’s grace is seen in the offering of Christ. However, this does not negate the fact of God’s gracious dealings with man from the beginning.

In Genesis 4:3-5, we read of the offerings of Cain and Abel. Since Abel’s sacrifice was by faith (Heb. 11:4) and faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17), we know that God had commanded them what to offer. Now, was there any blessing Abel received by this offering? Indeed so! However, any blessing received was by **grace**—unless we argue there was something in the offering itself which “*earned*” that blessing.

Abram built altars and worshipped God (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4). Was there any spiritual blessing bestowed upon Abraham because of his offerings? Surely there was. Unless we contend there was something in the offerings themselves or in Abraham which demanded this blessing, then we must conclude it was by God’s grace.

It was no different under the Law of Moses. In Leviticus 1:1-4, God gave commands relative to burnt offerings. In verse four, God said, “...*it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*” Was that sacrifice “*accepted*” because of the worthiness of either the offerer or that which was offered? Surely not! The very fact that God determined to “*accept*” the sacrifice demonstrates His grace toward man.

There can be no doubt. The atonement of any sin under Patriarchy or the Law of Moses suggests God’s grace. The offerer was not worthy of the atonement received. The animal offered did not earn said atonement.

Concerning blood, God affirmed “...*I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*” (Lev. 17:11). Did God **give it** upon the altar because of the worthiness of the animal offered? Surely all can see this looks specifically at the grace of God. No one earned the “*atonement.*” It was a result of the goodness and kindness of God.

### **Grace And Truth Came By Jesus Christ**

All we have said of Patriarchy and the Law of Moses refers to that which foreshadowed the ultimate manifestation of God’s grace. Let us now turn from the shadow to the substance, from the type to the anti-type, from the preparation to the consummation.

John the Baptist said of Jesus, “...*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Abraham and all the worthies under Patriarchy had to provide their own animal sacrifices, as did those under the law of Moses. But here John affirms that God has provided His own Lamb for the sin of the world! This

God-given Lamb was Jesus Christ.

If we take time to read Ephesians 1:3-7, we see the focus of inspiration upon the Christ. Consider—all spiritual blessings in Christ; chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; predestined to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph. 1:7).

Just think for a moment: God in the flesh, to die for the sins of the world—provided by Deity! This is, at best, a sobering thought. It is only when we fully grasp this great concept do we more fully realize what Paul meant when he wrote, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith...”* (Eph. 2:8).

### **God’s Grace: Universal Or Conditional?**

However, the doctrine that man is saved by grace is not the issue. The real question is the implications of, and application of, this Bible doctrine.

The truth of God’s word can easily be seen if we understand one fact: The grace of God which brings salvation is either universal or it is conditional. By this I simply mean God’s grace is either extended to all men regardless of their mindset, in spite of their attitude toward God and all things spiritual, or there is some factor, some sort of condition that separates those who receive this grace from those who do not. If God’s grace is unconditional, that is, if all people will receive the benefits of God’s grace regardless of the kind of life they live, this means UNIVERSAL SALVATION. Now, **universal salvation** would allow one who has purposely lived a life in rebellion against God to be saved for eternity.

If one is not willing to accept the doctrine of Universal Salvation, then he must take the position that the reception of God's grace is conditional. This brings us to the next point we must emphasize.

### **God's Grace Must Be Appropriated**

It is without hesitation I affirm that the reception of God's grace (salvation) is conditional, that it is not universal. Thus, we must appropriate God's grace as it pertains to salvation. By **appropriate** I mean: "2. *To take possession of...To lay claim to.*" Consider Paul's words to the Corinthians, "*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*" (II Cor. 6:1). If His **grace** was universal, this passage would mean nothing.

There is a sense in which God's grace is **universal**. The offer of salvation is to all men, "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*" (Titus 2:11). But those who are saved by God's grace (and there will be none saved any other way) will be saved because they have appropriated God's grace. We must understand—God has offered it, man must accept it by his own choice. God will not **FORCE** His grace upon any man.

For instance, in the state of Texas, there is a "*homestead exemption.*" It is a means whereby one can save on taxes. The state does not force this upon anyone. It is offered to homeowners, but the homeowner must **APPROPRIATE** it, he must take possession of it, he must lay claim to it. Likewise, God's grace is offered—**IT IS NOT FORCED UPON ONE!**

Consider this scenario. A man falls into the swirling flood waters of a river. A person on shore throws him a



life preserver attached to a rope, the drowning man takes hold of the life preserver and is swiftly drawn to shore. Now, was this man saved simply because the person threw him a life preserver? Of course not! The life preserver would have done no good if the man had not made use of it. Likewise, man is not saved simply because God has offered him eternal salvation. Man must appropriate it, he must take possession of it, he must lay claim to it.

### **God’s Grace Appropriated Through Law**

There is a popular idea that has gained much ground in the Church of our Lord over the past few years. It is the argument that **grace** and **law** are mutually exclusive. In other words, there is a God-ordained line that is to be drawn between “*the grace of God*” and “*the law of God*.” According to this false doctrine, it is impossible for a person to be under “*law*” and “*grace*” at the same time. One cancels the other, we are told. A passage often used to prove this contention is, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*” (Rom. 6:14).

But the truth of the matter is, “*God’s grace*” is appropriated by “*God’s law*.” According to Thayer, the word **law** means, “*a law or rule producing a state approved of God, i.e., by the observance of which we are approved of God.*”<sup>2</sup> Some have conveniently forgotten the alternate to law is chaos, disorder and anarchy. The gospel is not a “*law*” which “*earns*” salvation—that is, obligates God to save us. It is that through which we appropriate God’s gracious offer of eternal salvation. The gospel is “*law*” in the sense that it is that body of doctrine given by God to govern man, whereby man might

appropriate that gracious offer of salvation. The gospel is “*law*” in the sense that it was given by the Sovereign Ruler of the universe—Jehovah God! We must understand—the gospel is LAW!

Paul wrote, “*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith*” (Rom. 3:27). Both **law** and **faith** are in the genitive case, the case of possession—thus, “*faith’s law.*” Now, liberalism does not like Romans 3:27. Nonetheless, it was written by an inspired apostle and must be followed.

Consider the words of Paul again,

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law (I Cor. 9:20-21).

Paul clearly states he was under the law to Christ. Was Paul correct in this statement?

James wrote,

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

Is there truly a “*perfect law of liberty?*” If so, James declares the one who looks into and continues in it, shall be blessed. Is this true or false?

Furthermore, the same writer encouraged his readers to “*So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty*” (James 2:12). What is this **law** of liberty by which they will be judged? If it is not

the gospel of Christ, then what is it?

Paul affirmed “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:2). Here he clearly states he was under law. Was he? He either was or he was not!

He told the Galatians to “*Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2). Keep in mind, this is the same apostle who wrote “*For by grace are ye saved through faith...*” (Eph. 2:8). Was Paul confused? Did he contradict himself?

Surely anyone who will look can see that since God’s grace is conditional, He has set forth certain conditions by which one can appropriate His gracious offer.

### **Conditions Met Do Not Nullify Grace**

Since it is the case that God’s grace is conditional, any condition He has placed upon the appropriation of His gracious offer of salvation, does not, in any sense of the word, nullify the principle of grace. The offer has been extended to all men through the gospel of Christ. Man must accept it in accordance with those conditions God has placed upon its reception.

Man is separated from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2). There is nothing he can do, of and by himself, whereby God would be obligated to restore man to His favor. Man has nothing to offer. David sang, “*The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein*” (Psm. 24:1). What does man possess that God needs? How or what can we offer that would bring Jehovah into our debt? Absolutely nothing!

The blood of an animal on the altar (Lev. 1:4; 17:11), of and by its own worth, could never atone for man’s sin—**except by the approval of God!** But right here we see

the principle of “*grace*.” God determined to provide a way by which man could be reconciled to His divine favor—this is GRACE!

Furthermore, this would be **grace** (unmerited favor) whether God placed conditions upon its reception or not—**man could not save himself; he could do nothing to invoke God’s forgiveness.** He could never merit God’s forgiveness.

Peter declares God is “...*not willing that any should perish...*” (II Peter 3:9). But this salvation is not mandatory. No man will be saved unwillingly or unwittingly. Through the gospel, God appeals to man’s intellect and emotions. He reveals to man that he is separate from God by sin and through His **grace** He has offered the remission of sins. However, in perfect agreement with the nature of man, He will never overrule man’s free moral agency. Man, of his own free will and volition, either accepts or rejects this offer.

How does man accept this offer? By complying with the conditions that God has established! For the alien sinner, this means rendering primary obedience to the gospel. For the Christian who has sinned it means repentance and prayer (Acts 8:22). These are conditions God has placed upon one receiving forgiveness, and when we comply with them, we appropriate His grace.

### **Conditions Met Do Not Constitute Works**

In the New Testament, when works are condemned, it is in the context of the “*works*” of the law of Moses being capable of obligating God to bestow something on man. This principle would include any such system that would demand salvation from God, not as a free gift, but as a debt God owes man. However, it is interesting to

note there are several instances where “*works*” are highly commended, even commanded.

Paul wrote,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

There can be no argument—salvation is by **grace**, not by works. However, in the very next verse, Paul penned an interesting statement. He added, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:10). The question that our “*grace only*” brethren need to answer is: Did Paul contradict in verse ten what he said in verse nine? Of course not. The answer is easy, there were two kinds of works under consideration. Verse nine refers to those works which merit salvation. Verse ten refers to those works God expects, yea, demands of His children.

The same situation clarifies a problem some think exists between Paul and James. Paul argues that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works (Rom. 4:3), and quotes Genesis 15:6 to prove it. James, on the other hand, argues that one is saved by works and not by faith only. He likewise quotes Genesis 15:6 to prove his contention. How could two inspired men quote the exact same passage to prove two contradictory (as man sees it) ideas?

The same answer mentioned above is here applicable. Paul and James had two different kinds of works under consideration. Paul wrote of works that would **earn** God’s approval. James wrote of works God **expects**, even demands of His children.

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The Galatians were told, “*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love*” (Gal. 5:6). Dare anyone accuse Paul of teaching a **works salvation**? Can we say he contradicted James? Indeed not! The works here mentioned are those which do not earn salvation, but which flow from one because they are a Christian.

Paul told Timothy,

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (I Tim. 6:17-18).

A person would have to have help to misunderstand these words.

The same apostle wrote,

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (Titus 3:8).

Did Paul command meritorious works here?

We therefore confidently affirm that salvation is by the grace of God. It is not by grace alone, nor is it without grace. **Grace** has always been involved in God’s dealings with man, even in the Old Testament. Every blessing received as a result of the bloody sacrifices under Patriarchy or the law of Moses demonstrates the grace of God. Without doubt the fulness of God’s grace is seen in the offering of His only begotten Son for the sins of the world.

But the reception of this **grace** is conditional—with God Himself establishing the conditions. Thus, man must appropriate God’s grace in compliance with those provisions which are clearly revealed in the New Covenant, the law of Jesus Christ. These God-established conditions do not nullify the concept of **grace**. Neither do they constitute works.

Consequently, we see the supposed conflict between the notion of **grace** and **faith** and the idea of **law** and **works** exists only in the minds of those who have been drinking at the trough of denominationalism. These concepts are not “*mutually exclusive*,” but in fact, they are “*mutually inclusive*.” God ordained them to work hand in hand—and this they do so beautifully and harmoniously!

We join with Paul to fearlessly proclaim,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

What more can we say!

### Endnotes

1 Joseph Henry Thayer, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 666.

2 **ibid.**, p. 427.

## Chapter 9

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Warnings From Our Lord

*Bobby Liddell*



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**W**e are all well aware of warning signs (whether we always heed them or not), and would probably all agree to their need. Certainly, it is better to be warned the bridge is out, than to find out the hard way. It is far better to see “*Poison*” on the bottle, and to take the necessary precautions, than to suffer, or die, because of not being warned. In fact, criminal negligence might be charged against one who fails to give necessary notification of the presence or possibility of danger, illustrating the understanding the world has of the value of advising caution.

How shall we respond to warnings? The wise will hear and take heed (cf. Matt. 2:12,22; Acts 10:22; Heb. 11:7). Having been warned, we cannot say we did not know of the danger. Having lived on the coast of Florida, this writer knows the often fatal results when swimmers in the Gulf do not heed warning signs. Each year, several



die because they ignore warnings of “*Rough Surf*,” or “*Dangerous Rip Tides*.” The signs are there, plainly displayed, yet many, in a rush to enjoy their vacations, must think these signs are for someone else, not them. Somehow, they obviously think, they will be the exception, and they will not be in danger. Many pay the price, for ignoring the warnings, with their lives. As a result, another family leaves its sunny vacation brokenhearted, and wondering why this happened to them. The answer is very simple. Someone failed to beware, to be on guard, to take caution – to heed the warning.

Why are warnings given? Concern for safety is an important reason. Whether it is a label on the hair dryer which says, “*Electrical Shock Hazard – Keep Away From Water*,” or a flashing light on the dashboard indicating the need to fasten a seat belt, the reason is a concern for safety. Warnings are given because of love. “*Son, don’t ride your bike out in the road*,” becomes in later life, “*Son, please drive carefully*.” The concern is not for a bike or a car, but for one we love dearly. Warnings provide needed information and instruction, such as, “*Road Work Ahead – Slow To 45*.” Local folks might already know of the construction, but one traveling through will benefit from being made aware. One without such knowledge should appreciate the warning, “*Keep Hands And Feet Clear When Starting Mower*.” As obvious as that should seem, some might not realize the danger, without the warning, until too late.

Warnings are also given to forego the liability of not fulfilling one’s obligation to advise caution, or sound the alarm of impending danger. The great prophet Ezekiel, frequently called “*son of man*,” received the following from God, foretelling the dreadful consequences

to the watchman who failed to warn,

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:17-21).

So, warnings are given, not to irritate and aggravate, but to inform, instruct, and save. The proper attitude behind the warning is one of love and concern, and those being warned should understand that. Thus, warnings, as we shall study them, are not malicious threats, childish pranks, nor idle talk. Warnings from Jesus come from his great love, and His desire for the very best for us. He wants to see no harm come to us; hence, He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10;10). His love is manifested in that He responded with compassionate concern as He thought of the undone

condition of all who heed not His warnings and pleadings. Yet, the appropriate condemnation and consequences will follow for all who reject His Word. Such is the case of Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matt. 23:37).

### **Beware Of False Prophets**

Jesus warned:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).

False prophets/teachers lead the unwary away from God, not to God as the true teacher will. Their blind direction takes their blind followers away from Christ, his church, the Truth, spiritual life, fellowship with the faithful, and all blessings in Christ (Matt. 15:14; Eph. 1:3). Finally, they will lead the spiritually blind away from heaven itself, and into the ditch of disobedience, dismay, destruction, and eternal death. However, false teachers usually appear to be other than what they really are. False teachers often seem so sincere, pious, concerned, and loving. All the while, they are devouring souls (cf. Ezek. 22:25). Like ravening wolves, they destroy with fierceness, having no compassion for those who suffer because of their wicked deceptions. They satisfy themselves, and care not what God says, or what man thinks, or what price the thoughtless, careless followers of their false teaching must pay.

Error taught sincerely is still error. A lie spoken through the smiling lips of the hypocrite loudly extolling his deep love is just as much a lie. False teaching propped up by out of context, misapplied, and New Hermeneuticized Scriptures is still false teaching – even when it sounds good to the hearer with itching ears (II Tim. 4:3-4). Eloquence of delivery and education (too often received at the feet of denominationalists who neither respect God’s authority, nor believe His Word), do not change soul-damning deception into soul-saving doctrine. Pseudo-scholarship, bowing at the feet of modernistic theologians has never saved one soul, but has cost many their salvation. Strength of will (intimidation), and taking advantage by position (such as a college professor’s misusing his position over impressionable young minds) does not make the commandments of men become acceptable to the God of Truth (Matt. 15:9; John 8:32). On the other hand, sometimes the dishonest teach the Truth, and hide their dishonesty, but that does not change the Truth into error.

Why will so many brethren so eagerly listen to a “*Ph.D.*” spouting off false doctrine instead of the Truth spoken by “*the carpenter, the son of Mary*” (Mark 6:3)?

The honest inquirer can understand why Jesus would warn against false teachers. There is a real danger, and a danger we MUST avoid. Instead of blindly accepting whatever men say, we are to “*try*” (test or prove) teachers (I John 4:1). Jesus’ teaching was put to the test. Are those today, who claim to be teachers, above our Lord, that their teaching should not be proved? Is it wrong to demand an accounting of their teaching? Should men accept whatever is taught just because a “*brother*” teaches it? Are elders right who, as the ostrich, hide their heads

in the sand, and do not know what is being taught in the classroom to the souls over which they watch (Heb. 13:17)? Quite often, this writer admonishes hearers and readers to be careful not to take what is taught just because someone claims to be a preacher, or is standing in a pulpit, but to try it by the Word. One's soul is worth too much. Open that Bible and see for yourselves what God requires. Do not be like the denominationalist who says, “*Well, my pastor said so and so, and that is good enough for me.*”

Testing the teaching of one implies a standard by which his teaching must be measured. We must compare what is taught with the Word from above, the Truth of God (John 17:17). The standard of authority is His revealed will. Jesus said,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Therefore, let us not judge according to outward appearance which may be deceiving (Matt. 7:1ff; John 7:24), as Paul wrote,

But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (II Cor. 11:12-15).

Apparently, some delude and deceive for material

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gain. Exposure of some of the millionaires among the televangelists have shown their greedy covetousness, as well as the ignorance of their supporters. Even among brethren, some teach error for gain. If error sells books, or ensures big salaries at large congregations, or appointments at liberal schools, or fellowship with “*important*” men, some are willing to sell their souls to get the earthly reward. Paul, in writing of the grave responsibility of elders to stop the mouths of gainsayers, wrote of the appeal of “*filthy lucre*” to those setting forth false doctrine.

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth (Titus 1:9-14).

Peter wrote of false teachers motivated by covetousness:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through

covetousness shall they with feigned words  
make merchandise of you: whose judgment now  
of a long time lingereth not, and their  
damnation slumbereth not (II Peter 2:1-3).

When it comes to false teachers, some brethren simply cannot be warned! Can a brother not warn about a false teacher without being a busybody meddling in others' business? Is it the case that every warning of one's teaching error is from a heart filled with hate and malice, as some charge? Quite often, those warned react as if the warner were the one who is wrong. This writer warned a college professor of two false teachers invited to the campus. Some time later, after they had been welcomed with open arms to inject their poison into the minds of our unsuspecting young people, the president sent out a form letter saying he had never heard of their teaching anything wrong. Several faithful men, out of genuine concern and love, had warned him, but he would not listen. Such a flimsy excuse as he gave may ameliorate the conscience of some, but what will God say? To Him, we shall give an account one day (II Cor. 5:10), and a form letter pretending ignorance will not stay His wrath.

Interestingly, these two blind leaders have since stated more openly their real beliefs. One admitted he was in full fellowship with the Christian church, saw nothing wrong with choirs and solos in worship, recognized denominational baptism as valid, and so on. The other has, at the infamous Jubilee, preached his message of Pentecostal Holy-Rollerism claiming present day miracles and divine guidance apart from God's written Word, including messages from God through his car radio. Both these false brethren run, and have run, with those who have embraced what is commonly known as

*“liberalism,”* and have shown themselves to have no problem in fellowshipping them. In view of the latest disclosures, I wonder if the college president could be warned now, but now is too late. The damage has been done. The keeper of the hen house has opened the door to the foxes.

Why cannot some brethren be warned? Is it just a matter of inconvenience that precludes some from taking a stand against error? Is it a matter of misguided friendship, or a benevolent giving of the benefit of the doubt, or is it simply a matter of lack of conviction? Would we rather be lost, lead others to be lost, or allow others to be lost unwarned than to expose and oppose the false teacher? Surely not! Surely, followers of Christ are better men than that. Hell is too terrible, and Heaven is too wonderful for us to fail to sound the warnings from our Lord. We must warn and be warned. As Peter wrote,

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness (II Peter 3:17).

When the blood is upon our hands, it is too late (Ezek. 3:18).

### **Beware Of Hypocrisy**

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).

Leaven has the power to permeate, and to change



the entire lump. “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Gal. 5:9). Its influential force was also used, by the Christ, to illustrate the way the doctrine of the Pharisees worked.

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees...How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:6,11-12).

Jesus used leaven to show the working of both the doctrine of the Pharisees and their pretending (literally, acting, as in a play). Those who embraced their doctrine would, likewise, become hypocrites. Hypocrisy may deceive men. What preacher has not been duped by one pretending to be in need, when really he was just a con artist? However, God will not be deceived, for He knows the heart (Acts 1:24). So, Jesus warned:

For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops (Luke 12:2-3).

In his denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, recorded in Matthew 23, Jesus said they “*sit in Moses’ seat,*” and whatever they bade be done, do (in keeping the law), “*but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*” (Matt. 23:2-3). They bound heavy burdens

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on others, but would not so much as lift one of their fingers themselves (v. 4). They did their works “*for to be seen of men,*” and loved the notice and acclaim of the people (vs. 5-7). Yet, the “*greatest among you shall be your servant*” (v. 11).

Seven times, as recorded in Matthew 23:13-29, Jesus said: “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*” Every time, He pointed out their desire to put on a good appearance as they made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, and as they were like unto whited sepulchres, and pretended to be pious. However, the inside was not clean, but was full of dead mens bones and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:28).

Five times, the Son of God declares them to be “*fools and blind,*” “*blind guides,*” or “*blind.*” Their hypocritical doctrine was a matter of convenience, fulfilling their desires, and filling their pockets. Though they pretended to be the religious leaders of the followers of God, they were blindly going into an eternity of punishment, and taking with them all who would blindly follow. To these hypocrites, Jesus said: “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” (Matt. 23:33). As Jesus warned, let us beware of hypocrisy.

## **Beware Of Fearing Men**

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after

he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea,  
I say unto you, Fear him (Luke 12:4-5).

*“Be not afraid of them that kill the body,”* Jesus said. The body is not all of man, neither is it the most important part of man. James wrote by inspiration, *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”* (James 2:26). The body houses the spirit, and as long as the spirit resides therein, the body is alive. Upon the spirit’s departure, the body is dead. So, this body is a temporary abode, an *“earthly house”* in which *“we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”* (II Cor. 5:1-2).

The spirit lives on, for eternity, beyond this earthly dwelling. We know that *“whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord”* (v. 6). *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”* (v. 8). Therefore, Paul could say, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21). If death is gain for the faithful, why should we fear it?

Since preserving life within the human body is not as important as one’s fearing God, reflect upon the even lesser worth of the things for which men clamor in their love of the world. The command (and its counterpart in question form) from the Christ rings through the centuries, as challenging today as almost two thousand years ago.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the

whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:24-26).

Therefore, why should we worry about what we are going to put on, or what we are going to eat or drink, or what will come on the morrow? Rather, let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Just as surely as we do, the Savior has promised that *“all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:25-34). Again, in Luke 12:15, the record shows the words of Christ concerning things.

...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

If a man takes from us our things, what have we lost, but that which we would leave behind anyway (cf. Luke 16:19-31)? If a man takes from us our life, what have we lost, but that which we shall lose one day anyway (James 4:14; Heb. 9:27)? Therefore, why should we fear men? Our loving Lord has made it possible for His disciples not to fear men.

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. 13:5-6).

With the Lord as our helper, whom shall we fear? What is the worst one can do, but kill us? Rather, fear Him who is able to cast into hell (gehenna), the eternal place of fiery, painful, never-ending punishment.

## Conclusion

As followers of Christ, let us warn and be warned. Let us hear and heed the warnings from our Lord, and let us sound out His warning to all who will hear (II Tim. 2:2; 4:4).

Paul penned, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1). He addressed the Ephesian elders, saying:

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:31).

To the brethren at Corinth, he wrote:

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you (I Cor. 4:14).

To the Colossians, he declared:

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28).

To those in Christ at Thessalonica, he exhorted:

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (I Thess. 5:14).

Let us follow the Lord, as Paul did, and sound the warning to the salvation of souls. One day it will be too late!

## Chapter 10

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Issues Satan Has Used To Divide Us

*Curtis A. Cates*



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**G**od has ever wanted His people to be united. He Himself is the epitome of unity. *“Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah”* (Deut. 6:4). He loathes and hates division. *“...God is not a God of confusion, but of peace”* (I Cor. 14:33). He created the universe characterized by beautiful, amazing orderliness, one of the tremendous evidences of His very existence. Only the fool can look at the heavens and fail to acknowledge their marvelous, infinite, majestic Creator (Psm. 19:1-2; 14:1).

Is our Creator the God of unity only in the physical creation, in nature? Is He not also the God of unity in His spiritual creation, the church? The Psalmist exulted,

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For  
brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psm.  
133:1).

The Father expected His people to be united in the Mosiac

Dispensation. Note, for example, the command in Leviticus 17:8-9,

...Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that offereth a burnt-offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it unto Jehovah; that man shall be cut off from his people (Lev. 17:8-9).

They were to worship the one God, in the authorized way, at the authorized place, at the authorized time. They were to be united under the one law, the law of Moses.

When the Prince of Peace established the New Testament church, His beautiful bride, He did not author confusion. The church He promised to build (Matt. 16:18), which would be His body (Col. 1:18), is the fulness of Christ Himself (Eph. 1:22-23). There is but one body (Eph. 4:4). The church was established on Pentecost of Acts 2 (Isa. 2:2-3; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4); those who obeyed the gospel were added to it that very day (Acts 2:41; cf. 2:47). And, when Christ returns, He shall,

...present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).

It is the Lord's will that the church (His people) be united. That fact inheres in the seed of the kingdom. Just as in physical nature the seed brings forth after its own kind (Gen. 1:11-12), so it is in the spiritual realm. God is the God of order just as much in the spiritual kingdom as He is in the plant kingdom. Notice the words of Christ: *“The seed [of the kingdom, CAC] is the word*

of God” (Luke 8:11). The seed is the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42), in which the disciples continued steadfastly in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42). It was “*all the truth,*” into which the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles (John 16:13; 14:26; II Peter 1:3). The seed would bring forth only after its kind – primitive, New Testament Christians, those who loved Christ and those whom He loved.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love (John 15:10).

...If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me (John 14:23-24).

It is that truth (those words of Christ) which would be made known to the apostles and which would constitute the seed of the kingdom detailed in John 17.

### **Christ’s Definition Of Unity**

When the seed of the kingdom is planted, the church/kingdom of Christ comes forth from that seed. This is emphasized by our Lord in Matthew 15:13, “*Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up.*” Any doctrine, institution, form, creed, ritual, system, organization, et al., which is not of God shall not stand. This principle is critically important! NEVER in the history of the world has the unadulterated seed, the Word of God, produced disunity in religion (denominationalism); it has produced only unity.

Christ’s definition of unity reads thus:



Neither for these [apostles, CAC] only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me (John 17:20-23).

Special significance is generally placed upon one’s words and pleadings and prayers uttered shortly before his passing. In the shadow of the cross, the Lord prayed for unity. This might appear quite strange in view of the face that He also predicted,

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household (Matt. 10:34-36).

Further, Christ spoke of conditions which would exist in the Christian age.

Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three (Luke 12:51-52).

**HOW** was this unity to be accomplished? It was through the Word, was it not? Now, what Word was that? “...*the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them*” (John 17:8). That Word is the truth that

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saves. *"...and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). It is the very Word of God: *"Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17), the same *"all truth"* into which the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles (John 16:13).

**WHAT** would be the result of the Word heard, believed, and obeyed? It would set the disciples apart (*"sanctify them"*), would it not? It would also nullify them; in fact, they would be *"perfected into one."* Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), and His kingdom is the peaceable kingdom (Isa. 9:7). It is where the wolf, the leopard, the lion, the bear, and the serpent have been changed by the power of the gospel; they no longer bite and devour. They lie down beside and dwell with the lamb, the goat, the calf; and, a little child leads them. *"The elder serves the younger,"* and *"the greatest is servant of all"* (Isa. 11:6-9). Is this a picture of fighting, division, rancor, and bitterness, dear reader?

**IN WHAT WAY** did Christ illustrate the unity which would characterize His church? Did He not use these descriptions: *"that they may ALL [note that word] be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee";* *"that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me"*? Who would even think about suggesting that God and Christ are divided, that they are not of one mind, that they have different purposes, that they go in different directions, that they have *"agreed to disagree"*? Even the very idea is utter foolishness! Friend, the complete, absolute harmony which exists in the Godhood is used by the Lord to illustrate the harmony, oneness, peace, and unity which is to characterize His people.

**WHERE** is this unity possible? It is to be found only in God: *"...that they also may be one in us";* *"I in*

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*them, and thou in me.” “...and I make known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them”* (John 17:26). Not only are we informed in the Lord’s longest recorded prayer where unity is found, John also verified the only place for which Christ prayed is possible.

...that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ... but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin (I John 1:7).

