

The Keys Of The Kingdom

May 2014 - Vol: 1 Number: 3



Published By: J.F. Miller

©Copyright 2014 All Rights Reserved

***To Visit Our Website
Click Link Below
[Keys Of The Kingdom](#)***

Contents

Our Staff.....Pg: 3

The Need of Parental Authority.....Voices From The Past Pg: 5

Noah and Me Pt. 3.....Scott Crawford Pg: 8

A Blue Thread.....Cougan Collins Pg: 12

Warming By The Enemies Fire.....Chuck Verkist Pg: 14

Be With Me Lord.....Archie R. Green Pg: 19

Understanding What Is Expedient? (2).....Jim Miller Pg:21

The Power Of Forgiveness.....Robert Alexander Pg:24

Some “Hard” Questions from Leviticus (2).....Devin Dean Pg:27

Ananias And Sapphira.....Tim Bench Pg: 30

Insights from the churches of Galatia.....Logan Summers Pg: 34

“The god of Atheism or the God of the Bible?”Cloyd Frock Pg: 38

Analysis of Romans 14 (Pt 1).....Doug Post Pg: 40



Our Writing Staff



Jim Miller

Jim Miller: Preacher semi -retired, publisher, writer, editor. A member of the Lords church since 1985. Preached in NC, TN, Ky, and Maine. Two years hosting Bible Talk Radio in Livingston, TN,. Fill in preacher and member at Kittery, Maine church of Christ. Owner of Keys Of The Kingdom magazine and website.



Tim Bench

Tim Bench: Member at Hillcrest Church of Christ, Abilene TX. 1990 graduate of Abilene Christian University. Speaker, teacher at numerous churches in and around Abilene and West Texas.



Archie Green

Archie R. Green: I have served the church of Christ in Downtown Cedar Hill over the past 6 years as their evangelist. I am married to the former Ruth Hall and together we have 5 adult children and one grandson, Xavier. I attended both Abilene Christian and the Brown Trail School of Preaching for my formal education.



Logan Summers

Logan Summers is a graduate of the Florida School of Preaching, and has preached for congregations in Florida, Illinois, and Texas. He is a member of the Westside church of Christ in Midland, Texas.



Cloyd Frock

Cloyd "Ben" Frock, Jr. is the preacher for Parsons church of Christ in Parsons, Kansas. He is a graduate of the Florida School of Preaching, and has preached full-time for the past five years in Florida and Kansas. Prior to preaching he worked eighteen years in civil service as a Police Crime Scene Technician (11 years), and as a Business Analyst (7 years). He and his wife, Elisha, have two children, with another due in June, 2014.



Cougan Collins

Cougan Collins: Minister at the Lone Grove Church of Christ and speaker/producer of LG Ministry (a video program of short and full sermons). I am married and have two daughters. I have been preaching full-time for 9 plus years.



Devin Dean

Devin Dean: Native Texan. Married to Neely (Rouse); 2 daughters, Rebekah, and Hannah. 2010 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching; 1996 graduate University of Texas at San Antonio (B.S. in Computer Science). Former United States Marine. Served as a deacon with the Schertz congregation and as the director and editor for the Annual Schertz Lectures 2005-2007. Currently the local evangelist with the Antioch congregation in Corner, Alabama.



Robert Alexander

Robert Alexander: Married to Susan (Hall) Alexander. Two sons: Robby and Liam. 2005 graduate of the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. Have preached for congregations in TN and AL as well. Past director and editor of the annual Summitville church of Christ lectureship (2007-2008). Currently preaching for the College Ave. congregation in DeFuniak Springs, Fl.



Scott Crawford

Scott Crawford: Currently a member at the Roebuck Parkway church of Christ in Birmingham, AL; preaching part-time for the Montevallo church of Christ in Montevallo, AL. Married to Kathy L. (Joynes) Crawford of Elkton, KY for 25 years with 2 children: Attended Harding University from '85 to '89 with concentrations in Psychology, Music, Bible Studies. Currently working on a Master's Degree in Theology through the Trinity Collage of the Bible and Theological Seminary.



Doug Post

Doug Post: Has been in full time ministry for 15 years, preaching in Indiana and Connecticut. Received his BA in Communications, UCONN; MA in Biblical Studies, Southern Christian University; New Testament Theology and New Testament Greek, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Theological University of America. Doug is married to Debbie, his wife of 22 years.

If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at jfmiller61@gmail.com.

To announce up coming events like Gospel Meetings, Lectures, Singing events etc..... Just use the email link above to contact me. Please feel free to tell others and have them sign up for their copy today. Use this link to join the mailing list. http://jfmiller.com/keysofthekingdom/?page_id=1316 . May God Bless You. Jim and the Staff

Voices From The Past

The Need of Parental Authority

H. Leo Boles

Perhaps few subjects need to be stressed more than this one. Parents have lost sight of their responsibility to their children, and children are growing up to disregard all restraints and parental authority. In the general decline of respect for authority, both human and divine, which prevails to an alarming extent at the present time, and which threatens to involve in social anarchy and confusion all of the elements of society, it is woeful to observe an almost total failure on the part of parents to exercise their authority in controlling their children. One of the great causes of disrespect for all authority by young people today is the failure of parents to exercise authority over their children. The parent stands to the child, in the years of its character and habits, in the place of God and of all other authority. God has enjoined upon parents that they exercise His authority over the child while it is young and tender. Children are most impressionable in youth, and the parent should not neglect the opportunity for training them.

