

The Gospel Preceptor

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

Volume 1, Number 2

Published Monthly

October, 2018

Denominationalism

Cled E. Wallace

Toward the close of his personal ministry Jesus said: Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). He did so and years after its establishment Paul referred to it and its divine mission as being “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). It is not an accident, an afterthought nor a substitute, but is identified with the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy. It was “at hand” in the days of John the Baptist and during Christ’s ministry on earth and had an established existence when Paul was preaching the gospel. It is the “kingdom which cannot be moved” which took the place of shaken and fallen Judaism. Beyond any doubt we have a new kingdom, a new law and a new priesthood. It is a sickly hope that pines for an earthly kingdom and a revival of Judaism in view of what the kingdom of God is and the blessings it confers upon its citizens and the promises it holds out before them. We have our inheritance in heaven.

Faith Versus Flesh

In view of his purpose to build the church, or establish the kingdom, Jesus said, “And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). But Judaism had to go first. So Paul said that Christ broke down “the middle wall of partition” between Jews and Gentiles by abolishing the Jewish law, that he might establish the church which is called the “one new man.” In this church, which is also called “one body”, Jews and Gentiles without distinction are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:11-16). This church of Christ is the new kingdom of Israel where faith counts for everything and blood counts for nothing. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). It is both strange and false, this idea that is freely advocated, that a man can be a true child of Abraham by faith, reckoned with the true Israel of God, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, and not even be a member of the church at all. Paul makes it clear that Christ established the church “that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.” A man who contends that salvation is outside the church has the choice of an undesirable classification. He is either ignorant of New Testament teaching on the subject, or in rebellion against it. All Christians we read about in the New Testament were members of the church because they were Christians. They became members of the church at the same time and in the same way they became Christians. It follows quite naturally, then, that they were all members of the same body. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:12-13).

Christians Versus Sectarians

Since the New Testament was written, differences have come up over matters not in the New Testament. An Ashdodish language has sprung up to describe conflicting parties and their principles, and so we have denominations and human creeds. Believing and doing what the New Testament teaches never did and never will make a man anything but a Christian. It takes something else to make a sectarian. These

weeds of sectarianism did not grow up from the planting of the word of God. They came of another sowing. And we might do well to remember that Jesus said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

Denominationalism, which is partyism in religion, is the outstanding religious crime of today. Its condemnation is established by the testimony of its own advocates. Each one of them will inform you that you can be saved and go to heaven without being a member of his particular denomination. They do not jointly, or separately, constitute the body of Christ, for the body of Christ consisted of all Christians before there was any such a thing as a denomination in existence. The sure way to go to heaven is to get into the body of Christ by obeying the gospel, stay in there by living as the New Testament directs, and stay out of the partisan affairs which everybody admits you do not have to belong to in order to be saved.

The Church Versus Choice

"O, but one church is just as good as another," we are told so often it starts a yawn. How such a piece of pious inanity ever enjoyed the currency it has is beyond me! If I believed it, which I really think nobody does, my advice to inquirers would be brief. I'd tell them to flip a coin and choose according to heads or tails. It would be so much simpler than proving all things and holding fast to that which is good. My idea of a hard job would be to have less respect for popular religion than it has for the plain teaching of the New Testament.

It was popular for awhile to thank God for so many churches so that the whims of the individual could be satisfied in choosing what suited him. Each partisan brotherhood was supposed to emphasize some "truth" and the individual made his choice according to the "truth" he wanted emphasized. The whims of human weakness were exalted above the duty of obeying God. If a man were found who wanted to emphasize all the truth, he would have to join all the denominations or find himself cut off from some of the truth by a partisan fence. And this contradictory situation would not allow him to join even two. Who ever heard of a man being a member of two religious denominations at the same time? The whole thing was and is a farce, a travesty, to be ridiculed. A man who belongs to the body of Christ, the church of the New Testament, has all the truth that anybody else has and all the truth that others do not have. The apostles' doctrine, which is the creed of the true church, includes the entire will of God, and the membership of this church is not cut off from intimate fellowship with any of the people of God by sectarian adherence to partisan principles. Party lines will vanish and party organizations will dissolve when everybody stands firmly on the New Testament. It is the only perfect bond of union.

Popular religion with its disgraceful divisions is rapidly settling down to a sort of truce where fundamental and irreconcilable differences are politely ignored and smooth tongues cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is not the unity that Jesus prayed for and the body of Christ represents.

Many communities have been treated to so-called union revivals where denominations united to make "Christians" and divided again to make sectarians out of these same "Christians." What advantage is there in being a sectarian? Whoever makes a sectarian out of a Christian has played a dirty trick on him. But whoever makes a Christian out of a sectarian has done a divine piece of work.

The thing that makes a Christian is not Methodist doctrine, or Baptist doctrine or Presbyterian doctrine or any other partisan doctrine. The gospel does this work most effectively. It was preached by the apostles before modern denominationalism ever existed. It is no compliment to "our denominations" to recognize the fact that a universal acceptance of the New Testament would destroy every one of them.

Christianity: The Religion Of Reason

Jerry C. Brewer

The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of reason. God addressed it to that part of man which is reasonable—his mind. Therefore, one who professes that religion must be able to give a *reason* for so doing. Every religion has a basis and Christ's religion is based upon the *Bible*. Without the Bible, man would know nothing of the love of God, Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, heaven, or hell. The New Testament is God's will for you and me which He expressed through His Son Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). And Jesus said, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth..." (Matt. 28:18).

God has given Christ all power or authority to command you and me in matters religious. That's why Paul said that all we do in religion must be in the name of Christ. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks unto God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

To do a thing "in the name of the Lord Jesus," doesn't mean we can select whatever suits us in religion and say, "I'm doing this in Jesus' name." To do something in Christ's name means that He has first authorized it. No one can act "in the name of the State" unless the State authorities have authorized that person to so act. One might say he is acting in the name of the State, but unless the State has authorized him to act, his action is in vain.

The same is true regarding the religion of Jesus Christ. To truly act "in the name of Jesus Christ," one must be doing something Jesus Christ has first authorized. Unless Christ has authorized what we preach and practice, we are not acting in His name—though we may claim to be.

Jesus Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18) and the Hebrews writer begins with the statement that God has, "spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). God has spoken and His final revelation to man has come through Christ. For one's religion to be right in the sight of God, it must be ordered by the word of Christ in the New Testament.

That's why the church of Christ seems peculiar to people. We preach and practice only those things revealed in Christ's will—The New Testament—and that's what we're concerned with in this article. Why do we in the church of Christ preach and practice what we do? That is an honest question and one which anyone should be able to answer about his religion. Therefore, we are happy to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15).

What We Preach ("In Word")

We preach the same message which Jesus commanded the apostles to preach. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The only way you and I can be saved is through the power of the gospel of Christ. That's what Jesus commanded us to preach and that's what Paul said God uses to save men's souls: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16).

The gospel of Christ is the message of the church of Christ. We have no creed book but the Bible. Creed books are written by men, but the Bible is from God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In fact, men's creed books contradict the Bible and lead men astray. That's the way it was in the first century and Paul condemned men's creeds: "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" (Gal. 1:8).

What We Practice ("In Deed")

Why do we use the term, "the church of Christ?" Christ promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), He died for it (Eph. 5:25), and He is the head of it (Eph. 1:22-23). If

Christ promised it, built it, died for it and is the head of it, what would you call it?

The church has no name. The term, “the church of Christ” describes ownership, like the phrase, “the farm of John Jones.” In fact, we do not capitalize the word “church” because it is only a part of that phrase. The church of Christ did not need a name to distinguish it from others because when Christ built it there was only one true church. And since He has never established another on earth, there remains only one true church of Christ today—the one you find in the New Testament.

