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Editor's Notes

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Moral Issues

Jim Miller
Gray, Maine

Neither word has found place in our English translation of the Gospel; but both words have some close relatives there, and are normally understood. Webster defines the word "moral" (adj.) as "conforming to a standard of what is right and good." The word "is-sues," while found in the Scripture, it is not there in the
sense we normally use it. One comment which Webster makes on this word is "point of controversy." Perhaps this is enough to set the stage for what we wish to say.

Let us first identify these moral issues. Galatians 5:19-20 is the first list that comes to mind: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, "and such like." Paul's "such like" seems to include all others mentioned in the Scriptures (Rom. 1; Col. 3; 1 Cor. 5, 6, etc.). Some of these moral issues are not so easily identified: hatred, covetousness, envy, malice, etc. Others, of course, are more easily recognized: Drinking, gambling, unscriptural marriages, murder, etc.

There is a fixed standard of "what is right and good" by which these things are to be governed. That standard is, of course, the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25; Phil. 1:27). Jesus demanded a higher standard in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:20). It appears that every time society lowers the standard, many in the church wish to do the same thing; and this is where/when moral issues become a battle-ground. God does not change (Mal. 3:6); Jesus does not change (Heb. 13:8); and, his law by which we are to live does not change. It cannot do so if it is the "perfect law of liberty." I fail to see the difficulty in understanding these simple facts, or the application to moral issues.

The moral issues over which controversy is raging today are: divorce and remarriage problems, drinking of intoxicants, gambling, dancing, and homosexuality; at least this is so in my part of the country. The problems here are not to be assigned to a lack of plainness of the Scripture; rather, it seems to be a desire to lower that perfect standard. Compromising that standard cannot accomplish any-thing good. Jesus has plainly stated the only cause for divorce, and the ones who have a right to remarry (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Any deviation from this is a lowering of the standard. The same can be said of other moral issues. In the final analysis the question would appear to be

What is our attitude toward the standard given by the Lord? Having said these things, we are ready for the second part of our article.

Discipline

Webster defines this word as, "Treatment suited to a disciple or learner; educational training, drill; subjection to rule; severe training, instruction, chastisement, correction."

From this definition, we can easily see that discipline is both preventive and
corrective.

All church-related discipline has a two-fold purpose: (1) To save souls (James 5:20; Gal. 6:1), (2) To protect the purity of the church (Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Cor. 5:6). If, for some reason, we cannot save the soul, we can protect the purity of the church, and this must be done.

Preventive discipline has to do with instructions or teaching (Acts 20:28-30; Tit. 2:11-12; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:28; 2 John 9-11). Proper teaching will deal with these moral is-sues, hopefully preventing people from participating therein. This stresses the importance of the local teaching program; such programs should be designed to include strong teaching on the moral issues.

Corrective discipline has to do with seeing to it that all members of a local church follow the gospel or suffer the consequences. This is punishing in nature; but, it is frequently necessary. Corrective discipline begins with the effort(s) to restore the guilty to a proper relationship to the Lord (Gal. 6:1; Tit. 3:10-11); we do this in meekness and love. The fact that such people are separated from God, in a lost condition, destined to eternal torment, clearly shows the urgency of such efforts.

The immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5 was to be disciplined, the disorderly of 2 Thessalonians 3 were to be disciplined, the false teacher of Romans 16:17 was to be disciplined, and the heretic of Titus 3 was to be disciplined. Any person persisting in or continuing in sin must be disciplined.

Discipline, whether preventive or corrective is for our own good (Heb. 12:4-11). When practiced, corrective discipline is never pleasant or joyous; it fact it is grievous. But, it "yeldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Such discipline has its place even in private offenses (Matt. 5:22-24; 18:15-17), and it must be practised without respect of persons (James 2:9). This brings us to the third part of our study.

Fellowship

We come into fellowship with the Father and the Son through the agency of their word (1 John 1:3); and, that fellowship is maintained exactly the same way (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9-11).

In the context of our study, the word "fellowship" has to do with relationship. Exactly what is our relationship to the one who has been disciplined? How do we treat them? What association are we allowed with them? The answer to these and other questions may be had through a study of some passages involved.
Romans 16:17, says that we are to "mark" the false teachers and to "avoid them." To avoid is to "turn away from" and "to turn aside" (Vine). How can we avoid anyone by planning to be with them? This provides some response to our questions.