If a child is not taught to respect the authority of a parent in its early years of life, or if it is allowed to follow its own will and to gratify its own desires and passions, that child will seldom be able to deny self and will be the slave of selfish passions and habits that will be destructive to good order in society and subversive of the divine law. In the human heart, as in the sin cursed soil, the briars, thistles, and thorns grow of themselves and choke out the tender plants that are desirable to promote the well-being here and hereafter. Parents should recognize this truth and should seek to restrain their children from all evil and selfish habits of life. The growth of obnoxious weeds in the human heart must be checked and destroyed, or tender plants of truth and kindness will be choked out.

No parents would plant a garden with vegetables or flowers and let the weeds and grass grow and choke out the tender plants. No farmer will plant the seed in the soil and let all sorts of weeds and briars grow and destroy the tender plants. Yet many parents do this very thing with their children. They are more careful in cultivating their gardens and fields than they are in cultivating the hearts and lives of their children. No parent can please God by neglecting the children. No parent can train the children as God would have them trained without exercising prayerful care and authority over them. Only the just and prayerful exercise of parental authority over children can keep down the selfishness and evil habits

and passions of childhood. Parents must exercise constant and watchful care over their children. No parent who fails to do this can wisely love his children. The tender hand of parental affection alone can nurture to their proper development and strength the plants of virtue and piety in the hearts of their children. Parents who fail to do this disobey God when He says: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) Not only do parents disobey God in failing to exercise proper authority over their children, but they also commit a crime against their children.

The parent that neglects to exercise proper authority and care over his children during the formative period is the most cruel enemy to the child that it will ever meet during life. Sometimes parents persuade themselves that they are good and kind to their children by not restraining them and punishing them as the child needs discipline. This is a mistake, and the day will come when the parent and the child will be made to realize that it was a mistake and heartless cruelty to let the child grow up unrestrained and develop evil habits which make it a menace to society. Thousands of young people are now in the jails and penitentiaries because parents failed to do their duty to their children. In many instances these young criminals can point to an overindulgent parent as being largely to blame for the shame and suffering that now must be endured. Many of these young criminals have a just cause for blaming the parent for not exercising parental authority over them while they were forming their youthful habits of life.

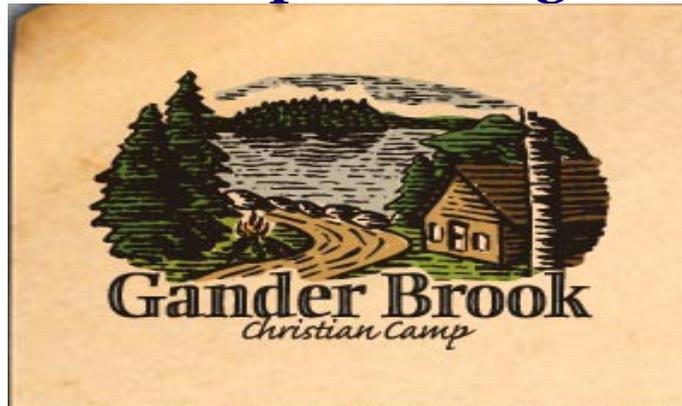
Parents are responsible for the life and oftentimes the destiny of their children. Parents certainly are responsible oftentimes for the success in society of their children. Children should be kept under the home influence of their parents. This argues that the home influence must be directed by the wisdom of God as revealed in the Bible. Parents should keep their children under their own influence. This means that the influence of parents must be that of Christians. Parents should be anxious about the company their children keep. They should firmly restrain their children from all evil influence and exercise with carefulness the parental authority by controlling the child. This should be done with gentleness and affection. Parents should nurture in the hearts of their children a feeling of respect and love that will guide them safely and innocently through childhood and which will clothe their youth with sobriety, chastity, and honor, and which will crown their manhood or womanhood with integrity and uprightness. Parents are responsible if they do not give worth and respectability to their children.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not

depart from it," is the law of God, as certain and sure as any other law of heaven. To bring up a child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is to teach it the precepts of the Lord. It means to inspire in the heart of the child a holy reverence for God ; it means to teach the child honesty, truthfulness, kindness, and mercy; and it means to teach the child self denial, in simplicity of diet and dress, in habits of industry and economy. To "nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" is to train the children to be gentle, forbearing, and forgiving. It means to teach the children to find pleasure in denying self for the benefit of others; it includes teaching them reverence toward God and respect for age; and it means to teach them humility, gratefulness, and prayerfulness. By looking at the full content of this Scripture we will see the great responsibility of parents toward their children.