It is not possible to have fellowship with God and not at the same time have fellowship with all others in fellowship with Him. One the other hand, those not in fellowship with Christians are not in God’s fellowship. In a beautiful Messianic prophecy describing the spirit of those abiding in the Lord’s church, Isaiah wrote:

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever. And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting- places (Isa. 32:17-18).

*“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace”* (James 3:18).

### **Paul’s Definition Of Unity**

In exact harmony with the Lord’s definition of unity is the description given in the apostle Paul’s command to the Corinthians:

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the

same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you (I Cor. 1:10-11).

Now, dear reader, notice how Paul's rebuke ties into Christ's prayer for unity: "*Is Christ divided?*" (I Cor. 1:13). The answer to this rhetorical question is NO! Herein we see the will of our Lord –

1. Speak the same thing!
2. Have no divisions among you!
3. Be perfected together!
4. Have the same mind and same judgment –  
Oneness, unity!

How better to describe the Lord's demand for unity than the words of Paul in Philippians 3:16, "...*by the same rule [pattern] let us walk*"! Paul points out further the Lord's emphasis upon unity – not union – when he said that Christ had "*broken down the wall of partition between*" Jews and Gentiles and had made "*in himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby*" (Eph. 2:14-16; cf. 3:1-6).

### **Was Biblical Unity Achieved In The First Century?**

The apostles learned that though God and Christ are not one person, they are one in nature, purpose, and mind; they are not divided. The apostles were the Lord's; He would leave them on earth to "*bind and loose*" what had already been bound and loosed in the mind of God, in heaven (Matt. 19:28; 16:18-19; 18:18; John 20:30-31).

They were one, united as Christ had prayed – one as were God and Christ. For the apostles to have been divided would be the antithesis of that for which Christ prayed and counter-productive to the cause of Christ. The unity of the apostles would *not* be characterized by agreeing to disagree, by teaching different doctrines, by wearing different names, by ignoring their differences, by having mere union rather than unity, by practicing “*unity in diversity*,” by defending division, et al. God and Christ did not ignore their differences, for God and Christ had no differences! The apostles were to be united as one, as were God and Christ. The apostles *were* united, for they had a common aim, only one faith, and mutual devotion, like Deity. Judas ceased to be one mind with Christ and the other apostles; however, this did not jeopardize the unity of the faithful. The unity of the faithful children of God is jeopardized neither by the number of people refusing to become Christians nor by the number of God’s children who go into apostasy. The faithful are still united with all the others who maintain obedience to the truth.

The early Christians *were* united, as were the Godhood and the apostles. Hear brother Gus Nichols:

Thus, the early Christians taught and practiced undenominational Christianity. They had none of the earmarks of denominationalism. They were Christians *ONLY* and *ONLY* Christians. They had no membership in anything of human invention. They did not belong to something larger than a local congregation which was not as large as the whole family of God on earth. Their congregations were not tied together under some human head, or creed of men, having a

humanly invented name to distinguish and separate them from fellow Christians. In them the Lord's prayer for unity was answered (John 17:20-21). Following Christ, great Shepherd of the sheep, they gazed together in the green pasture of the kingdom of God, with no cross fences in it to cut off some of the sheep from the rest of them.<sup>1</sup>

In the same volume, brother G.A. Dunn, Sr., wrote:

The Bible says fifteen times that there is one body which is the church (Eph. 4:4; 2:16; I Cor. 12:20; Rom. 12:4-5). That means there is one church in the New Testament, and that is all. There are to be no divisions in this one body, except geographic. One congregation may be meeting in one town and another in another, but they must have the same faith, the same doctrine, and the same practice. If you will open your Bible to I Cor. 4th chapter and the 17th verse, and the 7th chapter and the 17th verse Paul says, "So teach I everywhere in every church." They all had the same teaching everywhere. We should teach the Bible, and nothing but the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

When the ambassadors (the apostles) bound and loosed the oracles, the commands of God, they fulfilled Christ's prayer for unity. Since the apostles' doctrine is recorded in the inspired Book, this unity would include/includes all of those who preach the truth and all who obey the truth throughout all ages in every place. Each trusting, obedient believer is a beneficiary of the prayer of the Lord.

The unity for which our Lord prayed and died was not merely some contrived pretension. It would be a reality inevitably produced when the pure gospel, the

seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), would be preached throughout the world and when it would fall upon the good and honest hearts, producing obedient believers. The unity produced would be as genuine and vital as that existing between God and Christ, *“even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.”* There would be unity in acknowledging Christ as having all authority (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23), unity in teaching the unadulterated Word of truth, the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11; II Tim. 4:2; Jude 3), which would produce unity of mind and unity of practice. The result or design of the unity for which Christ prayed was that the world might believe. Think of the beauty of Christ’s definition of unity. In praising this unity, brother C.R. Nichol observed:

“Christian Unity” exists now, and has existed every moment since the first Christians were made. All this hue and cry about “Christian Unity” is not one whit short of a plea for something to take place that has existed through the past centuries.

### **Satan’s Definition ~ The Antithesis Of Christ’s Definition Of Unity**

Satan has been the archenemy of mankind (the offspring of God) ever since creation. And, for just that long, he has been the archenemy of religious unity.

Rex Turner, Sr. wrote,

Satan cannot attack God directly, thus he employs various methods to attack man, God’s master creation.<sup>3</sup>

Satan has used every means possible to lure man into sin (I Peter 5:8; James 4:7, *“for he is a liar, and the father*

*thereof*" (John 8:44). In no area of life is the Devil's lies more readily apparent than in the spiritual, doctrinal realm. He hates it when one hears the truth; "...*then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which has been sown in his heart*" (Matt. 13:19). How diabolical! But, that is not all. Not only does Satan tempt man (Matt. 4:1), he lays snares for our destruction (II Tim. 2:26). He furthermore uses human beings in his evil schemes to lead us astray (Eph. 4:27), even to the point of blinding people to the light of God's Word (II Cor. 4:4). Satan is notorious for dressing his wolves in sheep's clothing and fashioning them into "*deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ*" (II Cor. 11:13). They might even dress up as elders, preachers, and professors (Acts 20:28-30). The Devil often sows tares among Christians; "...*the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil*" (Matt. 13:38-39).

When Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden, they were in full and complete unity and fellowship with God; they were of one heart and one mind with Deity. Satan despised that relationship and immediately moved to destroy it. That beautiful communion had to cease, for God cannot have communion with rebellion and disobedience (Isa. 59:1-2; cf. Gen. 3). The Old Testament is filled with examples of Satan's destroying the unity of God with His people. One can see God's attitude toward false teachers, pawns of Satan, in Ezekiel 13. These prophets claimed to speak for Jehovah, but in reality they spoke falsehood and lies. God called them "*fools,*" and stated in no uncertain terms that He was against them and that they and their followers would be consumed. God is jealous in His relationship with His



people – He always has been (Exod. 20:5)!

Brother Bill Jackson made the following keen observation:

Clearly, Satan is in the business of directing men in paths contrary to the will of God! Satan has been under restriction from God, that no miraculous and supernatural power can be brought against man, to override the free will God has given him. He, then, will have to work through men and the things of men.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment and early history of the Lord’s church was characterized by unity which was beautiful to behold. Notice the emphasis upon such attitudes and manner of life as *“one accord”* (Acts 1:4), *“gathered together”* (1:15), *“Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men”* (1:24), *“all together”* (2:1), *“received the word”* (2:41), *“continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching”* (2:42), *“all that believed were together, and had all things common”* (2:43-44), *“continuing steadfastly in one accord”* (2:46), *“gladness and singleness of heart”* (2:46), *“added to them day by day those that were saved”* (2:47), *“one accord”* (4:24), *“spake the word of God with boldness”* (4:31), *“the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul”* (4:32), *“distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need”* (4:35). Now, dear reader, what do you think was Satan’s attitude toward all of this beautiful oneness of heart, teaching, and practice? He hated it, did he not? And, he moved immediately to try to destroy it! Notice the lies of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-14). Question: Who filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3)? You see the point? The Lord *“nipped it in the bud,”* did He not? When the murmuring arose in Acts 6:1-7, it was handled immediately; Satan was not allowed

to disrupt! When Satan tried through the Judiazers to inject false doctrine, it was handled by the apostles (Acts 15). That is the only way to maintain unity; teach and practice the truth, stop the mouths of false teachers (Titus 1:9-11), and withdraw from the producers of division (Rom. 16:17-18) and from the immoral (I Cor. 5). God's people must "*stay on top of things,*" ever vigilant (I Cor. 16:13), for Satan is never asleep. In spite of strong warnings from the inspired writer Paul (Acts 20:29; II Thess. 2:3-12; I Tim. 4:1-3; et al.), the early church went into apostasy. Note that a number of the churches of Asia were allowing, "*suffering,*" false teachers (instruments of the Devil) to be among them and lead Christians astray. Christ removed their candlesticks (Rev. 2:3).

Satan hates the restoration of primitive Christianity, the church that Jesus built. When the Lord's church was restored in the last of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in America, Satan's devious subversion and work was not far behind. He would soon do all he could to thwart and destroy the unity and growth experienced by those calling for a return to primitive Christianity, for a "*thus saith the Lord*" for an abandonment of the creeds, worship, and institutions established by men. Satan nearly immediately laid the foundations for apostasy. He introduced a "*superior*" way to do world evangelistic work, through the American Missionary Society (1849). Soon to follow was the innovation of mechanical instrumental music in worship. Colleges were gradually departing into sectarian and modernism, including Bethany College, College of the Bible, Add Ran College, and others. Liberal editors and writers, such as Isaac Errett, J.H. Garrison, R.C. Cave,

W.K. Pendleton, and others were leading the church into apostasy.

The time is described in the introduction of the **Search for the Ancient Order** thus:

But alas! The day came when men within the ranks of the church began to betray the faith by tendencies to compromise with those without, allowing the world and human errors of judgment to weaken and destroy the force of their plea. Their attitude toward the Scriptures changed. The temptation to be like the nations about them was more than some dared resist. Innovations entered and departures resulted – but not complete and entire! Noble men arose here and there with unsheathed sword to declare, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” A remnant was rescued from the tide of digression and the plea for the ancient order of things was saved.<sup>5</sup>

Those stalwart souls who battled for the truth were mercilessly attacked by Satan and his forces. Brother West says about some of them,

Most historians have brushed aside men like David Lipscomb, Moses E. Lard, Ben Franklin and Jacob Creath, as inconsiderate legalists who lacked true spiritual attainments. On the contrary they were men who deeply loved the truth, and accepted the chastisement of others rather than renounce their convictions. They are men who need to be remembered...<sup>6</sup>

Another name that could be added to that list is Hall L. Calhoun, the subject of an outstanding biography by Adron Doran and J.E. Choate, brilliant historians and scholars in “*the Book.*” The reader is encouraged to read

this work, which not only chronicles the life of brother Calhoun but also the unsuccessful struggle to salvage the old College of the Bible (of which J.W. McGarvey was professor and president many years) from destructive higher criticism (modernism). It is amazing and extremely enlightening to parallel the apostasy of a century ago and today.<sup>7</sup>

Satan has come with numerous definitions of his own of “*unity*,” each of which is the opposite to Christ’s definition. He is smart enough to know that not everyone will fall for just one definition; so, as in going to the grocery store, a person is free in Satan’s scheme to choose whatever definition suits him and his own purposes and world view. Whoever said that doctrinal, religious error had to be consistent and truth, anyway? Satan is shrewd enough to tell man what he wants to hear. As noted, then, Satan’s definitions are numerous and varied.

One, Satan often defines “*unity*” as a kind of ecumenical movement which superimposes a structure over all the denominations. He certainly does not expect or call for unity in convictions but merely for a gigantic fellowship of sectarian groups to cooperate in preaching and carrying out the “*social gospel*.” He would not expect the differences between the groups to be eliminated but just minimized (perhaps a kind of salving the conscience), the differences being recognized as merely peculiarities of each sect. (The reader immediately recognizes the great contrast of this definition with that of Christ and Paul. This could hardly be termed the “*one faith*,” “*the same mind*,” “*perfected into one*.” This would but contribute to disunity, even though they would deemphasize doctrine. One can readily see why Satan would come with this definition.)

Two, Satan at other times defines “*unity*” as agreeing to disagree. The denominations (which were established by men) have done this for countless generations. For years, they have called each other “*Christians*” and “*godly*,” had love feasts, been fellow members of the ministerial associations, exchanged pulpits, joined together in Easter-Sunrise services, had prayer breakfasts, had other ecumenical “*unity*” summits together, et al. for many years; yet (and, I may say to Satan’s great delight and design), they are not one whit closer to the unity demanded by the Lord than when they first began. Their party lines are not healed by their club-meetings, even. (Again you recognize, do you not, that agreeing to disagree can in no way be described as “*the faith once for all delivered*” [Jude 3], based upon and consisting the oracles of God [I Peter 4:1]?)

Three, Satan at still other times defines “*unity*” as simply turning one’s back and ignoring the differences. Satan likes to bring up the church at Corinth. His argument goes something like this: the Corinthian church was plagued with members following various men, one living in adultery, members going to law against each other, some corrupting the Lord’s supper, many denying the Lord’s supper, etc. Yet, they were addressed as “*the church of God which is at Corinth*” and their fellowship was unbroken – a defense of “*unity in diversity*.”

Question, though: did Paul condone the sin in the Corinthian church, did he overlook it, were they maintaining the unity Christ commanded? Did Paul not rather condemn the false doctrine and practices and allow time for the sin to be corrected before taking more severe action? The truth is, no epistle in the New Testament is stronger in rebuking sin and division than is I

Corinthians! One does not see in the letters to the church at Corinth this “sweet,” “tolerant,” “irenic” spirit which is so often on the lips of the advocates of the division, sectarianism, and denominationalism of the “new unity movement” [except of course when these “loving spirits” are writing about and speaking about – rarely to their faces, by the way – those who stand for true, Biblical unity]).

Four, Satan will often define “unity” by averring that the “*Church of Christ*” (note the capital C – Church) is but another man-made denomination, as are the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian churches, or any other. Since, therefore, it is but one among many groups that make up the Biblical “*church of Christ*,” and since there are Christians in all the denominations (including the “*Church of Christ*”), then we should accept all who even profess faith in the deity of Christ as brethren and have at least a certain level of fellowship with them. (Dear reader, the Lord’s church, produced from the unadulterated seed, the Word of God, and maintaining loyalty to the truth is *not* a denomination, and the person(s) does not live who can prove the church of Christ to be a denomination.)

Five, Satan will deny that Biblical unity is even possible, averring that it has never been achieved nor can it be achieved. (He would have us ignore the beautiful unity in Jerusalem, to which reference has already been made, as well as such passages as Romans 8:9; Philippians 2:5; 1:27; 2:2; I Corinthians 10–14; Ephesians 1:15,22-23; 3:21; Philippians 1:3-7; Colossians 1:18-29; 3:11-17; et al.).

### **Issues Satan Has Used To Divide Us**

As always in the past, Satan persists in his diabolical hatred of the unity for which Christ prayed. If he can

succeed in destroying this unity in our age among God’s people, he accomplishes three major goals: (1) he destroys mankind, the offspring of God, for he separates man from the Father, (2) he succeeds in destroying the belief of the world in Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, and (3) he strikes a great blow to the very heart of God by destroying His very children, whom He loved so much that He gave His only begotten Son to save their souls (John 3:16; Heb. 2:9). Satan is ruthless; we must never underestimate our mortal enemy! Nor must we close our eyes to his devices, ever being clothed in the Christian Armor (Eph. 6:10-18). Not unlike his diabolical lie to Eve, Satan begins trying to divide us by attacking the very authority and integrity of God, His Word. He challenged the very truthfulness of God’s Word and whether God could even communicate understandably with His offspring. From there, he proceeded to other false doctrines. His methods have not changed.

**A first issue used to divide us is the INSPIRATION AND ORIGIN OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE.** Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris wrote that Luke *“had learned what he knew of Jesus from the apostles and other eyewitnesses to his life,”* that he *“investigated”* places and *“interrogated people”* in order to write his account of Christ’s life. Shelly said at Richland Hills, Texas, that Luke used, *“Mark, Q, what, I don’t know, scraps, listened to preaching...”* to write the book of Luke. He also has averred that the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew was from scraps.<sup>8</sup> This type modernism is seen in the statements of such as C. Leonard Allen, ACU professor who has trouble understanding that the Bible is *“a collection of facts analogous to the facts of nature,”* or that its *“literal meaning”* can be emphasized.<sup>9</sup>

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Carroll D. Osburn, also of ACU, charged those such as J.W. McGarvey, Thomas B. Warren, and J.D. Thomas with being naive for holding the Bible as being the inerrant, infallible Word of God. He said that “*verbal inspiration has given way to ‘full’ inspiration,*” charging that Jude, for example, “*relied upon*” many noncanonical, secular writings for his sources. He also affirmed that the Biblical text (including that of the gospel records about our Lord, are full of “*contradictions*”; it is certainly not “*an objectively written piece of history.*” These examples could be multiplied.<sup>10</sup> Who is behind such infidelity and modernism, dear reader? Is it not Satan himself? Whatever happened to such passages as II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16-17; I Corinthians 2:10-13; et al.?

**A second issue used to divide us is that WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND GOD’S WILL FOR US.** God speaks in God-talk, whereas we speak in baby-talk, as Shelly and Harris averred in **The Second Incarnation**.<sup>11</sup> They further wrote that man’s attempts to understand the Bible produces only “*flawed attempts.*” All our “*methods of inquiry and analysis are human... fallible.*” “*There is no infallible method of interpreting Scripture.*” They ridicule what they term “*proof-texters’ with the Bible.*” Rubel said we are “*proof-texting ourselves to death,*” – a “*silly game of scissors and paste.*”<sup>12</sup> Does the Bible indicate we can understand the truth, that God *can* communicate with His creatures (Matt. 5:21-29; John 8:32; 12:48; II Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 10:16-17; II Peter 2:20-22; I Thess. 5:21; Rom. 12:2; Mark 12:24; I John 2:21)? Three ACU professors in ridiculing those of us who hold the Bible to be “*a book of good common sense*” wrote that we can never arrive at Truth; it cannot be understood nor can we keep the law of Christ.<sup>13</sup> These New Hermeneutikers say that truth is subjective,

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situational, and vague. Thus, since the truth cannot be understood, then one person’s interpretation is just as good as another, and just as authoritative as another, especially as it relates to oneself. This lays the foundation for Satan’s other issues that divide. If it is true that truth cannot be known (which statement itself is self-contradictory), why does the Bible state clearly that one **can** know the truth (I Tim. 2:4; 3:14-15; II Tim. 3:5-7; I Thess. 5:2; Eph. 3:3-4; 4:13-14; et al.)?

**A third issue used to divide us is that THE NEW TESTAMENT IS NOT A PATTERN.** Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, and Michael Weed, professors at Abilene, abhor that the New Testament is “*a law book or divine constitution for the church,*” that there is a “*biblical pattern or blueprint.*” We are to be faulted for talking about the pattern for the church. The emphasis on “*obeying the laws, building by the blueprint, working the formulas, and knowing all the right ‘facts’*” is ridiculed by these professors. Osburn does not like the use of “*prooftexts*” or “*select rules*” either.<sup>14</sup> Shelly and Harris likewise reject “*pattern theology*”; yet, these brilliant architects will give us what they call their “*paradigm*” for the twenty-first century. Dear reader, have you looked up “*paradigm*” in your dictionary? In the **Websters New Collegiate**, the first definition is “*example, pattern.*” These “*theologians*” have rejected Christ’s pattern and are giving us their own.<sup>15</sup> Nothing could please Satan better! Would that work havoc on unity, dear reader? What does that do to Christ’s prayer? Well, what do we do? Do we just ignore Holy Writ as the pattern or rule (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16; Heb. 8:4-6; Exod. 25:40; Rom. 6:17; et al.)? Do we just ignore God’s clear affirmations that we are under law to Christ (Isa. 2:2-3; I Tim. 1:8; James 2:8; 1:25; 2:12; II John 6; I John 3:4; Rom. 4:15; 7:25; 8:2; I Cor. 9:22; Gal. 6:2; Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16; et al.)?

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That is what the great deceiver and his messengers would have us do! You see, if there is no pattern, each person and each religious group becomes the law unto itself, and who can adjudge it to be wrong? Liberals and the father of liberalism (Satan) hate “*judging*,” as they term the trying of the spirits (I John 4:1), the contending for the faith (Jude 3), and the stopping of the mouths of false teachers (Titus 1:9-11). They need to re-read Matthew 7:15 and John 7:24.

**A fourth issue used to divide us is THE CHARGE THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH CANNOT BE RESTORED.** Harris and Shelly wrote, “*We have no interest in building a first-century church...*” They said, “*There is no historical prototype of the church for duplication.*” One cannot guarantee the church’s existence; it cannot be restored.<sup>16</sup> Bill Love, in **The Core Gospel**, ridiculed such greats as Walter Scott and Foy E. Wallace, Jr.’s emphasis upon the Divine pattern and the emphasis brethren have placed upon “*the unity of all believers in one great church of God.*” Allen, Hughes, and Weed said if you believe the church has been restored, dear reader, you are sectarian. Note: “*By sectarian, we mean the belief that the church has been fully restored by our forbears...*” They further wrote that “*restoring the primitive church*” has nothing to do with our salvation. C. Leonard Allen accused the work of restoring the church of being idolatry and talked about the “*audacity of claiming that Campbell created a group ‘identified with primitive Christians.’*” Osburn avers that the church has not been, does not have to be, and cannot be restored. The very idea is but a “*mindset.*” He scoffs at Campbell and Scott for their work to restore the church of the New Testament, and ridiculed Moses Lard’s contention that the “*true church*” was restored.<sup>17</sup> The Devil is basically saying here that the seed of the kingdom cannot produce

today what it produced nearly two thousand years ago; the Word has lost its life and power. (But, see Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; Galatians 1:6-9; et al.).

**A fifth issue used to divide us is TO RIDICULE THE LORD’S CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, AS FLAWED AND INSUFFICIENT.** Shelly does not like to talk about “*the church you read about in the Bible*” except evidently to ridicule it. It is “*flawed,*” “*weakened by division,*” “*imperfect peeks of his [Christ’s] glory,*” “*never arrives,*” always but “*a pilgrim church,*” “*has never existed except in the Father’s mind,*” etc. For the church to fail to recognize her insufficiency is the “*most sinister sin of all,*” and “*In its historical reality, the church of Jesus Christ is woefully insufficient*”; she “*never arrives.*” The church in the New Testament is NOT a “*concreate example for the church to model.*” We are not the “*true church – an arrogant claim.*” Can you believe all those charges against the Lord’s beautiful bride, dear friend? What does that do to the “*fulness of Christ*” in the church, the place where God is glorified (I Peter 4:11-12; Eph. 3:21), purchased and cleansed by the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 5:24-27; Acts 20:28)? Note this blasphemy – “*Sufficiency for the race’s spiritual salvation is not found in the church.*” Whatever happened to Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; II Timothy 2:10; II Corinthians 5:17; and the like? The liberal who denies the reality of the Lord’s church denies the power of the Word, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). What Rubel once strongly, forefully affirmed (that the church has been restored and is adequate in every way to accomplish her mission on earth), he now ridicules as “*ignorant,*” “*arrogant,*” and “*idolatrous.*”<sup>18</sup> Now, where is Satan going with all of this; what is his agenda?

**A sixth issue used to divide us is TO TEACH A “CORE/BULL’S EYE GOSPEL.”** Did you know, dear

reader, that virtually all the truth is unimportant, that is, Christ did not die for that truth? Jim Howard, then of White Station in Memphis, TN, wrote,

The power of the early church was not in a doctrine or a dogma, the power was in a living person, the resurrected Christ.

But, how can one separate the doctrine of Christ from the cross of Christ (Rom. 1:14-16; John 8:32; 17:17)? As the fuel is to the core of the nuclear reactor, there is a core to Christianity. Bill Love said,

Peter preached Christ crucified and raised by the plan and power of God for the salvation of all mankind. That was the core gospel.

Do you see where this “*core gospel*” is leading? Allen, Hughes, and Weed criticize faithful brethren thus: we fail to “*distinguish the ‘weightier matters’ from the less weighty ones, the central doctrines of the Bible from subordinate ones.*” C. Leonard Allen wrote that there is too much emphasis on “*What must I do to be saved?*” and on doctrine. Carroll D. Osburn says that instrumental music and missionary societies are not “*truly biblical.*” Those matters are not “*core*” gospel.<sup>19</sup> Now, where is all this leading?

Note please the words of Shelly. On April 10, 1994, he was the featured speaker at a combined worship service held at Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, in which the additional churches participating were Woodmont Hills Church of Christ (where Shelly preaches), St. Paul Southern Methodist, Calvary United Methodist, Woodmont Baptist, Covenant Presbyterian, and Trinity Presbyterian. They all sang with instruments and claimed “*unity*” in “*this ecumenical fellowship,*” as the Christian Church “*Senior Pastor,*” Douglas Lofton

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put it. It was an Easter celebration, it seems. Shelly said at the beginning,

The devil cannot like what’s happening tonight. He has played off our divisions and antagonisms with each other for so long and has counted on that, that if the time were ever to come that we become the army of God that we were capable of being and moved out with a united front against Satan, his kingdom would not stand (applause).

He continued,

We’re here to affirm a **central truth** around which **we can unite**. We’re so different in our **church polity** and **organization**. We are so different in our **traditions**, we don’t know **each other’s liturgies**. We didn’t know quite at some points in the service, some of us, which side to sit on, when to get up, when to sit down, and when to do what. We are so different in those matters, **but those are not the matters that make people Christians. The core of historic, orthodox Christianity** comes to its crescendo around the event that we call resurrection, around this season of the year we call Easter (emp, CAC).

Do you see where the “*Core*” is going now, dear friend? Do you believe we can unite with the denominations, sing with the instrument, celebrate Easter, and do it with God’s approval?

Shelly spoke the morning of April 13, 1994, at Christ’s Church, Pentecostal Holiness, Nashville, Tennessee. He sang with the instrument, and he commended their work and their “*pastor*,” L.H. Hardwick, whom he called a “*Godly man, a man whose heart belongs to the Lord and whose life has given him great glory.*” Is

a Pentecostal “*pastor*” a Godly man? Is he a brother in Christ? Is he to be fellowshipped? How in this world could such happen? It is because Hardwick believes in Christ’s Deity; doctrine does not matter. He said,

We come from our different backgrounds and traditions ... The kingdom of God is wider, deeper, larger, greater than any of those particular streams or traditions ... we would do well not to build dams in each other’s little rivulets. So, I want to be a part of anything and everything that I consider holy and of God, and I want to encourage your ministries.

Incidentally, Robert Schuller spoke in the same “*celebration*” that night. Shelly condemned the putting of “*boundaries so that we can sit in judgment ... on one another.*” My question to Shelly is, “*What about God’s boundaries?*”

Again, he taught his grace only doctrine:

It’s the form of evil I lived for a long time in my life. Believing ... saying, yeah, God’s done His word in salvation and now here’s your part to do ... or here’s what I ... folks, I don’t contribute anything to salvation ... not one whit (“Amen” from audience) ... If you have your life in submission the only way it is of any value is if it comes out of faith ... as opposed to a legalism ... now some people are great into obedience as a matter of step-climbing to God. Dead men can’t climb ladders, folks. Salvation is by grace – by grace through faith, not of anything we do.

Incidentally, Shelly said the following on baptism:

You know some of us in the Baptist Church and in the churches of Christ ... you know we

are thought to be big on baptism ... but, sometimes we are in a very legalistic sense.

He continued his bashing of the church:

There’s a marvelous contrast between a sectarian and a truth seeker ... I’ve been sectarian most of my life ... I’m trying to be a truth seeker ... Some of you know my tradition, the churches of Christ, as a very narrow, legalistic, arrogant, “everybody’s going to hell but us” kind of tradition.

He went on, “*Yet I really do believe the Spirit of God is awakening our fellowship, our **little part of the body of Christ***” (“amens” and “praises” heard from the audience of Pentecostal Holiness people). After speaking of the core, his view of Christ as “*the virgin born, bodily-raised, God-incarnate, the Word become flesh to live among us*” and his “*affirmation of Scriptures as the infallible Word of God*” (how does he harmonize this with his “*scraps,*” and “*Q*” affirmation concerning Luke’s sources for his Gospel account), he said,

When you get me outside that core of orthodox Christian affirmation ... I call that the bull’s eye (the Deity of Christ, per the above, CAC) ... on one little illustration, ... there is the core ... there is where salvation is and there is where the fellowship of the saints is based ... then outside the bull’s eye ... out of different traditions people may come up with different answers about ... shorts or dancing (“yes” heard from the audience) ... Maybe you go one more ring out in that target ... this bull’s eye, and here you get our denominational traditions ... you know, I, I don’t mind anybody knowing that I’m from an a cappella tradition, but folks, I, I don’t regard that a heaven and hell issue

... We preserve our different traditions with regard to music styles, with regards to polity and organization ... I remind you, that is not bull's eye.