In reference to the immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5, we are told six things to do: Put away, judge them, with such a one don’t eat, not to company with, purge out, and deliver such a one unto Satan. The word "company" (sunanamignumi) is defined by Vine as, "to mix, mingle, to have or keep company with." Does not this reflect upon the answers to our questions?

More proding for our answers may be found in 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15. We are to "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly..."; and, we are to "have no company with him." Yet, Paul here says, "Count him not as an enemy; but admonish him as a brother." To admonish anyone is to both instruct and to warn. This would appear to specify the limited contact which we may have with the one who has been disciplined.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). This is an obvious command, in fact two commands: (1) Have no fellowship with, and (2) Reprove them. Beck's translation says, "Don't have anything to do with." To "reprove them" may make it a necessity to be with them; but, this contact would need to be for the purpose of reproofing them. Thus, again, limits are drawn for us. When we make an effort to fellowship those who have no fellowship with God, we become "partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 11)

We need to "continue stedfastly" in the apostles' fellowship (Acts 2:42); yet, we must not forget that, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6). On the other hand, "if we walk in the light, . . . we have fellowship one with an-other." This most certainly is true where moral issues are concerned! May each of our lives be such, morally, that the standard will be held above the filth and scum of the world. To that extent, we may be able to say with Paul, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal.2:20).

Till next we meet
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WILL GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

Dub McClish
Denton, Texas

God has “changed His mind” on occasion (e.g., Exo. 32:7–14; Num. 14:11–20). If God never “changes His mind” about anything Deism is justified, and many of our prayers are vain. Often the very aim of our supplications is to persuade God to intervene providentially in situations that (we understand from the Bible) would not contradict His immutability. These prayers involve cases in which we fear He might not act if we did not make our petitions known.

However, all of these occasions (concerning which we hope to persuade God to act providentially because we have prayed) have a common thread. They relate to His dealings with our finite and temporal circumstances. Had He destroyed the wilderness murmurers and created a new nation through Moses, it would not have altered His promises to Abraham, including the promised Seed Who would bless all nations (Gal. 3:16).

When we pray about various circumstances or people, those things for which we pray are indifferent matters regarding God’s plan to redeem mankind. We may earnestly desire and pray that God will restore the health of a dedicated brother or sister. However, his or her salvation does not depend on whether or not the prayer is answered in keeping with our desire.

No one with even a smattering of Bible knowledge would ask God to save some sincere pagan through Buddha. The general thrust of the Bible, to say nothing of numerous explicit statements (e.g., John 14:6), renders such a prayer unthinkable.

It would be absolute folly to ask God to save an impenitent sinner in his sins, an infidel in his unbelief, or a reprobate against his own will. By various imperative, categorical statements we know that God’s will is eternally settled in such redemptive issues: (1) “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3). (2) “For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). (3) “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). God’s promise to Abraham as it related to the saving Gospel is the subject of His sworn statement:
Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the **immutability of his counsel**, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is **impossible for God to lie**, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us (Heb. 6:17–18; emp. DM).

God cannot lie, **period**; but, as he began his letter to Titus, Paul especially stressed this facet of God’s nature **in relation to matters of the promised salvation**:

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, **who cannot lie**, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior (Tit. 1:1–3; emp. DM).

God has sealed all matters pertaining to redemption. He would violate and contradict His own immutability were He to change them. The Lord’s categorical statements above embrace the very conditions upon which God grants saving grace through His Son. He would not only be undependable and whimsical, but deceptive, were His conditions of pardon not absolutely constant and unexceptional. Were God a Divine Change Agent we would not know what to believe, to do, or to teach concerning the question of questions, “What must I do to be saved?”

God definitively revealed His plan to save men through the death of His Son. In spite of this fact men sometimes make exceedingly foolish statements: “We don’t know why God chose to save us through the sacrifice of Christ; He could have done it some other way.” Surely those who thus speak have not thought through what they are saying.