What are members of the church of Christ called? They are called the same thing they were called in the New Testament. Members of the church of Christ are simply *Christians*. Isn't that peculiar in our day? When asked what he is religiously, if a person replies “Christian” he is usually asked, “What denomination?” But there were *no denominations* of Christians in the New Testament. They were *not* “Paul-Christians,” “Peter-Christians,” “Apollos-Christians,” or any other *kind* of Christian. The name “Christian” is a proper name given by God to His people (Acts 11:26) and is the only name found in the Bible for Christ's followers, and the only name in which God can be glorified (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).

Why do members of the church of Christ worship as they do? Because the worship in which we engage is authorized by Christ in the New Testament. Remember, we must have His authority for all we do in word (teaching) and deed (practice). We pray to the Father in heaven during our worship and those prayers are led by men because that's what the New Testament authorizes (1 Tim. 2:8). We freely give of our money upon the first day of the week to support the work of the church in carrying the gospel to the world. We do this because this is what we are authorized to do in the New Testament (1 Cor. 16:2). We refuse to engage in fund-raising activities such as cake sales, car washes, bazaars, carnivals, or other worldly ways of raising money because they are not authorized in the New Testament. Neither do we beg money from those who aren't members of the church of Christ. We do not expect non-members to support our work. That responsibility belongs exclusively to us.

The gospel is preached in our worship by *men* in order to teach those who aren't Christians and to edify the church (Acts 20:7). Males preach because females are expressly forbidden to speak in public worship. Thus it is a sin for women to preach (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

We observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week because that is the inspired apostolic example we have in Acts 20:7. The disciples met to remember Christ's death and suffering as He commanded them to do (Matt. 26:26-29).

We sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to praise God and edify each other (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We do this without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music because God specified the kind of music He wants in those two verses—singing. To play a mechanical instrument of music in worship adds an element which He never authorized and is rebellion against His authority.

Why do we insist upon baptism for the remission of sins? Because that's the plain teaching of scripture. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). New Testament baptism is immersion in water for the remission of sins. If you had water poured or sprinkled on you for baptism, you were not baptized. Baptism requires a “going down into the water” and a coming “up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39), and Paul says we are buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). We do not baptize babies because no such practice is authorized in the New Testament, nor was it practiced by any church in the New Testament. Baptism is “for the remission of sins,” and babies have no sins to be forgiven. They are born pure and innocent.

These things are the answer, from the Word of God, “to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ” (1 Pet. 3:15-16). Come and see for yourselves. We preach only Christ and Him crucified.

“A Text Out of Context Becomes A Pretext”

Ron Cosby

The concept that the Scriptures were not written *to* us, but *for* us is helpful in making proper applications to the many Bible verses. Another helpful principle is students must keep the thoughts of the text within the context. Truly, “A text taken out of context becomes a pretext.” Misuse of the context occurs repeatedly in respect to miraculous events and promises. Some students make the terrible mistake of claiming a textual promise that has not been made to them.

One modern miracle worker who debated that miracles continue today was fond of his slogan which said, “What they did we can do.” He was mistakenly applying this thought to the miraculous healings of the first century, claiming he, like they, could perform the same miracles. This may have been impressive to some but when it was pointed out that the man making the claim could not replace missing body parts, he quieted down. No doubt the apostles could replace legs, feet, hands, fingers, and ears of those who were suffering. However, these marvels cannot be done today because such mighty works served their purpose and then ceased (1 Cor. 13). Everyday observation also shows that such marvels are no longer happening. No one today has seen a man without a leg suddenly grow a leg. If students will interpret such wonders within their first century settings, they will better understand and apply Holy Writ.

Jesus promised the Comforter. The promise was made only to the apostles. Within the context of the promise of the Comforter, students can see for themselves two necessary qualifications that the Lord Himself specified had to be met by the beneficiaries before they could rightfully claim for themselves Jesus’ promise. These two qualifications demonstrate conclusively that the benefit was restricted to first century recipients. In John 15:26-27, Jesus states the first requirement that the recipient must fulfill. He said, “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 bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” No individual since the first century has been with Jesus from the beginning. Jesus gives a second requirement, saying that the Comforter was for those He had taught personally. “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you” (John 14:26). By the very nature of what Jesus said within these two verses, this particular contextual promise of the Comforter is restricted to personal first century acquaintances that actually walked and talked with the Christ.

The following illustration will further clarify the point. A gospel preacher was discussing the subject of miracles with a holiness preacher. The holiness preacher claimed, “Jesus promised to bring to our remembrance through the Comforter.” The gospel preacher then ask him, “Where did Jesus make such a promise?” The holiness preacher stumbled and stuttered for a moment and then answered, “I don’t remember.” To which the gospel preacher responded, “John 14:26.” Ironic, isn’t it? The one claiming the promise couldn’t remember, while the other could.

First Corinthians 2:9-16 is another text that speaks of the miraculous which men claim for themselves. In this context, Paul claims he has received divine revelation; and that, he has the supernatural capability to teach what has been revealed without error. In other words, revelation, inspiration, and confirmation. The apostles, including Paul, spoke the same thing and practiced the same doctrine because each of them had been

immersed in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not inspire one of the gifted apostles to say that baptism in water was unto remission of sin and then have another deny it (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). The Spirit did not inspire one of the gifted apostles to say that baptism in the Holy Spirit was temporary and then have another teach that more than one baptism was to continue (Mat. 28:19; Eph. 4:5). So-called Spirit inspired men today contradict other so-called inspired men daily. Actually, so-called Spirit inspired men today even contradict themselves. These contradictions occur because modern man is not miraculously endowed. It is not because God is confused. You will notice that not a single one of these so-called gifted men has produced writings equal to the Bible. That is telling!

Taking texts out of their contexts causes false beliefs and false practices, and it produces unbelief in the world (John 17:21).

The Catholic Church And The Bible

O. C. Lambert

Timothy, his mother, and grandmother were highly commended because they were students of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-17). Timothy was urged to a further study (2 Tim. 2:15). The Bereans were commended very highly for searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). All of this is in the Catholic Bible as well as the Protestant Bible. Yet in spite of this, the Catholic Church is, and always has been, the world's most uncompromising foe to Bible reading.

Policy

What a Catholic writer or speaker will say depends very largely on the exigency of the hour and they are at liberty to tell just the opposite of the truth if the interests of Catholicism can be best served by that means. We must understand this principle of Catholicism to be prepared for Catholic statements on both sides of nearly every question. For instance, in this country they would prefer that the public believe they are in favor of tolerance; that they are the champion of human rights; that they are especially devoted to the Constitution of the United States, when nothing could be farther from their real feelings and designs, as I shall prove.

Propaganda

It is very common in lectures and books designed primarily for non-Catholics that they make the ridiculous claim that they have always urged Bible reading. Non-Catholics are so little informed on the real history and teaching of Catholicism that they believe it.

Prohibited

The series of quotations here given are not irresponsible statements of unknown writers but are from books which have been circulated by the millions and issued with the full authority of the Catholic Church. We will note in these statements that *during the Dark Ages*, which is called the Golden Period of Catholicism, *she did prohibit the reading of the Bible*. We note, too, that with the invention of the printing press, and its companion the Reformation, the power of Catholicism was broken and since then she has adopted other means because her prohibition could no longer be enforced. We will learn also as we proceed with our study of the many fancy ways she invented for torturing to death those who disregarded her mandates. She not only admits that she prohibited the reading of the Bible when in her glory, and that the Reformation forced her to adopt a different policy, she admits that there was no restraint on the reading of the Bible in the early Church and that the Bible occupied a much more prominent place in the New Testament Church than is true with Catholicism.

She tells us that her reasons for not wishing her communicants to read the Bible are: that it is too sacred to be read; that some parts are "unsuited to the very young or the ignorant"; and that "more harm than utility is thereby caused." She exultingly informs us that as a result of her diligent campaign to disparage the Bible her members usually

prefer human books!

Proof

Catholic Church Forbids Bible Reading.