Well, what do you think of these statements? Do you believe in grace only? Do you talk about "*our little part of the body of Christ?*" Do you feel that salvation depends ONLY upon one's faith in Christ's Deity? Why, even the demons held Christ to be Deity (James 2:19); was He in fellowship with them? Are immodest dress, singing in worship without the instrument, having elders and deacons in a congregation (as opposed to one-man rule, or the pastor system, or a hierarchy, or a woman having dominion over the man), and other Bible doctrines salvation matters? Is the present reign of Christ a salvation issue? Shelly does not consider premillennialism a "*heaven and hell issue.*" Such brings, he said, "*Legalistic divisions*"; he is pushing for "*the body of Christ to get beyond its pettiness, its narrowness.*" It is to turn "*the gospel into law; by the keeping of law people are not justified,*" he says.

Speaking again at Christ's Church, Pentecostal, on May 29, 1994, Shelly said,

Do you hear a lot of acappella singing being done out there? That's those church of Christ folks who came in among you [laughter] ... There is certainly no bad way to sing with the power of the blood of Jesus.

He talked again about "*core gospel*" to them:

We have chosen to focus on those second, third, fourth-order truths of our discipleship distinctive, our historical traditions, our denominational pasts, our personal opinions.



We’ve chosen to focus and fight over those, where there could have been unity around the bull’s eye, core truths of the gospel.

He further told the Pentecostals, “*men and women who have been born into the same family of God had better quit making such a fuss*” over “*our tastes in worship styles in manner, our polity – the way we organize our churches, the ministries we focus on.*” He defended unity in diversity; we need to “*get past our splendid isolationism ... we had better stop judging one another,*” even those in “*separate traditions*” (churches, CAC). “*There is something larger to me than the yellow-page listing of the church of Christ. There is the church that is Christ’s, that is described in the New Testament, and, it is not a denominational franchise.*” Have we been wrong in saying that there is the “*church*” in the local sense, and there is the “*church*” in the universal sense, and any church larger than the local sense but smaller than the universal sense cannot be the Lord’s church? And are the denominations correct in their averments that there is the visible church (the denominations) and there is the invisible church, the “*church of Christ*” as they define it? How does Shelly’s statement differ from a defense of denominationalism?

Shelly ridiculed the beautiful bride of Christ and gave the Pentecostal enemies of the bride occasion to mock the Lord’s body.

You, you know the joke, don’t you? ... of Peter bringing the new guy into heaven, and they walk by, and he into ... this is that ... and he says, “Shh! Don’t make noise going by; that’s the church of Christ group; they think they are the only ones up here...” [much laughter from

the audience] ... aw, you know that one ... You've told it on us ... Don't play naive with me ... ["I confess" heard from the audience – sounded to me like the Pentecostal preacher Hardwick, CAC) ... altar call has started ... I've had one response.

Now, we can take personal criticism quite patiently, can we not? But, let someone criticize our mates, and what is our reaction? Do you have to imagine how the Lord must feel when His beautiful bride, who He "*gave himself up for,*" is bludgeoned, bruised, and ruthlessly bloodied? Does the bride of Christ mean nothing to such liberals as Shelly anymore? Do they not realize that to "*beat up*" on the church of Christ is to "*beat up*" on Christ (Matt. 25:35-45; Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:2-4)? We plead with Shelly to "*cease and desist*" from this shameful practice!<sup>20</sup>

With Shelly's view of and defense of denominationalism before you, you will not be too shocked at the following letter to the preachers in Nashville from Rubel Shelly dated March 11, 1997, a copy of which is before me.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Best selling author Max Lucado will be in Nashville on Tuesday, April 22, and I want you to have the chance to meet him. Max will speak at a dutch-treat luncheon for area ministers that day at Sheraton Music City.

To make the experience even better, Christian recording artist Wayne Watson will perform at the luncheon and lead a period of praise and worship.

Max will be speaking at the new Nashville Arena on July 2, 3, and 4 this year. He will be the nighttime keynote speaker at **Jubilee 97**,

an annual event sponsored by Churches of Christ. But we want to spread the word by means of this luncheon that **Jubilee 97** is intended for the larger Christian community of Nashville.

No one is doing a better job of communicating the basic message of Christ to this generation than Max Lucado...

Yours in Him,  
/s/  
Rubel Shelly

Several points are worthy of note:

1. Max Lucado is a liberal, and interestingly, recently received an award from the Baptists for his writings.

2. Wayne Watson, I am told, is a member of a denominational church and carries a big band with him when he performs. He will *“lead a period of praise and worship.”* Of course, Rubel has a history of singing with the instrument – *“not a core/bull’s eye matter.”*

3. Max will be the keynote speaker at the Jubilee.

4. The Jubilee is *“intended for the larger Christian community,”* a clear reference to all the denominations. I would say that Satan is *“laughing wildly up his sleeve”!* His definition of unity is being fully implemented by the Jubilee liberals.

**A seventh issue Satan has used to divide us is THE DIRECT WORKING AND LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Brother William Woodson documents Shelly’s affirmation that one’s salvation comes thus:

The sinner is chosen and saved by God’s act in Christ on the cross; the sinner, thus chosen and saved, comes to hear of the salvation he

has been given, claims it by faith, is brought to the new birth, then is baptized as a symbol of his salvation. He has not been saved by anything he has done or will do; he is saved by and only by what God did in Christ. On this plan, baptism is not necessary for the remission of sins; rather, according to Shelly, the one necessary step is faith.<sup>21</sup>

This is in perfect harmony with the Shelly/Harris view that the alien must have an “*encounter*” with God (neo-orthodoxy), “*a personal encounter.*”<sup>22</sup> They also teach that the Holy spirit is the empowering agent in baptism and in one’s life. He indwells Christians “*to validate and to empower their unique experience.*”<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Time and space forbid observing and documenting the further issues used by Satan, such as emphasizing constant change,<sup>24</sup> substituting spontaneous, unavoidable celebration for Bible authorized worship,<sup>25</sup> “*absolving*” each others sins,<sup>26</sup> etc. However, these are sufficient for God’s faithful children to know that the church of Christ and the unity for which Christ died are under vicious attack from Satan and the change agents who are in his army, fighting against the Christ (Matt. 12:30). Let us be “*set for the defence of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:17).

### **Endnotes**

- 1 Gus Nichols, **Sermons by Gus Nichols and Others**, p. 10.
- 2 Ibid., p. 148.
- 3 Rex A. Turner, Sr., “*Satanology,*” **Sound Doctrine** (January-March, 1985), p. 21.
- 4 Bill Jackson, “***That Ye May Grow***” (Pulaski, TN: Sain

Publications, n.d.), pp. 36-37.

5 Homer Hailey, “Introduction,” in Earl Irvin West, **The Search for the Ancient Order II** (Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1950), pp. xv, xvi.

6 Ibid., pp. xii, xiii.

7 Adron Doran and J.E. Choate, **The Christian Scholar: A Biography of Hall Laurie Calhoun** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1985).

8 Curtis A Cates, **The Second Incarnation: A Pattern for Apostasy** (Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1992), p. 53. Please see these and the other works cited for full documentation.

9 Curtis A. Cates, **The “Core/Bull’s Eye Gospel” Concept Refuted** (Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1994), p. 26.

10 Ibid., pp. 28-34.

11 **Pattern**, p. 54.

12 Ibid., pp. 22-24.

13 **Core**, pp. 36-37.

14 Ibid., pp. 51-54.

15 **Pattern**, pp. 27-28.

16 Ibid., p. 29.

17 **Core**, pp. 65-70.

18 **Pattern**, pp. 30-34.

19 **Core**, pp. 71-92.

20 Ibid., pp. 78-86.

21 William Woodson, **Change Agents and Churches of Christ** (Athens, AL: School of Bible Emphasis, 1994), pp. 233-258.

22 **Pattern**, pp. 51-53.

23 Ibid., pp. 44-45.

24 Ibid., pp. 20-22.

25 Ibid., pp. 45-48.

26 Ibid., pp. 49-51.

**Jesus “Spake These  
Things Unto Them”**

(Matthew 9:18)



**Concerning  
Our Faithfulness**



## Chapter 11

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Living For The Master: Persecuted But Victorious

*Dave Miller*



Dave has been faithfully preaching the gospel over thirty years • He is the holder of various degrees (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D) from Texas Tech, Harding Graduate and Southern Illinois Universities • He serves as director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in the Ft. Worth, Texas area • Author of **Singing and New Testament Worship** and **Piloting The Strait** • Deborah and Dave have four children.

**M**any great men and women in the Bible have preceded us in their attempts to live faithfully for God. Being human beings just like us, they faced the daily struggle to overcome self, sin and Satan. They, too, had to cope with the stress and strain of life. We can learn from their behavior (Rom. 15:4). If we will consider their lives and their reaction to the difficulties of life, we can receive from their example the necessary strength to endure. When we observe how they were mistreated and persecuted, we can draw from them the needed encouragement to hang on and achieve the victory.

In his efforts to live the Christian life, Stephen found himself standing before the highest legislative body of the Jewish nation – the 71 member Sanhedrin which included the High Priest as president. He was on trial



for his life. Instead of offering a legal defense, he preached a sermon. He surveyed Israelite history, spotlighting their behavioral propensity for apostasy, and then he drove his sermon home with this grand conclusion:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it (Acts 7:51-53).

Here was this great man of God, on trial for his life, and yet no speech could ever be any less likely to gain one’s acquittal. Instead of defending himself to gain his release, Stephen’s sermon placed his accusers on trial before the bar of God!

Their reaction? They were cut to the heart and gritted their teeth at him. They began yelling at the top of their lungs while they stopped up their ears. Then they ran at him, dragging him outside the city, and threw rocks at him until they beat the life from his body. **Persecuted?** Yes – unto death! **But victorious?** Oh, yes – eternally victorious!

Then there was Elijah. Upon hearing that Jezebel had put out a contract on his life, he literally “*ran for his life*” into the desert and hid in a cave. God spoke to him directly and said, “*Elijah, what are you doing here?*” His response showed a heart filled with desperation and despair when he insisted that he had been very zealous for the Lord despite the fact that the Israelites had forsaken the covenant, torn down God’s altars, and killed

God's prophets. He felt he was the only one left – and they were trying to kill him, too! Here was a man who felt the crushing pressure of persecution.

Yet, God provided him with appropriate victories in life. When he went to meet his king, he was accused of making trouble for God's people. But the truth was, it was Ahab who troubled Israel by forsaking God's commands. He then challenged the hundreds of false prophets to meet him in a contest on Mount Carmel to determine once and for all who is God. When those false prophets tried all day long to evoke a response from their god to ignite the sacrifice, they failed miserably. Elijah then gathered all the people around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord. Placing wood upon the altar and carefully arranging the sacrificial meat upon the wood, he ordered it to be doused with water, thoroughly saturating the entire sacrificial site. Then he offered a simple prayer to the God of Heaven, which elicited fire that roared down out of the atmosphere, consuming the sacrifice, the wood, the altar stones, the water, and even the dust! That caused God's people to get their thinking straight, and Elijah ordered the execution of the false prophets. Was Elijah a **persecuted** man? Yes! **But victorious!**

And what of Daniel? Deported from his homeland while still a youth, he was placed in an unfriendly foreign culture and forced to learn the language and literature of the Babylonians. When his political enemies became jealous over his success and favor with the king, they finagled the law to get Daniel in trouble with the legal system. His crime? Praying to the one true God regularly! His punishment? Death by being thrown to lions. Talk about persecution! Yet, God was with him and stopped

the mouths of the lions (Heb. 11:33). Though he spent the night in the lions’ den, he was retrieved the next morning safe and sound. His accusers were substituted in his place and the Bible says the lions tore them in pieces before their bodies hit the ground (Dan. 6:24). Was Daniel **persecuted**? Yes! But he was **victorious**!

Then there is Amos. He had no intention of being used by God as a prophet. He was spending his life tending sheep and sycamore trees that produced a fruit that had to be manually pierced to ripen. But when God commissioned him to travel from his home in southern Palestine to northern Palestine and to present God’s words to those people, he went. But he was not well-received. When he announced that Israel would be laid waste and the king himself would die by the sword, you can imagine the reaction. Amaziah the priest accused him of conspiracy to overthrow the government and tried to intimidate him into leaving the country immediately. Amos responded by making clear that he was no prophet by profession and would have been content to do the humble work he performed in his private life. But God had instructed him to prophesy and that’s what he was going to do. Not only would Israel fall, but Amaziah’s own children would be killed and his own wife turned into a prostitute (Amos 7:17). Was Amos **persecuted**? Criticized? Opposed? Yes! But God made him **victorious** even in the midst of persecution!

Micaiah, too, faced the pressures of persecution. When the king of Israel and the king of Judah met to discuss the possibility of a mutual military campaign, the king of Israel wanted some reassurance from God that their efforts would be successful. Ahab paraded his 400 false prophets before Jehoshaphat and the “*yes men*”

offered the desired reassurance. But Jehoshaphat was uneasy and wanted some more credible indication. Ahab admitted that Micaiah could be consulted – *“but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil”* (I Kings 22:8).

Micaiah was immediately summoned. The two kings sat upon their thrones, listening to the false prophets. One false prophet, Zedekiah, even dramatized his reassurance by holding up an iron replica of some ox horns and declaring that the kings would gore the Syrians to death. Meanwhile, the officer who had been sent to bring Micaiah to them, urged him to go along with the other prophets and reassure the king. But Micaiah said he would say what the Lord told him to say, and when questioned by the king, he sarcastically suggested that they go right ahead. When pressed to get serious, Micaiah predicted that the army would be scattered and Ahab would be killed. He then described how a lying spirit was directing the advise of the false prophets – whereupon Zedekiah walked over, slapped Micaiah across the face and taunted him with the words, *“Which way did the spirit from the Lord go from me to speak to you?”* Micaiah said he would find out on that day of military calamity when he runs and hides in an inner chamber.

Micaiah was sent to prison for his courageous stand and placed on bread and water. But when the battle ensued, Ahab disguised himself for the specific purpose of avoiding Micaiah’s prediction. The Syrian king even assembled a *“swat”* team of 32 assassins and charged them to avoid all conflict and concentrate solely on getting Ahab. But God did not use them to accomplish His prediction. Instead, the Bible informs us that a nameless archer drew back his bow and let his arrow fly *“at*

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*random,*” that is, aiming at no one in particular – no doubt just excited in the heat of battle. Out of all those soldiers who were occupying the battlefield, that arrow found its way to Ahab. And out of all the places on Ahab’s armor, that arrow struck in the crevice between the joints of the armor and punctured his wicked heart. His blood pooled in the bottom of his chariot and he was dead by sundown. Micaiah was **persecuted** – but he was **victorious!**

The Elijah of the New Testament faced the same thing. He had to stand up and confront the Pharisees and Sadducees face to face, label them “*vipers,*” insist upon repentance, and warn them of the wrath and unquenchable fire to come (Matt. 3:7-12). When he had the godly guts to inform the king that his marriage was unacceptable to God, the king’s illicit wife held it against John and wanted him eliminated. She got her way and the executioner cut off John’s head, leaving only his headless corpse for his disciples to bury (Mark 6:14-29). Was that persecution? Yes – even unto death! But was John victorious? Jesus, Himself, said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...*” (Matt. 11:11). **Persecuted – but victorious!**

Paul was a model of persecution. The list of his persecutions is lengthy (II Cor. 11:24-28). He received the customary 40 lashes (Deut. 25:1-3) from the Jews on five separate occasions. Three times he received the customary Roman beating with rods (Acts 16:23). He was even stoned (Acts 14:19). Three times he went through the harrowing experience of being shipwrecked (e.g., Acts 27:41ff) and even drifted on the ocean all night and all day. He experienced the fatigue of frequent travels,

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the perils of waters, robbers, angry countrymen and Gentiles. He suffered in the city and in the desert, in the sea and among false brethren. He went through weariness, toil, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, and nakedness. He was a hounded, hunted, harassed man! He experienced the insecurity and fright that comes from vicious opposition – but the Lord said to him, “...*Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you...*” (Acts 18:9-10). When he faced the pain of a “*thorn in the flesh*” to keep him humble, the Lord reassured him – even in the midst of his suffering – “*My grace is sufficient for you.*” He was able to conclude: “*I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecution, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (II Cor. 12:10). Infirmity, distress, reproach, **persecution**? Yes! But through it all – with the help of our Lord – **victorious!**

But the supreme example of persecution and suffering is that of Jesus Christ Himself. Besides the frequent mistreatment He endured throughout His earthly ministry, He was seized by an angry mob carrying swords and clubs; He was positioned before a kangaroo court to face the accusations of false witnesses; He encountered the tirade of a raging High Priest who accused Him of blasphemy and the council’s condemnation to death; He had people spit in His face, beat Him, and strike Him with the palms of their hands as they mocked and taunted Him to identify those who struck Him; He was bound and taken before the Roman authorities where He experienced the further humiliation of a jeering crowd who chose a notorious criminal over Himself for release; He then suffered further indignities at the hands of

Roman soldiers who stripped Him, pressed a crown of thorns down upon His head, spit on Him, and struck Him on the head with the reed they had made Him hold as a scepter. Finally, He endured the excruciating, horrifying death inflicted by a Roman cross, as passers by blasphemed Him, shook their heads at Him, and taunted Him to save Himself. Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

Whatever suffering or persecution you or I may experience pales in comparison to the persecution endured by our Lord. We need to remember that Sunday following Friday. His persecution unto death effected an incredible victory that you and I may share. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8). Must we suffer?

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: (I Peter 2:21-23).

He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. In so doing, He is able to bring many sons to glory – *“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”* (Heb. 2:18). Jesus was **persecuted**, but He was **victorious**. We can and must be like Him. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (II Tim. 3:12).

## **Conclusion**

In Revelation 19, we are treated to a spectacular portrait. Heaven opens and out comes a white horse whose rider has three names: *“Faithful and True;”* *“The Word of God;”* and *“King of kings and Lord of lords.”* In righteousness, He judges and makes war. His eyes are flames of fire. He wears on His head multiple crowns and his clothing has been dipped in blood. Protruding out of His mouth is a sharp sword. He rides at the head of the mounted calvary of Heaven. The Christians who were first given this awesome picture had been undergoing intense, excruciating persecution. But neither they nor we can visualize this marvelous scene without coming to at least one undeniable conclusion: **LIVING FOR THE MASTER MEANS WE WILL BE PERSECUTED; BUT WE WILL BE VICTORIOUS!**



## Chapter 12

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Overcoming The Obstacles Of Life

*Dave Miller*



Dave has been faithfully preaching the gospel over thirty years • He is the holder of various degrees (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D) from Texas Tech, Harding Graduate and Southern Illinois Universities • He serves as director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in the Ft. Worth, Texas area • Author of **Singing and New Testament Worship** and **Piloting The Strait** • Deborah and Dave have four children.

**J**ames informs us that Elijah was just a man – “*subject to like passions as we are.*” He possessed the same human frailties and inclinations. He was a human being **just like us** (James 5:17). Therefore, we can learn from his efforts to face the obstacles of life. We can glean assistance in knowing how to cope with the difficulties that God’s people encounter in our trek toward Heaven.

You would think that after participating in one of the most stunning, spectacular displays of God’s presence and power on Mt. Carmel, that Elijah wouldn’t have much trouble handling the obstacles of life. He stood up valiantly and courageously in a marvelous demonstration of what it means to defend God and His truth against overwhelming numbers (I Kings 18). Yet, when Ahab went home and told his wife, Jezebel, what Elijah had done to dispose of her false prophets, that woman was so enraged that she put out a contract on his life and

vowed he'd be dead within 24 hours. That news so shook him up that he headed straight out into the desert a day's journey, sat down under a desert shrub, and began to pray that God might take his life! What a change came over him! Rather than being the courageous, confident man he was on Mount Carmel, now he is despondent, depressed and in the firm grip of his human vulnerabilities.

That sounds like some of us Christians at certain moments of our lives. Depression has been described as "*internalized rage*." It occurs when a person feels he or she has been treated unjustly. The deep sense of frustration and injustice has gotten out of control. Notice in I Kings 19 the **symptoms** and **sources** of Elijah's despondency which were counterproductive to dealing effectively with the obstacles of life.

1. He was the recipient of criticism, even threats (v. 2). It is extremely discouraging to be attacked verbally by others. It can come from acquaintances, strangers, or even our own physical or spiritual family members – close loved ones. The tongue is a "*fire*," "*a restless evil, full of deadly poison*" (James 3:6, 8). With it, people can cut and slash us and leave us bleeding emotionally and psychologically. (Have you ever noticed that those who are most prone to give you a piece of their mind can least afford to be so generous?) If we are not careful, critical verbal jabs can move us in the direction of depression and serve as obstacles in life.

2. Elijah's reaction to the criticism which he received was typical. He withdrew and backed away from his previously forthright behavior (v. 3). He retreated into inactivity. He dropped out of life, so to speak. He desisted from living the aggressive lifestyle he had been

living. Earlier, he had confidently asserted that he would boldly meet Ahab face to face – and did so (I Kings 18:15, 17). But now he has given up, dropped out of sight and is nowhere to be found. His strong and active stance for the Lord was effectively neutralized.

3. He then withdrew from people. He left his servant behind (v. 3) and went to a deserted, uninhabited location, ultimately spending the night in a cave (v. 9). Severing oneself from others and insisting upon being alone is a sure sign of depression and the inability to cope with life’s obstacles. Avoidance of the obstacle is no solution. It only prolongs the agony.

4. Next, Elijah entertained the idea of an end to it all. Perhaps he was not suicidal, but he certainly wanted to be put out of his misery (v. 4). If he really wanted to end it all, Jezebel would have been happy to oblige him if he had just presented himself to her. So he lacked the will to follow through with his desires (like bunji jumpers who have the nerve but lack the commitment). Job felt such horrible pain that he, too, yearned for a release from his misery (Job 3:1ff). This desire to put an end to one’s heartache is normal but must be subdued to minimize the potential for acting upon it in inappropriate ways.

5. Another symptom of Elijah’s predicament is seen in his self-pity. He felt sorry for himself and likened himself to his hapless predecessors (v. 4). Self-pity creates the illusion of humility and submissive resignation. In reality, self-pity is a selfish, self-centered, even self-righteous attitude. Twice Elijah boastfully reiterated how very zealous he had been for the Lord and that he was now all alone in the effort to please God (vs. 10, 14). How typical of we emotional humans who think **our** obstacles

and **our** unpleasant experiences are without precedent! How prideful for us to think that what we go through in life is somehow unique to us (I Cor. 10:13).

6. Notice that Elijah dealt with his depression by going to bed and sleeping (v. 5). Some people cope with life's difficulties by resorting to drugs or alcohol as an escape. They think by dulling their mental capacities or rendering themselves unconscious, they won't have to face the problem and deal with it. They think they can eliminate their pain. But, in reality, it only prolongs it and postpones the inevitable. Sooner or later the obstacles of life must be dealt with.

7. A final aspect of Elijah's circumstances was his loss of appetite. When a person goes into mourning or grief or depression, he loses his desire for food. An angel nearly had to force feed Elijah to keep his strength up (vs. 5-8).

So here was Elijah, facing his share of obstacles and hurdles in life. Can you identify with him? Have you ever felt overwhelmed and beat down by the hardships and traumas of this life? How can we deal responsibly with them? How should Christians behave when adversity strikes? How can we keep from going into psychological seclusion, alienation and spiritual neutrality? We've seen the **sources** and **symptoms** of Elijah's depression. What's the **solution**? At least five answers lie in this very text of Scripture.

1. When Elijah retreated into a cave, we're told the Lord confronted him with the words, "*What are you doing here?*" (v. 9). There's the first solution to coping with life's obstacles: straight talk and direct confrontation. We don't need those who would help us to dance around the subject and evade the situation. We need friends and

loved ones to get right to the point, press us with reality, and shock us out of our inward preoccupation. One may even detect a tinge of abruptness or even rebuke in God’s words, as if to say, “*Who do you think you are and what in the world do you think you are doing sitting here in this cave?*” When ominous obstacles cause us to lose our perspective, we need friends who are objective and clear-headed enough to shake us into reality so that we can once again see the big picture. (Like the preacher’s wife who, when asked by her husband how many really great preachers there were in the brotherhood, said to him, “Probably one less than you think.”)

2. Secondly, in order to successfully negotiate the obstacles of life we will have to face God. Elijah was forced to experience God’s presence in the form of a series of near encounters involving a strong wind, an earthquake, a fire, and suddenly the voice of God Himself (vs. 11-13). The application for us is that we absolutely must hear the voice of God in Scripture. We must go to our Bibles often and quit relying upon our own thoughts and our own wisdom. The only way to lean on the Lord is to encounter Him in His word and saturate ourselves with His thoughts. His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psm. 119:105). Without its constant guidance, without the perspective that only it can give, we are mere rudderless ships being tossed to and fro indiscriminately. Life becomes a hodge podge of confusion and disorientation. I repeat, when life’s obstacles and burdens weigh down upon us, causing us to drop to our knees under the pressure, we simply must fling ourselves into the comforting, encouraging, eternal words of Scripture (Rom. 15:4).

3. Thirdly, an important key is for us to focus on

others instead of ourselves (vs. 15-16). That's one antidote to self-pity. Get back into the Lord's work and get busy. If you get shut down in one aspect of the Lord's work, shift over to another. Occupy your mind with thoughts of other people who need to be loved and served. Not only is self-pity self-destructive, it hamstring and paralyzes us from concentrating on a central feature of Christianity: loving our fellowman (Matt. 7:12; 22:39; John 15:12-13, 17). "*There is much to do, there's work on every hand.*" So let's direct our attention to those areas rather than torment ourselves with our own predicament.

4. Another great help in handling life's roadblocks is to make friends – comrades in the faith who will help us and support us even as we encourage them. God wanted Elijah to enlist the aid of three individuals. These men would help Elijah in the task of eliminating idolatry and false religion. The Bible even says that one of these men, Elisha, "*...arose and followed Elijah, **and served him***" (v. 21). Elijah needed some buddies, some fellow workers who were in there pulling in the same direction. When you or I are criticized or mistreated, even by those within the church, we will find that almost immediately God will bless us with other Christians who will give us the needed reassurance and an encouraging boost. We should be especially cautious about retaliating or becoming vengeful. Instead, we should look for the positives and the offers of comfort that come our way.

5. Finally, a great aid in overcoming life's obstacles is to realize that we are not alone. Elijah was lonely; he felt all alone in his efforts to oppose false religion. He honestly thought he was about the only one left who was genuinely trying to live faithfully before God. But God set him straight on that point: 7000 remained who had

not capitulated to the subversive trends (v. 18). So it is for us. There are other Christians who are facing similar obstacles in life. There are other Christians who are just as dedicated and determined to stay faithful and work for the Lord. Don't allow the few highly visible critics to overshadow the many positive promoters of Christ's cause. We're not alone!

### **Conclusion**

Remember, the Bible goes out of its way to emphasize that Elijah was a man just like us (James 5:17). So we can overcome the obstacles of life just like him. Malachi held Elijah up as a prototype for John the Immerser (Mal. 4:5; Luke 1:17). And when Jesus experienced His transfiguration, there stood Elijah with Moses as representative of the prophetic tradition – the prince of prophets. He serves as a fitting model for us as together we apply ourselves to the perpetual task of **overcoming the obstacles of life.**

## Chapter 13

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Examples Of Overcoming Obstacles

*B. J. Clarke*



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**I**t is always a supreme joy and pleasure to associate with the East Hill church and the Truth In Love lectureship. The Truth In Love paper and lectureship are aptly named, for both serve as vehicles through which the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is lovingly distributed to a lost world. I am sincerely grateful for the tireless service of men like Paul Sain, the elders at East Hill, and the members at East Hill, in general.