In the first place, where did any puny, ignorant man learn that there was “some other way”? Further, consider what such sophistry implies about God: He **could** have redeemed man by some other means, but He **chose** to do it in a way that required unspeakable—and unnecessary—suffering on the part of His Son! Such sadistic behavior would be utterly irreconcilable with the love and mercy of God. When His perfect Son prayed three times, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me” (Mat. 26:39–44), surely, had there been any other possible way to secure our redemption, His loving Father would have employed it. There was no other way.

In Divine Triune Council the scheme of human redemption was conceived before creation (1 Pet. 1:18–20; cf. Mic. 5:2; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9).
This plan was as perfect, certain, and final as Deity Itself. Even Satan, with his evil angels and his mighty weapon of death, could not prevent its fruition in the establishment of the eternally purposed church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 3:10–11). If, after all of the Divine planning, prophecy, and typology, God had “changed His mind” about the way in which He would effect man’s redemption, how could we depend upon any other thing He said? The very suggestion borders on blasphemy.

Others have long suggested that God has changed His mind about the actual responses man must make in order to be saved through Christ. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism alike are built on the proposition that God does not mean what He says about the plan of salvation, the church, worship, holy living, and other subjects, including the Judgment.

Some of our digressive brethren are only a footprint behind the denominationalists, boldly declaring that God has changed His mind about—all things—baptism. Royce Money, President of Abilene Christian University, is a case in point. In his ACU Lectureship speech last February, after he made what at first sounded like a strong statement on the necessity of baptism, he then took it all back. Of John 3:5 he said:

I assume it’s still true. That’s the rule, but what about the exceptions? What about countless believers...whose spirituality and Christian virtues at times far outstrip mine? What about all that? I don’t know, but the Lord knows exceptions, and I hope He makes a lot of them. Our job, it seems to me, is to teach the rule and let the Lord make the exceptions [long and loud applause].

As all certifiable liberals so often do, Money put his brain in neutral and his raced his emotions engine in this statement. I paraphrase: “God is obligated to make exceptions to His teaching on baptism because there are so many ‘spiritual believers’ out there who do not believe in it. Surely He will not condemn all of those good, sincere people.” This is vintage denominational tripe. No, brother Money—it is not our job to teach the rule and suggest that the Lord will make exceptions. It is our job to teach the rule—period (Mat, 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16)!

Will someone please explain to me how this apostate brother knows that “the Lord knows exceptions” to John 3:5? He certainly gave no Scripture for His outrageous announcement. His bold assertion of exceptions to John 3:5 (in which the Lord explicitly denied any exceptions to His stated rule) would be amusing were it not so spiritually destructive. Obviously, this man believes that the Lord has changed His mind about baptism. According to him, what Christ really meant was, “Except some be born of water and Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Others can enter without doing so.” Again, Christ
really meant, “Some who believe and are baptized shall be saved, but others will be excused from being baptized.”

If men can so easily dismiss baptism, why stop there (of course, the liberals do not)? Why could not the infidel argue that Christ did not mean what He said about believing in Him? If God will make exceptions on baptism, surely He would be unfair to refuse exceptions on faith. Perhaps He has changed His mind about the sin of Sodom, too.

We should not be too surprised to see an apostate such as Lynn Money make such outlandish statements. However, those who are not cut out of such liberal cloth sometimes swerve into this “God-may/change/His/mind” syndrome. When one says, “If God chooses to save some without baptism, I will not object,” he needs to more carefully consider his words.

Of course, no mortal should object to anything that God does, but is there the slightest hint that God has changed or will change His mind about salvation requirements? Such statements suggest that at the Judgment the Lord may say that He really did not mean what He said in His Word about baptism. The seeds of Universalism are in this declaration. (1) If baptism is the sinner’s only access to the blood of Christ (which it is: Rom. 6:3) and (2) if there is no remission of sins apart from His blood (and there is not: Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; Rev. 1:5; et al.), then (3) if there are exceptions to the requirement of baptism there must be exceptions to the need of Christ’s blood for remission of sins. If this is so with one, then why not with all, unless God is a respecter of persons?

Why would anyone who is seriously interested in the salvation of souls even think about suggesting that the Lord may exempt some from baptism or that maybe He has changed His mind about the requirement? One who thus views any statement of God’s Word relating to salvation no longer believes the Lord’s awful promise: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

God has not changed His mind. Those who assume that He has would do well to change theirs while they still live this side of the Judgment.