"More than this, parts of the Bible are evidently unsuited to the very young or to the ignorant, and hence Clement XI condemned the proposition that 'the reading of the Scriptures is for all'. These principles are fixed and invariable, but the discipline of the Church with regard to the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue has varied with varying circumstances. In early times the Bible was read freely by the lay people, . . . New dangers came in during the middle ages, . . . To meet these evils, the Council of Toulouse (1229) forbade the laity to read the vernacular translations of the Bible. Pius IV (1565) required bishops to refuse lay persons leave to read even Catholic versions of Scripture unless their confessors or parish priests judged that such reading was likely to prove beneficial" (*Catholic Dictionary*, 82).

Bible Reading Not Allowed Before Luther.

"It was well for Luther that he did not come into the world until a century after the immortal discovery of Gutenberg (the printing press). A hundred years earlier, his idea of directing two hundred and fifty millions of men to read the Bible would have been received with shouts of laughter, and would have inevitably caused his removal from the pulpit of Wittenberg to a hospital for the insane" (Quoted from Martinet by Cardinal Gibbons in *Faith of Our Fathers*, 107).

Bible Too Sacred to Be Read.

"If occasionally she has seemed to restrict its use or its diffusion this, too, was through an easily comprehensible love and particular esteem for the Bible, that the sacred book might not like a profane book be made a ground for curiosity, endless discussions, and abuses of every kind." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, XV, 9).

Catholics Prefer Human Books to Bible.

"In other spiritual books the truths of the Bible are presented more fully and in a more modern style, so that we can hardly wonder that they are, as a rule, preferred; and that though good Catholic families generally have a Bible, it is more venerated than read" (*Plain Facts*, 154).

Bible Reading More Harm Than Utility.

"As it has been clearly shown by experience that, if the Holy Bible in the vernacular is generally permitted without distinction, more harm than utility is thereby caused, owing to human temerity: all versions in the vernacular, even by Catholics are altogether prohibited, unless approved by the Holy See, or published under the 'vigilant care of the Bishops with annotations taken from the Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers.'" (Pope Lee XIII., in *Great Encyclicals*, 413).

The Strictness Of God's Law

Roy J. Hearn

It is significant that nothing in the Bible is emphasized more than the demand to respect and obey the commands of God. In both Old and New Testaments it is significant that when people obeyed God they were blessed, but when disobedient and incorrigible, they were punished. To the apostles, Jesus said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). Conversely, Luke 10:16 states: "He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

Observe in John 16:13-15 that God gave the Word to Christ, Who in turn sent the Holy Spirit, Who gave it to the apostles. This is the source of all authority in religion—God to

Christ to the Spirit to the apostles through whom the Word was first revealed and now recorded for the world to obey and abide by to serve God and be saved eternally. In the above quotes, our Lord simply meant that those who received the Word received the Godhead, and those who rejected the Word rejected God, Christ, and the Spirit. So it is now. When one rejects the authority of the Bible, he is rejecting the Godhead.

In view of the widespread attitude that God's Word is not binding, that it is not necessary to be so concerned about God's Word as law, it is in order that we are reminded that nobody presumptuously sets it aside without guilt. God's laws are not given according to human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18- 31), and God demands that His Word be respected. "Things written aforetime" in the Old Testament were "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4), and can make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Wherefore, note:

Some Apparently Foolish Laws of God

The Passover

Unquestionably, God could have saved Israel from Egypt without any conditions, but in preparation for their departure He ordered the placing of the blood of a lamb upon the door posts and lintels of the houses, otherwise the firstborn in every house would be destroyed if not so protected. To fail was folly. God kept His Word and at the appointed time He passed over and the death of the firstborn resulted. Present-day preachers would have rationalized that such an arrangement was foolishness and would have sought to set aside that which became law to Israel on this occasion. Read Exodus 12 and note the results.

The Brazen Serpent

Israel sinned against God by rebelling and complaining (Num. 21:4-9). Fiery serpents were sent among them. Many were bitten and vast numbers died. When Moses asked for mercy, the Lord instructed him to make a serpent of brass, place it on a pole in the midst of the camp, and those who would look upon it would live. This was highly contrary to human wisdom, but not the results. Those who looked in exercise of faith lived, others died. It was strict, but no amount of rationalization could set it aside.

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

This captain of the host of the king of Assyria was a great man, but afflicted with that dreaded disease. After a series of mistakes, he finally found his way to the house of Elisha the prophet. Naaman was instructed to go wash in the Jordan seven times for healing. As with so many today, when God commands, he thought that such was unnecessary and that God's law could be set aside by substitution of prayer and miracle without doing anything himself. But God did not change His Word to satisfy the whims of Naaman. He could obey and be healed, or he could reject God's provision and rot. Read 2 Kings 5 and get the picture.

Other examples could be given, but these suffice to show that God does not order His own ways or design His laws according to human wisdom, but demands compliance, regardless of what man thinks.

Examples of God's Strictness

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-8 gives the first record of worship. God bore witness that Abel was righteous (Heb. 11:4). This testimony was based upon Abel's faithful obedience. Cain's offering was rejected. Why? Cain was a liberal. He felt it unnecessary to abide within the limits of God's law. He seemed to think because he had faith—some kind of faith—that he ought to be accepted. He was not accepted, and should serve as a warning to us today. God is not now pleased with some faith, or some kind of faith, but demands that we stay within the bounds of "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Strange Fire

Nadab and Abihu offered incense in the tabernacle service, using fire from an unauthorized source (Lev. 10:1-2). The incense burned and the odor ascended, but they were destroyed. They took undue liberty with God's law. The fire they used was not consecrated by the sacrifices upon the altar. When Jehovah tells us what to do and how to do it, that eliminates all else. No act of worship, unauthorized by the New Testament, reaches the throne of God. "Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Pro. 30:6).

Uzzah's Innocent Act

In being removed from the house of Abinadab, the Ark of the Covenant was hauled on a new cart driven by Uzzah and Ahio. When the ark was shaken, Uzzah spontaneously put forth his hand to steady it, and when he touched it, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:1-7). Why? Was he not honest? Was his heart not right? Perhaps. But he violated a positive command of God: "neither shall ye touch it lest ye die" (Gen. 3:3).

The liberties taken by the denominational world, and many of our brethren to copy their ways, cannot be classified as innocent as this act by Uzzah. Such departures from God's Word are generally presumptuous. Upon what ground, therefore, can anyone justify sectarian practices? How can anyone conclude that God does not mean what He says, that one can do as he pleases as long as he is sincere? This is nothing short of perversion and draws the wrath of God (Gal. 1:6-9).

The Law of Christ Is Stricter Than Moses' Law

Seeing that every transgression under Moses' law received a just recompense of reward, the question is asked: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:1-4). Reference is made to that spoken by the Lord. There is no escape! Every soul that will not hear (obey) the voice of Christ will be destroyed (Acts 3:22-23).

To take undue liberty with God's Word is to despise it. Those who despised Moses' law died without mercy (Heb. 10:28). The punishment for those who despise the law of Christ will be greater (Heb. 10:29). What can be greater than physical death as punishment? The punishment being greater, we can see that the law of Christ is stricter than the Old Testament law.

The Word of Christ is unalterable and indestructible (*Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23*). Everyone shall meet it at the judgment (*John 12:48-50; Acts 17:30-31*). To merely call Christ "Lord" is insufficient (*Luke 6:46*). To be saved, one must obey the will of Christ (*Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14*). Jesus showed that the difference between the wise and the foolish is determined by whether one obeys the Word of Christ (*Matt. 7:24-27*).

From the examples given herein (which could be multiplied), nothing is more plainly taught in the Word of God than that nobody is allowed the privilege of taking liberties with it. God has always forbidden addition, subtraction, or substitution in any way (*Deut. 4:2; 5:32; Gal. 3:15; Rev. 22:18-19*).

Those who are inclined to liberalism—in or out of the church—should take another look at what God has commanded and what He requires now. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (*Prov. 28:26*).