April 30, 1931

Work and Worship week begins June 21st



We are a group of Christians who desire to ensure that our New England Christian Camp, Gander Brook, continues to provide a place for wholesome recreation and spiritual growth for our families.

[Click Here To Learn More](#)

Noah and Me Pt. 3

Scott Crawford
Clay, Alabama

Noah leaves the ark and worships God.

The storm is over and the ark settles in the mountains of Ararat and Noah sees that the waters are starting to recede. Eventually, after bird out/bird in, bird out/bird in, bird out, Noah removes the cover from the ark, waits about another month and then leaves the ark, and the first thing that he does is build an altar and worship God. The ark, for the past year, had been a shelter from the storm, a place of refuge from the rains, a secure spot in the violent trouble of the world. I could see how Noah might have wanted to remain in the ark. It was safe and dry. It held those people that were closest to him. It had the approval of God, but Noah knew he had to leave – can't stay in there forever.

The same goes for us, even as Noah. Does God tell us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world? Yes, in James 1:27. Does God tell us that we are but pilgrims here and our real home is in heaven? Yes, in Hebrews 11:13 and I Peter 2:11. But are we also not told go into the world? Yes, that was the great commission given to us by Jesus in Mark 16:16 – to go into the world and teach. In Matthew 28:19, 20 the great commission is given by Jesus and the imperative is on the need to teach the nations by making disciples of them. Are we supposed to be apart from the world, of course; but are we also a part of the world? Yes, and difficult to avoid.

The question then arises as to how we are supposed to be in the world but also to remain separate at the same time. The answer comes from Noah. Even though he went out – he also at the same time worshiped God. God was first in Noah's life. Jesus tells us we have to put ourselves second and Him first, and deny ourselves (Mark 8: 34, 35) if we desire to live with Him. Paul also helps us to understand the way to keep ourselves apart from the world when God speaks thru him in Philippians 4:8 and tells us to meditate on things that are true, noble, just, pure, and holy; things of good report, things with virtue, and anything that is praiseworthy. Our minds are the battleground, and we must make every attempt to train ourselves to be something different than what we see around us every day. Romans 12:1-2 says we should not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We are but one last breath, one last heartbeat away from leaving this world, and we must keep in the

forefront of our thinking the fact that we are to live here for Christ, but to die is even better (Philippians 1:21).

Remember, Paul tells the Philippians in chapter 2 to do all things without complaining and disputing, so that they (and us by extension) would become blameless and harmless, children of God, without fault. We, like them, are to shine like a light in the world, holding fast the words of life. We are a peculiar people, apart from the world, and the way to maintain those special qualities that make us different is to worship God every day, remember God every day, and to walk a path that leads toward God every day. The real amazing part is that the path to God is that same path that meanders through the wickedness of this world. God wants us to go in the world, just like Noah. God wants us to worship him, just like Noah. When we can go into the world, and worship, these activities come before God like a sweet aroma, just like the worship of Noah.

God blesses Noah.

Blessings, all good things, come from God – they come from above (James 1:17). Noah obtained the blessings of God because he found grace in God's eyes, he was there when God spoke and he listened, he let God shut him in, and then when all was over he went forward into the world worshiping God. All those things that Noah did helped to bring the blessings of God upon him.

Some blessings are for all men, saint and sinner alike. The sun, the rain, the air we breathe are given to all by God so that we may exist. In fact, our very life is a blessing that some would throw back into the face of God. There are those that walk through this life seeing the great and wondrous works of God and refuse to acknowledge them. King David, the great psalmist of Israel, says in Psalms 19 that the heavens declare the glory of God, that the earth shows his handiwork. All around us is the glorious craftsmanship of the Lord, and some – thinking their ignorance wisdom – refuse to look past the physical manifestation of this world. There was a time when mankind was in ignorance and God overlooked, or winked at, their sins; as Paul says in Acts 17:30. There was a time when mankind had sins of ignorance forgiven them (Hebrews 9:7), but now we are called to a higher purpose. Are there blessings that all can access? Are there blessings that God sheds on all His children? Are there blessings that those outside God are missing out on because of their ignorance? Yes, yes, and yes.

There was a time in the history of mankind that we had no access to the throne of God, we had to go through another earthly man to access God, but no more.

Now we are saved and live under a new mandate, that by the sacrifice of Christ for our sins we are a holy priesthood. Hebrews 4: 14–16 says that since we now have a great High Priest – Christ – who shared all our imperfections and passed through spotless, we can come before the throne of God with boldness to obtain help in our time of need.

Because of Christ we have, and are receiving the goal of our faith in Him, the salvation of our souls (I Peter 1:9). The sacrifice of Christ makes our salvation sure when we love Him and keep His commandments. Paul tells Timothy in II Timothy 2:10 that our salvation is in Christ. Not only Peter, and not only Paul, but also Christ Himself said “Come unto me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) This would imply that those that are outside of Christ and His salvation do not have rest, and those in Christ do have a rest given unto them.