[NOTE: This MS was originally written as an Editorial Perspective and published in THE GOSPEL JOURNAL, August 2000.]
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The Keys Of The Kingdom 13
A fundamental error of Calvinism is inherent depravity. Proceeding from that premise is Calvin’s second error of irresistible grace. If all men are “conceived in sin...indisposed to all saving good, propense to evil...and the slaves of sin,” then it naturally follows that “without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit they neither are able nor willing to return to God.” As irresistible grace proceeds from inherent depravity, so the doctrine of perseverance proceeds from irresistible grace. Having been elected and saved by the mere grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, the elect are then secure in their salvation because “God...does not wholly take away his Holy Spirit from his own, even in lamentable falls...” Those three doctrines must stand or fall together and whether preached by the Baptists, the Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals or our own brethren, they are false to the core.

Calvin’s doctrine of inherent depravity and election strips man of his free-will and makes him a mere machine in the hands of a ruthless God. If we inherit sin from Adam, then God is the source of it, for Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38). One Calvinistic “proof-text” is David’s statement in Psalms 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” There is a difference in being born in sin and with sin. Iniquity existed in the world when David was shapen and the sin existed when he was conceived. Astonished that unlearned Galileans could speak their native languages, the crowd on Pentecost asked, “how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:7-8). While they were born in those tongues, the multitude wasn’t born speaking those tongues. They learned them after they were born. They were born into cultures in which those tongues existed and were spoken. The same principle applies to David’s words. He wasn’t born with sin. He was conceived and born in a world polluted by sin, as all men are.

Contrasting our Heavenly Father with our fleshly fathers, the Hebrews writer says God is the “father of spirits,” (Heb. 12:9). If one is born inherently depraved then God is the Father of a depraved spirit. Writing of our earthly demise, Solomon says the body returns to the earth from whence it came, while the “spirit shall return unto God who gave it,” (Eccl. 12:7). If we are born sinners, then God gives a depraved spirit. Seeking an example of simplistic purity and innocence for his followers to emulate, Jesus chose a little child. “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,” (Matt. 18:3). If depravity is inherent at birth, then, according to Jesus,
we must become depraved to enter the kingdom.

Sin is not inherited. It is acquired. That truth is taught throughout the Bible. Man isn’t born astray. He goes astray of his own will. “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies,” (Psa. 58:3). Our estrangement from God is after we are born and the means is by speaking lies. “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable,” (Romans 3:12). We aren’t born unprofitable. We become that way and Ezekiel says sin is not passed from generation to generation. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,” (Ezek. 18:20).

We acquire sin when we come to the age of accountability. Illustrating the absurdity of Calvinistic arguments for inherent depravity, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. says the doctrine carries its own seeds of destruction.

The dictum of this doctrine, which results in its self-destruction, is that acquired characteristics cannot be transmitted to the offspring, and that is the reason, they say, that the righteousness of the parents cannot be transmitted to their children...this principle must work both ways, and utterly destroys the theory of inherited depravity. Here is why. Whatever depravity or sinfulness Adam and Eve had was an acquired characteristic. If that is not true, then their sinfulness would have been inherited, which would mean that Adam and Eve inherited sin from God! Therefore, there was no depravity, and no sinfulness in Adam and Eve until they acquired that characteristic by disobedience. But since acquired characteristics of parents cannot be transmitted to their children, Adam and Eve did not, could not, transmit their depravity to their posterity. (Bulwarks of The Faith, p. 377).

With no basis in God’s revealed truth, the obnoxious doctrine of inherent depravity is the premise from which irresistible grace and perseverance are derived. As a false premise, the conclusions drawn therefrom are also false. Augustine borrowed it from heathen philosophy and passed it from century to century until John Calvin plagiarized it for the Protestant world. As the fundamental error of both Catholics and Protestants, it is a perversion of Bible truth and the corrupt foundation upon which Calvinism teeters. Those who believe it are wrong and those who preach and practice it are wrong. From its false premise to its consequential error, Calvinism constitutes something other than the gospel and that incurs the wrath of God. (Gal. 1:6-9).
Baptism (Email)

Michael Hatcher
Pensacola, Florida

I recently received an email asking me a specific question regarding baptism. The questioner asked if I would address who may baptize someone. There are many who are teaching that for a baptism to be valid, it must be done by a Christian male. From my experience, while these brethren are sincere, they are sincerely misguided. In this discussion, we are not discussing someone who has been taught error or is obeying erroneous doctrine. It is a discussion of someone who has properly understood God’s Word and is obeying that Word. In connection with such, we are not discussing who has done the teaching, but only who does the actual immersion. I first want to look at their attempts to make their case.