"Witnessing For The Lord?"

John W. West

Several years ago, I was talking with a woman who said that everything in her life was great because she was "witnessing for the Lord" every day. Many in the church today

have adopted this denominational idea of witnessing. It is being taught in many pulpits, as well as classrooms. Young people are now being taught how to “witness for the Lord.” This false teaching is not a plea for us to “seek the old paths,” but an attempt to denominationalize the church.

We want to discuss the Biblical account of “witnessing” and see if it is possible for us to witness today. We shall see from the following what it takes, according to scripture, to be a “witness for the Lord.”

Biblical Witnessing

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament defines witnessing as “to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e., to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration ... to give (not to keep back) testimony” (p. 390). W.E. Vine, in his book, *Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, on page 225 says it: “denotes one who can or does aver what he has seen or heard or knows.” Webster’s defines it as “attestation of a fact or event ... one that gives evidence ... one who has personal knowledge of something ... to see or know by personal presence or direct cognizance.” If someone witnesses a crime or an accident, he can give his personal testimony of what happened. If he was only told of that crime or accident, he cannot be a witness to it. In a court of law, when a witness is put on the witness stand, it is to give a personal testimony in the case being tried. If that person is told of the events of a case and did not witness it personally, then he will not be used as a witness in the case. A jury will not accept his testimony if it is second hand.

There are several scriptures in the New Testament that discuss the matter of witnessing: In **John 3:11** we can read, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ...” In **John 15:27**, we have recorded, “And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” Jesus, in this passage, was speaking only to the apostles. They were with Him from the beginning of His ministry and as a result would bear witness of Him. **Acts 4:33** records, “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ...” The apostles were witnesses because they had been with Jesus before His death and had seen Him after His resurrection. In **Acts 22:15**, Paul states, “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.” Paul was told that he would be a witness of God of what he had seen and heard. For one to be a Biblical witness, he would have to have “seen and heard” Jesus. The apostles could be true witnesses of Jesus because they had both seen and heard the teachings of Jesus. There is no one alive today who has personally seen Jesus or talked to Him.

Can We Witness Today?

In light of the scriptures mentioned above, it is clear that *only* one who had seen Jesus and had personally heard His teaching, could be a witness. This idea of one “witnessing for the Lord” and telling others what Jesus had done in his life is one that has come from the denominational world and not from the Bible. It has been argued that since the subject of witnessing is in the Bible, it needs to be taught and practiced. While it is true that we must follow the teachings of the Bible, there are some things in the Bible that *only* applied to the those in the first century. The method of teaching someone about salvation for us today is set forth in the great commission in Matthew 28, Mark 16 and Luke 24. There is no need for us to “give a personal testimony of what Jesus has done in my life,” but to teach them the gospel of salvation as set forth in the New Testament. It is the gospel that saves men’s souls (Rom. 1:16), not a personal testimony by an individual.

The word *witnessing* is widely used today. It is not only prevalent in the denominational world but, sadly, it has crept into the church. The teaching of witnessing is not just an issue of “opinion,” but is a matter of “doctrine.” In the future, if we don’t put a stop to practices such as these, we will be facing more and more trouble in the church. Paul warns us that “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” (2 Tim. 4:3).

What About The Thief On The Cross?

David P. Brown

Invariably in the discussion of the essentiality of baptism for, or unto, the remission of alien sins someone will raise the question: "What about the thief on the cross?" The account of the thief is found in Luke 23:39-43. Further, no doubt, this is one of the objections that is most offered to the necessity of baptism.

The objection argument can be summarized like this: 1) The thief on the cross was not baptized, 2) The thief was saved, 3) Therefore, baptism is not essential to salvation!

Is such reasoning correct? Could it be that objectors have failed to take into consideration Biblical facts that render the thief on the cross irrelevant to the issue?

In pursuing this study let us consider some necessary background material from the New Testament. Let us realize that the thief was saved. No doubt Jesus certainly had the power to save him. For while our Lord was on earth, He had the authority to forgive sins. Indeed, Jesus exercised this authority on several occasions, such as the accounts of the paralytic and the sinful woman (Luke 5:18-26; 7:36-50).

Obviously, Jesus offered the thief salvation. The thief "...said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42, 43).

A fact that must be closely considered is that the thief was saved before Great Commission baptism was commanded by Jesus Christ. Please take note that the baptism of the Great Commission was commanded following Jesus' death and resurrection (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Also, it was a baptism into Jesus' death (Rom. 6:3-4). The thief could not have been baptized into Jesus' death, since Jesus was alive on the cross.

Great Commission baptism was commanded following Jesus' death! We would do well to remember that Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, et. al., were not baptized, but they were saved by Jesus Christ's death on the cross because they were faithful to God's law under which they lived. Thus, the thief could appeal to Christ for salvation as he did.

Of course, there was the baptism of John, a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It was preached to the Jews to get them ready for Jesus (Mark 1:4-5). It was certainly possible that the thief had obeyed John's baptism, for he had to hear about Christ's kingdom and its importance from somewhere. John, Jesus, and his disciples had preached the coming Messiah and His kingdom all over the land of Israel (Mat. 3:5, 6; Luke 7:29). However, it must be understood that John's baptism was designed to be replaced by Great Commission baptism into Christ and His death for the remission of sins (cf. Acts 19:4-5; Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38).

Since we live after Jesus commanded Great Commission baptism, and with all that is said in the New Testament about baptism, how can we use the case of the thief to say baptism is not necessary to one's salvation?

But there is more to be emphasized, namely that the thief was saved before the New Testament began. Most denominational people do not recognize that there are two different Testaments comprising the Bible. There was a covenant between God and Israel (Deut. 5:2-3). That covenant governed all Israelites, such as Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, et al.—the thief on the cross included. That covenant never commanded

people to be baptized! The Law of Moses ended when Jesus died on the cross (cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col 2:14). We are under the authority of the New Testament, the testament that has been in force for almost 2,000 years, is presently in force, and will be till the end of time (cf. Heb. 8:6-7; Gal. 5:4; John 12:48). In fact, Jesus spoke of the New Testament when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Mat. 26:28). The New Testament of Christ came into force after our Lord died (Heb. 9:15-17).

Today we live under the authority of Christ revealed only in the words of the New Testament (Mat. 17:5; 28:18; John 14:6; Col. 3:17; Jam. 1:25). All men must submit to the authority of Christ revealed only on the pages of the New Testament. This authority our Lord delegated to His apostles through their undergoing the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following Jesus' death (Mat.28:18-20; John 13:20; Acts 2:1ff; 2 Pet. 3:2). The New Testament, in no uncertain terms, commands baptism to those outside of Christ in order for them to have the salvation only Jesus offers (cf. Ac 2:38; 10:48; 22:16).

How can anyone correctly appeal to the case of the thief on the cross, who lived under the Old Testament, to be an example or pattern of how one is saved today? One may as well appeal to the Old Testament accounts of David, or to the example of Isaiah as examples of how God saves people today? Therefore, we should not look to the thief on the cross as an example of how men are saved from sin today. The thief lived and died before the New Testament became the authority in all things pertaining to Christ. That, of course, includes how, where, and when one is saved from one's sins.

Indeed, the thief was saved on the cross without baptism. But the case of the thief is irrelevant to whether one must be baptized in order to become a Christian. Thus, the case of the thief on the cross is not an example for us to follow in learning how God saves men from sin today. The thief died before Christ ever commanded anyone to be baptized into His death. Also, as we have seen in our study of the Bible, the thief lived and died under the Old Testament, and it did not require baptism into Christ for the remission of sin!