Is there more? How about the washing away of our sins by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5), how about having our sins remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12), or being delivered from this body of death by Jesus (Romans 7:24, 25)? Remember we are all children of God through Christ (Galatians 3:26), that Christ is the firstborn of the dead (Colossians 1:18) and our advocate with the Father (I John 2:1), therefore we have the hope of eternal life with God in the form of our brother and high priest Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). And that is just the tip of the iceberg. God blesses everyone with every good blessing, just like Noah. God wants us to have more in life, just like Noah. God wants to bless us because we are His children, we are those that have overcome the world, we are receivers of the promise of God, and we are the vessels of His spirit on earth, just like Noah.

Noah did as he was commanded.

So at the end, in Genesis 9:28, 29, we find that Noah lived for another 350 years after the end of the flood and finally died at the ripe old age of 950 years. After Noah came out of the ark there were good times and bad times, but there is no indication that Noah ever lost his standing with God. Noah was a sinner of that there is no doubt, but still he found grace in the eyes of God. Noah was merely human and still God spoke to him. Noah was stuck on this world just like we are and still God shut him in. Noah was no more brave, or strong, or motivated than we are but still he went into the world praising God. Noah was a man, a farmer, a small speck on the face of this world and still God blessed him. Why, because in the end, Noah did “according to all that God” had commanded him to do.

You have a relationship with God just like Noah did, and you are the only person that can destroy that relationship. You can be close to God just like Noah was; God speaks to you and wants you to speak to Him. You have been chosen by God to be something special; all you have to do is accept the direction of the Lord in your life, just like Noah did. You can have, and do have, a grand purpose in your life, just like Noah, and that is The Keys Of The Kingdom 10 to save as much of mankind as you can by spreading the gospel of Christ. Noah had the tools; your tool is the Bible. Noah had the faith; your faith is in Jesus Christ. Noah had the backing of God; you are the child of the living God. Noah did what he could; friend – be more like Noah.

Preachers For Pulpits



Clloyd Frock

Clloyd's Facebook Page offers a great resource for preachers seeking churches and churches needing preachers. Use the link below to visit his page.

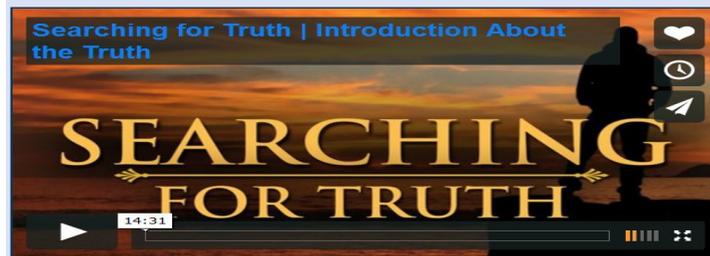
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/466657760042906/>

[Click Here To Visit Clloyd's Page](#)

Searching For Truth was produced with the thought in mind of the great filmstrips of the past that did so much good in teaching the Gospel. This new program is designed to teach the viewer what one needs to know to become a Christian. Written and hosted by John Moore.

Please view the first program which is 15-minutes in length, then you will be able to decide whether to watch the additional 5 programs that are designed to help you find the answers to these questions.

Lesson 1



[Click Here View The Videos](#)

A Blue Thread

Cougan Collins
Lone Grove, Oklahoma

Paul teaches us that there is much for us to learn from the Old Testament.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

I can go to any book in the Old Testament and show you great examples for us to follow. We are also given some great wisdom about God and His people. I want you to consider the following Scriptures:

Numbers 15:38 "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. ³⁹ "And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, ⁴⁰ "and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

When you read through the Old Testament, you will find many things the children of Israel built as a memorial to remember certain events. However, most of these were at a specific location so you would not see them very often. However, you would wear your garment every day. God wanted them to make tassels on the corners of their garments and to put a blue thread in them. This would serve as a daily reminder for God's people to keep the Lord's commandments. It was also designed to remind them each day to not allow their own desires or what they feel is right to govern their lives. No, they are to allow God's commands to be their guide.

This is a great lesson for Christians today. Now, I am not suggesting that we start putting on a garment every day with tassels and a blue thread. However, I think we should find something to focus on that will be a daily reminder of how we need to focus on living for God. One of the most important things I want you to glean from what God told the Children of Israel is that He wanted them and He wants us to pay attention to what His Word teaches and He wants us to follow what it says.

Today, many are focused on what they feel is right that they allow their feelings to be their guide. They don't really care what God's Word says about a matter if it feels right in their hearts. When we start thinking this way, we are going to get ourselves into a lot of trouble with God. Consider what Jeremiah said:

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

Do you have any idea how many people have tried to justify sin by saying it felt right? While I could give you example after example from the Bible of those who make this same claim, the apostle Paul has always ranked up high on my list. He tried to destroy Christianity, and he was responsible for the deaths of Christians. He did all this with a clear conscience because he felt like he was doing the right thing in his heart of hearts, but we all know he was wrong. Do you remember what Jesus said to Him on the road to Damascus?