Man's journey from earth to glory is littered constantly with trials and difficulties, and so has it always been. Rather than sit back and watch human beings joyfully journey from this life to eternal life, Satan has, instead, complicated their journey by hurling obstacles into the midst of the narrow way that leads to life (I Peter 5:8). A survey of the Divine Record reveals that no one, no matter how righteous, is immune from the presence of these obstacles. Indeed, *“Man that is born of*



*woman is of few days, and full of trouble*” (Job 14:1). Even those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). Jesus promised His apostles, *“In this world ye shall have tribulation”* (John 16:33). In the Old Testament, Noah and his family faced the obstacle of being surrounded by wicked men and women, whose *“every imagination of the heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). Abraham and Sarah faced the obstacle of a barren womb as they awaited the promised child, Isaac. Jacob faced the obstacles of Laban’s broken promises and Esau’s brotherly hatred. Joseph’s life met with the obstacles of abandonment, false accusations, and alienation of affection from his beloved father. The lives of Moses and Aaron collided with the huge obstacle of a powerful Pharaoh who refused to let the people go. Furthermore, in the wilderness, away from Egypt, the frustrating obstacles of the faithlessness, murmuring, and outright disobedience of the people continued to beset these leaders. Men like Gideon and David faced the obstacles of giant odds and giant warriors. Samuel faced the obstacle of watching the change agents of his day reject the old paths and clamor to become like the nations round about them (I Sam. 8:1-21). After his triumph over Goliath, David met with the obstacle of escaping from King Saul’s murderous intentions. Later, while serving as king, David was faced with the obstacle of betrayal by his own son (Absalom) and chief of staff (Ahithophel). A large number of the prophets had to combat the obstacle of corrupt priests and corrupt kings who were leading the people into idolatry. In the New Testament, Mary and Joseph faced the obstacle of finding a safe haven for Jesus at his birth, and his early life. John the Immerser faced the obstacle of preaching to

hypocritical religious leaders, and to an adulterous king. Followers of Jesus faced the obstacles of leaving all to follow Him (Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33). Early Christians and the apostles faced the wrath of a temple hierarchy that wanted to kill them for their faith in the Savior. The book of Acts provides us with many excellent examples of how our early brothers and sisters in Christ dealt with the obstacles thrust into their path. Furthermore, the apostle Paul generously sprinkled his epistles with mention of certain brethren/churches who met and overcame obstacles of life. On the other hand, he also frequently mentioned certain individuals who did not overcome life's obstacles. Contrariwise, Hebrews 11 affords us an extensive list of "*obstacle overcomers*." In short, the Scriptures are so replete with examples of those who overcame obstacles of life, that it is difficult to narrow down which passages to use for this lesson. Of course, all knowledgeable students of the Bible would regard Jesus as the supreme example of how to overcome life's obstacles. Our Lord faced every obstacle known to the human condition and overcame every single one of them without sin (Heb. 4:15). Hence, it makes sense to explore the life and teaching of Jesus for the best advice available on overcoming the obstacles that beset us in our daily walk.

The very theme of this lectureship is a good beginning place for the secret to overcoming obstacles of life. This lectureship is about what Jesus said (Matt. 9:18). Great emphasis should be given to what Jesus said because He "*has the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). His Word is a Word of grace, able to build us up and give us an inheritance among them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32). Moreover, His words will judge

us on the last day (John 12:48). If we continue in His word, then are we His disciples indeed (John 8:31-32). Having said this, it is crucial to observe that the Words of Jesus are far more encompassing than just Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The words of the epistles are not of secondary importance merely because they were not spoken directly by Jesus while he was upon the earth. Rather, the words of the epistles still trace their origin back through Jesus, for He instructed His apostles concerning the Holy Spirit,

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:13-15).

Hence, the chain of revelation is as follows:

***God, the Father***  
***God, The Son***  
***God, the Holy Spirit***  
***Apostles***  
***Recipients.***

The significance of this chain of revelation is to show the folly of confining the authority of Jesus only to the words which He spake during His earthly ministry. The words of I Corinthians are as authoritative as the words of Matthew. Did not Paul say that the things that he wrote “*are the commandments of the Lord*” (I Cor. 14:37)?

Nevertheless, in this lesson, we turn our attention

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to another body of inspired literature besides Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the book of Acts, the Pauline and the general epistles. In this body of inspired literature, Jesus speaks and provides excellent advice for overcoming life's obstacles. We have reference, of course, to the epistle addressed to the seven churches of Asia. The apostle John took his inspired pen in hand and recorded "*the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Rev. 1:1). Accordingly, the book of Revelation is a record of what Jesus spake unto them in the seven churches of Asia. Yet, the question may be asked, "*Does the content of the letters from Jesus to the seven churches of Asia really have anything to do with overcoming life's obstacles?*" Most assuredly! If ever there were a group of people facing obstacles, it was the brethren of the seven churches of Asia. Furthermore, Jesus repeatedly addresses the theme of "*overcoming*" in his correspondence to the seven churches. In fact, the word translated "*overcome*" is used more in the book of Revelation than in the entirety of Scripture combined. Hence, we should profit greatly from an examination of the obstacles which faced our brethren in Asia Minor, and the Lord's recipe for overcoming those obstacles. Remarkably, many of the obstacles faced by these brethren near the close of the first century are strikingly similar to the obstacles faced by God's people today.

### **Overcoming The Obstacle Of False Teachers**

One of the very oldest obstacles employed by Satan to divert man from the narrow path that leads to life is the obstacle of false doctrine. Satan first hurled this obstacle in man's pathway in the Garden of Eden when he deliberately and erroneously promised Eve that she and Adam would not surely die as God had foretold (Gen.

2:15-17; 3:1-6). Eve heard this error, believed this error, and acted upon this error. Consequently, she and Adam were expelled from the garden and the tree of life. The remainder of the Old Testament records numerous instances in which false teachers served as obstacles to God’s people carrying out the will of Jehovah. Even in the first century, many false prophets were circulating throughout the world, tossing people to and fro with every wind of doctrine (I John 4:1; Matt. 7:15; Eph. 4:14).

A study of Revelation 2-3 informs us that false teachers surrounded the churches in Asia Minor. Some of the churches combated the false doctrines while others tried to coexist peacefully with the false teachers in their midst. The Lord’s attitude concerning these false teachers is expressed clearly in the content of His letters to the churches.

For example, Jesus praised the church at Ephesus for her intolerance of false doctrine. He said,

I know how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars (Rev. 2:2).

He also praised them for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, something that the Lord Himself also hated (Rev. 2:6). Evidently, Paul’s prior admonition to the Ephesian elders to guard the flock from grievous wolves was one that the Ephesian elders had taken to heart (Acts 20:28-31). The message of these verses is that it is not unloving to test the teachers whether they be of God (I John 4:1). Furthermore, these passages teach that it is not incompatible for a loving Christian to hate certain things. Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Heb. 1:9). If we truly love the Lord, we must hate evil and love

good (Psm. 97:10; Amos 5:15; Rom. 12:9). The Psalmist declared, *“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way”* (Psm. 119:104, 128). The presence of false teachers must be taken seriously, for they constitute a serious and insidious threat to the welfare of the body of Christ. Peter warned his readers,

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (II Peter 2:1-2).

Whereas Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for her hatred of false doctrine, He condemns some of the other churches of Asia for their tolerance of false teachers and false doctrine. To the church at Pergamos He said,

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate (Rev. 2:14-15).

To the church at Thyatira he admonished,

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I

will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come (Rev. 2:20-25).

Several observations are in order in view of these passages. First, Jesus does not make a blanket accusation against the church at Pergamos or Thyatira for promoting false doctrine. In other words, Jesus doesn't say that the entire church at Pergamos held to the doctrine of Balaam, nor did He charge everyone at Thyatira with supporting the false prophetess Jezebel. There were some in Thyatira who had been seduced by Jezebel, but Jesus also addressed "*as many in Thyatira as have not this doctrine*" (Rev. 2:20, 24). A close look at the passage reveals that Jesus doesn't even come right out and charge the evangelist or the leadership of these congregations with personally holding to these false doctrines. However, even if it is the case that the leadership of these churches did not believe/teach these false doctrines, they still failed miserably by not stopping the mouths of these false teachers (Titus 1:11). If these congregations had elders, they should have been "*able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*" (Titus 1:9). The evil influence of the false teachers at Pergamos and at Thyatira could have been nullified, or neutralized, if the

leaders of the congregation had done their job. Likewise, the mouths of false teachers all over this brotherhood could be stopped if some elderships would get serious about their responsibility to do so. In congregations that are not yet privileged to have qualified men serve as elders, it is still the responsibility of faithful men in the congregation to give no space or place to error, no, not for an hour.

We need to wake up to the fact that Jezebel is in our midst, seducing God's servants away from the church to commit spiritual adultery. Tragically, rather than taking a stand to oppose the false teachers in our midst, many elderships, congregations, and preachers salve their consciences and say nothing. They argue that we need to be less critical and more loving. Perhaps, we need to be more loving of the truth! Instead, we hear statements like, *"Well, we don't personally agree with his teaching, but we don't want to alienate ourselves from him."* A president of one of our Christian colleges told me that calling false teachers by name was unwise because it would alienate these men and make it difficult, if not impossible, to reclaim them. In reply, I asked him if Jesus knew human nature better than anyone who has ever lived. He admitted that Jesus did. I then asked him why Jesus would have so specifically and publicly warned his disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Saducees (Matt. 16:6). Didn't Jesus want the Pharisees and Saducees to be reconciled to the truth? A thousand times, yes! Did Jesus think that specifically calling these false teachers by name was unwise, inappropriate and counterproductive? Obviously not! Did the apostle Paul hesitate to mention Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:20) by name when they were



circulating throughout the first century brotherhood, spreading their heresy? No, he did not hesitate (I Tim. 1:19-20; II Tim. 2:16-18; Also see II Tim. 1:15). Why did he not hesitate to specify these men as false teachers? Was it because he lacked Christian love? A thousand times no! It was because he fully and readily recognized the dangers that these men posed to the welfare of the body of Christ. That is the reason why he admonished the church at Rome to mark the false teachers who taught contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18). That is why John commanded Christians not to bid God speed to those who bring something other than the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11).

Brethren, we have been tolerating Jezebel for far too long! It is time to try the false teachers in our brotherhood and find them liars! It is time to hate false doctrine as much as Jesus hates it (Rev. 2:15). Since only the truth makes men free, we must hate the error that keeps men and women in the bondage of sin. Be assured of one thing: if we don't fight against these false teachers and warn them to repent of their wicked way, Jesus will, but we will be condemned for not sounding out the warning (Rev. 2:16; Ezek. 3:17-21).

### **Overcoming The Obstacle Of Formalism**

Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for her determination to reject all false teachers and false doctrines. Furthermore, He acknowledged that she had worked and laboured patiently for His name's sake. As a church, Ephesus had worked to the point of weariness. However, Jesus also said,

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee,  
because thou hast left thy first love. Remember

therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (Rev. 2:4-5).

According to Jesus, the problem at Ephesus was that she had left her first love. In other words, her participation in labor and works, and her opposition to false teachers was, for all intents and purposes, merely an external action separated from internal devotion. She was guilty of formalism, something Webster defines as “*having the appearance without the substance.*” In short, Ephesus was merely going through the motions. She had remembered to oppose false teaching but had forgotten why she should do so. She had remembered to toil and labor for the Lord, but had forgotten the joy which should motivate such service. A wife may continue to be faithful to her husband out of a sense of duty, while her love for him may have died. Likewise, one may continue to serve Christ out of a mere sense of duty, without any feelings of love and adoration.

The critical importance of love is seen clearly in a conversation Jesus had with a certain lawyer who, in an effort to test Jesus, asked the Lord what the greatest commandment was in the law. Jesus said unto him,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

With this text before us, let us notice the importance of serving God out of love. It is interesting that in specifying

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the greatest commandment, Jesus did not cite one of the Ten Commandments as being the greatest. Instead, He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Hence, we are behooved to ask the following question: Why did Jesus point to Deuteronomy 6:5 as being the first and greatest commandment? It is because He knew that if one dedicated himself to love God with all of his heart, soul, strength and mind, that obedience to all other Divine commandments would surely follow. Jesus stressed the connection between love and obedience when He said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). The apostle of love later penned similar words when he wrote,

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous...And this is love, that we walk after his commandments (I John 5:3; 2 John 6).

The Pharisees emphasized obedience without giving consideration as to whether this obedience was motivated by a heart given over to God in love. They were more concerned with external actions than they were with the inner attitude of the heart. The reaction of the scribe to Jesus’ response demonstrates that he correctly perceived that Jesus was stressing more than mere performance of obedience. Mark’s account of the incident records that the scribe said unto Jesus,

Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12:32-33).

The latter portion of the scribe's reply is reminiscent of Psalm 40:6-8,

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;  
mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and  
sin offering hast thou not required. Then said  
I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is  
written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my  
God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

This passage appears puzzling at first because it seems to deny that God ever required His people to bring sacrifices and offerings to Him. Even a casual reading of the books of Exodus and Leviticus demonstrates that God did indeed desire and require offerings and sacrifices. Does Psalm 40 contradict Exodus and Leviticus? The solution to this apparent problem is to recognize the use of the hermeneutical device known as an ellipsis. An ellipsis is the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied. Keeping this in mind, the passage could read, "*Thou didst not desire sacrifice and offering alone.*" In other words, God never desired or required that his people merely go through the motions of bringing their offerings to him. Two key words in the passage are the words "*delight*" and "*heart.*" God wanted more than mere offerings and sacrifices. He wanted those who brought these offerings and sacrifices to do so with delight and love in their hearts.

Two passages from the prophets serve as perfect illustrations of God's demand for more than just the mere act of performance in obeying him.

Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom;  
give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of  
Gomorrhah. To what purpose is the multitude

of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats (Isa. 1:13)...Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me... (Isa. 1:10ff).

To this Micah adds,

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offering, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8).

Our God desires that we worship him with hearts full of love. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for drawing nigh unto him with their mouth and honoring him with their lips while their hearts were far from him (Matt. 15:8-9). We must recognize that God never has and never will accept external actions without internal devotion. But, how does this relate to the concept of our theme? It is relevant because it relates to one of the obstacles employed by Satan in warring against men's souls. If Satan cannot discourage us from serving God altogether, then perhaps, he can detach us from the joy of such service. If that happens, eventually, we may become weary in well doing, and just give up. When we serve Christ only out of a sense of legalistic duty, we torment our consciences. However, when we serve him out of a *“faith that worketh by love”* (Gal. 5:6), we enjoy

the service and our obedience becomes a blessing rather than a burden. Remember that phrase in I John 5:3 which says that when we love God his commandments are not burdensome? A song from a few years ago entitled, *“He Ain’t Heavy; He’s My Brother,”* comes near to expressing the thought. I have to carry my fallen brother, but it doesn’t seem like such a burden because of the relationship that we have. If I were given the choice of carrying around a 10-pound sack of potatoes or my 45-pound son through an amusement park for six hours, I would surely choose my son. Although he is heavier and demands more care and attention, he seems lighter because of my love and affection for him. Likewise, when we serve the Lord out of love, His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30). If the world perceives our Christianity to be a burden rather than a blessing, they will want to have nothing to do with it. On the other hand, if we display to the world the great love in our hearts for God, and the joy that serving Him brings, this will serve as a beacon to lead men out of their darkness and despair into the marvelous kingdom of light.

### **Overcoming The Obstacle Of Fear**

Jesus encouraged the church at Smyrna,

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Talk about mixed emotions! This statement from our Lord no doubt filled the Christians at Smyrna with both trepidation and consolation. They would suffer, but the suffering would be relatively short in duration, especially

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when compared to the eternal blessings of the crown of life. The same Jesus who offered these consoling words, also said,

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28).

The reason that the brethren at Smyrna could face persecution, yes, even death, without fear, is because of the presence of Jesus. The portrait of Jesus walking in the midst of the churches indicates His supreme power, majesty and strength. Furthermore, John tells us,

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:17-18).

Because Jesus has conquered death, we do not have to fear death (Heb. 2:14-15). The descriptions of Jesus at the beginning of each one of the letters to the seven churches, should instill confidence within each one of us. In these letters, He is described as: the first and the last, the one who was dead and alive, the One with the sharp sword with two edges, the One whose eyes are like unto a flame of fire whose feet are like fine brass, the One who is holy and true, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens what no man can shut, the One who shuts what no man can open, the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the beginning of the creation of God. The point is that with someone as powerful as this on our side what can possibly cause us to fear? Or to use the language of Scripture,

The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psm. 27:1).

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation (Isa. 12:2).

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof (Psm. 46:1-3).

Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me (Psm. 56:2-4).

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? (Psm. 118:6).

And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm (Matt. 8:26).

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?...For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31,38-39).

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,

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and I will not fear what man shall do unto me  
(Heb. 13:5-6).

The central truth of the foregoing Scriptures is that Jesus is greater than any obstacle or circumstance that might ever land in life’s pathway. Accordingly, I can overcome any obstacle as long as He is with me. As the song says, “*Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go, anywhere He leads me in this world below.*” Thus, although Jesus said “*the synagogue of Satan*” was right in the backyard of the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia, they could still press on with the confident knowledge of God’s abiding presence. Jesus designated Pergamos as “*Satan’s seat*” and “*Satan’s dwelling place,*” and yet there were still many Christians who were holding fast in their allegiance to Christ. One of them, Antipas, died as a faithful martyr rather than compromise his commitment to Christ (Rev. 2:13). As we face the obstacles of life, we must remember that with Jesus on our side we can’t lose.

### **Overcoming The Obstacle Of Fickle/Fizzled Faith**

One of the obstacles on our road from earth to glory is that of maintaining our spiritual devotion to the very end. In the Parable of The Sower, Jesus compared some hearts to “*thorny ground soil.*” According to the Savior, these are those who initially embrace the word, and subsequently,

...the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness  
of riches, and the lusts of other things entering  
in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful  
(Mark 4:18-19).

They start out living for Christ, and eventually drop dead spiritually. They start the Christian race, but never

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finish it. The church at Sardis was in danger of letting the last signs of spiritual life ebb away. Thus, Jesus warned Sardis,

I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God (Rev. 3:1-2).

If you had asked some of the other brethren of the first century what their opinion was of the church at Sardis, they probably would have given her high marks and lofty praise. Her reputation was a positive one. However, God can see what lurks beneath the exterior, and He knew that in reality Sardis was dead. Accordingly, reputation is what we appear to be, character is what we really are. The truth about Sardis is that her faith had fizzled out in some areas and was fizzling out in others. The precise reasons for her demise are not given in the text. Notwithstanding the exact reasons, immediate repentance was her only hope for survival. In the latter portion of Revelation chapter 3, we read of the church at Laodicea. Despite her lofty estimate of her spiritual condition, the life of the church had fizzled out. Her faith was flaccid (lacking vigor or force, limp). She was lukewarm. Unlike the church at Smyrna which was physically poor but spiritually rich (Rev. 2:9), Laodicea was physically rich, but spiritually impoverished (Rev. 3:17). The depravity of the church at Laodicea is evidenced by the fact that Christ finds something to commend in every one of the 7 churches of Asia, except for the church at Laodicea. So revolting was the lethargy of the Laodiceans, that the Lord pledged to “spue” them out of his mouth (Rev. 3:16).

## **The Formula For Overcoming Life’s Obstacles**

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 not only reveal the fact of life’s obstacles, but also the formula for overcoming these obstacles. As already noted, Jesus is the absolute key to overcoming any obstacle. With Him we can do all things, without Him we can do nothing (Phil. 4:13; John 15:5). But what is our obligation? What must we do to be overcomers?

**In the first place, we must listen.** We must give an attentive ear to the revelation of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we must always govern our lives by the Word of God, and turn to it for the answers to life’s difficulties. Jesus told the church at Sardis to remember what she had received and heard (Rev. 3:2). In fact, each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia charges, “*He that hath an ear; let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches*” (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). No church or individual can conquer the challenges of life by ignoring the dictates of Holy Scripture.

**Secondly, we must repent if we have allowed any of life’s obstacles to come between us and a right relationship with God.** Jesus found fault with five of the seven churches of Asia. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia escaped His criticism. Jesus commanded each of the five churches with which He found fault, to repent or else (Rev. 2:5, 16, 21-23; 3:3, 19).

**Thirdly, in order to overcome obstacles of life, we must hold fast** (Rev. 2:13, 25-26; 3:2-3,11). We must hold fast that which is good (I Thes. 5:21). We must hold fast the form of sound words (II Tim. 1:13). We must hold fast the profession of our faith (Heb. 3:6; 4:14; 10:23). In short, we must keep on keeping on with a holy tenacity.

We must be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). We must “*continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel*” (Col. 1:23), “*for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*” (Heb. 3:14). We must beware, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness (II Peter 3:17). We can avoid such a fall by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18).

**Fourthly, we must be watchful.** The exhortation to the church at Sardis is needed uniformly by all that desire to overcome life’s obstacles. We need to be watchful (Rev. 3:2) lest we be caught unprepared at the coming of the Lord (Rev. 3:3; Matt. 24:42-44; 26:40-41; Mark 13:34-37; Acts 20:31; I Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:6; II Tim. 4:5). The more we watch and set our affection on things above, the easier it will be to overcome earthly obstacles (Col. 3:1; Matt. 6:19-21; II Peter 3:10-14).

### **The Forecast For Overcomers**

In each of the seven letters to the churches of Asia, Jesus forecasts the future of those who overcome the obstacles of life. The following is a listing of promises to those who overcome. The one who overcomes: Will eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (2:7). Will receive a crown of life (2:10). Will not be hurt of the second death (2:11). Will eat of the hidden manna (2:17). Will receive a white stone with a new name engraved upon it (2:17). Will receive power over the nations (2:26-27). Will receive the morning star (2:28).

Will walk with Christ clothed in white raiment (3:4-5). Will not have his name blotted out of the book of life (3:5). Will have his name confessed before the Father and the angels (3:5). Will be made a permanent resident in the temple of God (3:12). Will sit with Christ at His throne (3:21). A glimpse at these blessings reminds us that Heaven will surely be worth it all! Truly, to those who overcome Jesus will say, “*Come over.*” Let us live in order that we might overcome life’s obstacles and have the Lord say to us, “*Come over, overcomer, and live with me.*”

## Chapter 14

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Jesus’ Attitude Toward Compromise

*Joe E. Cox*



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One of the saddest things that is taking place in the brotherhood of our Lord today is the willingness of some to compromise in any area, at any cost. Perhaps even sadder than this is their misguided persistence in trying to portray the Lord Jesus Christ as their example for these compromises. In an article titled “*Something Greater Than Law,*” one man wrote:

‘Even the most rigid of God’s laws were not always inflexible. There are examples showing that in certain circumstances **there was elasticity in the most absolute laws.**’

‘The articles of furniture in the tabernacle were holy, they were to be touched by no one (Num. 4:15f). The twelve loaves of bread placed on the table of showbread were holy also and were to be eaten only by Aaron and his sons. Uzzah was killed instantly by the Lord when he touched the Ark of the Covenant (II Sam. 6:6f).

But David and his soldiers ate the bread of the Presence and **Jesus gave his approval of the action** (Matt. 12:1f; Mark 2:23f; Luke 6:1f).’ The Jews accepted the sabbath law as rigid and arbitrary. Out of respect for it, they made the most technical definitions of what could or could not be done on the sabbath. In the time of Moses the test case had been made of the sabbath law which the Jews interpreted as proving its rigidity. However, Jesus chose the sabbath law as a test case to show its flexibility and elasticity, giving way to the weightier matters of the law. Six times Jesus did things on the sabbath which were called in question by his legalistic critics. Jesus was deliberate in this, making an emphatic point. He was showing the true nature of law. Jesus was denying the arbitrary nature of law, declaring that there is something greater than law. **Jesus was saying that God thinks more highly of mercy extended to a cow or donkey than to the sabbath law** (Luke 13:10f; 18:1f). It is hard for a Pharisee to grasp that!

Such are the charges made against the Son of God and the very law that He kept in its entirety. The six examples that the author used as his proof-texts are Matthew 12:1-8 (in the grain field); Mark 3:1-6 (healing of the man with the withered hand); John 5:1-17 (the healing at Bethesda); John 9:1-38 (the healing of Siloam); Luke 13:10-17 (healing of the woman with an infirmity); and Luke 14:1-6 (healing the man with dropsy).

I stand amazed at the depths that men will sink to when trying to uphold a false doctrine. Does it ever occur to any of these writers that if it could be proven that Jesus actually did violate the law of Moses then He could not have been our Perfect Sacrifice? Further it

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would actually make the word of God a lie, seeing the Bible records:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

The sacrifice would have been of a blemished and spotted lamb instead of the unblemished Lamb of God, which Jesus was. *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (I Peter 1:19).

There is not even one example of Jesus breaking the law of the Sabbath as outlined in detail in the pages of the Old Testament. Jesus did break the rules and restrictions which had been added by the Jews themselves! These He broke without guilt or remorse. He was not obligated to the non-binding, arbitrary religious laws that man had elevated to a position even higher than the Law given by God. Instead of Jesus upholding David in his sin, He used David to show the ridiculous stance taken by the Pharisees. The Pharisees accepted the flagrant violation of the Law that David had committed and made excuses for him. Yet, they stood ready to condemn Jesus who was violating nothing more than their man-made laws. In fact, the writer of the above article trips over his own deceit when he admits that it was the Jews themselves who had *“made the most technical definitions of what could or could not be done on the sabbath.”*

The Scriptures teach us that Jesus is our example, as is pointed out by Peter, in I Peter 2:21-23. His example is ever before us as we learn from Him where we can and cannot compromise. Certainly compromise is expected of us in some areas as Jesus Himself pointed out:



He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him (John 13:4-16).

Should we compromise in areas of personal difference? The example that Jesus is setting forth is quite clear and concise. This same principle is taught throughout the New Testament:

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

However, there is a world of difference between being willing to compromise over personal feelings and matters of self interest and in the compromising of principles and doctrines that are a matter of God's Law.

I will do my best to break this down into three sections: Jesus' attitude toward compromise in doctrine, toward compromise with the false teachers, and even His attitude toward compromising with the sin that existed in the life of His friends.

I. What was Jesus' attitude toward compromise in the area of doctrine? As we have already stated, Jesus placed His highest priorities on the keeping of God's Law. While delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated the following:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17-19).

In this bold and decisive declaration Jesus put forth His true and proper relationship with the Law of Moses. While doing **no** violence to the Law of Moses, He was able to set it aside only after He had fulfilled its precepts and requirements. As Paul would later state:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his

flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Eph. 2:14-15).

It is apparent even to the uninformed that Jesus meant no violence to the sacred law of Moses because He was going to take it away by fulfilling it, not by violating it! Christ fulfilled the law (1) by His own strict obedience to it, (2) by His fulfilling every prophetic statement concerning the promised Messiah, and (3) by explaining the teachings of the Old and bringing them up to the level that God intended, thus revealing to the world the purpose of the Law, which was to bring men to the Christ and His Covenant.

Although Jesus came with only one purpose, that one purpose had many different roles. The stated purpose that Jesus revealed over and over was simply this: *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”* (John 6:38).

The roles or parts attached to the Father’s will would fill up an immense volume of work, but they include the fulfilling of the law, the offering up of the perfect sacrifice thereby purchasing the church, and providing a means of salvation. This does not in any way exhaust the list, rather is just the beginning, but perhaps you can get an idea of what I’m talking about. Jesus’ attitude concerning doctrine carried directly over into His preaching and teaching. He not only kept the law without spot but He also expected the same from all men. He did not flinch when trying to correct the flaws and sins in the life of those around Him. No one has to guess or assume where Jesus stood on the importance of the commandment of God:

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition (Matt. 15:3).

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition (Matt. 15:6).

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9).

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (Matt. 19:17).

Instead of their being **flexibility** and **elasticity** to the commandments of God, Jesus says there must be strict adherence to every word of God: *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4).

The liberals will find no solace in the twisting of the Scriptures, they will find no comfort in classifying our Lord as a Law violator, and they will find no salvation in eternity if they continue to add and take away from the Holy Word of God. Jesus had no place for those wishing to compromise the sacred Scriptures nor did He offer any hope of salvation for those who continue to do so!

II. What was Jesus' attitude toward false teachers? The best answer to that question can probably be found in the following words:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do

men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles  
(Matt. 7:15-16).

When Jesus warned us that there would be false teachers, He characterized them as wolves. The people originally hearing these words spoken by the Master knew from personal experience the predatory animal known as a wolf. The thousands and thousands of sheep that inhabited the hillsides of Israel meant there were many that depended on the raising of sheep to make a living. One of the most destructive forces of the great herds of sheep was the wild wolf that fed on these animals. Sometimes traveling alone and sometimes traveling in packs, the wolves could destroy a whole herd of sheep in one night’s work. Sometimes driven by the sport of destruction rather than being fueled by hunger, they ravaged the helpless and defenseless animals. The wolf was a sly and cunning attacker, coming in under the cover of darkness, always downwind from his intended victims so as to be undetected. He crawled along on his belly and blended into the background of the ground cover so well he could pounce upon the sheep before any alarm could be given. Jesus’ illustration also illuminates the destructive nature of false teachers upon the work of God. All through the New Testament they are referred to as being unscrupulous, sly, cunning, and crafty. Instead of knocking on the door, the false teacher will slip in undetected and do his vicious work of destruction. They too are often driven by the sport instead of being fueled by hunger. It has been my impression they take great pride in seeing how many they can ensnare and entrap in their evil ways.

Much of Jesus’ criticism against the false teachers of His day were aimed at the teachings of the Pharisees.

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In addition to the Old Testament books, the Pharisees recognized in oral tradition a standard of belief and life. The Jews claimed that along with the written law given to Moses, he also received a body of precepts which were orally delivered unto him. Supposedly this oral tradition was transmitted in unbroken succession to subsequent generations. These oral laws both expanded and illustrated the written law and during the time of Christ had been elevated to a standard higher than the written Law of God. History does not bear out this early dating for the oral Torah; in fact the earliest date that most conservative scholars give it is about 250 B.C.

The Pharisees consider themselves as the guardians and “*holy keepers*” of the traditions of their fathers, thus giving them the opportunity of interpreting it to their own selfish satisfaction and goals. There are two prominent illustrations used by Jesus against these so-called oral traditions:

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect **by your tradition**. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth

nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for **doctrines the commandments of men** (Matt. 15:1-9).