We do not live under the authority of the Old Testament nor in the days of Jesus' earthly ministry. We are under the authority of Christ as expressed in the words of the New Testament that has been once for all delivered (Jude 3). And, in our Lord's last Will and Testament, He makes baptism the place where men contact the saving blood of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3, 4). Jesus, through His apostles, via the Holy Spirit, has commanded *all* people who are accountable to Him for their conduct on earth to be baptized (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Pet. 3:21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). For the believer in Christ who has repented of his sins and confessed his faith in Christ, baptism is the final step to take for one to enter into Christ where our Lord has located "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"—forgiveness of sin being one of those blessings (Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Gal. 3:27).

Verbal Inspiration

Jerry C. Brewer

Once upon a time religious people could discuss the Bible from a common perspective. While they may have twisted it to suit denominational theology, most of them believed it to be God's inspired word. Even the great denominational debaters like Rice, Bogard, and Norris defended their doctrines from that perspective against such Giants as Alexander Campbell, N. B. Hardeman, and Foy E. Wallace, Jr. But the world has changed since then. Permeated with Secular Humanism, most of the denominational world—and many within the Lord's church—deny not only the doctrine of Christ, but the *verbal inspiration* of the Book in which it is revealed.

A constant in an ever-changing world of human philosophy, the Bible remains as

verbally inspired in the second millennium as it was when it resided in the “earthen vessels” of the first. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35), and Peter affirmed that, “the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Pet. 1:25).

The term, *Verbal Inspiration* means that the *very words* of the Bible are those which the Holy Spirit directed the writers of the Sacred Volume to select in conveying God's will to man's mind. That does *not* mean that the writers were mere amanuenses in the writing of the Bible, styled by some, the *Mechanical Theory* of inspiration. God has never circumvented the natural faculties of man. But this theory renders the writers mere machines, and eliminates their own distinctive writing styles which are evident in the Bible. The eminent J. W. McGarvey rejected this theory for additional reasons:

The theory fails to account for the writer's human feelings; and for the obvious fact that in recalling to their memory what Jesus had said the Spirit only recalled what they did not already remember; and in guiding them into all truth He did not guide them into that which they already possessed (*Evidences Of Christianity*, Part IV, Ch. 7, p. 212).

Neither does verbal inspiration allow for the selection of words by the writers themselves. The theory of *Thought Inspiration* holds that the writers were given God's thoughts, and allowed to select the words by which His thoughts were expressed. But words are vehicles of thought, and it would have been impossible for *finite men* to select the words by which the mind of the *Infinite God* could be adequately conveyed. The theory of *Thought Inspiration* is espoused by so-called “translators” of modern perverted texts of the Bible, and couched in the term, *Dynamic Equivalence*. For that reason, their works are *not* word-for-word translations of the original languages.

Verbal inspiration consisted of the Holy Spirit exerting an influence upon the writers of the Bible without circumventing their natural writing styles, and giving them the very words in which God's will is expressed to man.

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, *neither do ye premeditate*: [emph. JB] but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost (Mark 13:10-11).

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say (Luke 12:11-12).

Expressly forbidden to “premeditate,” the apostles *could not have selected* the words they spoke. That they were given those words by the Holy Spirit is illustrated by Peter's reply to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:8-12:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The phrase, “filled with the Holy Ghost,” means that Peter spoke by inspiration in answering those before whom he and the other apostles were arraigned. He took “no thought beforehand” nor did he “premeditate.” The words he spoke were not his, but the Holy Spirit's.

In his first epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul contrasted the wisdom of men with

the wisdom of God, proving that God's wisdom is far superior to that of men (1 Cor. 1:18-2:8). Then he quoted Isaiah 6:4: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." That verse referred to the gospel scheme of redemption which God had hidden beneath the types and shadows of the old covenant and had not been revealed to the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. But in the next verse, Paul said those things had *now been revealed*. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). In verse 11, he explained that no man can know another man's mind, as no man can know what is in the mind of God, and followed that with this statement:

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

As no man can know the thoughts of another without those thoughts being revealed in the *man's* words, so no man could know God's hidden plan without being told in *God's* words. Thus, Paul wrote that inspired men had received, "the Spirit which is of God" in order to "know the things...of God" and spoke God's will in words *not their own*, "but which the Holy Ghost teachest." The "deep things of God" was the gospel plan of salvation that God had "prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

God's word, expressed in the Bible, is as *verbally inspired* today as it when it reposed in the minds of inspired men in the first century. Upon that great foundation stone, our faith rests. If the very words of the Bible were *not* breathed out from God, then our faith is vain and our hope is lost.

Scriptural Silence

Dub McClish

What is the significance of Biblical silence, or has it any significance at all? Does Scriptural silence grant freedom to act in religious matters, as many allege? Does the silence of the Bible have a prohibitive force? How shall we deal with the silence of Scripture? All such questions relate to the subject of Biblical authority for doctrine and practice and the way by which that authorization is ascertained.

The foregoing questions may appear immaterial, given the fact that the modern approach to "Christianity" pays little attention to the New Testament for the most part. The only "authority" that matters to most Protestants is whatever will draw the crowds and keep them coming. Simple New Testament worship has been prostituted, redefined in terms of "Christian" rock band and "praise team" performances and hand-clapping/hand-fluttering cultic hysteria. The pop-psychology, make-me-feel-good "sermonettes" that come from so many pulpits are a travesty when contrasted with the Bible's prophets and preachers.

But how do these practices relate to Biblical silence? The worship corruptors are ready with their defense: "The Bible doesn't say **not** to employ such in worship." In other words, if the Bible doesn't explicitly forbid a practice, they assert their right to engage in it.

Only in religion, it seems, are men willing to follow this flawed course. It is axiomatic that when a doctor prescribes a medicine, he authorizes only that medication. Only a fool would ask him for an attendant list of all of the medicines he was **not** prescribing. Those who shop Online will never be asked to list all of the items they are **not ordering**. The doctor's silence regarding other medications and one's silence regarding additional merchandise is therefore **prohibitive**—rather than permissive—in force. The doctor, patient, merchant, and buyer understand that fact without its

being stated.

The Bible calls attention to the prohibitive force of God's silence. Nadab and Abihu presumed upon God's silence regarding the fire in their censers. They lost their lives by doing so. Their fire was not "strange" because God had explicitly forbidden it, but because He "commanded it not" (Lev. 10:1–2). His silence **prohibited** rather than permitted. Jesus could not be a priest on earth (Heb. 8:4) because He was of the tribe of Judah, "as to which tribe Moses **spake nothing** concerning priests (7:14). Scriptural silence never implies authorization. To allow all that is not expressly forbidden is to open a Pandora's Box and destroy its lid—where "Christianity" is today.

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How A Religious Man Became A Christian

Fred E. Dennis

All Christians are religious, but not all religious people are Christians. We have millions of people in our own beloved country who are deeply and sincerely religious, but who are not Christians. One may be religious, but religiously wrong. We have accounts in the book of Acts of individuals who were very religious, but who were not Christians and, consequently, not saved.

In Acts 8:26-40 we have a rather minute description of a man who was sincere and honest and who was certainly very religious, but he was not a Christian. This man was an officer under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was evidently a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion. In our lesson, we are introduced to him after he had been to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way back to Africa. In other words, he had made a journey of 1,000 miles to worship the God of heaven. He had dropped the heavy duties of his office and had gone to worship God. He had a very lucrative position. In those days Ethiopia was one of the great countries of the world and this man was the queen's treasurer. But he took time off to go to worship. This man knew nothing but the Old Testament law. He knew that under that law, God had recorded his name in Jerusalem, and that every male in Israel was to go there to worship at the three annual feasts. How sincere he was!

After being at Jerusalem, he was on his way back home. He was going along the road reading the Old Testament. He was reading a hard passage for an unconverted Jew to understand. He was reading this passage from Isaiah 53: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living." He was pondering on this scripture. He could not understand it. He knew not of whom the prophet spoke.