Acts 9:4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Paul was a smart man. He knew what the Scriptures taught about Jesus, but he continued to let his heart guide him. As Jesus points out, it was hard for him to kick against the goads. In other words, God's Word was like a pointy stick that was jabbing at his heart every time he heard what the Christians were proclaiming. It is a shame that it took Jesus Himself to wake Paul up to get him to stop following his heart, but that is what it took.

If you are like Paul and you find yourself believing what you want to because it feels right in your heart of hearts, I hope you will allow God's Word to prick you in the heart and that it will cause you to change your ways. Stop kicking against the goads and accept the fact that your feelings will deceive you. The only way you can be right with God is by allowing God's Word to be your guide. I understand that God's Word may be hard to follow at times, and you may even feel that God is wrong, but I can promise you, He is not. So, find something like that blue thread in your life that will remind you daily about God and why it is important to keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15).

Warming By The Enemies Fire

Luke 22:54-61

Chuck Verkist
Ellensburg, Washington

The hope of this lesson is:

To help us see where we stand in this life; to allow us to examine ourselves. *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified”* (2 Cor 13:5).¹

To help others come away from the same enemies fire. As we will see, Peter was not ashamed of the Lord; he just could not bring himself to stand up for what he believed. Remember, when good men are silent, evil abounds. Peter was SILENT!!!! The time was just hours before (Christ) was crucified.

In Luke 22:54-61 we read of Jesus being arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, and they “led him away.” He was “seized” and bound and brought “unto the high PRIEST’S house (literally, they took Jesus by force). When we take a close look we can see the unlawful way in which Christ was tried. We understand that truth and justice are not on the minds of Christ’s CAPTORS.

Now when Jesus was led away Peter followed afar off. He was curious about what would become of his Lord. Could it be, at the same time, that he did not want anyone to know that he was a follower of Christ (one of His apostles)? Was it not but a short time before this event that Jesus said to Peter, *“you will denied Me”* (Christ). For just a moment, look at where Peter was, and with whom he was standing. Remember it tells us in John 18:17-18, upon Peter’s entrance one of the servant girls questioned Peter about his relationship to Christ, which provoked Peter’s first denial. At this time it was either late at night or early morning. The temperature was said to be cold. Peter was standing with the servants and officers who warmed themselves by a fire of coals. Peter also was warming by the same FIRE (now these people were the enemies of our Lord and Christ). And, here is Peter, one of the Apostles, who *“...sat in the midst of them”* (Luke 22:55, ASV [said it best]). How about each one of us? If we do not walk as our Lord prescribes in His word, are we not warming next to the enemy’s fire?

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

Do we not believe that “*there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Eph 4:4-6)? It is not that Peter denied Christ just one time; that would be bad enough, but then, two more times. Peter even came to the point of cursing about the matter.

I think it would be a very important question to ask ourselves, “What about Judas: one of twelve”? Christ’s old familiar friend, who betrayed Him with a kiss of hypocrisy! Is this not a denial? Now ask yourself “Which was the greater sin – Judas’s or Peter’s? Was Judas’s betrayal any more a transgression than Peter’s denial? The two are the same: guilty of abusing their Master!

But, the greater TRAGEDY by far surrounds Judas. Judas could have repented, just as Peter. But, Judas chose the coward’s way out – suicide.

How about each of us today?

Are we guilty of denial of our Lord, who bled and died for us:

- (1) When we stay away from worship service;
- (2) When our recreation gets in the way of worship;
- (3) When we stay home on Sunday because a friend stopped by;
- (4) When we stand silent and let evil abound?

Yes, we must all search our own souls.

The Fire of Ignorance.

This is a word that is misused in many ways today: (1) The word Ignorance does not mean that you cannot learn; (2) Peter was not Ignorant about the Lord; he knew who He was, and He had walked with Him.

Jesus is the one that said, “*...you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church*” (Matt. 16:18). This is not just a problem with Peter. There are many a church that are ignorant, indifferent and spiritually unemployed. The local church will not be better than they are taught. There are many people ignorant, and they want to stay that way, because they feel they will not be held responsible. Ignorance is bliss. What I don’t know can’t hurt me. “*But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant*” (1 Cor. 14:38). You will suffer the consequences of your ignorance. What a dismal shame! People choosing to be ignorant of God’s love and His saving Grace, which is free to all, choosing darkness instead of light.

We must take the Bible very seriously; in lies our salvation – salvation for all men. *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you...”* (Hos. 4:6).

Many a church of Christ has fallen into the pit of destruction for the lack of knowledge, and ignorance of God’s word. They seem to choose ignorance. When we are ignorant of God’s will are we safe? We become enemies of God. We will lose our soul.

The Fire of Popularity.

We all like to be popular. Most people like to be noticed of others. Many want to be one of the group. To be popular makes people feel good about themselves. But, when we are popular in the eyes of men, we are not popular in God’s eyes. When we choose popularity then we make adjustment in the way we live for the Lord.