If you read the text closely, you will note several things instantly:

1. There was no hesitation on the part of Jesus to condemn their evil practices of adding to the word of God.

2. He did not hold back in His criticism but told them plainly, forcibly, and concisely their actions were wrong!

3. He upheld the Law of God to the nth degree while condemning the law added by men (the traditions)! You can find the exact same story as told by Mark’s account of the Gospel in Mark 7:1-13. The major difference between these two narratives is found in the last verse mentioned where Mark says: “*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, **which ye have delivered:** and many such like things do ye*” (Mark 7:13).

The Pharisees and their fathers had delivered the oral traditions; they were not from God and not recognized by our Lord as having any authority whatsoever.

Another illustration that pinpoints the Pharisees rejecting God’s word in favor of the oral traditions is found in these words:

And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that

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is greatest among you shall be your servant  
(Matt. 23:7-11).

The twenty-third chapter of Matthew is one of the harshest condemnations ever uttered. It is here that Christ struck the blow that no doubt led to His death, (the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back). "*Seven Woes*" are pronounced upon the Pharisees by the mouth of Jesus and each one more severe than the other. Some fail to realize the significance of the verses quoted above. They not only condemn religious titles today but also condemned them then. Rabbi was a term used for a "*living teacher*." The term father was used of those teachers who formerly lived. These were the ones relied upon by the Pharisees to back up their oral traditions. But Christ's teaching here strikes down the idea of reliance upon human authorities for the settlement of religious truth.

One of the ways the liberals have devised to attack the Lord's church is by the re-defining of terms and phrases. This has proven an effective method on a generation that is ignorant and untaught. Such is the redefining of the term Pharisee. Anyone who now makes a firm stand for the truth of God's Word is denigrated with the term "*Well, he's just a Pharisee!*" In this new definition the term Pharisee is not only one that is hypocritical but also one who cares more for the Law than for the spirit of the law! So, a Pharisee has become a knipicker, a "*gnat-strainer*."

This definition of the Pharisee is unknown in the pages of the New Testament. The Pharisees could not have cared less about the word of God; it was the Torah, the oral traditions, that was most sacred to them. There is not one mention from Genesis to Revelation where one



has been condemned for being faithful to the word of God. No, not even once. In fact the opposite is true; from beginning to end the faithful are the ones that are praised and upheld, not condemned. Can you imagine anyone actually believing that God would condemn anyone for keeping His law? How ridiculous and repugnant.

When men found the going tough and the sayings of Jesus too hard to handle, Jesus did not offer to tone it down or compromise the truth in any way, shape, or form.

These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6:59-66).

So uncompromising was our Lord that He was not even going to run after those who were not truly willing to pay the price for their Christianity. This is such a contrast with what is going on in the Lord’s church this day and time. The watch-word is not faithfulness, rather it is compromise. Anything that attracts the people or keeps the people is employed regardless of its

Scripturalness. This is the reason why so many are anxious to redefine terms, find new interpretation principles, and to reduce the Holy Word of God into a cultural love letter. Anything goes, and in fact the more outrageous, the better.

Yet, the Bible states emphatically that Jesus' attitude toward the false teachers was one of exposure and rebuke, never, ever was it one of compromise!

III. From personal experience and from twenty-five years of preaching experience, I have learned that even the most faithful in Christ Jesus are sometimes tempted to compromise when certain situations arise. One of these areas involves situations involving friends or family members in error. Instead of correcting the error when the opportunity arises, we will go-along-to-get-along. I understand the difficulty this involves because I am often placed in these same situations with family members who are not members of the Lord's church.

Even when friends or family are members of the church, some have a tendency to overlook certain things. A dear friend of mine has a brother that is an elder in a very liberal congregation. Instead of trying to correct some of the erroneous beliefs of her brother, she keeps her mouth shut out of fear that she might alienate him. This happens to mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends. What do we do? What is the example of Jesus?

Thankfully we have been left with a valid example of this same principle in the life of Jesus. Out of the twelve apostles that Jesus chose, there were three that formed an inner committee: Peter, James and John. We are never given a definite reason why these three particular ones were chosen, but, nevertheless, these three

were the exclusive eyewitnesses of the transfiguration, the raising of Jairus’ daughter and present the night Jesus spent in agony in the garden of Gethsemane. If there were any who were closer to Jesus, they are not revealed. So as far as earthly attachments go, these no doubt represented the friends of Jesus. Yet, not even to these, His chosen, did Jesus seek to compromise.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:35-45).

No doubt Jesus was disappointed with the actions of James and John, and most assuredly they were going to be a vital element in the spread of Christianity. But Jesus cared more for their souls than He did whether His words upset them. It was Jesus that truly told us the true value of the soul over the physical body. And while we might upset a few at being overly frank and honest with them, if it is done in love and concern, for their souls then not only will we sleep better at night but also their souls might be saved in that great and notable day of judgment.

The Lord even had to rebuke the apostle Peter on occasions. The words that He used must have stung to the very soul of Peter, but our Lord was correcting Him in love of his soul:

But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men (Mark 8:33).

Our Lord is the perfect example when it comes to when we should and when we can't afford to compromise. Instead of letting men be your example, we pray earnestly that you will turn your attention back to the Savior of our souls to find that perfect example of love and faithfulness!

## Chapter 15

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Faithful To The End

*Bobby Liddell*



Bobby studied at Walker College, University of Alabama, Memphis School of Preaching and Southern Christian University • Extensive radio and television work • Local work in Alabama and Florida • From 1989–1994 he served as editor of the **Defender** and **The Beacon** • Presently Bobby works with the Memphis School of Preaching • Joan and Bobby have three children.

**J**esus left the perfect example (I Peter 2:21), not only telling us, but also showing us how to be faithful to the end. As Luke, by inspiration, wrote of “...*all that Jesus began both to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1), so Jesus did first that which He taught. His message is one of faithfulness, as in His earthly life He was faithful to the Father in all things, doing the Father’s will (John 6:38), so He commends being faithful (full of faith) to us, and commands us so to be (cf. Matt. 24:13). The Savior did not give up, nor did He give in even though cruel death stalked Him. Walking in the shadow of the cross, and knowing that the course before Him ended there, our Lord continued on. Persecution did not slow Him. Opposition did not stay Him. Rejection and despite were the lot of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 53), but He pressed forward. When His own familiar friend betrayed the only begotten Son of God (Matt. 26:50), He did not so much as hesitate

for a moment in the accomplishing of His mission (John 9:4; 1:29; Luke 19:10).

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9, cf. Phil. 2:5-9).

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:8-9).

Having lived the exemplary life of faithfulness, Jesus could exhort: “...*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10). “*Faithful unto death*” means one must remain full of faith even if so doing costs one his life. That being the case, that one should be ready to die for the faith, in faith, surely, one should be ready to live for the Lord by faith (Phil. 1:21).

### **Being Faithful To The End Demands The Right Beginning**

One does not die in faith who has not lived by faith. What is faith? One defined it as: “*The driving force of all the acts of the believer, which brings him into perfect harmony with the will of God.*” God’s Word says, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*”(Heb. 11:1). Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

Bible faith is saving faith, and saving faith is obedient faith. Obedient faith is a faith that works – not the works of the Old Law, nor works of merit, but works of obedience (Luke 6:46; Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14). Without such works, faith is dead (James 1:17, 20, 26; cf. John 12:42-43; 9:22; James 2:19). Therefore, faith motivates the believer to act, to do the will of God, and to do so happily.

The believer is able to bring his faith into focus because God gives plain, simple, and understandable instructions to His people as to what He requires of them. God never requires of man what God has not revealed to man, nor does God so conceal the fundamentals of faith that only those with advanced degrees may discern. To the Ephesians, Paul penned: “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph. 5:17), and:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:2-5).

Paul wrote what God, through the Spirit, had revealed unto him. What he had written “*in a few words,*” the Ephesians could read, and when they read, they could understand his “*knowledge in the mystery of Christ.*” Some try to excuse themselves from focusing their faith by saying that the Bible is not understandable. Such is certain blasphemy! It is an indictment of God to declare

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Him unable to express His will in understandable communication to man, His creation. God has expressed His will by pinpointing what one must be, and what one must do. Thus man is without excuse, and none can say, *"We wanted to obey God and serve Him, but we just could not understand what He wanted us to do."* Still, our faith must not be focused only in doing certain things which God has set before us, but in doing so in obedience to God's will, and from a heart filled with faith to the end. Only when man obeys from the heart, is his faith properly focused (Rom. 6:16-18; I Peter 1:22-23). Some do good works, give liberally, even preach without their aim being to please God, but to win acclaim and honor of men. *"...Verily I say unto you, They have their reward"* (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). God requires of us that we do His will, and that we have the right attitude in so doing (I John 5:3; John 14:15).

God's favor extends to His people for their obedience by faith. Foolish men live in disobedience (Psm. 14:1; John 3:26 [ASV]; II Thess. 1:7-9). Faithful men live in the favor of God by obedience (Micah 6:8; II Thess. 1:10). The psalmist said, concerning such favor of God bestowed upon his obedient children:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper (Psm. 1:1-3).

Today, we look to those of the past, who, by faith,

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enjoyed God’s favor. They were forerunners of the faithful of today, having gone on before, fighting the good fight of faith, and finishing their course (II Tim. 4:6-8). Hebrews 12:1-2 is a written encouragement to us to consider “*so great a cloud of witnesses*” (referring to the faithful men and women of old, some of whom are mentioned in Hebrews 11) whose lives spur us on. Then, laying aside every hindrance, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, knowing that as these forerunners ran the race, and gained the prize, so can we. Those who have lived by faith and have gained the victory still exert a great influence for good though their lives on earth are over (cf. Heb. 11:4). They encourage those who follow to live so that the hope of eternal life might be realized (Titus 1:2), and that the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, and that is reserved in heaven might be obtained (I Peter 1:4).

The future, for the faithful, is bright. The goal of the faithful is not to amass worldly wealth, but to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). While gratitude for the blessings we have now should fill our hearts (Eph. 1:3, 7; John 10:10), we look for a “*...better country, that is an heavenly...*”(Heb. 11:16). Rest from our labors and sojourn, a “*forever*” home with peace and security, favor and fellowship of God, and eternal blessings coincidental with conditions met are the inheritance of the true believer. Such should be our aspiration, but these blessings do not come accidentally, nor are they gained haphazardly. Faithfulness to the end brings them.

### **Faithfulness To The End Brings The Blessing Of Fellowship**

The faithful are all in the same family or household; that is, the family of God which is the church of the

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living God (I Tim. 3:15). Within that family, there is fellowship with all others who are faithful (I John 1:7-10). All those outside the family of God are outside of that fellowship, having been separated, by unforgiven sin, from the faithful. One who, as a way of life, walks in darkness, may claim fellowship with God's people, but such claims are lies (I John 1:6). Fellowship, by definition, is a joint participation, communion, and sharing. Because of fellowship, the faithful are willing to share with their brethren in all that comes their way. God's people share in weeping and rejoicing (Rom. 12:15); in burden bearing (Gal. 6:2); and in need (Acts 2:44-45). There is a mutual desire to spread the Gospel, and a willingness to aid in that effort (Phil. 1:3-7).

No problem is too big, nor too small if it is a problem with which a brother is struggling, for brethren love one another, with a pure heart fervently (Heb. 13:1; I Peter 1:22-23). Fellowship sees no distance too far, no cost too great, no sacrifice too severe. In God's family, lives, labors, and loves are intertwined. What a wonderful blessing is fellowship! The blessing of fellowship must not be abused nor cheapened by extending its borders beyond God's limits. In fellowship, the family of God goes forward by faith. In fellowship, there is unity, and in unity, there is goodness and pleasantness. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"* (Psm. 133:1). A lack of fellowship is not desirable, but neither is sin in the world desirable. Should God's children extend fellowship to all, or only to those who walk by faith (II Cor. 5:7)? *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed"* (Amos 3:3). Can one outside the body of Christ have fellowship with those within? Paul recorded this admonition.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Cor. 6:14-18).

Fellowship in the faith is like marriage in the sense that both are blessings from God and both have certain and definite boundaries. No man has the right to move these boundaries, nor to loose where God has bound.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

### **Joshua, A Great Old Testament Example Of Faith**

Joshua is a great example of faith. He was a man who was great in faith, for he had chosen to serve God (Josh. 24:15). Likewise, he was a man who was grounded in faith, as he led the people toward the final accomplishment of their goal, entering the Promised Land, not by misguided zeal, nor by impatient alarm, but by patient continuance. His eye of faith was firmly fixed on the goal which God had given him and his time schedule was controlled by God. He showed the people of Israel

a faith they could follow. Like Paul could say of his faith in Christ, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (I Cor. 11:1), so Joshua could say of his faith in God.

Joshua exhibited an example worthy of emulation, because he had built his faith on the firm foundation of God's Word. His life had been lived in faith; his battles had been fought by faith; his victories had been won by faith; his hopes had been built on faith; and his dreams had been born of faith. Thus, Israel could look to their leader, and see him standing firm even though the responsibilities were weighty and the consequences were great. His was a faith they could follow, for they knew that when God spoke to Joshua (cf. Josh. 13:1), he would hear and obey. There would be with him no vacillation, no subtraction, no addition, nor substitution. Would that all leaders of God's people were as Joshua, having what all great, strong, and courageous leaders must have – a faith firmly grounded in "*Thus saith the Lord.*"

Joshua was "*old and stricken in years*" (Josh. 13:1), but what a blessing for him to know his faith had stood firm and had preserved him to the twilight of his life. The account of Joshua 11:15 plainly shows the character of this great man of faith: "*As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.*" His remarkable influence for good is revealed in Joshua 24:31:

And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel (Josh. 24:31).

At his death, the greatest compliment that could ever be paid to man was given him:

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old (Josh. 24:29).

Though worldly minded men seek to be the richest, smartest, most powerful, most popular, or most handsome, Joshua set his affections on things above (cf. Col. 3:1-2), and sought only to be known as a servant of the Lord.

Faith made possible the victory when Joshua led Israel against Amalek (Exod. 17:8-13). Faith was present when Joshua accompanied Moses up Mount Sinai and waited for him there (Exod. 24:12–33:19). By faith, Joshua went into the Promised Land to spy it out (Num. 13:8-25), and by the same faith, he, with Caleb, encouraged the people not to rebel against the Lord, but to go up and take the land in spite of the evil report of the other spies (Num. 14:6-9). In like token, his faith was ready to obey when the Lord spoke to him, and he immediately began to make plans to carry out the Lord’s will (Josh. 1:10ff). Faith enabled him to cross the flooded Jordan and defeat the walled city of Jericho, then to dethrone thirty-one kings and subdue the greater portion of the land (Josh. 3–12). In all his adventures of faith, faith’s firm foundation of God’s Word gave him the strength to face every foe and overcome every obstacle with the courage exemplified in the record of Joshua 10:25:

And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight (Josh. 10:25).

Joshua was faithful to the end.

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## **Paul, A Great New Testament Example Of Faith**

The great apostle Paul, was one whose faith was severely tested. He was often in danger, and knew well the face of death (II Cor. 4:11). However, in all his affliction, he kept a marvelous attitude of resolute determination and faithfulness to the end. His troubles were not imagined, nor were they superficial and incidental. He wrote:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (II Cor. 4:8-10).

This writer well remembers the kindly encouragement of the beloved former Director of Memphis School of Preaching, Roy J. Hearn, who, when the students began to feel sorry for themselves, having left jobs and homes, doing without all but the bare necessities, and laboring under a demanding schedule of classes and homework, would refer them to Paul's inspired words recorded in II Corinthians 11:23-28:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in

perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

On top of all these things, Paul endured “*a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet (him)*” (II Cor. 12:7; cf. I Cor. 15:31; Gal. 6:17). Did Paul suffer? Yes! Was Paul faithful to the end? Yes! Near his death, he wrote to Timothy:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

How could Paul keep the faith in spite of the problems, persecutions, tribulations and sufferings he was called upon to endure? He looked beyond the chains that bound him (Phil. 1:13), the critics that opposed him (v. 16), the crises he faced (v. 20), and the conflict within him (vs. 29-30). He looked beyond the circumstances to the Christ. Some see Christ through the circumstances of life, and get a very distorted view of the Savior, if they see Him at all. The faithful see circumstances through Christ, and react as Christians should. They say, with Paul, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Phil. 1:21; cf. Gal. 2:20). Such are sustained by a life of faith in Christ, and with Christ, and the strength that comes

as a result (Phil. 4:13). Paul did not face his problems alone, and he knew that, nor did he react to trouble by being afraid, or by making more problems. Instead, he endured by faith (II Cor. 4:13).

His faith worked, and gave him strength to speak (Psm. 116:10). Believing the gospel to be the “*power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16), Paul spoke with courage, and contended earnestly for the faith (cf. Jude 3). His message was not one of eloquent oratory, and worldly wisdom, nor was his appearance handsome and impressive, but he spoke with a sincerity that comes with an abiding faith (I Cor. 2:1-2; 9:16). He spoke the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Therefore, he could address the Ephesian elders with these words:

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Paul’s faith was sustained by hope (II Cor. 4:14). There is NO hope in unbelief, NO endurance in faithlessness, and NO comfort without God’s Word (cf. Rom. 15:4; I Thess. 4:18). Those who lack faith, being without hope, will not endure to the end. Paul trusted God, believing God’s precious promises; thus, he lived “*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*” (Titus 1:2). To the Corinthians, he declared,

...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 (I Cor. 15:1-2).



Did suffering rob Paul of the crown of life? Could death deprive him of his reward? No, but suffering made him stronger, increased his dependence upon God, and drew him even nearer to his Lord who bought him. He could look, with the eye of faith, to the victory, sure and certain. Seeing the victory before him, he could overcome the burdens, trials, troubles and pain which come in every life, but to an even greater degree in his.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:54-58).

The Christian who lacks hope will not endure, nor will he go and preach the saving Gospel of the risen Savior to a lost and dying world which struggles on in darkness without hope (Mark 16:15-16).

Paul could remain faithful to the end because of his great love (II Cor. 4:15). He knew his suffering served God and his fellow man, especially his beloved brethren. That put a new light on the trouble which befell him. Remaining faithful to the end is so much easier when one has the proper priorities, putting God first (Matt. 6:33). Knowing the value of one soul exceeds the worth of all the things of the world (Matt. 16:26; I John 2:15-17), Paul was ready to pay the price to get the good news

of redemption to all who would listen (Acts 26:18). He remembered where he had been, and what he had been: “*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,*” but that “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*” (I Tim. 1:12-15), and he rejoiced to be where he now was – saved in Christ by faith (Gal. 3:26-27).

Paul was faithful to the end because he had the proper attitude toward his being (II Cor. 4:16). He knew the outward man perishes, but the inward man is renewed day by day. Therefore, he did not faint in facing death. Death is but a doorway to another life, and to a far better life for the faithful. All shall pass through, for God has made that appointment (Heb. 9:27). Men fear death because of its unknown quality, for men fear what they do not understand. Shall we not understand that Christ, the author and finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2), has passed that way before, and has prepared for us a place of rest upon the other side (John 14:1-4; I Thess. 4:13-18)? What is our life, but a vapor which appears for a little time, and then vanishes away (James 4:14)? What is our body, but an earthly tabernacle subject to disease and decay (II Cor. 5:1-10)? So, with a proper attitude toward this physical body, let us be faithful to the end.

Paul was faithful to the end because he had a proper attitude toward his burdens. He said:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17).

Paul said his affliction was light. Some see the whole world in a bad light, and every mole hill becomes a mountain. The faithful dare not complain and magnify the problems of life. Remember, Paul said they were “*but*

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*for a moment,*” that is, they are limited in duration. If called upon to suffer constantly for a long lifetime of one hundred years, would heaven be worth it? Yes in the words of the grand old song, “*Heaven will surely be worth it all.*” Notice the comparison Paul made: our *light* affliction works for us an eternal *weight* of glory; and, that which is but for a *moment* works for us that which is *eternal*. Was Paul afraid of living? No, he lived for Christ. Was he afraid of dying? No, because he lived for Christ, he was ready to die, knowing death was gain. Was he afraid of the future? No, because he knew that just as the power, possessions, and popularity of life are short-lived, so are the pain, persecutions, and privation, and for the faithful child of God, heaven awaits.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

Paul was faithful to the end because he had a proper attitude toward his blessings (II Cor. 4:18). The things which are seen are temporary, and will pass away (Matt. 6:19-21; II Peter 3:9-11). He said we look at the things which are not seen, the things which are eternal. How can one do that? Only with the eye of faith (II Cor. 5:7). Therefore, the faithful will use the blessings of life in view of eternity. Would any, who used physical blessings to bring glory to God rather than to fulfill fleshly lusts (Luke 12:15), in heaven say, “*It cost me too much to be here*”? Dare any, who denied himself in this life to gain life forever and ever, so blessed in eternity say, “*Heaven is not worth all I had to endure*”? No, but multiplied millions in the burning darkness of eternal Hell would

trade anything and everything to escape. In order to escape from their eternal fate of unbearable pain and torment, they would, if given the opportunity, happily live a thousand lifetimes of faithful, patient endurance, knowing the cost of not being faithful to the end – but too late. It will be too late, then, for one to hear the gospel, too late to obey the Lord, too late to seek His mercy, too late to obtain forgiveness, too late to enjoy fellowship, too late to prepare for eternity, and, too late to be faithful.

Paul is a great example of a child of God living faithfully to the end. He kept on believing, bearing his cross, and keeping balance in his outlook. As he did, so must we.

### **Conclusion**

The fruit of faith is victory.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (I John 5:4).

God will most certainly be with the faithful, and that to the end. The Bible is full of examples of the presence, protection, and power of God on behalf of His children. Just so, Jesus has promised to be with his faithful followers (Matt. 18:20; 28:20), and to protect them, never leaving nor forsaking them (Heb. 13:5-6). Thus, no man can pluck the faithful disciple, against his will, from the hand of the Lord (John 10:27-28; Rom. 8:35-39). Consider the victories of faithful David over the great giant Goliath of Gath (I Sam. 17), and of Gideon and the courageous, watchful three hundred over the hosts of Midian and Amalek, who *“lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as*

*the sand by the sea side for multitude*” (Judges 7:12). Think of God’s protective presence with Daniel, aged prophet, in the lion’s den (Dan. 6:22); with the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:24-25); and with Joseph in prison for a crime which he did not commit (Gen. 39:21). Remember the powerful peace so beautifully presented in Psalm 23, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

In New Testament times, God’s power overcame shackles (Acts 5:19-20; 16:26), serpents (Acts 28:3-5), and sorcerers (Acts 13:6-11). What enemy, person, or power can overcome God and His faithful children? Foes of the faith shall not be able to stand against the Father, nor against the faithful (Ezek. 22:14), but those who live by faith to the end shall stand, and shall overcome. The slaying of Balaam, the self-willed, presumptuous, evil counselor, is an excellent example. At the first entreaty from Balak, Balaam consulted the Lord and refused to curse the people of God (Num. 22:1-14). At Balak’s second request, coupled with the promise of promotion to great honor, Balaam rose up and went with the princes of Moab (22:15-21). When Balaam encountered the angel of the Lord in the way, he was instructed to speak only that which would be given him to say (22:23-35). Three times, Balak called upon Balaam to curse Israel, and three times Balaam blessed them instead (24:10). Later, in battle against the Midianites, Balaam was slain with the sword (31:8). When Moses learned that the women had been spared, he was wroth and commanded, “*Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor...*” (31:16); thus, they were to be slain. Peter says that Balaam loved the wages of

unrighteousness (II Peter 2:15), and Jude 11 depicts his running greedily after error for reward.

The futile efforts of those who oppose God and His children are foolish, for who can oppose the all-powerful God of the heavens and earth, Creator of the universe and all that therein is? Seeing then, that all such efforts against the faithful shall be brought to nought, why should God's people live in doubt and fear? God's children should reach forward with the fortitude of faith (Phil. 3:13-14). Knowing that God's enemies shall be destroyed does not mean that they are not to be exposed and opposed by the faithful. As soldiers of the cross, we have a never ending fight against any and all evil. The battle is not with carnal weaponry, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (II Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). Putting on the armor which God has supplied, let us be on with the good fight of faith, with strength and courage (Eph. 6:10-18; I Tim. 6:12). The fight is against Satan and his forces, but is not for land, nor for material possessions. Rather, the fight is for the souls of men. Certainly, such a fight demands our determined participation. Let us be fortified in our faith, for if we are faithful to the end, then, and only then, we shall win the victory.



**Jesus “Spake These  
Things Unto Them”**

(Matthew 9:18)



**Concerning  
The Home**





## Chapter 16

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# The Home: Paradise Or Torment?

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*



Robert graduated from Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb, and George Peabody Colleges • Faithfully preaching the gospel for almost fifty years • Has worked with the Ripley, TN congregation for over twenty years • An outstanding writer • More than two dozen books in print • Written for many journals and brotherhood papers • Irene and Robert have two children.

**D**eep appreciation is expressed to Paul Sain, the elders here at East Hill and this fine congregation for extending to me the invitation to appear on this program as I have done a number of times previously. I appreciate the solid stature of this good lectureship – one surely on the cutting edge of truth.

Two options are open to all homemakers – husbands, wives, children and perhaps in-laws who may live within the family framework – building the home the way God would have it or the way the devil would have it. The former causes paradise to descend and torment to evaporate; the latter causes torment to descend and paradise to fade and fade permanently!

### **Some Needed Definitions**

A definition of terms is in order. The home is the basic unit of society. It is the atmosphere wherein we live; it is the place where the heart is; it is the place

where we are treated the best and perhaps grumble the most within its confines. It began with God’s institution consisting of a man and woman – Adam and Eve – created by the All-Wise and All-Good God of high and holy heaven. It is the realm within which husbands and wives can be intimate with God’s ardent approval; it is the sphere for the proper procreation of children; it is the nursery for their right rearing; it is a foretaste of what the Heavenly Home will be like; it is a place where we learn to live holily, harmoniously and happily with other people; it is the place where the world is shut out and peace and tranquility are shut into its happy confines; it is the place where we can plan, work, worship, and know that we are important to others; it is an institution that feeds the church with faithful workers and potential converts as children reach accountability’s age and responsibility’s realm; it can and should make the world a better place to live; it is a place where discipline is learned; it is a place that can produce a generation that behaves at school, remains free of the drug culture and aloof from gangs which major in malicious decorum; it is the place that can keep husbands and wives faithful to each other; it should be a place of paradise and peace; it ought never to become a territory of torment and terrorism (domestic abuse).

Paradise and torment stand in marked contrast. Of Persian origin, paradise signified a place or park of pleasure. Webster’s first and second definition link the term with the Garden of Eden and the realm of the redeemed subsequent to death. His third definition is the one which fits our current usage, “*A place of bliss; state of happiness.*” Pleasure, bliss, joy, felicity and happiness would be stately synonyms. Torment is

*“anguish of body or mind; distress.”* It is *“that which gives pain, vexation, etc.,”* (Webster). Paradise and torment are about as equally distant from each other as are the proverbial east and west. Marvelous marriages and happy homes on the one hand and marred marriages and hollow homes on the other hand are equally distant as are the proverbial east and west.

### **Paradise Prevails...**

**1. When God’s Marital Manual, The Holy Bible, Is Ardently Accepted And Patiently Practiced.** For many years people have said something like this, *“I wish someone would write a book telling us how to have sound marriages and happy homes.”* Brother Garland Elkins has ably stated in wise response, *“The Book has already been written!”* That Book is the Bible. It sets forth God’s intense ideal for marriage – one man for one woman for the lifetime of both. That was the fine and firm foundation upon which marriage began in marvel in Edenic excellency (Gen. 2:18-25). God made Adam; He did not make another man to be Adam’s help meet or his marital complement. He did not make a harem of wives in order that Adam might have a different lover each night of the week. For man He made a woman of beauty, glory, worth, and one fully capable of meeting man’s deepest needs for companionship. God made Eve. For Eve He did not make another woman to be her marital mate. Homosexual marriage is a contradiction of terms; it is repugnant to God and decent people alike. It is heinous and hellish; it is one to Satan’s total liking for degraded and degenerate men and women. For Eve God provided Adam. Male and female He made them is Christ’s accurate assessment in Matthew 19 and Mark 10.

In God’s Marital Manual He has given man His law of marriage. We are amenable to New Testament teaching. This means we are to obey what is set forth under the gospel covenant – not to what Israel was amenable in the Sinaitic covenant prior to Calvary and Christianity. Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:1-9 and Mark 10:1ff set forth Christ’s legislation relative to marriage. Paul and Peter do more of the same in Romans 7:1-4; I Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; I Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4 and I Peter 3:1-7. Jehovah’s Marital Manual tells us in both testaments what made marriages marvelous or what marred them – what sullied them and caused their collapse. The Bible, when heard and heeded, will make better men, better women and better youth. These, in turn, become the faithful building blocks for marriages of majesty and homes of harmony and happiness. The Bible has not failed marriages. It is not that which is flawed in the family framework. Husbands, wives and children have failed God and His holy Word by corrupting that which began with marvel, might and majesty at time’s beginning. What a monumental mess man has made of marriage!