The first attempt is to use the principle of example. They state that every example we have of a baptism is done by a Christian man. They thus wrongly conclude that for a baptism to be valid today, it must be done by a Christian man. The Scriptures are not as conclusive as some would have us to believe regarding this point, however. There is very little evidence as to who did the immersing in the Bible. Prior to the establishment of the church (thus, prior to anyone becoming a Christian), we do find that John the Baptist was baptizing people, including Jesus. However, Jesus showed that John the Baptist was not in the kingdom (which is the church) in Matthew 11:11. Then, in John 4:2 we find that Jesus’ disciples baptized people even though Jesus Himself did not.

When we move into the time the Lord’s church actually existed, we find very few times it actually mentions who is doing the baptizing. For example, when the church began (the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ recorded in Acts 2), after Peter convicts the Jews of sin and they ask what they needed to do to be saved, Peter tells them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (2:38). (While I will return to this point later, Peter did not say to repent and be baptized by a Christian man.) We are told, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (2:41). Notice that it does not state who baptized these 3,000 souls, only that they were baptized. If the who is essential, then why does the text not state who baptized them? Why would it not state, “then they that gladly received his word were baptized by Christian men” (or simply by men or by the apostles)? The next time individuals being baptized is mentioned is the result of Philip preaching Christ to the Samaritans (8:5). We
find that “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (8:12). Again, it does not state who baptized these Samaritans (we would assume Philip did, but it does not state so), only that “they were baptized.” Why did it not state that Philip baptized them (or a Christian man, or just a man)? If the who is essential, then why is this essential point omitted?

We next come to Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in the later part of Acts 8. Philip preached Jesus unto him and when they came to a certain water “the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (8:36). Upon this Philip asked him if he believed leading the Ethiopian to make the good confession (8:37). We are then informed that Philip baptized the Ethiopian (8:38-39). We now have the only time in Acts the person who did the baptizing is actually mentioned. Again, we would ask that if the person doing the baptizing is essential to the salvation process, why is it omitted in every case of conversion in Acts except this one?

There is one other in Acts that bears specific mention and that is the conversion of the Corinthians. In Acts 18:8, Luke records, “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” Again, it does not state who did the baptizing. However, Paul in writing to the Corinthians stated that he did personally baptize Crispus, Gaius, the household of Stephanas, and adds that he did not know if he baptized anyone else (1 Cor. 1:14-16). If who does the baptizing is such an essential element to salvation, why would Paul (writing by inspiration of God) deal with it in such a cavalier attitude?

Now, upon these some argue that every example is of a Christian man doing the baptizing. Yet, when you actually look at the facts (not what we might assume—whether rightly or wrongly), there is only the Ethiopian and the ones Paul mentions where we specifically told who did the baptizing. Yet, these brethren build an entire doctrine upon these two accounts. That would be fine if they can now prove (not just assume) that these accounts are binding upon everyone in all places. This they do not even attempt to accomplish and instead simply pound the table that every example we have of a baptism is done by a Christian man and thus only Christian men can baptize someone today. (Every baptism was done in running water—at least the ones that state. Yet, none of them will bind the running water. Why bind the who does it but not the running water part of it?) I have come to the conclusion that these brethren do not know how to prove that an account of action is an actual example that is binding (it is a mandatory action upon all people at all times). By the lack of statements regarding who did the baptizing, one is lead to the conclusion that the person
doing the baptizing is an incidental and not an essential matter (in opposition to what is being claimed).