WE WILL COMPROMISE the truth of God’s word to be popular. What about Peter, when he warmed himself at the fire of the enemy of our Lord? DID he compromise the security he had with Jesus?

For just a moment he put aside all the trust he had in Jesus.

All the belief.

All the love.

All the safety that he found in the Lord.

All the teaching he had learned from Jesus.

But, he did come back and was repentant for what he had done.

What about us when we COMPROMISE THE TRUTH for the sake of popularity, or to be accepted? What did Jesus say? *“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him”* (John 8:29). You and I, as Christians, must do those things that please God, not man, for the purpose of being popular. *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight”* (1 Jn. 3:22). Paul said, *“Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10). Peter denied Jesus because of fear; lack of courage. Perhaps he did not want to be labeled a follower of Christ. Maybe he felt that he would be put to death with Jesus.

“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Jn. 12:42-43).

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

If all our friend’s speak well of us, and if we are friend’s with all, well maybe, just maybe, we are warming ourselves by the fire of the enemy. In the words of Paul, *“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).*

The Fire of Indifference.

When people are indifferent they could care less about anything. They have the attitude “live and let live.” Many of the Lord’s people are indifferent about serving the Lord. They lose that spark of their Christian walk. What did Jesus say to the church in Laodicea: *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:15-16).*

A person that is indifferent stops coming to church on a regular basis *“... forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some” (Heb 10:25).* They have lost their way and do not care about returning. The world is more satisfying for them.

We must have the same mind as Paul did: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).*

Jesus is very plain in His teaching in light of this. We MUST set aside the mind of indifference and keep our eyes on Christ. He is the one that can save us from our sins.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Act 4:12).

“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to

save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what advantage is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:23-26).

In all of life we have choices, just as Peter and Judas did; and, just as these two men, one was lost and the other saved. What constitutes being lost? One who will not come to Christ and repent of his sins, or saved is one coming to Christ and repenting of their sins. “...*be faithful until death*” (Rev. 2:10). What is your choice in your eternal destiny. Which is set before each one? Will it be saved or lost?

Only You Can Choose.

But, sadly, there are many who are “...*always learning and never able to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the TRUTH*” (2 Tim. 3:7). That is why it's so urgent that we come to Christ and obey Him. “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). Willful rejection of the WILL (knowledge) of GOD brings spiritual destruction. It is not God's will that any should perish “...*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4). We think how sad it was, Peter denying his Lord. But, we also deny our Lord when we walk with the world. We do just as Peter did when we deny Jesus. We stand in the presence of His enemy. But don't lose hope, for we have hope in Christ. But, we must come to Him, and He will wash all our sins away, if we obey His will. So, why do you wait dear sinner? Why do you tarry so long? The Savior is gently knocking on the door of your heart. Won't you let Him in? Choose eternal life, not everlasting separation from God in a devil's hell.

Hear: Romans 10:17 “*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

Believe: John 8:24 “*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*”

Repent: Luke 13:3 “*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*”

Confess: Romans 10:9-10 “*...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus...*”

Be Baptized: Acts 2:38; 22:16.

Be Faithful: Revelation 2:10 “*...Be faithful until death...*”

Be With Me Lord

Archie R. Green
Glenn Heights, Texas

One of God's greatest gifts to mankind was His blessing of the sung word. From the Song of Moses to the echoes of David stating that Israel should, "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations*" (Psalm 100). And all throughout the New Testament humanity has been ordained to offer up to God the "fruit of our lips" which is our proper definition of praise to glorify the Father (Hebrews 13:15). A great song leader will sometimes stop to emphasize the words that may connote the passion and reverence that the artist has exuded as they penned a particular hymn, song or spiritual song. I for one am thankful that God has designed for us to all sing as one (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) To be encouraged in singing one to another and having the insight to meaningful words of a song when sung in unity is truly amazing. One of those boundless hymns that will remind me of this principle is "*Be With Me Lord*" by T. O. Chisholm. The song fetches countless images of desire, strength and humility to the Christian that has fought through this frail life on their way to glory. I would like to revisit just a few of those points here if you don't mind. The first verse states:

"Be with me, Lord, I cannot live without Thee. I dare not try to take one step alone. I cannot bear the loads of life unaided; I need Thy strength to lean myself upon."

Our Father in Heaven IS the Great Provider. He alone has the saving power and grace for our very existence. "*For in him we live, and move, and have our being;*" Acts 17:28a Anyone who has decided for themselves that they can live separate and apart from the Almighty will only find despair. David states it simply in Psalms 36:9, "*For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.*" God literally sustains a man in areas. Some of which we cannot see or often value and appreciation. He is our Rock and Steadfast Master...He is truly THE ONE that will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Verse two goes like this:

“Be with me, Lord, And then if dangers threaten, If storms of trial burst above my head, If lashing seas leap everywhere about me, They cannot harm, or make my heart afraid.”