**2. When Love Binds Together Every Person In The Home.** Greek speaking people had a number of words for love. The two most prominent terms in the Greek text of the New Testament are *phileo* and *agape*. The former is warm, ardent affection such as with a friend; the latter is a matter of the will; it can be commanded; it seeks the best for the object of its ardent affection; it is the stately type of love God and Christ confer on us – His physical and spiritual creation. In marriage there needs to be a bright, beautiful blend of

both *phileo* and *agape*. I like to hear a person say of his/her mate, "*He/she is my very best friend.*" *Agape* says, "*I will do what is best for my mate even to the giving of my life for him/her.*" **Marriage Is For Those Who Love God And One Another** is the precious title of a Thomas Warren produced and published volume. The correct priority pervades the stately title. Surely, love must be on the throne of marital love. Marvelous and majestic is the Pauline description of marital felicity in Ephesians 5:22-33. In Ephesians 5:25,28 Paul gave this inspired counsel,

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

In Titus 2:3 wives are given the apostolic directive to love their husbands.

There should be parental love and with a full requiting of affection from children back to parents. Unrequited love is NOT the way to build good families. Too often parents fail to love their children; far too often children fail to love the very parents who, with God's help, brought them into the world.

**3. When There Is Maturity Between The Marital Mates.** Marriage is not a game for little children to enter; it is not an institution for grown people physically but who act like spoiled children. When he is immature and she is immature, there is a compounding of immaturity. Good marriages are not built upon the debris created by two immature people living together. When he is determined to have his way all the time and she

is determined he is not going to have his way all the time, trouble of a deep nature is on the near horizon. The same is true when she is determined to have her way 100% of the time and he is equally determined she is not going to have it that much. It quickly crystalizes into a case of where the irresistible meets the immovable and needed flexibility is crowded out promptly. Marriage is for a mature man and a mature woman who love God supremely and each other just below that.

**4. When Sound, Sensible, And Solid Preparation Has Gone Into The Marriage.** It is amazing how much preparation goes into college admittance, into career preparation, into building one’s dream house and furnishing it with desired furniture and how extremely little preparation goes into a coming marriage. Planning a wedding takes on greater importance than what comes after the ceremony is concluded! Becoming a Christian is the single greatest decision of anyone’s life. Next to it in far-reaching importance is the choice of a marital mate. That mate will help or hinder one’s going to heaven. Peter envisioned such when he wrote words of weight and wisdom to Christian women in I Peter 3:1-6. He envisioned more of the same when he said to husbands:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (I Peter 3:7).

The young lady a man marries will be the mother of his children and the grandmother of his grandchildren years down the turnpike. The young man a woman marries will father her children and be the grandfather of her

grandchildren some twenty or more years down the road. Marriage does not work miracles. The two people who compose it are not perfect. Preparation beforehand will help us to accept the faults and frailties of each other down the long pathway of life filled with both vicissitudes and victories, both sorrows and joys.

**5. When There Is Commitment.** The ever growing and increasingly popular live-in arrangement between unmarried people lacks honor, holiness, legality and commitment. Such people ask sneeringly, “*What difference does a piece of paper (the marriage license) and a wedding ceremony by a religious or civil magistrate make?*” It makes the difference between a righteous union and a wicked one which the Bible styles fornication. It makes the difference between what is wholesome and what is wicked, what Jehovah smiles upon and what Satan smiles upon with sinister satisfaction. Solomon spoke about commitment in marriage in these words of weight and wisdom, “*...rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love*” (Prov. 5:18-19). Jesus spoke about commitment in marriage in Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:3-9. Paul did the same in I Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; I Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-4; and Hebrews 13:4. Peter does more of the same in I Peter 3:1-7.

Likewise, there needs to be commitment in child-rearing (I Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:3-5). There needs to be commitment from children toward parents in the twin realms of respect and obedience (Eph. 6:1-3).

**6. When There Is Faithfulness Toward Marital Vows.** Vows taken at a marriage altar are not to be



regarded lightly or treated with flippancy. Each vows to the other there will be NO extra-marital affairs down the marriage turnpike. He is not to touch (be intimate sexually with another woman or man either); she is not to touch (be intimate sexually with another man or woman either). This is precisely what Solomon inculcated in Proverbs 5:15-20, a passage alluded to in the previous section. This is precisely what the Christ had in mind in Matthew 19:6, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” Faithfulness to a marital vow is the heartbeat of I Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33 and I Peter 3:1-7.

Adultery is the capital crime of matrimony. It can kill a good marriage in thirty minutes or less and send the guilty party to hell unless there is repentance and a remaining aloofness from atrocious adultery. Many times that first taste of forbidden fruit becomes an open door for a lifetime of adulterous affairs one right after the other. I have seen personally the hurt written across a wife’s face as she told me, with the guilty one at her side, that he had been unfaithful to her. I have seen the hurt deeply etched in a man’s broken countenance as he told of his wife’s indiscretion and sometime indiscretions with a number of men. Many of these marriages did not survive these adulterous affairs. Some did, but have never been as strong as once they were. Even when the innocent one forgives the guilty one and keeps the marriage together, there is often that gnawing feeling, “*Will he slip on this next business trip or when I am gone a few days to visit an aged parent?*” From the man’s vantage point he wonders, “*Will she slip again when a man shows sexual interest in her or when she makes her next out-of-town trip?*” A broken trust is hard to mend back to its

original ground of trust. With all the AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases around today, the innocent party who continues to live with a guilty spouse runs the risk of being infected. This must be a gnawing fear every period of intimacy. *“The way of the transgressor is hard”* (Prov. 13:15). One word added makes it read, *“The way of the sexual transgressor is hard.”* This is why Paul wrote I Corinthians 6:18.

**7. When There Is Discipline.** Disciplined decorum is demanded between husband and wife. Both cannot be heads of the household. Paul established home headship as belonging to the husband in Ephesians 5:22-33. It was not Pauline culture on the front burner but dated back to Genesis 1-3 wherein man was created first and woman was first in transgression. There must be touch discipline between parents and children. Dereliction in this department was costly to Eli and his wicked sons as well as to David and some of his sons such as Absalom and Adonijah.

**8. When There Is Consideration On The Throne Of Household Patterns And Practices.** The Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31, though wider in scope than just family emulation, will assure such. So will the *“be ye kind”* spirit that punctuates Ephesians 4:32. So will the *“be courteous”* disposition enjoined by Peter in I Peter 3:8. Interestingly enough, Peter wrote this precept immediately after extending marital counsel to both husbands and wives.

**9. When The Three R’s Prevail.** These are religion, righteousness and redemption. Not just any religion will do. It must not be a religion that is vain – one built on the doctrines and commandments of men. It must be the religion of Christ as set forth in the New

Testament. It must be the religion that produces righteousness and leads to redemption. Righteousness is right doing, commandment keeping and strict conformity to God’s Word. Redemption is forgiveness, sonship to God and heavenly hope ingrained in one’s heart and life. The three R’s demand Bible study and prayer in the home. They demand regularity at ALL services of the local congregation. They demand that children be TAKEN and not SENT to church services. They demand that Dad and Mother be in the lead. Some forty years ago I helped with a funeral for a beloved saint who had passed on to his reward. He was one of the best men I have ever known. The day of his funeral his oldest son said to me, *“Dad often would say to us as we grew up, ‘Come on boys, let’s go.’”* He explained that whether they were going to the field to work, they were farmers, or on their way to worship, Dad was ALWAYS in the lead. He lived to see ALL his children obey the gospel and remain faithful to the Lord. He saw many of his grandchildren obey the gospel also. Some of his grandchildren were not old enough to have obeyed the gospel the day of his funeral. What a rich legacy he left. That family built their home on religion, righteousness and redemption.

**10. When Heavenly Preparation Is Made For The Beyond.** The beyond includes Hadean comfort immediately subsequent to death and Heavenly paradise subsequent to the final judgment. A son of a good and great man once said, *“If there are only two men in heaven, I believe my father will be one of the two.”* (I sustain the same sentiment about my own father as well as my dead mother.) What a well-earned tribute. That father was on his way to heaven and he wanted to take his family and many others with him. That man was brother Gus

Nichols. Toward that end brother Gus Nichols baptized more than 12,000 and influenced untold thousands of others to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10-18).

### **Torment Descends...**

**1. When Vows Are Violated.** At the marriage altar both bride and groom pledge undying love and loyalty to each other as long as the two of them shall live. Furthermore, they vow to keep themselves for each other with NO allowances made for ANY extra-marital affairs. These valiant vows are made to each other, in the presence of God and to all witnesses of the sacred solemnity of the auspicious occasion – one of great festivity as they blend and bond their lives together. Yet these vows mean but little when later there are eyes that roam, lusts produced for another sexual mate, subsequent behavior that is lascivious with overt adultery the end of the sinful, sensual affair. A former leader of Communistic Russia, Nikita Khrushshev, once said that international treaties are like pie crusts – made to be broken. This is precisely the modernistic way of marital vows – made to be broken. And break them married men and women do en masse. During the wedding ceremony there are two promise makers – the bride and the groom. During the marriage that follows there should be two promise keepers – wife and husband. Neither has the right to trample underfoot these virtuous vows in moments of passion with one of the opposite sex. Now, we are hearing more and more about men coming out of their long concealed homosexual closet and leaving wives and children for their male lovers. Now, we are hearing of more and more women coming out of their lesbian

closets to declare love for other women with husbands and children left in the destructive, devastating aftermath. Sodomy has moved into the homes of many families today. Regardless of what the modernistic, liberalistic advocates for it say, it is NOT an acceptable lifestyle. Romans 1:26-27 and I Corinthians 6:9-10 spell out clearly what is so sordid and sinful about these heinous sins. **Porneia**, the Greek word that is translated fornication in our reliable Bibles, is inclusive of homosexuality as well as unmarried men and women who consort with each other. Torment characterizes all the foregoing sinful lifestyles for a surety!

**2. When Love Is Divided.** This is of close kin to the previous point but needs some emphasis in view of what many modernistic people now practice. Subsequent to the honeymoon the man may decide he needs a side interest to keep his sexual life exciting. Hence, he forms a clandestine relationship with a secretary, a fellow worker, a professional colleague or someone he meets at an exercise spa. He does not want an end to his marriage but neither does he want to end his side excursions into illicit sex. He is seeking to practice divided love. Subsequent to the honeymoon and the early excitement of the new marriage the wife may decide she needs a little extra sexual attention from another man. It may be her boss, a fellow worker, the man next door or down the street, a professional colleague or some man she has seen jogging the same course she does early each morning. She becomes overly friendly with her potential lover, accepts dinner dates and then goes all the way with him when her husband is gone on an out-of-the-state trip for two weeks. She does not wish to end her marriage but neither is she willing to end the stolen moments of illicit

passion with her side interest. She is practicing divided love. Sooner or later torment will descend ALL practitioners of divided love. Sexual love is for one partner only – one’s mate in marriage.

**3. When Treachery Becomes The Noxious Norm.** Malachi 2 portrays this very sad and sordid happening. What were once marvelous, majestic marriages have now become marred marriages. Insensitive and hard-hearted men in Malachi’s era were dealing treacherously with their wives. Knowing human nature the way most of us do, it is not reading too much into the passage to say these men already had their lustful eyes riveted on their next partners of passion to share their beds. If this were not their pernicious ploy, why were they putting away their wives by divorce? Subsequent lives of celibacy require no divorce. God, through His faithful mouthpiece Malachi, reminded each treacherous husband that she has been “*the wife of thy youth...yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant*” (Mal. 2:15). God hated what they loved; He hated divorce; they loved it because it freed them of unwanted wives and allowed quick entrances into marriages with more desirable women – no doubt women who were younger. Furthermore, He hated the violence they were practicing. Mate abuse is not just a crime of the twentieth century! It has been around a long, long time. They practiced it in Malachi’s day because it played right into their hands in ending marriages that had gone sour to them. Torment surely pervades such sad, sordid situations.

**4. When Divorce Is Common.** The little Tennessee community in which I lived as a lad had but little in the way of divorce. It was even less common

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among the congregations of God’s people in that whole area – almost an unheard-of thing. Divorce then bore a stigma. No longer is this the case in small communities, in large cities or among our congregations. Divorce is now very, very common. No eyebrows are raised when it occurs with but few exceptions. No longer is there any stigma attached. With a shrug of shoulders people pass it off as being among the expected in today’s lax and loose climate of moral standards. As a rule today there is no social or religious ostracism extended regardless of how many times a man or woman has been divorced and remarried. Since it is now politically incorrect to be judgmental of anybody’s lifestyles, eyebrows are not even raised when men and women begin to live intimately minus paper and preacher (license and wedding ceremony). Divorces mean violated vows; violated vows mean broken homes; broken homes produce handicapped children; handicapped children often become dysfunctional producing serious problems for society and the church. Divorce affects all of us either directly or indirectly.

**5. When Selfishness Reigns.** There are two terms descriptive of human decorum which are as widely separated as are the poles and are as different as daylight and dark. They are selfishness and selflessness. A former President of our nation said, in essence, the day he took office, *“Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”* The former, as he well knew, is selfishness; the latter is selflessness. The low ground of marriage says, *“Now what can he/she do in this marriage that will make me happy and keep me satisfied?”* The high ground of marital philosophy asks, *“Now what can I do to make him/her happy in our home*

*and fulfilled in our marriage?"* The low ground concept is selfishness goes to seed and then some; the high ground concept is selflessness in admirable action.

One of the great lessons selfless parents can teach their children is leaving the selfishness of childhood and climbing up to the plateau of adult selflessness. The ladder climbing to selflessness is NEVER crowded! This is something that children have to learn; they are not born with it. It is especially hard for them to learn such if they have NO worthy role models of selflessness set before them by Dad and Mom.

#### **6. When Nagging Is On The Front Burner.**

Solomon not only wrote by Inspiration but from a broad background of marital alliances – one thousand wives. This was the aggregate of his princesses and concubines. Nagging may have echoed in his palace on a daily basis. It would have been most extraordinary if such had not been the case! Here are a couple of choice bits of wisdom about notorious nagging within the family framework,

Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain (Prov. 25:14).

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike (Prov. 27:15).

An American soldier was fighting on a foreign battlefield. His wife was a constant nagger. She sent him one nagging letter right after the other. In desperation he wrote back and said, *"I wish you would quit sending me your nagging letters in order that I might FIGHT this WAR IN PEACE!"*

Women do not have a monopoly on nagging by any means. Husbands are just as bad. Sometimes ill-mannered children are even worse as nothing pleases them about homelife. In Luke 15 Jesus told about a

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young man of that diabolical disposition. He was sick of home but later became homesick. More than one young person has traveled this entire gamut. It just takes ONE nagger to make all others in the home miserable. Some members of the home create joy when they are present; others create joy only in their absence! Matthew 7:12, Ephesians 4:32 and I Peter 3:8-9 contain the divinely derived prescription for eliminating nagging from marriages and homes.

**7. When Forgiveness Is Non-Existent.**

Marriages are composed of imperfect mates; homes are composed of imperfect parents and far from perfect children. Mistakes are going to be made; our lives frequently are flawed with our faults and frailties. Contrary to a movie made some years back which stated, in essence, the sentiment, “*Love means never having to say you are sorry,*” real love means saying one is sorry when mistakes are made and pardon is requested. Yet, very frequently, the one sinned against is puffed up with pride and refuses to yield any forgiveness at all. Sometimes the extended pardon is lip service only and the guilty’s infraction is thrown in his/her face everytime there is a sharp disagreement. Good marriages and happy homes cannot rest upon this type of unforgiving debris. Torment is surely set to strike at the foundations of such homes.

**8. When God And His Word Are Ignored.** Those who build a secular marriage and materialistic home void of all religion are doomed to a life of torment for a surety. In such a marriage and home there will be no Bible Study, no prayers at bedtime or early each morning, no thanksgivings expressed for meals, no church going, no real standards of decorum for marital mates or within

child rearing techniques, no guests welcomed who are strong, spiritually-minded Christians, no higher power upon whom to lean when calamities strike and no hope when death crosses the family threshold to take life's nearest and dearest. A young woman, strongly inclined toward religion, married a young man who was highly talented but very skeptical. Through the years his skeptical views whittled away at the fringes of her faith. As she lay upon her deathbed she was desperate. He was greatly moved. He told her if holding on to her faith would help in the dying hour now at hand, then do it! With a weak voice and an empty heart she said, *"I have no faith to hold on to; you have destroyed it all."* He loved her deeply in his own way but he had robbed her of her greatest treasure – faith in God and His holy Word. Her sunset was filled with torment and nothing like Paul's victorious summary of his faith, hope and love in II Timothy 4:6-8. She should have held on to her faith at all costs but an unbelieving mate many times becomes a millstone around the believer's neck pulling him/her down into the waters of unbelief.

### **9. When Heaven Is On No One's Horizon.**

Today's home is not heaven bound except in very few instances. Even among religious people there is not much said about heaven and the ardent aspiration of going there in yonder's world. A very successful man had died. One of his servants was asked, *"Do you think your master will be in heaven in eternity?"* The longtime servant expressed doubt by saying, *"I NEVER heard him mention heaven on any agenda of future activities."*

## **Conclusion**

God votes for us to make the home a place of

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“The Home – Paradise Or Torment”

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paradise; the devil votes for us to make it a realm of torment. We cast the deciding vote of whether we will travel God’s way or the devil’s way in marriage building and home continuation. Paradise or torment – which describes your home?

## Chapter 17

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# Marriage Laws And Remarriage

*Allen Webster*



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**A**cross the table they sit. The wife in tears, the husband fighting to control his emotions, and the preacher with his heart in his throat. They have just finished Open Bible Study lesson three and now the couple is considering being baptized. Then she asks, “*Does it matter that we have both been married before?*”

The preacher flinches, and begins to ask some questions. He finds that she had married young, was just not ready for the responsibilities of marriage, so she divorced. The husband had just not been able to get along with his first wife. Then they met each other, fell in love, married and have “*lived happily ever after.*”

Now they want to know if they can be baptized and continue to live with each other. They want to be Christians, but have read that the Lord said man was not to cut asunder a marriage bond (Matt. 19:6), and that a wife was bound to her husband so long as her “*husband liveth*” (Rom. 7:1-4). They had read about

divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). But they cannot bear the thought of being apart – and besides, what about the kids?

This is not a real occurrence – then again it is all too real. Church workers have to answer such questions all too often. Personal workers in America find this problem in about one-half of all couples with whom they study.<sup>1</sup> Oh, how our hearts ache to see such problems! Missionaries sometimes find the situation even worse in other parts of the world. Many Christians have to deal with it in their own immediate families. It hurts the hearts of mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers. Concerned personal workers, too, struggle to deal with their own feelings.

Such situations are the result of Satan’s success in destroying the American home. When the United States government first began to keep marriage and divorce statistics (around 1890) the total number of divorces was about 5,000. In 1976, less than a hundred years later, the number reached one million. By 1992, it was in the vicinity of 1,250,000. Family specialists predict that divorces will increase to two of three marriages by the end of the millennium.<sup>2</sup> With so many divorces, we cannot escape having to deal with these situations.

Have you found yourself “*across the table*” from this couple? How did you handle it? Some ministers just “*don’t ask questions.*” After all, they reason, now is not the time or place. If they have a problem, they can deal with it later.

Others give the wrong answers. They have digested some persuasive teacher’s easier-than-the-old-way interpretation. They twist the Scriptures to fit an “*itching-ear generation.*” Besides, they think, we can’t be too hard

on folks or the church will never grow. Some missionaries, pressured to send home impressive statistics or lose support, just baptize people and leave them in whatever moral mess they found them in. Some Christians, faced with a divorce case among their children, give in to pressure and “*re-study*” what they have always believed to be God’s law. They have been known to concoct strange interpretations which, with a touch of hermeneutical magic, give a loophole through which their loved one is exempt from the divorce and remarriage law.

Jesus taught about marriage and remarriage. He – the most loving human being ever to inhabit planet earth – wanted us to be happy. He also wanted us to please God. He died that we might go to heaven. With these thoughts in mind, let’s carefully study what Jesus said about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Are all men amenable (accountable) to God’s pattern for marriage? Notice, first that there is a pattern for marriage today (II John 9; Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 19:1-12). The popular notion against “*pattern theology*” notwithstanding.

The Holy Spirit anticipated every error that man would invent and answered it ahead of time in His Scripture Book. We have all the teachings, principles, and precepts necessary for godly living (II Peter 1:3; II Tim. 3:17). It is our job to carefully handle them to determine what God’s will is in every situation (II Tim. 2:15). It is possible. It is not always easy. And sometimes the consequences are not pleasant.

### **The Ordinances Examined**

In the case of amenability to divine law, the Holy Spirit used four phrases which show, simply and

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conclusively, that every mature person will be held accountable to the divine law under which he lived.

### **Christians Are Commanded To “*Preach The Gospel To Every Creature*”**

Is the New Testament a rule book for church members or the owner’s manual for all mankind? Is it for “*Christian’s eyes only*” or reading material for all of God’s creation? Do God’s rules apply to every one or just those who chose to follow them? These questions are at the heart of the discussion of divorce and remarriage. Specifically, it is affirmed that Matthew 19:9 is a “*covenant passage*,” that is, it applies only to those who are in a covenant relationship with God (Christians). This means that one who is not a Christian may divorce and remarry as many times as he/she likes without violating God’s Word.

Jesus commanded His followers to “...*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). He did not say that the Gospel was just for the church or that there was two parts – one for Christians and another for non-Christians. Peter says,

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people (Acts 3:22-23).

Even those who refused to hear the words of Christ would be destroyed for not keeping the Prophet’s words. The “*all things*” that He taught are binding on all men.

Further, in Matthew’s account of the Commission,

Jesus said,

...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

He claimed *all* power – He has authority over all men, not just those who chose to follow Him (cf. Acts 2:32-36). Paul wrote, “*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,*” and “*every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” or they will face the wrath of God (Phil. 2:9-10; I Thess. 1:10). If all men are not accountable to God by the New Covenant, then Jesus does not have all authority as He claimed here.

He commanded us to teach *all nations*. The only way He can command Christians to teach the Gospel to all nations is for all nations to be under His authority. All people are to repent of sins (Luke 13:3), but how did they become sinners? By violating the law of Christ (I John 3:4). But one cannot violate a law he is not under (Rom. 4:15). Therefore all men are amenable to the Gospel (cf. Col. 3:5-7).

Some make a distinction between “*Gospel*” and “*Doctrine*,” explaining that the Gospel (facts about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) is to be preached to the lost and the doctrine (rules of Christian living, church organization, worship, and so forth) is to be taught to the church. This is a distinction without a difference. The same Gospel is to be preached to the lost (II Thess. 1:8) and the saved (Rom. 1:15).



Others try to get around teaching the marriage law to the lost by insisting that for something to be law for the church today it must have been stated after the establishment of the church (Acts 2). Thus, they aver, anything that Jesus said personally while on earth is not binding on those living today since He lived under Moses’ Law. This effectively rules out “*Matthew 19:9.*”

This fails to take into account that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written after Pentecost.<sup>3</sup> A law can be written (or stated) before it comes into effect. The U. S. Congress could sign legislation that would not become effective until January 1st of the next calendar year. This is what Jesus was doing.

For instance, the Lord said that if one would not hear an offended brother and his witnesses, then they were to “...tell it to the church” (Matt. 18:17). At that time, there was no church. He was teaching His ambassadors (apostles) what they would need to know when His church was established. John 3:5 explained how to get into the kingdom before there was a kingdom. Where is John 3:5 repeated after Pentecost? The Lord gave instruction which was to apply after the New Covenant came into effect – e.g., the beatitudes, the “*kingdom*” parables.<sup>4</sup>

Jehovah does not need for man to agree in order for the covenant to be binding upon man (Gen. 17; Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:19; 4:15). This is the distinct nature of the New Covenant – it is universal in scope and application (cf. Jer. 31:31-34).<sup>5</sup> All men are amenable to all of the covenant, although alien sinners do not qualify for some commands (e.g., Lord’s Supper) before baptism just as Christians do not qualify for some commands (e.g., baptism) after baptism.<sup>6</sup>

In Australia it is the law that every citizen must vote, however, only those of a given age are allowed to vote. There is only one supreme authority which all Australians are to recognize, but not every Australian is amenable to the law in an identical way. By the nature of God's law, some people are precluded from keeping some parts of it. For example, a woman cannot be an elder, orphans cannot obey their parents, a single man cannot love his wife.<sup>7</sup> But all are amenable to it.

Thomas Warren stated this position in logical form:

1. *Major Premise:* All men who violate the laws of Christ are men who are subject to the law of Christ. Read Romans 4:15.

2. *Minor Premise:* Men in the world are men who have violated the law of Christ. Read Acts 17:23-31; Acts 2:38-41.

3. *Conclusion:* Men in the world are men who are subject to the law of Christ. Read Mark 16:15-16.<sup>8</sup>

### **Jesus Said, “*He That Rejecteth Me*” Will Be Judged**

John records Christ's words:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Notice that John does not qualify the “*He that*” phrase. It includes all persons who are able to hear, be taught, and understand the Doctrine of Christ (John 6:44-45).<sup>9</sup>

Thayer defines *rejecteth* (*atheto*) as “*to set aside, to reject, to cancel...according to the context, to act toward anything as though it were annulled; hence to deprive a law of force by opinions or acts opposed to it, to transgress*”

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*it.*” This is exactly what one does when he acts as if Matthew 19:9 does not apply today. He sets aside God’s commandment as though it were annulled.

Examine closely what will judge a man – the words of Jesus. Those who hold that non-Christians are not amenable to the law of Christ say they are governed by a “*law of the heart.*” Jesus said nothing of a “*law of the heart*” being the standard of judgment. Since all men will be judged by the Gospel of Christ, it is logical that they are amenable to it. Further, a law of the conscience is subjective. Some see nothing wrong with the worst of sins. Does this mean that those who see nothing wrong with drunkenness, homosexuality, bestiality, and murder are not held to God’s laws on these issues?

A missionary in Kenya told of an occasion when he preached to native Kenyans regarding sin, making the statement that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). He said, “*I have sinned, you have sinned; we each need to be saved from one sins.*” An old man raised his hand and replied, “*But I have not sinned.*” Upon further conversation with this old man, the missionary learned that according to his culture only four things were considered sin and he had been guilty of none of those. Therefore, he felt no guilt, no need of repentance, nor of a Savior. The fact that he had not violated the “*law of his heart*” did not, however, make him free from sin; he just thought he was free.<sup>10</sup> Those today whose “*law of the heart*” does not condemn them of adultery are not free from adultery, they just think they are free.

### **God Expects “All Men Everywhere To Repent”**

God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). He does not address some men somewhere or

even all men in the church, but all men everywhere. “*Commands*” (*parangello*) means “*a charge, an order, a command.*”<sup>11</sup> It is not optional nor negotiable. Sin is a universal problem (Rom. 3:23); forgiveness is the universal opportunity (Matt. 11:28-30); Christ is the universal answer (John 14:6); repentance is the universal command (Acts 17:31); obedience is the universal remedy (Heb. 7:8-9); and “*come*” is the universal invitation (Rev. 22:17).

This generation has enjoyed more luxuries than any in history. America is at ease in Zion (Amos 6:1), and the make-it-easy-for-me attitude has spilled over into religion. Relentless pressure from society is having its effect upon the church. Many key individuals are surrendering to the dictates of the world rather than influencing the world toward godly living.<sup>12</sup>

Ours is a day when Christianity has been made comfortable for the masses. “*Servitude*” and “*sacrifice*” are not concepts that sell well with the boomers and “*X-ers.*” Their number one concern revolves around what *they* (not God) want and what it would take to make *them* (not God) happy.<sup>13</sup> They are much like Samson who lived during another time when “*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6). He, too, wanted to get married (Judges 14). So, he went to Timnath and found a Philistine to marry, which was against God’s law. His parents tried to reason with him, but to no avail. He said, “*...Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well*” (Judges 14:3). He wanted what he wanted and did not want to hear about rules. He would have fit in nicely in our world!

To appease our “*Samson generation,*” we have modified approaches. Lanes have been added to the way called strait. The narrow gate has been redesigned to be

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more accommodating. A person can become a Christian without seriously changing his thinking, habits, or lifestyle. Preachers are offering “*new and improved Christianity – now easier than ever!*” Except for attending a few church services, sinners can remain the same after “*conversion*” as before. Christian veneer will legitimize your favorite sins!

When following the path of least resistance, men, like rivers, end up crooked. Repentance is designed to straighten them. But it has been overlooked. It is often the “*stumbling step*” that folks cannot get over in their approach to God. Belief – no problem. Confession – easy said and done. Baptism – over in a couple of minutes. But, repentance – that’s hard! It involves bringing our stubborn minds under bondage to God’s will (Matt. 21:28-29). We have to change our evil habits, give up our sinful pleasures and replace them with good habits and servitude to Christ.