In this neighborhood there was a gospel preacher by the name of Philip. An angel of the Lord spoke to the preacher. Please note that the angel did not appear to the man who was to be converted. The man who became a Christian knew nothing of the appearance of the angel unless the preacher told him. Even if the angel had made his appearance to the man, he would not have told him what to do to be saved. The Lord has committed the preaching of the gospel into the hands of men (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:2).

The angel of the Lord told Philip to, “Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” This way was the road the eunuch was traveling. The preacher “arose and went.” The Lord is well pleased with any individual who will thus obey. Of course, when the preacher reached this road, he had done what the angel told him to do. What next? The religious man was passing along the road. Now, the Spirit speaks to the preacher. Please note that the Spirit did not speak to the man who was to be converted.

The Spirit told the preacher to join himself to the chariot. How readily he obeyed! The record says, “And Philip ran thither to him.” How anxious gospel preachers ought to be to “run” to the unsaved! Some of us are much more anxious to “run” to the saved! Philip heard the man reading the passage from Isaiah. The first thing he did was to ask this question: “Understandest thou what thou readest?” Well did Philip know that if the man understood this passage he knew something at least about the Blessed Christ. But he did not understand it! He answered the question by saying, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” He desired someone to teach him. How easy to teach one who wants to be taught! He desired Philip to come up and sit with him.

So we have the beautiful picture of an earnest, humble gospel preacher and a lost soul riding along the highway. What did the preacher preach? This great question can be answered in one word. “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” What a religious revolution would be worked if all preachers knew nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified! What this old world needs is Jesus Christ. What you need, my gentle reader, is Jesus Christ. Philip began preaching with a prophetic declaration concerning the Christ. He would come up to His birth, His life, to His vicarious death, His burial, and His resurrection and His ascension and coronation as King on David’s throne. He kept right on until he had told this dear soul what the Lord commanded him to do to be saved.

No preacher is preaching Jesus Christ who does not preach what Christ wants preached. No one can preach Jesus Christ without telling lost souls what Christ would have them do to be saved. No preacher is telling what Jesus says folks must do to be saved unless he tells them plainly that they must be baptized to be saved. This is what Jesus said to preach. Hear Him: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

This is what Philip preached. How did this honest, sincere, religious man receive such preaching? Here is the record: “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Just as soon as he learned what God would have him do, he was ready to do it. May God help us all to be that honest.

Did the preacher have him tell some “religious experience”? No, a thousand times, no! Did he have some church to “vote” on it? Indeed, he did not! What did the preacher say? Here it is: “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Now, note that the man said he believed: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” He did not believe that he was already saved, but he believed that Jesus Christ is God’s Son.

Upon this simple confession of faith he was baptized. “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

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Faith And Baptism

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The person whom the Bible designates a believer is one who having been persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, accepts him in implicit trust as his Saviour (John 20:31). He is not one who has merely assented to gospel truth or fact, but one who has believed with all the heart; a belief that involves every faculty of his intelligent being-his reason, his sensibilities, his will (Rom. 10:9-10). The noun "pistis," (faith) means confidence, trust. The verb "pisteus" (believe) means adherence to, reliance on. The nobleman's (Acts 8) belief with all his heart meant his reliance on what Phillip had preached unto him as essential elements of salvation. His faith in Jesus and his confession of that faith meant nothing less than his acceptance of all terms and conditions of salvation laid down in the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:12). And the conviction of those "pricked in their hearts" on Pentecost (Acts 2) was a faith that yielded the willing spirit of obedience in the pleading question, "What shall we do?" Such a faith implies and embraces all necessary conditions named in God's law of pardon.

Salvation

The commission according to Mark says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This salvation is the forgiveness of past sins; pardon, the complete absolution of guilt; remission of sins. But this pardon is an executive act. It takes place in the mind of God in heaven; not in the heart of man on earth. The thing we know as inner consciousness cannot determine by inward feelings that pardon has been granted. Pardon can be known only as God declares it. The man in the penitentiary can know that he is pardoned only as the executive, the Governor, declares it. No warden of such an institution would release an inmate of it on the ground of an inner consciousness that the Governor had pardoned him. Inner consciousness cannot testify 'to anything outside of the man himself; it cannot measure or weigh any outward thing. There must be a standard for all such. And God has a law of forgiveness-the sinner is not pardoned until he has complied with it.

By Faith

The issue is not whether one is saved or justified by faith—to that we all agree. The issue is in the degree of faith-when is one saved by faith. The Baptist order is repentance before faith, but they do not mean salvation by repentance before faith. The Bible order is faith before baptism. Why should a Baptist insist that salvation comes by faith before baptism seeing that they will disavow salvation by repentance before faith in their order of things? True, faith comes before baptism, but one is not saved by faith before baptism any more than one would be saved by repentance before faith in the Baptist order of things. This one thing answers every argument that can be made by a Baptist against baptism on the ground that one is saved by faith and that faith precedes baptism.

All passages that declare justification by faith (Rom. 5: 1) and others of like import we accept and believe and claim. But we deny that any of these passages teach or imply

that one is saved by faith before he is baptized. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

By Faith

When The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists the men of faith in the former dispensation, by faith they were approved but faith plus what? By faith Abel offered his sacrifice and was justified by it. By faith Enoch moved in godly fear. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called. Try faith alone on any of these examples of justification by faith and see how it works. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.” (Jas. 2:21, 22). In further proof that it requires an active faith to produce justification, contrast the cases of the priests and rulers who believed. In one case (Acts 6:7) a great company of priests became obedient to the faith. In the other case (John 12:42) many of the rulers believed but would not confess. Both of these companies of Jewish officials believed; but only one company was justified. It proves that faith only does not save, else both companies would have been saved seeing that they both believed. “Ye see, then, that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.” (Jas. 2:24).

Faith Plus

If a man exercises faith but his faith does not exercise him; either the subject has a poor faith or the faith has a poor subject. Some plain passages from the New Testament suggesting some pointed questions will serve to show that mere faith does not save.

First: “But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”(John 1: 12) Question: How does a believer exercise the power to become a child of God?

Second: “And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.” (Acts 11:21) Question: What did these believers do when they turned unto the Lord?

Third : “Repent ye, therefore, and turn again (be converted) that your sins, may be blotted out.” (Acts 3:19) Question: What did these penitent persons do when they turned?

Fourth : “And without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God ‘must believe that he is.” (Heb. 11:6) Question: What does one who has believed do when he comes to God? Becoming a child of God does not consist in mere faith, for in the first passage above it is stated that the believer is given the power to become a child of God. One cannot be given the power to become what he already is, therefore, the believer as such is not a child of God. Turning to God does not consist in faith for the second passage above states that they believed and turned. The turning followed the believing. What was the turning act?

Again, turning to God does not consist in repentance, for in the third passage above the Jews were told to repent and turn. What was the turning act in this case? Moreover, coming to God did not consist in faith, for in the fourth passage above it is stated that one cannot come before, or without faith; the coming, therefore, must follow believing. Then what is the coming act? The turning act in Acts 11:21 is not faith, for they believed and turned. The turning act in Acts 3:19 is not repentance, for they were told to repent and turn. The coming act in Heb. 11:6 is not faith, for there it is said that one must believe in order to come to God. If one is saved at the point of faith—by faith without further acts of obedience—then he is saved (1) before he comes to God (Heb. 11-6); (2)

before he becomes a child of God (John 1:12) ; (3) before he turns to God (Acts 11:21; 3:19).