The Psalmist David wrote, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”* (Psalm 23:4). If he could live in such confidence knowing that God is our DELIVERER; then we all can know as well! Jesus calmed the physical storms while here on earth and our Father in Heaven can calm the spiritual storms of our lives that will and often come our way (Isaiah 41:10). Trusting in Him and in Him alone is what makes us sure (Proverbs 3:3-5). We also notice in verse three:

“Be with me, Lord, No other gift or blessing. Thou could'st bestow could with this one compare. A constant sense of Thy abiding presence, Where'er I am, to feel that Thou art near.”

That Jesus spoke of an eternal residence provided by His father in heaven for all those that obey Him (Luke 6:23). Can our hearts even fathom the eternal bliss to come (Colossians 1:5; 1 John 2:24-25)? Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“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”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). The grandeur of the entire manner is that He now walks with us and the journey is never alone (1 John 1:7). And finally in verse four, we might find the most paramount theme of the entire song:

“Be with me, Lord, When loneliness o'ertakes me; When I must weep amid the fires of pain; And, when shall come the hour of my departure For worlds unknown, Oh, Lord be with me then.”

The Bible guarantees that all of mankind has a common destiny (Hebrews 9:27). Only one thing will make that ending worthwhile...And that is to go home with God (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The peace that we find in God comes now sometimes in the form of our earthly brethren and the relationships that we form between us (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). And whenever we have the opportunity to assemble AS the Lord's Body, it should be considered a blessing! And it ought to create in us a longing and a sense of comfort when songs like this are lead. I pray that we all sing with the understanding and heart that pleases our Father in Heaven (1 Corinthians 14:15). So that when it is our time to leave this world, we can all leave in peace. God Bless.

Understanding What Is Expedient?(2)

The difference in Expedients and Requirements

Jim Miller
Gray, Maine

One problem some people have is that they fail to distinguish between a practice that is sinful because they have no scriptural authority and a practice that is a simple expedient that only differs from what most other congregations use.

We established in our last article that it would not be an expedient to have the Lords Supper on any other day than the first day of the week because it is not authorized by scripture to do so.

However, Lets say that a congregation wants to meet for Bible study on Tuesday night instead of Wednesday. So congregation (A) starts meeting on Tuesday because more of its members can be present. Some may think this is not the norm and not allowed, yet there is nothing wrong it, it is simply more expedient for congregation (A) and benefits all its members.

Now lets say congregation (B) says we are only going to offer the Lords supper every second Sunday and they start this new practice. Congregation (B) is now sinning.

Both congregation (A) and congregation (B) are doing things different from what we consider the norm. But, congregation (B) is sinning because they are breaking the command to partake the Lords Supper **EVERY** first day of the week while congregation (A) is not. Congregation (A) is simply using an expedient even though it isn't the norm. Congregation (B) sins because it goes beyond what is written.

Now if I haven't totally confused you lets look at another example. Lets say that congregation (C) wants to have an evening devoted to singing on every third Wednesday night, and congregation (D) chooses to devote the fourth Wednesday night to a prayer service. We would not have a problem with congregation (C) because it has been a practice among congregations for a long time and is accepted. However, congregation (D) often times has to defend itself because the practice of prayer meetings has almost ceased in the churchs over the years. In reality both congregation (C) and (D) are within authority and using a simple expedient.

The problem we have today is there are many among us who want to make things expedient that are not authorized.

For example there is the age old fight over instrumental music. Though not being authorized some still try to call this an expedient. Personally I have no problem with using expedients. However, we must remember if a thing is not lawful it can not be expedient or have an expedient.

I remember reading many years ago where members of a large congregation wanted to use an overhead projector as an aid in teaching. Yet the elders refused for no real reason. There was also about this same time a congregation who wanted to change the Sunday evening meeting time for the reason that more of the members could attend. In this case several members threatened to leave. The list goes on and on because of lack of understanding.

Where as many years ago these folks were worried about using an expedient because they were not used to such, today there are those who go way too far the other way trying to justify their own desires through the use an unauthorized action calling it an expediency.

Because of all the confusion it bears repeating just what an expedient is, and what its relation is to practices the Lord has required, whether by direct statement or command, by apostolic example, or by implication of these. Basically, an expedient is an advantageous or profitable method of carrying out the Lord's directions.

We are commanded to assemble on the first day of the week, there is no specific time given, so one church may choose to meet starting at 9 a.m., and another may choose to start at 11 a.m.... So, each congregation examines its own situation, then determines what time of the day, on Sunday, it would be most spiritually profitable to assemble. The time here is the expediency and either church may meet lawfully at their given times.

One important key point is this: local church expedients are just that - local in nature. If Church (A) determines it is expedient to meet on Tuesday night rather than on Wednesday night, other congregations may not agree – and they may even discuss why Wednesday night would be more expedient. However, they must not treat Church (A) as not being sound or as being "liberal" simply because it uses an expedient not used by all other churches.