Repentance is brought about by godly sorrow over sin (II Cor. 7:10), but it is not just being sorry for sins. One can be sorry for sin, in a worldly way, and not change his actions. The rich young ruler went away sorrowful, but he did not repent of his covetousness (Matt. 19:16-21). Repentance results in a reformation of life, but it is not just a life-change. One might change a life and not do so because he loves God or is sorry for sin. A drinker or smoker might be warned by a doctor to give up his vice or end up six feet deep. This might motivate him to quit, but he has not repented of the sin unless he is sorry for violating God’s will.

Repentance is what happens between sorrow and life-change. *Metanoeo* and *metanoia* (words translated “*repentance*”) mean “*to make a change of principle and*

*practice, to reform*” or “*a change of mode of thought and felling, repentance.*”<sup>14</sup> It is a decision.

Christians must teach repentance. All of God’s great servants have been “*repent or perish*” preachers. Noah was a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5), and for 120 years he tried (in vain) to get his generation to escape the wrath of God through repentance. Jonah went to the Gentile city of Nineveh and preached repentance (3:5-9). John the Baptist focused on two key ideas in his sermons: the coming Messiah and repentance (Matt. 3:1-3). Jesus, following in his steps stressed, “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt. 4:17; Mark 6:12). He gave a famous story about repentance that we call “*the Parable of the Prodigal Son*” (Luke 15). His final commission, in Luke’s words, reads: “*...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (24:47). Peter, in the first Gospel sermon, stressed the need for repentance (Acts 2:38), as did other early preachers (Acts 3:19; 26:20).

Repentance is at the heart of a discussion of divorce, remarriage, and conversion. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Unless sin is removed so that man can be reunited with God, he will remain eternally separated from God in hell (Rev. 19:15; 21:8). Sin can be removed only by contact with the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22; Matt. 26:28). One contacts the blood of Christ and has sin removed when he is Scripturally baptized (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). But one can only be acceptably baptized for the remission of sins if he first repents (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3).

Repentance involves restitution (Matt. 3:8). It is not possible to receive forgiveness for any sin while continuing to live in that sin. One cannot keep the

proceeds of ill-gotten gain after baptism. By the same reasoning, one cannot keep a woman (or man) marked by God for another union. If one repents of the sin of adultery, then he will not continue to practice that sin. All people involved in adulterous marriages must be sorry that they are living in adultery and thus disobeying God. There is no way to repent of adultery without ceasing to practice it. To continue living in an adulterous union after one has been taught the Truth is an indication that true repentance has not taken place.<sup>15</sup> It sounds harsh, but these couples must break up (cf. Ezra 10:3-5, 9, 7). They should live apart.

Would a teacher be wrong to turn away sinners from baptism if they indicate no willingness to correct their sin? John told those who came to hear him preach that they must “*bring forth fruit meet for repentance*” (Matt. 3:8). In our words he was saying, “*Show me that you mean business.*” He would not baptize the Pharisees whom he was convinced were not penitent. Neither should we.

### **Jesus Said, “*Whosoever Marrieth Her Committeth Adultery*”**

The Bales doctrine holds that Matthew 19:9 applies to the church only – that is, it applies only to the case in which a Christian is married to a Christian. It does not apply to the Christian who is married to a non-Christian or to two non-Christians who are married. This position is called the “*church only*” position but it does not apply even to all who are in the church.<sup>16</sup>

Often the answer to a false position is found right in the text that is perverted. Notice here that Jesus used the inclusive word “*whosoever.*” There is nothing in the

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context of Matthew 19:9 or Matthew 5:31-32 to offset universal application of the language employed. When Jesus said “*whosoever*,” He was not leaving out anyone whatsoever.

Marriage is not a “*church ordinance*.” It did not begin on Pentecost with Christianity or even at Sinai with Moses’ Law, but in Eden with the first couple. It was designed for the whole human race and applied to those who were conscious of God’s will and those who were not. When Jehovah ordained marriage it is significant that He authorized one man to live with one wife till death. Exceptions included the death of one or fornication (Gen. 2; Mal. 2:16; Rom. 7:4; I Cor. 7:39). These are God’s marriage plans for us. When God gives us the ideal situation that naturally rebukes any deviation from the standard.<sup>17</sup>

We do not have to be married to please God, but if we are married our arrangements must please God. To be consistent, those who hold the “*church only*” theory, ought to insist on having a marriage ceremony performed for all couples who obey the Gospel (Matt. 19:5-6).<sup>18</sup> If the laws of marriage are not applicable to alien sinners, how can marriage itself be?

This theory assumes that moral law is applicable only to those in the church. The Scriptures teach that non-Christians can be, and most times are, immoral (Rom. 1:18-32; 3:10-18). Any “*law written in the heart*” would be subjective and variable. Civil law changes from nation to nation, with some legalizing adultery (polygamy, concubinage, and divorce for any cause). This doctrine makes it impossible for a non-Christian to commit adultery. But the Bible says that non-Christians can be adulterers. Some at Corinth, before they were converted,



were (I Cor. 6:9-10). Further, it is possible to live in a state of adultery (Col. 3:7). A. T. Robertson says of this verb: “*Imperfect active indicative of zao to live, ‘ye used to live’ (customary action).*”<sup>19</sup>

Adultery is “*any voluntary cohabitation of a married person with any other than his lawful spouse.*”<sup>20</sup> It is unlawful sexual relations between two people who are married, but not to each other. It can be a sexual relationship between one single person and one married person or between two married people. The word *adultery* probably derives from the words *ad alteruis torne*, “*to another’s bed.*” The Hebrew root word occurs thirty-four times in the Old Testament (Adam Clarke). The Greek equivalent (from root *moicheia*) appears thirty-five times in the New Testament.<sup>21</sup>

*Fornication* is a broad term for any unlawful sexual relationship, including adultery. When used in the same context, fornication usually refers to premarital sex and adultery to extramarital. The margin renders adultery in Exodus 20:14 (“*thou shalt not commit adultery*”) as “*any impurity,*” thus forbidding any sexual impurity, including rape, seduction, lewdness, polygamy, lasciviousness, sodomy, whoredom, homosexuality, bestiality, and pornography.

There are four kinds of adultery mentioned in the Bible. First, there is *spiritual adultery*. In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be His bride (Hosea 2:2-5, 19, 20). She often forsook Him for idols (Jer. 3:8-9), which He called adultery (Ezek. 16:32-36). In the New Testament, the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). Individually, we are married to Christ (Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2; James 4:4). We, too, are to keep ourselves from idols (I John 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). The Christian who

flirts with worldliness or steps out on Christ by association with denominationalism is guilty of spiritual adultery.

There is the *thought of adultery or mental adultery*. God not only forbids the act of adultery, He also forbids the attitude that precedes it. It is in the heart that the conception of this sin takes place (Matt. 15:19-20). The one who looks on a woman to lust after her "*hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*" (Matt. 5:28). Peter wrote of those who had *eyes full of adultery*, who could not cease from sin (II Peter 2:14).

There is the *act of adultery or physical adultery* (Lev. 18:20; 20:10; Prov. 6:27-32). This is the sin of David and Bathsheba (II Sam. 11:4) and Jeremiah's contemporaries (Jer. 5:7, 9). It was punishable by death under Moses' Law. Ancient Jews interpreted this strictly and enforced the death penalty in those cases when the man and woman were caught in the act of sexual union.

There is the *state of adultery or legal adultery*. This is "*unholy matrimony*" and is what is contemplated in Jesus' word "*doth commit adultery*" (Matt. 19:9). While it might be "*legal adultery*" in the eyes of our courts, it is "*illegal adultery*" in the eyes of God. It is a state of continuing sin.

## **Objections Considered**

### **The "*Holy Water*" Objection**

The "*loophole lookers*" think they have found one at the creek bank. Baptism is powerful. There are those who attribute no efficacy to the waters of baptism, but Jesus explained that it plays a part in every man's salvation (Mark 16:16). Saul (Paul) was told that it would wash away his sins (Acts 22:16) and Peter said that "*baptism doth also now save us*" (I Peter 3:21).

Some attribute to baptism “*holy water*” magical power that it does not have. They think baptism is so potent that it can wash away an adulterous marriage. It is powerful, but it is not *that* powerful! Baptism will wash away *sins*, but not *spouses*! And, further, what if only one of the couple is baptized? Does this mean that one is living in adultery and his/her partner is not?

Baptism cannot save by itself. There are prerequisites which must be met in order for baptism to accomplish its purpose. As powerful as baptism is, it will not save the insincere (Rom. 6:17). As powerful as baptism is, it will not save the unbeliever (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 6:3-5). If a person does not believe in Christ he could be immersed a thousand times in water and his sins would not be washed away by Christ’s blood (Rev. 1:5).<sup>22</sup>

As powerful as baptism is, it will not save the impenitent or cowardly. Baptism must be preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31) and confession of faith (Rom. 10:9-10). Baptism for the alien and prayer for the Christian will not cover any active sin (Rom. 6:1-2; Prov. 28:13). Adultery is in active sin.

### **The “*Abide In Your Calling*” Objection**

Some contend that Paul said those who are remarried can remain in whatever relationship they are in when converted. They take the phrase “*abide in the same calling wherein he was called*” (I Cor. 7:20) to mean this.

This theory falls upon examination. If one can abide in a sinful calling, then could two homosexuals or lesbians remain “*married*” if converted? What if a missionary converts an African chief or a Mormon with more than one wife? Can he “*abide in his calling?*” What if one is

converted who has been living in a communal situation where men share wives? Can he *“abide in his calling?”* Can a businessman running a house of ill repute, a saloon, or brewery continue *“in his calling”* as long as he agrees not to open any more? Paul says, *“...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid...”* (Rom. 6:1-2).

To this it is retorted, *“These situations are wrong in themselves.”* Sure, and so is adultery! American-style polygamy is as popular as any in Africa. We do not call it that, but, effectively, this is just what it is. Instead of having one man with many wives at the same time, we have one man with many wives over a lifetime. We have *“wife swapping”* but its done for a year or two at a time instead of a night at the time. We have just as much right telling the polygamist to keep *all* his wives as to assure one man he can keep *one* unlawful wife.<sup>23</sup>

### **The *“But It Is Too Hard”* Objection**

Some say, *“I cannot live without the physical satisfaction of marriage the rest of my life – it is just too hard.”* No one would disagree that this is a difficult road to travel, but Christians are taught to *“put to death the deeds of the body”* (Rom. 8:13). There is a yoke to wear and a burden to bear (Matt. 11:30). The hearts of Christians go out to those who have made poor moral decisions. We wish that they could go back and re-live those fatal years. But it cannot be done.

Man’s sin has always brought grief and heartache. We do not delight in the suffering that comes about because of sin, but neither can we compromise the truth in order to appease hurt feelings. The more we hurt, the more we are tempted to alter God’s Word.<sup>24</sup> The more we desire to do what God has forbidden, the harder we will

try to justify doing it. Watch for it – convenience is the mother of apostasy.<sup>25</sup> When physical convenience supersedes spiritual purity our values are too shallow.

Adam and Eve must have hurt when they left Eden in shame (the text indicates they had to be driven from the tree of life). Moses must have thought it was unfair to be denied entrance into Canaan just because he struck the rock, but God did not waiver (Num. 20:12). Esau sought his birthright with tears after foolishly selling it, but could not retrace his steps (Gen. 25:29-34; Heb. 12:16-17). Uzzah’s death must have been painful to his family, but God meant what He had said (II Sam. 6:6-7).

The rich young ruler was unwilling to “*pay the admission price*” for heaven and walked away from Jesus (Luke 18:18-22). The Lord did not go running after him to apologize for being too hard. It was his decision, and he made the wrong one. On the other hand, the Ephesian sorcerers who heard Paul preach and learned of their sin, brought their libraries into the streets and set them on fire (Acts 19:19). In a day when books were hand written and extremely costly, this was quite a sacrifice. But they repented – and this meant burning their bridges and books.

The way of transgressors is hard (Prov. 13:15). Jesus preached “*hard sayings*” (John 6:60), which caused many to follow Him no more (6:66). One of the hard sayings was that if one loved “*father or mother (could it not also be wife or husband?) more than me is not worthy of me?*” (Matt. 10:37). Another was,

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:38-39).

On the subject of remaining single He said, “...*and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake....*” (Matt. 19:12). This means, for the sake of going to heaven some have chosen to live celibate lives. Jesus indicates that He knew that it will be hard to take (as is evidenced by His disciples), and went on to say, “...*He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*” (Matt. 19:12c).

Paul used a similar phrase for the wife who had been deserted by an unbelieving husband, “*Let her remain unmarried...*” (I Cor. 7:11). Easy? No. Worth it? If it is the only way to make it to heaven and escape hell, yes. Of the two, happiness in eternity is to be preferred to happiness on earth. Christ will give the strength that is necessary (Phil. 4:13). Remembering Christ’s suffering for us (Rom. 5:8) motivates us to suffer for Him.

### **The “*What About The Children*” Objective**

It is argued that couples cannot separate when children have been born to adulterous unions. Certainly, this *complicates* the situation, but it does not *change* the situation. The dissolving of a sinful union does not free a father or mother from responsibility to the children involved, but neither does that presence of children alter the status of an adulterous relationship.

Children have always had to bear the consequences of their parents’ sins (Exod. 34:7; Josh. 7:24), even in the case of adultery (cf. Ezra 10:44). The same reasoning could be used for those who became adulterers *after* becoming Christians, which all know to be wrong. Heartaches are involved, and personal feelings hinder us from being objective, but we must accept God’s teachings.

Those in unscriptural marriages must separate *for*

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*the sake of* the children. Their influence on their families is so important in whether or not they will take God seriously in their own lives. How lasting is the impression when children know that heaven was important enough for their parents to separate (cf. II Thess. 2:10-12).<sup>26</sup> It is never wrong to do right and never right to do wrong.

### **The “*That’s Not Really Forgiveness*” Objection**

Some suggest that if one has to end a relationship, then forgiveness is not really forgiveness. But the Biblical doctrine of forgiveness is not to be confused with the Biblical doctrine of the consequences of sin.<sup>27</sup> The Corinthians faced this very decision when Paul preached in their city. Some were adulterers, others were homosexuals (some even male prostitutes), and some were swindlers (I Cor. 6:9-10). They were forgiven. But notice carefully the verb tense in verse 11, “*And such were some of you...*” They had ceased practicing sin before being forgiven.

God is not to be blamed for man’s condition. God warned man. He sought to keep him out of trouble. But man disregarded His will and tangled his life in the web of adultery. Now man can only secure pardon by repentance and submission to the original will of God for his life. The creature should never argue with the Creator (Rom. 9:20).

Sins have consequences. If a homosexual is taught the Gospel, and understand that he must give up his sinful lifestyle, can he become a Christian? Yes. If he does so, is he forgiven? Yes. But, what if, as a consequence of prior promiscuity, he had the AIDS virus? Will forgiveness remove the painful death that awaits him?

No, that is sin's consequence. Christians can pray for him, help ease his suffering, take care of his family, and try to improve his quality of life, but they cannot remove sin's consequences.

Likewise, a couple can be forgiven of past marital entanglements. But they cannot escape the consequences of sin. They cannot continue to live in a sinful relationship. This does not reflect on God's forgiveness. We are blessed that He will even grant us *any* terms of pardon. We are not in a bargaining position; we are in a begging position.

### **The “*Some Sins Cannot Be Corrected*” Objection**

It is argued that there are some sins that cannot be corrected upon repentance. We are told that a murderer cannot bring back a victim and an adulterer cannot give back his wife (or vice versa).

These are not analogous. Severing an illicit relationship is not an attempt to put the first couple back together. It is just repenting of a continuing sin. Both murderers and adulterers have to quit practicing sin. The murderer cannot continue to hate and the adulterer cannot continue to fornicate (cf. Col. 3:7). Just saying, “*I’m sorry*” is not enough. One has to get out of the sinning business. The thief must quit stealing; the drunkard must quit drinking; the gambler must give up gambling; and the adulterer must give up his adulteress!

### **The “*The Church Will Never Grow*” Objection**

Some church leaders affirm that we can never have a large church if we “*cross every t and dot every i*” on the marriage law. Repenting of adultery is difficult and few



people are going to do it. We do not deny the truthfulness of the premise, but is the answer, “*If we cannot beat them, join them?*” Does God expect us to have large memberships if it requires compromising His Word?

It is difficult to get people to listen to *any* teaching which causes them to give up something they treasure. This is true whether in the realm of morals or false religious teachings. In our world of alcohol abuse, are we going to compromise with social drinkers and not demand that they put away the bottle to be Christians? In a religions world that disdains baptism for remission of sins, are we going to let denominationalists in on their “*faith only*” conversion? If getting a big membership is the goal, then why stop with one compromise? Of the two, a small pure church is to be preferred to a large corrupt one.

When Paul preached the Gospel to the lost, he dealt with moral issues. He did not skirt around those things that might hinder his “*getting them to the water.*” When he had an opportunity to teach Felix and Drusilla, he reasoned of “*righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*” (Acts 24:25). The American Standard Version has “*self-control*” for temperance. Would not moral issues such as adultery fall into the category of “*righteousness*” or “*self-control?*” Did Paul preach the Gospel (death, burial, and resurrection) and not preach doctrine (e.g., Matt. 19:9)? No, he taught what was needed in any given situation.

### **The “*But There Is No Example*” Objection**

Often one will insist that there is no New Testament example of a couple having to split up to become

Christians. They reason that if it were that important then God would have certainly given us an example of it.

It is true that there is no example of an explicit case after Pentecost (although the Corinthians ceased to be adulterers, I Cor. 6:9-11). Nonetheless, there *is* a New Testament example. John lived and preached under Moses' Law, but he was the harbinger of the New Law. He prepared the way for Jesus and His Law.

Further, the moral principles that issue from the nature of God are eternal (cf. Heb. 13:8). They are repeated in each of His covenants with man. Adultery is wrong in every age, and under every law of God. John taught against it and came into a situation which is exactly what is contemplated in this discussion. Herod the tetrarch illustrates how all men are subject to God's laws. He had taken his brother's wife.

For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife (Mark 6:17-18; cf. Matt. 14:4; Luke 3:19-20).

Here is a ruler who was not considered a child of God by any stretch of the imagination, but whom John rebuked for not keeping God's law. The Greek text indicates that he continually repeated this truth to Herod.<sup>28</sup> Further *enchein* (to have) is in the present tense and has the meaning "to be having, to keep on having, or continue having." Thus what John said was, "By God's decree, it is not permitted for you to continue having your brother's wife."

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great and Malthake, a Samaritan who was also the mother of Archelaus and Olympias. Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great, the daughter of Aristobulus, another brother of Herod Antipas. Archelaus and Herod Philip (thus she was Herod’s niece). Herodias was first married to Herod Philip (another uncle), by whom she had a daughter.<sup>30</sup> She was a woman of violent passions who had a seemingly insatiable lust for political power which she could not realize as Philip’s wife. As one put it, “*She had beaten her wings against her cage in utter helplessness until Herod Antipas had appeared.*”<sup>31</sup>

Antipas was married to a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, but on a visit to Jerusalem he became enamored with the beauty of Herodias. She fell for his power, and they began the intrigue which ended in an adulterous marriage. According to Josephus, they both divorced and both divorced partners were still living when John was killed.<sup>32</sup> Herodias was a wicked woman and guilty of many crimes, but she was not guilty of failing to get a divorce. It even appears that she required Antipas to divorce before she would marry him.

This case establishes the fact that God recognizes marriages of the unbelievers but He does not approve unlawful attachments (not really marriages).<sup>33</sup> By whose law was the relationship “*unlawful?*” Divorce and remarriage was common among both cultures. It could be called “*pagan license*” and “*Mosaic toleration.*”<sup>34</sup> They were responsible to God’s marriage law and this was the point that cost John his head. According to the position under consideration John wasted his life standing for a principle with no meaning. Why would Jesus have allowed His forerunner to be put to death for a principle that He

would not teach? The problem is not with John's doctrine, but with the modern loophole.

### **Observations Noticed A Need For Compassion**

We must reach out to families in crisis and help to stabilize them. Christians must be noted for their compassion (John 13:33-34; Heb. 10:34). We do not need a *"holier-than-thou"* attitude toward those who have made mistakes. We have all sinned, and none are qualified to be rock slingers (John 8:1-11). We need to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). We must show the compassion of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30; 15:32) by assisting them in whatever way can make their conversion easier (Luke 10:33). A compassionate person does not encourage them to continue in a course that will ultimately cost them their souls. Befriend them. Associate with them. Make them feel comfortable in worship services. Help them to grow spiritually. Continue to remind them that heaven is worth giving up an adulterous marriage. We must *"have compassion, making a difference"* (Jude 22). *"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous"* (I Peter 3:8).

### **A Need For Teaching**

We must teach positively about the need for Christians to marry Christians and to build homes by the divine blueprint (Psm. 127:1). All recognize that it is best to avoid any course of action that requires repentance. One must repent of only those sins he commits. If he does not unscripturally divorce and remarry, he will never be in one of these heart-breaking

situations.

One seeking first the kingdom is not going to marry someone outside the kingdom. Young people need to be taught the seriousness of marriage. Do not marry him or her because he/she is good looking, is fun to be around, or has prospects to make much money. Marry one who will help you go to heaven. Many of the divorce cases that disturb churches are children of *our* members and not those ignorant of the truth. A high percentage of those who marry outside the church end up with serious spiritual difficulties. Children need to be taught the value of the soul (Mark 8:36-37).

### **A Need For Understanding**

Men and women need to understand that God owns the patent on marriage. Marriage and sex are privileges, not rights. Many feel that all sexual appetites must be satisfied regardless of what the Bible says. Nonetheless, the Lord does not allow for all persons to cohabit with a sexual partner. He grants the privilege to those who have never been married, those divorced as innocent parties, and those widowed.

One reason the Lord discouraged divorce was so people would try harder to preserve their marriages. If we held firmly to God’s way, people would not consider divorce a possible way out of marriage, and therefore they would be more serious about entering marriage and try harder to make their marriages work.

### **A Need For Discipline**

A failure to follow the teaching of God’s Word on this subject has misled many. Churches are filling up with adulterers. Souls are lost. God is displeased (cf.

Rev. 2:5). If the first instances of unscriptural divorce and remarriage had been Scripturally and firmly handled by the church when they appeared years ago, the widespread problem which is in our congregations today would not exist. But, sadly, in many cases, this did not happen. Now we have cases needing church discipline (II Thess. 3:6).

The only answer is Bible-believing, Bible preaching, Bible living, and Bible eldering.<sup>33</sup> Preachers and elders need to know that they are not responsible for making everyone happy. They will never please everyone when it comes to divorce and remarriage cases. They must keep the respect of mature Christians, save the souls they can, and please the One who really matters (Gal. 1:10).

### **A Need For Repentance**

J. W. McGarvey mused that if God were to give miraculous gifts today, he would not ask for healing, tongue-speaking, or prophecy. He would want to be blessed with the ability to get people to repent.<sup>36</sup> Most preachers long for greater persuasive power. If we want to lead men to repent, then we must confront them with their sins. Nathan said to David, following the Bathsheba incident, “*Thou art the man*” (II Sam. 12). This led to David seeing himself as God saw him. It brought about the penitence evident in Psalm 51.

If we would lead men to repent, we must make clear to them that one day they will stand before God in judgment (II Cor. 5:10). They must look beyond the here and now and focus on the there and then. The conclusion of the whole matter is to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13-14). It is “*a fearful thing*

*to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). Many unscriptural marriages are perpetuated because many people do not believe God really meant what He said about sinners going to hell. “Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD...” (Psm. 128:1).*

If men are going to repent, we must lead them to understand God’s goodness (Rom. 2:4). Consider the wonderful grace of God in allowing man the opportunity to repent! Instead of condemning man to be eternally doomed, God provides an opportunity to return to Him by repentance. He even sent His Son to plead for us to repent, because He is “...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

We must emphasize the blessing of forgiveness, the riches of Christian living, and hope of heaven in the end. All this is worth much more than any life of sin – or husband or wife. Selling a soul for a few short years of anticipated happiness is like selling a birthright for a mess of pottage (Gen. 25). Can you imagine a man or woman who was unscripturally divorced by a mate, who chose to live celibately for a few years, getting to heaven, being rewarded and praised of God, and then complaining that the sacrifice was too much?

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:29).

## **Conclusion**

What about the couple sitting across the kitchen table? They need an answer. All of us wish we could say,

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*“Well, forget it. It’s okay. God is gracious and forgiving. Don’t worry about it.”* We would love to be able to please people, but it is better to please God (Gal. 1:10; James 4:4).

Since they are living in adultery, their souls are lost. We are no one’s friend if we do not help them make it to heaven. Aiding one in continuing in sin and jeopardizing the soul is not an act of friendship. We need to cry with people, hurt with them, show compassion, and try our best to get them to do what is necessary to make it to heaven.

The couple has a serious choice to make. It is time for the decision of their lives (and eternities). The decision must be made in view of the Judgment. Remember, *“...fornicators and adulterers, God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4).

### Endnotes

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## Chapter 18

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# God’s Role For Man

*Albert S. McDaniel*



Albert was reared in North Little Rock • Holds engineering degree from University of Arkansas • Worked in industry as engineer and executive for thirty-five years • Former elder • Graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1990) • Served congregations in MO, IL, and TN • Presently preached by appointment in the St. Louis, MO area • Zelma and Albert have two children and five grandchildren.

**P**eter, being guided by the Holy Spirit has given a key scripture to guide all mankind (Jesus) “...*hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...*” (II Peter 1:3). Most in the world do not recognize that the scriptures also apply to them and not just to Christians. Their attitude seems to be that they have not placed themselves under the authority of Christ, therefore they are not amenable to him nor to the laws of His New Testament. They are wrong! As recorded in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said “*All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” The author of the Hebrew letter confirmed this fact when he wrote that God “*Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things...*” (Heb. 1:2). Clearly it is not our option to elect whether or not we are subject to God’s laws.

There are others who understand their accountability to Christ, but choose not to obey. Even those who do not understand (including some Christians)

seem not to recognize that the Scriptures supply all their needs, not only for matters of religion, but also for matters of everyday living. Thus even many believers reserve the Bible for guidance in religious affairs only and turn to modern-day gurus, philosophers, sociologists, and the like for guidance in daily affairs. Non-believers consult those same sources for both matters of religion and of life.

But Peter not only has revealed to us that binding guides are available but also tell us where to find them. In the same verse he continues: “...*through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (II Peter 1:3). To learn and gain that knowledge we must study and handle correctly the Scriptures as Paul wrote in II Timothy 2:15. This should come as no surprise for it was prophesied in Micah 4:2 and reference made by Jesus in John 6:45 that “...*they shall all be taught of God.*” Christianity is a taught (and therefore learned) religion. Contained therein is the implication that one must work (study) in order to learn God’s ways, God’s laws, and God’s plan for mankind.

It is apparent that in order to know man’s role in God’s plan, we must learn the things that Jesus spake, and what the Holy Spirit moved others to speak as recorded in II Peter 1:21.

The Scriptures are profitable to guide one in his participation in society, in the workplace, in the family, in the home, and in all other situations of daily living.

The Scriptures are likewise gainful for spiritual guidance of the individual as declared by Paul,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for  
correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Scriptures furnish mankind with direction in spiritual matters of the church. Paul wrote to Timothy so that he might “...*know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God...*” (I Tim. 3:15). It is wonderful that the writings of Paul and other inspired writers have been preserved so that we can know how to behave in the world, in the church, and in the home.

Let us turn to the scriptures and learn what is man’s role in society, in the family, and in the church.

### **Man’s Role In Society**

God has given man a role to fill in his relations with his neighbor.

The Bible states of Jesus “...*the common people heard him gladly*” (Mark 12:37). According to Matthew 27:18 His gaining popularity aroused envy in the Jewish leaders (Matt. 27:18) and they plotted to entrap Him with questions that He might be put to death. A lawyer’s prize question and Jesus’ answer are recorded in Matthew 22:36-37. “*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’”* They had not asked which was the second greatest law but Jesus told them anyway “*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Matt. 22:39). Think of it! Love of our neighbor is second only to love of God. The Holy Spirit was so determined for us to get this message that he guided it to be recorded nine times, once in each of these scriptures:

Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43, 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8. James called it the “royal law.”

But our behavior seems to indicate that there is much confusion in the world concerning who our neighbors are. There need not be. Jesus made it very clear with His narration of the parable, which we have termed “*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*” of Luke 10:29-37, that my neighbor is anyone in need. It makes no difference if he lives next door, down the street, across town, across the country, or across the sea. If he is in need, he is my neighbor. I have obligations to him demanded by God himself. I am cautioned to honor his property (Exod. 22), to do him no evil (Rom. 13:10), to not lie about him (Prov. 25:18), not lie to him (Prov. 26:19). Rather I am commanded to speak the truth to him (Eph. 4:25) and speak it with love (Eph. 4:15).

God has also given to man the role of fulfilling his obligation to his community and to those within it. Every man has the charge to “...*do good to all men*” (Gal. 6:10). Jesus spoke a great truth when he said “...*whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...*” (Matt. 7:12). Sadly, evil men of the world have rephrased this to read “*Do unto others before they do unto you,*” but right-thinking men will treat others as they wish to be treated.