The Bible order in these passages is this: The persons who believed turned to God; the persons who turned to God were pardoned; hence, faith, turning, pardon. It follows just as certainly as day follows night that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

The Turning Act

It is evident that the turning act is not faith, nor repentance, for in the passages cited they believed and repented and afterward turned to God. There is but one act left in which the turning can consist. Baptism is that act. Baptism is the act in which faith obeys. It is the turning act. Who shall be saved? “He that believeth and is baptized.” It is the command that points out the man who is saved. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be”—what? Shall be saved?—not if he is already saved before he is baptized in the exact sense that the passage says “shall be saved.” If one is saved before he is baptized the whole construction of Mark 16:16 is a fallacy. The doctrine of salvation before baptism changes the order and tenses of the verbs in Mark 16:16. The passage reads : “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” To fit the doctrine of faith salvation without baptism it would read : “He that believeth and is saved shall (or may) be baptized.” But Jesus did not say is saved nor shall be baptized. He said is baptized and shall be saved. The change in the order necessary for a Baptist to get salvation before baptism involves a change in the tenses of the verbs the Lord used. That is simply too much change for anybody to make who has an ounce of respect for the word of God. Belief and baptism are joined together by the copulative conjunction “and”—the coupling pin. To both thus united is annexed the promise “shall be saved,” which is conditional upon complying with both belief and baptism. Respecting salvation—the whole matter of salvation depends on faith—the exercise of it, “and is baptized.” Respecting damnation—the whole matter of damnation depends on faith—the lack of it, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

If it be urged that the text does not say “he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned,” we answer certainly not, the disbeliever cannot be baptized. It all depends on which way the man, is headed as to the conditions necessary to his destination. If he is headed toward perdition disbelief is enough to damn him. If he is headed for salvation it requires every condition named to reach it. When God appoints two things for the accomplishment of one end, it takes both of those things to accomplish that end. Is there anybody who will dare to say “he that believeth and will not be baptized shall be saved”? And does any preacher have the authority to say “he that believeth and is not baptized shall be saved?”

Some Errors Compared

The Romanist says: He that is baptized shall be saved—without faith. The Baptist says: He that believeth is saved—without baptism. The Bible says: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Which shall we take? Paraphrasing further, suppose it should read: “He that believeth and is baptized shall receive five thousand dollars?” There is not a person who could not understand it. Or, if Noah had said “he that believeth and enters the ark shall be saved” would it have meant that one who believed could have been saved without entering the ark? What the Son of God joined together, let no preacher put asunder.

***The Gospel Preceptor* is published monthly and delivered by email. To receive a free monthly subscription, simply email your request to txjch@att.net.**

Editor & Publisher – Jerry C. Brewer

Methodists Reap The Fruit Of Man's Religion

Jerry C. Brewer

Eighteen years ago, the United Methodist Church (UMC) was in the midst of a battle over homosexual issues at its General Conference. That battle was the focus of an article in a western Oklahoma area shopper. The writer was obviously a member of the UMC and, rightly, lodged strenuous objections to the proposal that Methodists accept “same-sex marriage”:

...this week the United Methodist Church at the General Conference will either divide or reaffirm the doctrine of the church on same-sex marriages and homosexuality. I say divide, because the majority of the members believe in the Methodist Discipline statement on the subject, which prohibits it (“Methodists To Vote...”, *The Penny News*, May 3-9, 2000, p. 2).

The writer, who signed the article with the initials “e-l-s,” went on to chastise, “many of the officials, which includes some Bishops because they do not follow the Book of Discipline.” The irony of the writer's position is that it is correct on the issue of sodomite “marriage,” but bases that position on the *wrong authority*. It takes as great authority to alter or abolish a law as it does to enact that law in the first place—a fact of which the writer is obviously ignorant. The *Methodist Book of Discipline* is a man made document. It did *not come from God* and, since men made it, men have the right to alter or abolish it. That is not true of the Bible. It came from God and man has *no right* to change it in any fashion (Deut. 4:2; Matt. 24:35; John 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 22:18-19).

The issue addressed in the article is the bitter fruit of man's attempt to subtract from, add to, or “improve” upon the word of God. If men have the right to create a religious document, they certainly have the right to alter that document. It should come as no surprise to Methodists—or anyone else—that when men presume to legislate spiritual and moral laws, this will be the result. The Bible condemns sodomy in no uncertain terms, and God does not need a *Book of Discipline*, or any other human instrument, to ratify what His eternal wisdom has already decreed. The *Book of Discipline* is *not* the word of God. It is the foundation of a human system of religion that shall be rooted up (Matt. 15:13-14).

The article continues,

...how they acquired their ideas that God would sanction this is beyond the rest of us and how they came to believe that they should speak for all of us is even more far-fetched. They need to know that they have not been given any Divine authority to defy the Word of God and if they choose to continue this disobedience, they should get out of the Methodist Church and find one that will allow them to practice their own version of ???? religion (Ibid).

When the writer and others became Methodists, they subscribed to the tenets of the *Book of Discipline*. In so doing, they placed themselves under the authority of Methodist Church officials, including their Bishops. They subscribed to a religious system that was founded upon the will of men, so it should not seem “far-fetched” to them that their officials should “speak for all of us.” Creeds that are *written* by fallible men can also be *altered* by fallible men. That includes the UMC whose *Book of Discipline* specifies government by a general conference that has full power to *make rules and regulations* for the church.

Morally decent and upright Methodists who find the proposal repulsive should repudiate their unscriptural arrangement for church government. God has spoken through His Son and made no provision in the New Testament for men to alter His authoritative decrees (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:18). Neither does the Bible authorize a “general conference” to make rules and regulations for the church. All legislative, executive, and judicial authority in religion belongs exclusively to Jesus Christ (John 14:26; 16:12-13; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 17:30-31). Methodists can easily remove any and all authority for humans to legislate in spiritual and moral matters by

abandoning their *Book of Discipline* and submitting to God's will expressed in the all-sufficient, God-breathed, Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The writer is correct in saying, “they have not been given any Divine authority to defy the Word of God,” but that objection is more than 200 years too late. The UMC is the direct descendant of The Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, which originated Dec. 24, 1784 in a Baltimore conference. That conference adopted the *Book of Discipline* which John Wesley prepared. In it, he reduced the 39 articles of the *Episcopal Prayer Book* to 24 articles, added one covering the rulers of the United States, and incorporated the “Apostles' Creed”—which Anglicans borrowed from Roman Catholicism—into Methodist worship. John Wesley was not “given any Divine authority to defy the Word of God” but he did so anyhow. No person ever became a Methodist except by subscribing to Methodist doctrines and regulations expressed in the *Book of Discipline*, which came from the minds of fallible men. The Bible only makes only Christians, but the *Book of Discipline* makes only Methodists, and its very *existence* defies God's Word.

“E-L-S” writes that those who promote same-sex marriages should, “get out of the Methodist Church and find one that will allow them to practice their own version of ???? religion.” The fact is they they are *already in a church* which allows that. Methodism—a very poor counterfeit of Christianity—was created by men who have the authority to practice any “version of religion” they choose. If Methodist officials accepted the Bible alone as their rule of faith and practice, they would give up “their own version” expressed in the *Book of Discipline*. In the last 2,000 years, the New Testament has *never made a Methodist*, and during those two millennia, no Methodist ever found the Methodist Church in God's Word, nor will he ever find it there. Methodism is a product of *man's* wisdom. It did *not* come from God.

Heaven And How To Miss It

J. D. Tant

The voice of mourning and the day of sorrow come to the happiest of homes here. But we have the promise of no sorrow in heaven. The fond mother and the devoted father often must say farewell to the child they love dearer than life. But in heaven there is no disunion, no sad farewells.

Today, we hear the voice of joy and laughter, but before the sun goes down, sad and bitter tears are shed. But John tells us that God will wipe away all tears (Rev. 21:4). This life is filled with disappointments, but in heaven we shall be like Him and disappointments will be unknown.

In many homes, there is sickness from the cradle to the grave, but no one is sick in our Father's home. Finally, death will come to claim all, but we are taught that no death will enter the city of our God, for it will be life eternal and we shall serve Him forever and forever.

All of these blessings held out to intelligent men and women should create within them a desire that heaven should be their home. If this is the home that God has promised to those who love Him, how is it possible for me to miss it?

By Indolence. Many times in the Bible do we read the warning to take heed how we hear. Many hear with a lingering thought that some day they will accept the Lord and all will be well. They put off the matter from time to time until death may come and find them unprepared.