The second way they attempt to establish their case is what they claim is direct statements. This is an appeal to the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47) in which it is claimed that Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize people. However, when one actually examines the Great Commission, it simply does not state what they want it to state. Since Luke’s account does not mention baptism, they center upon the other two. Matthew’s account states, “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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” By a simple reading of this, we could ask where Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize? The command is to “teach all nations,” literally to “make disciples of all nations.” He instructs them how disciples were to be made. Disciples are made by baptizing them into a relationship with the Divine Three and teaching them all things Jesus had commanded them. However, Jesus does not state who must do the baptizing or the teaching, only that is the way disciples are made. The baptizing and teaching are modal participles modifying making disciples, not the apostles.

When we consider Mark’s account, he records, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Like Matthew, this is more the idea “as you are going.” The command is to preach the Gospel. Thus, as the apostles (and us) are going, we must preach the Gospel. Then those who have heard the Gospel preached, if they believe and are baptized shall be saved. Notice it does not state who does the baptizing, and it does not command the apostles to baptize. It commands the apostles (and us) to preach the Gospel. For these brethren to have any argument supporting their position on this, it should have said, “He that believeth and is baptized by a Christian (or another synonymous term) man shall be saved.”

However, there is the old truth: what proves too much proves nothing. If this should apply only to the apostles and the apostles are being commanded to baptize, then it would invalidate anyone else doing the baptism. If this is true, no one can be Scripturally baptized since the time of the apostles. This they cannot have, so they arbitrarily change it to Christian men to support their doctrine. There is absolutely no textual basis for making such a change, and their interpretation does not correspond with what the text actually states.
If Jesus did command the apostles (and thus Christian men) to baptize, then the apostle Paul certainly did not know that. Paul (remember he was writing by inspiration of God) wrote, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). While our denominational friends misuse this verse, Paul still stated that Christ did not send him to baptize. Yet, if our brethren who hold this view are correct, then Christ did send Paul to baptize. Paul’s statement here, however, will forever stand against this view that the person doing the baptizing must be a Christian man for it to be valid. This passage in no way diminishes the necessity of baptism, but it does destroy the doctrine that the one who does the baptizing is of any importance.

Additionally, if we try to bind the one doing the baptizing, exactly where are those requirements? There are no commands or direct statements regarding it. There are no actual examples (there are the two accounts of action previously mentioned, but accounts of action do not automatically become examples—something bound upon all men at all times). There are simply no requirements. However, one of the requirements these brethren make is that the person doing the baptizing must be a Christian. Now, we are faced with some additional problems. For example, what if the Christian is not a faithful Christian? Does that invalidate the baptism? What if one is in the process of apostatizing or has apostatized but others do not know it, does that invalidate the baptism? (There was a man in a foreign country who while working as a missionary became a skeptic. He continued his work as a missionary, then came back to the states and worked as a local preacher—all the while a skeptic but not revealing such to brethren till later. Did those he baptize, need to be baptized again because they were baptized by a Christian who had become a skeptic?) What if the one doing the baptizing has committed some sin of which he has not repented when he does the baptizing? Brethren who hold this position simply do not like dealing with these types of questions. Upon asking one who believed one doing the baptizing must be a Christian if he had to be a faithful Christian answered yes. When asked further questions, the position changed to the idea that if he claims to be a Christian, then that is sufficient. I guess it never dawned on this person that denominational people claim to be Christians (they are not, but they claim to be).

While those who claim the person doing the baptizing must be a Christian man (faithful?) or it invalidates the baptism ridicule the idea of having an unbroken chain all the way back to the apostles, it is the case that their position demands such. Their position is that if someone baptizes me and that person is not a Christian (faithful?), then I am not a Christian. However, what if the person who baptized the person who baptized me was not a Christian? Then the...
person who baptized me is not a Christian and thus I am not a Christian. If just one person baptized someone, and that one person was not a Christian, then every person baptized after that is not a Christian (per this doctrine) because they were baptized by someone who was not a Christian. If I could trace the baptisms back 1,000 years and 1,000 years ago a person was baptized by someone who was not a Christian, then none of those from that one person 1,000 years ago are Christians including me. To be a Christian, one must be able to trace an unbroken chain of baptismal succession performed by Christians all the way back to the apostles. If that chain is broken at any place, then from that point on, no one would be a Christian. One of the problems with such (and one of the reasons those who hold this view ridicule this point), is that it is impossible to go back through the centuries to the apostles. There is far too much religious error and the historical records are either inaccurate or nonexistent to accomplish such. Additionally, Scriptural baptism would then be dependent upon fallible human records.