All men are obligated to subject themselves to the authority figures of their communities. I may not like some of the government authorities, both local and otherwise, to which I am subjected. Some of them may be dishonest, deceitful, immoral people. But God has not left me the choice of whether or not I subject myself to them for Scripture says,

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).

Verse 3 of the same chapter makes it clear that Paul is speaking of governmental authorities. But where there is conflict between the law of God and the law of the land, God has freed us, for the apostles told the Jewish authorities when they forbade them to speak no more of Jesus. “...*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). Even if we do not like our rulers nor what they do, we are commanded to pray for them as Paul instructed Timothy “*I exhort therefore, that...supplications, prayers, intercessions...be made...For kings, and for all that are in authority...*” (I Tim. 2:1-2). It’s not only an obligation, but it is in our own best interest to do so. Who knows what God’s providence will provide if we join together in prayer asking God to change the hearts of the rulers or to change the rulers out? Our strength in prayer is greater than we sometimes realize. I believe that we depend too much upon men’s judgment in the voting booth and too little on God’s intervention in answer to the fervent prayer of righteous men (James 5:16).

Coupled with dislike of certain ungodly rulers, there may be an extreme distaste for taxes. There is no question but what there is a need for taxes in an organized society, but when examples of foolish waste are brought forward, payment of taxes can be painful. But once again Paul brings us to the reality of God’s laws. Romans 13:6 states “*For this cause pay ye tribute (taxes) also...*” and again in Romans 13:7 “*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due...*” Jesus was once asked if it was lawful to pay taxes. His answer?

...Render therefore unto Caesar (the government) the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).

We must come to the realization that to cheat on our taxes is a violation of God's law and therefore a sin. Self-justification will never make it otherwise.

Bad or unpaid debts do not seem to carry the stigma they once did, but God has not relieved us of our duty to pay our debts. Paul instructed the brethren at Rome to "*Owe no man any thing...*" (Rom. 13:8). He was not saying, as some have interpreted, that we should not buy on credit, but rather that when we do, we must pay our debts.

One more obligation to those in the community needs to be mentioned, and perhaps it is the hardest of all to fulfill because of our faulty human natures. Sometimes we encounter those who do all they can to defeat us in every way; using us to their own gain, persecuting us, and hating us. Our first impulse is to strike back; being the frail beings that we are. Jesus brings this hard saying,

...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matt. 5:44).

Can you receive it? I hope that you can.

God has given man a role in the workplace. Even though God placed Adam and Eve in the perfect setting of the Garden of Eden, he recognized that they would be unhappy without a work to do. So he gave them the task of dressing the garden. It is man's nature to be happiest when he is not idle. Because of sin, God removed them from their idyllic setting declaring that henceforth man



would earn his sustenance by the sweat of his face in struggling with thorns and thistles (Gen. 3). In our industrial nation, the agrarian economy has changed to an economy of manufacturing and services, but man still earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. Indeed, Paul commanded “...*if any would not work, neither should he eat*” (II Thess. 3:10).

The man who is employed by others has obligations to his employer. He owes that employer a day’s work for a day’s pay, whatever the pay may be for which he agreed to work. He who cheats his employer of paid time steals the same as one who steals property or money. Paul cautions men to work rather than steal,

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Eph. 4:28).

I know some who complain of their wages even though those wages were accepted with the job. In Matthew 20:1-15 we read of such men who agreed to work for a certain wage, and were happy with that wage until they discovered that others who worked shorter hours received the same pay. For a time I worked with a few like that, who, at annual raise time, could hardly wait to know their peers’ wage increases so that they could decide whether or not they were happy with theirs. The point of Jesus’ parable concerned the rewards for variable lengths of service in the kingdom, I believe, but the parallel lesson about wages is also valid. John the Baptizer told the soldiers of Luke 3:14 “...*be content with your wages.*”

Some employees rationalize and attempt to justify deliberate idleness, pilfering of materials, etc. on the

basis of maltreatment or underpayment. It won't wash! Bad treatment by an employer does not absolve the employee of his failure to fulfill his duties.

But employers have obligations too. One requirement is to pay a fair wage. Jesus himself said "*...for the labourer is worthy of his hire*" (Luke 10:7). Paul expressed the same thought in I Timothy 5:18. How does one, who hires another, dare to pay less than a fair wage in light of these admonitions?

Employers have an obligation to treat employees fairly. The prophet, Malachi of old, prophesied that when the Lord comes in judgment he will classify those who "*oppress the hireling in his wages*" (Mal. 3:5) along with sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers. Surely such will suffer eternal punishment.

Why do we have strife in the workplace? Surely it is because employees and employers alike are not abiding by the things that Jesus spake unto them. A good friend who is both a Christian and labor union contract negotiator once told me, as he held up his Bible, "*This is the only labor contract that labor and management need. If we all would abide by this, there would be no need for negotiations or an additional contract.*" He was right!

### **Man's Role In The Family**

God has also ordered man's role in the family. In His divine providence He has designated the family as the basic unit of civilization and has placed man at the head. The scriptures record "*For the husband is the head of the wife*" (Eph. 5:23) and "*Children, obey your parents in all things*" (Col. 3:20). Lest man should feel no restraints in his dealings with other family members,

Paul informed us of the hierarchy chosen by God to regulate man’s actions.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (I Cor. 11:3).

Some women complain that their subjection to man makes them inferior. Have they considered that man has also been subjected to higher authority? If she is inferior, so is he. Actually neither is inferior because of being in subjection to another. All people are in some way subject to higher authority. Being in subjection does not establish inferiority nor superiority.

Since man is the head of the home, he must lead. Sad, indeed, is the home in which the father and husband has abdicated his position of leadership. Some homes are ruled by the children because the parents do not lead. Some homes are ruled by the wife and mother because the husband and father, the rightful leader refuses to lead. Wherever a vacuum exists, it will be filled. Women who lead in the home are sometimes not wholly at fault; a home cannot exist without some leadership and they assume the role by default.

No organization can rise above its leadership. Neither can the home. The man who would successfully lead his family must be mature. There is no room in a family leader for childish displays of temper tantrums which accomplish nothing but disruption and disharmony. Paul wrote “...when I became a man, I put away childish things” (I Cor. 13:11). So must we.

The successful family head will be a man who has obeyed the gospel. God has made him the spiritual head and he must set the example. He must lead in the worship

of God. He must show responsibility, restraint, and love. Must he be perfect? No, but he should strive to be like Christ.

God has given man a special role as husband. A paramount principle given by Paul in Ephesians 5:25 is that he must love his wife *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”* The husband must be the defender of his wife; to watch over her and protect her from all harm. Christ loved the church such that he gave his life for it. The husband can do no less for his wife if the occasion demands it.

Peter in I Peter 3:7 describes the wife as the *“weaker vessel”* giving recognition that man’s body is more muscular and stronger, better able to do strenuous tasks and ward off aggressors. In the same verse he admonishes the husband to honor the wife. And Paul writes *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”* (Eph. 5:28). If a man truly loves his wife, he will not intentionally dishonor her. If a man loves himself, he will not intentionally dishonor his wife for to do so is to bring dishonor upon himself. Paul adds *“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh...”* (Eph. 5:29).

A good husband will not succumb to anger. This is not to say that he will not be angry at all, but that he must keep his anger under control. Paul recognized that one does anger, but he cautions that the anger must not result in sin, nor must it last long. He wrote in Ephesians 4:26 *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”* Paul said that it is possible to be angry without sinning, but he didn’t say it would be easy. Some homes are a veritable battleground where

anger, and worse, abounds. Anger sometimes leads to verbal abuse which often escalates to physical abuse. God would not have it so.

Matthew 7:12 is often paraphrased as “*Do unto others as you would have others do unto you*” and has been dubbed “*The Golden Rule.*” There is no question but what harmony would reign in every home if this rule were practiced. When wrong, a good husband will say “*I’m sorry.*” It wouldn’t hurt us husbands to show a little tenderness from time to time. We might even learn to like it! I know that our wives would!

A good man who loves a woman will marry her rather than live together with her in sin. To do otherwise is to dishonor self, her, and God. God himself instituted marriage from the beginning. The author of the Hebrew letter declares marriage to be “*honorable*” (Heb. 13:4). The good husband comes into his marriage for life. God’s marriage law of Matthew 5:27-32 and Matthew 19:3-9 might well be termed “*One man – one wife – for life.*” But men refuse to have it so. Because civil laws toward divorce are so lenient, millions are living together in sin. Some know and don’t care. Others believe that God’s law matches civil law and live sinfully in ignorance. Either way they are living in sin and it is our duty to tell the world of God’s way, unpopular as that may be.

Man’s role as a father has been determined by God, and his Word defines that role.

Fathers have been charged with the training of their children “*Train up a child in the way he should go...*” (Prov. 22:6). Mothers do much of that training but as head of the home the father bears the ultimate responsibility to “*...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4). No more important

training takes place in the home than for the father to set the example for the children. How many children will grow up thinking church attendance is important if father never attends? How many children will believe that God is real if father shows no evidence that he believes?

Where are our children? Few congregations that I know have many young people, ages late teens to late twenties in attendance. Did we not teach them? Were our examples too weak? We need to do better.

Even though the father is head of the home he is not to be harsh nor dictatorial in his dealings with his children for Paul wrote "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath...*" (Eph. 6:4) and "*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger...*" (Col. 3:21).

Fathers need to get to know their children. They need to spend more time with them. We're all busy, perhaps too busy. Some fathers feel that they can't spare the time, but someone is taking the time to be with their children. Those "*someones*" are influencing them one way or another. Fathers you need to get your "*oar in the water*" and do some influencing of your own.

Recently an acquaintance who has worked sixty to eighty hours per week for years at his place of employment told me "*I have a sixteen year old daughter who will be going away to college soon, and I don't even know her. It is not worth it! I have a new job starting next week working forty hours per week.*" He made a wise decision! Perhaps each one of us should take inventory as he did and likewise made needed corrections.

A good father will discipline his children. Children without discipline seldom grow up to be good citizens; neither of the world nor of the church. Discipline of children has been belittled now for several decades.

Philosophers, psychologists, and others have insisted that to discipline the child is to warp his personality and limit his potential. Many have heeded them and today we have the breakdown of the family as well as the breakdown of law and order in the community.

It would have been better if we all had heeded God who had Solomon to write *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Prov. 13:24).

The great prophet Eli had two sons who were wicked and who *“...knew not the LORD”* (I Sam. 2:12). God blamed Eli for their behavior and judged Eli’s house *“...for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not”* (I Sam. 3:13). Should Eli have disciplined his sons? God said that he should have! Dare we do less?

Great fathers are glorious. They are a glory to God and to their children. Solomon wrote *“...the glory of children are their fathers”* (Prov. 17:6).

God has given man the role of breadwinner. It is his responsibility to see that his family has the necessities of life. It is no small matter with God for the Bible reveals,

...if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8).

Could it be any plainer? How does a *“deadbeat dad”* sleep at night with this scripture condemning him to eternal torment? Selfishness is the root of the problem! Such fathers seem to think *“If I don’t share, there will be more for me.”*

## **Man's Role In The Church**

God has given instruction for man's role in the church. His service to God, of necessity, begins with obedience to the gospel call which brings him into the church. And if his service is to be acceptable to God, he must remain faithful. Jesus found lukewarm Christians to be distasteful (Rev. 3:16). No doubt He will find those who are unfaithful to be even more so.

Unfaithfulness will deter not only his own individual influence, but also that of the church. Most disturbing is the sight of one who lives like a pagan all week but leads in worship on Sunday. Who will follow such a man? Whom can he influence? Some congregations continue to use such men in leading roles in worship even though their sins are well known. This should not be!

God has commanded man to worship him. In John 4:23 Jesus told the woman at the well that God seeks true worshippers to worship him. But he made it clear that not every worship offered is accepted. He declared "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). The alternative is vain worship which Jesus defines as "*the doctrines of men*" (Matt. 15:9). Make no mistake about it. Worship according to God's word is accepted and worship by man's design is rejected. It is man's duty to search the scriptures and determine what is acceptable and what is not.

Man is assigned by God to lead in the worship. This fact has not always been accepted and the women's rights movement of recent years has made it a major bone of contention. Proponents of that movement propose that women be leaders in all areas, including the church. Thus in many religious bodies we find women preachers, song leaders, prayer leaders, and elders. Such ideas, which



are beginning to find acceptance in the church of our Lord, need to be tested by comparison with God’s Word.

Preaching as well as teaching of men are both to be done by men. Women doing either are violating Paul’s instruction:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (I Tim. 2:11-12).

A woman cannot teach over men without taking command. Thus she is prohibited from preaching or from teaching men.

The “*sugarstick*” of those in favor of women’s leadership roles in these areas is put forth by Paul in Galatians 3:28 “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Their claim is that this scripture gives women equality with men and supersedes I Timothy 2:11-12 which they claim is only a statement regarding the culture of the times in which Paul lived. However I Timothy 2:13-14 reveals the context of Paul’s teaching to be about God’s order beginning with creation and not just about customs of the era.

Women cannot lead prayer or lead singing for the same reason. They cannot place themselves over men in any situation where they usurp their authority and thus are not in subjection.

Only men can assume the role of elder in the church. Women are not eligible. The qualifications for the office of church elder include the requirement that the elder must be the “*husband of one wife*” (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). No woman can meet that qualification.

Man has to meet certain obligations concerning his

work within the church and no one else can fill his role. No one is allowed to usurp his authority and he can't give it away.

God has appointed man to be a defender of the truth. There is an all out assault against the Bible. The assault is by self-serving design on the part of humanists, modernists, and the like. They want to do what pleases them and do it with self-felt impunity from guilt or criticism. They seek to achieve their goals through destruction of God's standard, the Bible. Hence Paul admonished Titus to speak sound doctrine (Titus 2:1) and Timothy to hold to sound words (II Tim. 1:13). And Jude urged all Christians to "...*contend for the faith...*" (Jude 1:3).

God has assigned man his role in the society, in the family, and in the church. May we all recognize our responsibilities and assume our assigned roles with fervor, commitment, and competence to the best of our abilities. God expects no less.



**Jesus “Spake These  
Things Unto Them”**

(Matthew 9:18)



**WOMEN’S  
CLASS**



## Chapter 19

*Jesus “Spake These Things Unto Them”*

# God’s Role For Women

*Zelma L. McDaniel*



Sister Zelma was born and reared in Pine Bluff, Arkansas • Married Albert McDaniel • She faithfully serves the Lord as a Housewife, preacher’s wife, and Bible class teacher • Graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1990) • Has lectured in five states • The McDaniels live in St. Louis, MO • Albert and Zelma have two children and five grandchildren.

**I**n regard to our service to God, James had this to say concerning our works.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was

faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:14-26).

James makes it very clear that God expects His servants man or woman, to work in His service.

We understand from this passage and others that faith is necessary. Certainly faith is the very foundation of our efforts to please God for “...*without faith it is impossible to please him...*” (Heb. 11:6).

But faith is not enough. James tells us twice in this one passage, verses 20 and 26, that “...*faith without works is dead...*”

Anyone who has faith does well but has an imperfect or incomplete faith unless it is coupled with works (v. 17). Abraham is given as an example of one having complete faith because he was justified by works which were wrought by his faith (v. 22). Because of his works of obedience, God declared him righteous and called him “*Friend.*” And so he was justified not by faith only but also by his works of obedience as he sought to please God through belief “...*for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6).

Rahab is given as a second example of one who was justified by works that were produced by faith. Her faith was produced when she heard of the wondrous works of

God in freeing the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and the mighty deeds of His people as they conquered the promised land as recorded in Joshua 2. That faith prompted her to protect God's people and salvation was her reward.

And just as these two were justified by works of obedience so can we be justified today.

All the world, including God's people struggle with this truth. The struggle is, perhaps, doubly difficult where woman's work in the church is concerned.

Two extremes are at work determining the scope of woman's role in the church.

One extreme says "*Women can do anything in the church that a man can do.*" Some would add: "*And even better.*"

Certain women's organizations such as "NOW" pursue such goals.

Their zeal and determination has affected the church. The reality of women preachers and women elders within the church of Christ is not so farfetched today as it once was thought to be. Sadly, even some elders and preachers seem to be promoting the idea.

The inspired apostle Paul foresaw this willful deviation and gave instructions to us. "*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*" (I Tim. 2:12).

And again in I Corinthians 14:34 Paul stated,

Let your women keep silence in the churches:  
for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but  
they are commanded to be under obedience, as  
also saith the law.

These scriptures seem plain enough but private interpretation of these and other verses have led to the

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other extreme: “*Women can do nothing in the church.*” If I were speaking to a liberal women’s organization I would direct my remarks today to the first extreme position. But since I know you to be a group of God-fearing women I will direct my remarks to this second extreme position with the goal of settling us not into any extreme position, but rather in tune with “*Thus saith the Lord.*”

God has placed woman in subjection to man: “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord*” (Eph. 5:22).

Some of my acquaintances “*see red*” when they consider this verse. Somehow they think that such a role makes them inferior to their husbands.

Being in subjection to another in no way defines one as being inferior. If so, every human being on earth is inferior because he or she is in some way subject to another.

Have those who object considered that their husbands are in subjection to a foreman, a manager, a superintendent, a board of directors, etc. Does this make them inferior? Not at all.

Even the President of the United States is under subjection to a set of laws interpreted by the Justices of the Supreme Court. Is he inferior to them? Of course not.

Even Christ was in subjection to God for He said, “*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me*” (John 6:38). Yet He was not inferior, for Paul said that Christ “*...thought it not robbery to be equal with God*” (Phil. 2:6).

This role assigned to me by God as a woman permits me to do certain things in the church. Other things I am not permitted to do. Is this so hard to accept? Everyone

is under certain limitations in some sector of life. In most circumstances these limitations are accepted. Why should limitations in the church be so different?

They are not different and therefore there are certain things a woman cannot do in the church. I want to briefly mention a few.

First, women cannot usurp authority over men. Paul wrote, *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man...”* (I Tim. 2:12). Teaching in this position of authority over a man would violate this scripture.

Second, she cannot lead public prayer in the assembly with men present. Paul expressed in I Timothy 2:8 *“I will therefore that men pray every where...”* A careful study of the original Greek word for *“men,”* *“Anthropos,”* indicates that the masculine form is used, which excludes the feminine. Therefore women are limited and cannot pray everywhere.

Third, she cannot be a public preacher or teacher of God’s word in the assembly for Scripture states:

Let your women keep silence in the churches:  
for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but  
they are commanded to be under obedience, as  
also saith the law (I Cor. 14:34).

Fourth, she cannot be an elder in the Lord’s church for an elder must be the husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:2).

Fifth, she cannot be a deacon in the Lord’s church for a deacon must have a wife (I Tim. 3:12).

Sixth, she cannot be head of the home *“For the husband is the head of the wife...”* (Eph. 5:23).

Now let us concentrate on the many things she can do. She can expound the word of God. Priscilla, along with her husband Aquilla, taught Apollos in a private

setting when they realized that he had an imperfect or incomplete knowledge of the “*way of God*” (Acts 18:26).

So can a Christian woman teach her husband toward winning him over to Christ, all the while living a pure manner of life and remaining in subjection (I Peter 3:1-2).

She can pray or prophesy according to I Corinthians 11:5. Prayer becomes all Christians. Prayer builds great churches. Prayer brings about great things. Prayer is the fuel for the engine of worship. Paul’s admonition is to “*Pray without ceasing*” (I Thess. 5:17).

God knows what we need. This great point is made by a story I once heard. Two men, one a Christian, the other a non-Christian, were picking cotton in a field when a great storm arose. They took shelter in a shed where the non-Christian, obviously afraid, asked the Christian “*Can you pray?*” He began to pray “*Dear Lord, John and I are here in this place.*” The non-Christian tapped him on the back and said “*He knows who we are. Just tell Him what we need.*” Little did he realize that God also knew their needs. Even so, God desires us to ask Him for needs and to thank Him for needs and blessings supplied.

Don’t be mystified by the instruction to prophecy. “*Prophecy*” does not always mean to “*foretell the future.*” It also means to “*reveal divine truths*” which you can certainly do if you “*Study to shew thyself approved...*” as Paul admonishes in II Timothy 2:15.

A woman can guide the home. Many women have neglected to fill this role in today’s society, leaving their home unguided and off course. You need to grab hold of the reins, consult with your husband and steer your home in the Lord’s way. Children are running off course

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because mothers are not training them. Are you leaving the training of your children to the schools? They'll not train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as commanded in Ephesians 6:4. Your schools will teach them evolution, and humanism, and many other "isms" you won't like. Are you leaving their training to your neighbors? They won't take the time and if they did you likely would not like the results.

Are you leaving their training to the church? The three or four hours per week they receive at church is insufficient to do the job. The writer of Proverbs 22:6 informs us to "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*" It is not the fault of the church if your children go astray.

You can teach others. Paul commands you to teach other women, you are to teach them to be responsible lovers of family and to keep themselves pure while being obedient to God's word in all things.

You can teach your own children and the children of others as Lois and Eunice taught Timothy as Paul revealed in II Timothy 1:5.

It is a tragedy that, in many churches, the women will not serve as teachers in the Bible classes. In some churches that I know, the Bible school program is far from being effective for lack of teachers. How many would be teachers if they were not afraid of failure? Excuses abound. You know them all. "*I am not adequate. I don't know how. I don't have time. I don't know the Bible well enough. I'm afraid.*" Moses gave such excuses when God commanded him to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. God did not accept his excuses then and He won't accept yours today. Jonah tried to run away rather than carry out his assigned task of teaching Ninevah as God

commanded him, but God brought him back with fearful consequences. If you try to run away from your God-given responsibilities of teaching, God will not intervene in such a miraculous way, but rest assured He will not be pleased.

Remember, “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31).

Resolve today that you will be a teacher of God’s word in a Bible class. Here’s how to begin.

Begin *now*. A wise man once said “*Procrastination is a thief of time.*” And you know a delay today calls for another delay tomorrow. There was never a swimmer who learned how to swim without entering the water.

Don’t wait until you know all there is to know, for that will never happen. Teach what you know. If you don’t know tomorrow’s lesson, learn it today.

Do not fear being asked a question that you can’t answer. No mortal ever lived who could answer every question asked. Do not attempt to answer that which you do not know. Tell the questioner you will research the issue and answer later.

Be honest, sincere, and interested in the souls of others. These three attributes will more than make up for the knowledge that you do not have. When your students realize your honesty, sincerity, and interest, they will overlook imperfect knowledge and any blunders you might make, but try to fake it and you’re in trouble.

You can teach others on an individual basis. This activity that we call “*personal work*” tends to frighten us out of our wits. Why is that? There are many reasons, but none are valid. Should it frighten us? The answer is “*No.*”

We have the truth! We have God’s word! We have

the time (if we are honest with ourselves). We have the candidates who need the gospel. All we lack is the will. Are you listening? All we lack is the will to work!

Certainly we have the charge. Paul wrote Timothy,

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (II Tim. 2:2).

Is there anyone of you who would hesitate to apply this charge to yourself in teaching women and children? Heed the admonition of the Hebrew writer:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (Heb. 5:12).

Yes, you can do personal work! If I can, I know you can.

You can be a servant of the church. Phoebe earned the commendation of Paul as a servant of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1-2). She gave assistance or relief to many in distress. Some of us, when we read this passage, tend to think of Phoebe as doing wonderful deeds in time of great calamity. But I suspect her commendation came as a result of doing little things on a daily basis over a long time period.

Too often we think of service in terms of magnificent deeds in turbulent times. But we perhaps best serve the church when we do those small acts of service in helping those who have small needs. Many of you are great servants of the church right now, today, for having helped your family, friends, and neighbors by acts of kindness which brighten their days and smooth out little bumps

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in the road of life. And they are such natural acts for you, a part of your nature as a Christian, that you haven’t even thought of it as serving the church.

But notice Paul cited Phoebe as being a “*servant of the church*” for having helped others. This should not surprise us for our Lord told us that loving our neighbor is second in importance only to loving God (Matt. 22:37-40). And He showed us by the “*parable of the good Samaritan*” (Luke 10:30-37) that our neighbor is anyone needing help.

Yes, the scriptures allow, yea command, us as Christian women to expound the word of God, to pray or prophesy, to guide the home, to teach others, to do “*personal work*” and to be servants of the church.

Why aren’t we doing these things today? There are many reasons, but no excuses. There are many reasons, but none acceptable.

One of the foremost reasons is fear. Fear of what? You name it. Fear of people. Fear of failure. Fear of not being accepted. These are fears conjured up in our minds. President Franklin Roosevelt once said “*we have nothing to fear but fear itself.*” He recognized that our own fear is the greatest obstacle to success. We can overcome these fears by study, preparation, and determination.

Another reason we are not doing our Christian duties is lack of self-confidence. We’re so afraid we will fail. And when we fail we hide behind excuses instead of trying again. A driver who has had an accident learns he must return to driving immediately or his fear may overcome him. If he took time to “*lick his wounds*” he likely would not drive again.

Sometimes we don’t do our Christian works because we lack conviction. True conviction will lead us to pleasing

God. Conviction stems from belief for Paul wrote:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

We can cure lack of belief, conviction, or faith through study of God's word "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17).

If we will truly be convinced that God says what He means and means what He says, then we will obey His commands.

We often neglect those works requiring teamwork for lack of leadership and organization. Are you a leader? Then lead! Are you a follower? Then follow!

Some fail to step forward to lead for fear of criticism. Just remember. If you aren't being criticized, it may be because you aren't doing anything. Criticism won't kill or maim you. Criticism didn't stop Peter, Paul or Jesus.

Some won't follow because they don't like the leader. Well, so what? Does "*doing good for the Lord*" require one to like the leader?

When leaders are in their places and followers are in their places, organization will result and good things will happen.

Occasionally the conviction is there, fear is overcome, self-confidence returns, leaders are in position, and followers are poised. Everything has been organized, but nothing happens! The work fails for lack of action. It's like you gave a party and no one came. What happened? The spark plug didn't fire, the engine didn't turn over, the wheels didn't move and the bus went nowhere. Could it be that we expended so much of our time and energies



in planning and organizing and hearing different plans described and taught that there was no time nor energies left to execute the plan?

At some point we just have to stop planning and studying plans and organizing and do as the Tee shirt slogan says, “*JUST DO IT.*”

We have many good examples in the Bible of God-fearing women to follow.

Ruth, who declared to her mother-in-law Naomi,  
...whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou  
lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my  
people, and thy God my God: (Ruth 1:16).

And so she served Naomi and she served Jehovah God and became the ancestor not only of David but also of Jesus Christ.

Hannah, who took her son Samuel, for whom she had prayed so hard and so long and “*gave him to the Lord.*” Once her prayers were answered to give her a son, she could have reneged on her promise and selfishly kept him for herself but she “*lent him to the Lord*” for all his life.

Of Mary Magdalene it is said that she “*followed Jesus.*” What greater tribute could be paid to one? She followed Him in His ministry and she ministered unto Him. She was present at His trial, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Jesus had healed her of the evil spirits of seven devils (Mark 16:9). She owed a debt to Jesus and served Him. So do we owe Him a debt that can only be repaid by “*Working for the Master.*”

The unnamed woman at the well of John 4 is our splendid example of soul winning. She came to Jesus as a skeptic and left Him as a believer. Immediately she departed to tell those of her city how that Jesus was the Messiah foretold by the prophets; how that He was the

Christ. And they believed.

John Mark's mother, Mary, serves as our example of hospitality. In Acts 12:12 we learn that she opened her home to a gathering of Christians. We need to show similar hospitality.

We are told of Tabitha or Dorcas in Acts 9:36-39 who was "*full of good works and almsdeeds.*" Her "*work for the Master*" included sewing coats and garments for the needy. Our works should include serving those in need.

The mother of Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13 became as the mother of Paul also. How many persons are out there who need the nurture of a mother and have no access to one? Is your nature such that you could serve that need of love and a guiding hand? I believe that it is, and if not, you could make it so.

Look at the small thing the unnamed woman mentioned in Luke 7:36-50 did for Jesus when she comforted Him by washing and anointing His feet. She honored Him with these actions even as His host, Simon, neglected to perform those hostly duties.

We can honor Him by comforting those in need for He said "*...Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me*" (Matt. 25:45).

And how about those unsung heroines, the unnamed women "*who labored with Paul in the gospel*" (Phil. 4:3)? We tend to overlook sometimes those who are not named but have done good works.

The best works are often those done by the unsung women of the church who go quietly about their duties of "*Working for the Master.*" Women like you.

I wish I could impress upon your minds and hearts the importance of working for Jesus while time is still

ours, to serve, to teach and save lost souls in the world.

And I pray that when time is no more and we stand before the judgment throne of God that He will say to each of us here today “*Well done thou good and faithful servant enter into the joy of the Lord.*”

But if we do not see the need nor take the time to obey the Lord as He has commanded us to do, then that time will be one of terror and fear.

We sing the old song which asks “*Must I go, and empty handed? Must I meet my Savior so?*” Let us answer with a resounding “*NO!*” and resolve that we will go to work, starting today!