By Neglect. God calls but, like the indolent, they neglect that call until it's too late.

By Morality. Perhaps this is the greatest drawback to Christianity now existing in the religious world. They hear it from every pulpit: “Just as good people in one church as in another.” “Good and bad in all churches.” “Many good people outside all the churches.” Then, they draw the conclusion that as men are good they will be saved. But they forget that God never promised salvation to man on account of his goodness. Jesus says, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Yet the new birth is not considered by many in our time. People only look at a man's goodness. There are just as good people found in heathen nations as are found in nations professing to follow Christ. Among infidels who do not believe the Bible, you often meet good, honest, and truthful men. If God saves a man because he is good, why not save infidels?

There are just as good men outside the Masonic Lodge as in it, but do Masons bury a man with Masonic honors because he is good, or because he is a Mason? It matters not how good a man is, the law does not force him to support a woman to whom he is not married.

There is a spiritual law which makes men and women Christians. It is called, “the law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2). In obedience to this law, we become children of God. Nothing short of obedience will make us free, regardless of the idea of goodness (Rom. 6:17).

By Fear Of Persecution. We can miss heaven by fear of persecution. We learn that while Jesus was here in person that many believed on Him, but for fear of persecution they would not confess Him because, “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43)

By Procrastination. Many of us are like Felix in Acts, chapter 24. We say, “go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).

By Vain Religion. There are many religious people who will never reach heaven. They are worshiping all the time, but Jesus taught that it is a vain worship, because they teach “for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

By Deliberate Sin. Jesus taught that certain people desire darkness instead of light, because “their deeds are evil” (John 3:19).

Now, after taking a look at these things that can cause me to miss heaven, I ask, “How can I *gain* heaven?”

By Diligence. We are commanded to give all diligence to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10).

By Remembering God In One's Youth. Timothy had known the Scriptures from youth, which were able to make him wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Solomon says, “Remember now they creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh; when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1-2).

By Spirituality. Religion is not always Christianity. To be a child of God, one is to be led by the Spirit of God through the words the Spirit revealed (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Men and women should not be led by their feelings or the doctrines of men, but by the Spirit-inspired word of God, the Bible.

By Living As A Child Of God. Do not grow weary in well doing or in persecutions (1 Cor. 15:58). We are taught that no man lives a godly life in Christ without suffering persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

Accept His Offer Now. “Today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7) is the warning coming to us from God all the time. We can gain heaven only by following the

Christian religion and that is done by doing the following:

1. Hearing Christ in all things (Acts 3:19-21)
2. Believing with all our hearts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).
3. Repenting of our sins, as commanded by Christ (Luke 13:3; 24:27).
4. Confessing that Christ is God's Son (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10)
5. By being baptized for the remission of sins as found in Acts 2:38.
6. By enduring faithfully to the end (Rev. 2:10).

If these plain, simple rules will give us a home in heaven where neither sickness, sorrow, nor death will ever come, why should we not all strive to enter there?

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Does One Have To Be A Member Of The Church To Be Saved?

Dub Mowery

When asked this question, a large percentage of people will answer in the negative. A favorite cliché among them is, "No, the church doesn't save you. Jesus is the Savior, not the church."

We wholeheartedly agree that Jesus is the Savior of mankind. Concerning Mary, an angel revealed unto Joseph, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). to the shepherds

watching their sheep at night, the angel who appeared to them said, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). We have proclaimed this truth for more than 50 years of preaching the gospel. Nevertheless, the above cliché is misleading! It indicates that those making the statement do not understand that of which the church consists.

The English word *church* is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*. That Greek word means, “the called out.” In obeying the gospel of Christ, a person is translated by the Heavenly Father into the kingdom of His dear Son (2 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:14; Col. 1:13-14). The same individuals who make up the church are in the spiritual kingdom of the Lord, as revealed in the first chapter of the Colossian epistle.

After having been scripturally baptized, those persons are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:36-47). This is the new birth, of which Jesus declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

The church and God’s spiritual kingdom are one and the same. Other metaphors liken the church to a physical body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Concerning this figurative language, the apostle Paul stated that the church is the body (Eph. 1:22-23). and that the body is the church (Col. 1:18). Our Lord is the Savior of His spiritual body, which is the church. At Ephesians 5:25, Paul said, “...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.”

For one to declare that, “You do not have to be in the church to be saved” is illogical. The church *is the saved!* Acts 2:47 says, “...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” To say, “You do not have to be in the church to be saved” makes as much sense as saying, “You do not have to be a part of the saved to be saved.”

Of course, a person does not have to be in a denomination to be saved, because the Lord never founded a denomination and none existed in the first century A.D. The Son of God did not die for a denomination, and there is no Biblical authority for any denomination to exist. When a person is immersed in water for the remission of sins by the authority of the Father, the Son. and the Holy Spirit, he is born into the family of God, which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15) and *that* is what Christ saves.

Each month, brother Harrell Davidson answers questions from readers in his column, entitled, *What Saith The Scriptures?* Readers who have questions should submit them to brother Davidson by email at harrelld@charter.net

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

The question this month is here duplicated in part: “**Can two churches oversee a preaching school in a foreign land?**” There is also included an illustration with churches that we will call church “A” and the other one we name church “B.” The question asked for authority, if such exists, for such an arrangement. Thanks for your question. We will be happy to entertain such questions each month through this fine medium – *The Gospel Preceptor*.

Three key words in the question are, “two churches oversee.” Never in the Scriptures do we find two congregations overseeing the same work. In fact. The church in each location is independent of any other congregation. As early as Acts 15: 1-2 the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss the matter of circumcision that Jewish brethren were falsely teaching. Please notice that the elders and apostles in Jerusalem came together to discuss this matter and settle the matter and it was done according to Acts 15.

Absent from this meeting were elders of any other congregation on the face of the earth to make the decision. In Acts 20:17-38, when Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, no other eldership was invited from anywhere in Asia Minor. “Why?” one might ask. Verse 28 states the *why*: “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.”

The Holy Spirit made the elders at Ephesus overseers of *only the church at Ephesus* and no other one. They did not oversee the church in Thessalonica, Corinth, or any other congregation. In many regards each congregation, then and now, are different in character and makeup. Thus, congregation’s “A” and “B” have no authority or Scriptural precedent to oversee or rule over a work jointly. Even if churches “A” and “B” were otherwise both Scriptural in all they did they do not have authority to jointly oversee any work.

Each congregation of the Lord’s church is autonomous. *Autonomy* comes from two root words. *Auto* means self and *nomy* means rule, from *nomos* in the Greek. Put them together and we have self-rule. Each congregation of the Lord’s church is thus independent of any other congregation.

Let’s look at the rule for a moment. When it comes to doctrine Christ, the Word of God is the rule (Cf. Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17). So, in matters of doctrine we are to follow the Word of God. There is no super-structure or society that rules over the local congregation. For instance, in matters of *judgment* each congregation is authorized to make those decisions. Suppose now that congregation “A” desires worship to begin at 9 a.m., but congregation “B” desires that congregation to meet at 10 a.m. Is there anything wrong with that scenario? Not in the least. However, *if* congregation “A” had total authority all services of the church *everywhere* would have to convene at 9 a.m.

There is no Scriptural authority for two congregations to jointly rule over anything. One congregation may oversee a work and ask others for support. Paul asked various congregations to contribute toward the poor at Jerusalem, which they did, and he took those funds to the elders at Jerusalem and *they* made the distributions as they saw fit (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8, 9). No other congregation had the authority to oversee that work—need.

A Resource For Further Study

**...Unto The Churches Of Galatia: A Commentary
On Paul's Epistle To The Galatians**

By Jerry C. Brewer

This commentary is *free* to our readers. Send an email message to txjch@att.net requesting your copy, and we will email it to you in PDF format, or download it from our website at www.thegospelpreceptor.com