I asked this real-life situation to a few individuals who hold that the one doing the baptizing must be a Christian. Brother Wayne Duran by use of correspondence course taught Benard Kagaga the truth. Brother Duran was in the United States while Benard Kagaga lived in Kenya. There was no congregation in Kenya where Benard lived and to anyone’s knowledge there were no Christians where he lived. Benard, knowing the truth and desiring to obey the truth to the salvation of his soul, finally got a Roman Catholic priest to immerse him in water and Benard was doing so for the remission of his sin. If this doctrine is true, then Benard Kagaga is not a Christian. The situation does not end there because brother Kagaga then taught and baptized hundreds more (including some who are now faithful preachers). If brother Kagaga is not a Christian because he was not baptized by a Christian (faithful?), then none of those he baptized are Christians. However, it does not end at that point because those he baptized have likewise baptized hundreds of others. Therefore, if this viewpoint is true, none of those individuals are Christians all because a Roman Catholic priest put Benard Kagaga under the water even though a faithful Christian taught brother Kagaga and he was obeying the truth as found in God’s Word. Yet none of the ones I presented this real-life situation to would affirm that Benard Kagaga and the hundreds he baptized and the hundreds they have baptized are all hell-bound. Yet, if this teaching is true (that one must be immersed by a Christian) is true, that is the result. (It also illustrates the unbroken chain that must go all the way back to the apostles.) Should brother Kagaga find a Christian man (obviously no one he has taught and baptized, nor any they have baptized) and be baptized again? Should he then go find all the ones he has baptized and re-baptize them, and inform them that they need to
find everyone they have baptized and re-baptize them? (If one of those who simply obeyed the Gospel has passed away, then they will spend eternity in hell because they were baptized by a person who had been baptized by someone who was not a Christian! Who can believe such?)

If the one doing the baptizing is essential to the one being baptized, then we have added an additional aspect to God’s plan of salvation. We need to change all the teaching we have done in the past from: upon hearing, believe, repent, confess, be baptized for the remission of sins. This is no longer the proper plan that God has established. We must change to: upon hearing, believe, repent, confess, be baptized for the remission of sins by a Christian man. This has become an essential element of God’s plan of salvation and to omit it is to transgress God’s Word. We would have no more right to omit being baptized by a Christian man as the Baptist denomination has of omitting being baptized for the remission of sins. To omit one is just as ungodly as the other, and to fail to teach it as such would be just as ungodly. (How many who advocate this view actually teach it as part of God’s plan of salvation?)

However, in demanding such (that one must be baptized by a Christian man), we have changed the power of the Gospel from the Gospel itself to the one doing the baptizing. One’s salvation or damnation is dependent upon the one doing the immersing rather than the Gospel of Christ. Yet, Paul would write, “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). The Gospel is no longer the power of God unto salvation, but the one who does the baptizing is God’s power to salvation (or damnation if not a Christian man).

In placing a requirement upon the one doing the baptizing and not the one being baptized, then we are placing our salvation (or damnation if not done by a Christian man) upon the basis of someone else and not upon the basis of what we do (or do not do). The Scriptures repeatedly state that we will be judged upon the basis of what we do. Paul writes, “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” (2 Cor. 5:10). John adds that each one will be judged “according to their works” (Rev. 20:12). Never is judgment based upon what others are or do. Yet, if this view regarding the one doing the baptizing is true, it places the one being baptized salvation (or damnation) upon the basis of the one baptizing them and not upon the basis of what they do. The one being baptized cannot be saved based upon his own obedience, instead it is dependent upon the one immersing him and whether he
is a Christian (faithful?) or not.

The obligations of the Great Commission that our Lord initially gave to the apostles and is applicable to us today is to preach the Gospel. Those who believe it and are baptized will be saved; they will come into a relationship with the Divine Three. The place, the water arrangements, the travel methods, the person doing the immersion, etc., are all incidental matters and not binding conditions. Let us stop placing requirements upon what God has established in the salvation process and let us do the work we are required to do: go preach the Gospel, go make disciples.

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