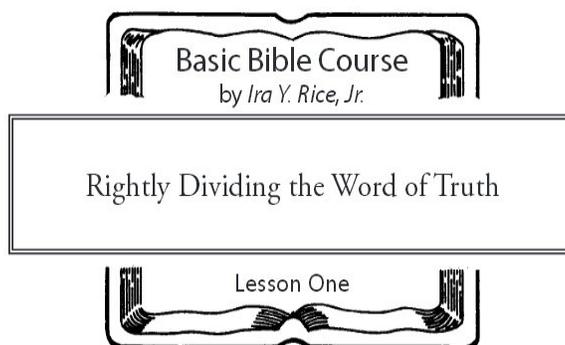
Today some congregations want to start a practice of hand clapping calling it an expedient when clearly there is NO authority for doing so. Others would have us believe that these so called praise teams, which are nothing more than glorified entertainment, are an expedient. Those who would make something expedient to justify their own desires must learn to respect the silence of God's word. God's silence more often than not prohibits actions rather than permitting them.

Clapping would be akin to a percussion instrument, like a drum, there for it is unauthorized because all we are instructed to do is sing Eph_5:19 speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

A specific statement or example excludes those things which are not specified Numbers 24:12,13 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, [13] If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do *either* good or bad of mine own mind; *but* what the LORD saith, that will I speak? Also see Revelation 22:18,19. We must learn to respect the silence of God's word. So if God specifies how or what he requiers us to do, or the method by which we are to obey, we are limited to what he says.

We will conclude our study on expediency in part 3 coming in June. Till then may God bless.

End Notes: All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.



Basic Bible Course

Basic Bible Course – Ira Y. Rice, Jr. Each lesson has been reformatted. This reformatting will allow students to complete the course via the Internet or to download the files to a computer and use them as study guides.

[Click Here To Take The Course](#)

The Power of Forgiveness

Robert Alexander
DeFuniak Springs, FL

Guilt is a terrible burden to bear. We have all “been there and experienced it,” as it were, because there has been various times in our lives that each of us has had to deal with the guilt of wrongful actions, words or thoughts. Because of such things, all of us have experienced a separation and/or outright loss of friendship and other relationships from time to time due to such actions. On a deeper plane, that is, the spiritual, we have all been guilty of sin against God in our lives (Rom. 3:23) and as a result, we have been separated from God because of our sins (Isa. 59:2). The vast majority of people living today are living in sin and thus are living with the guilt of sin as they go about the “hustle and bustle” of everyday living. The guilt of sin is a burden that we cannot bear ourselves. God, through His Only Begotten Son, Christ Jesus, offers us a new beginning. Through Christ and His precious blood we can enjoy forgiveness (Eph. 1:7). As Christians, we enjoy this great blessing of forgiveness; but, as a result, we also have the responsibility to teach others the good news of salvation and God’s gracious offer to forgive those who hear and do His will (Jas. 1:22,23). The question is: What should we tell others about the power of God’s forgiveness?

Forgiveness Builds Relationships

Sin fractures relationships not only with one another, but also, above all, with God. When we do (i.e. ‘obey’) God’s will, it is by His grace and love that we are forgiven of all our trespasses (Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:8,9) and hence become a part of God’s family—the church (1 Tim. 3:15). We have a new and better relationship. At one time our relationship was solely with the world and consequently enmity with God (Jas. 4:4); BUT, upon our obedience, not only do we become a child of God, but also a friend of God (Jas. 2:23). Friendship with God brings great blessings. One in particular is that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He will always be there for us. He, as Father, cares for us as His children (1 Pet. 5:7).

Forgiveness Heals Wounds

Sin is a spiritual problem, but in the Scriptures it is pictured in physical terms and pictures. Isaiah pictures sin as a debilitating disease, which brings putrefying wounds. He writes: “From the sole of the feet even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa.

1:6). Sin that is left unchecked will ultimately destroy the entire body (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 16:26). However, we should all be thankful to God that through Christ, the great physician, we can be healed of all our soul's diseases (Matt. 9:12). It is through the precious, cleansing blood of Christ that we become "white as snow" (Isa. 1:18), having had our sins washed away (Rev. 1:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:27), thus having them blotted out and remembered no more (Acts 3:19; Heb. 10:17,18); and, as we walk in the light of His word, that same blood continues to cleanse us (1 Jn. 1:7).

Forgiveness Brings Peace

There is no true peace away from God, and obviously outside of Christ. Sadly, too many listen to so-called "preachers" today, preaching messages of "peace," but never realizing there can be no "peace," because they are not hearing the true word of God (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11). It is only through and in Christ, the prince of peace (Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:14), that peace can be found (Acts 4:12; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 2:15). We make peace with God through our obedience to the Gospel. It is of little wonder, then, that Christ said that happy are the peacemakers (those who have made peace with God) for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9). As Christians, the children of God, we enjoy perfect peace. In fact, Paul describes the peace enjoyed by Christians as that which "passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). As Christians we have peace knowing that when we pillow our head at night, if we have been faithful unto the Lord, and if death comes to us, or Christ comes, we will be ready for the hereafter and thus confidently await the eternal reward of heaven prepared for the faithful of all ages (Jn. 14:1-3).

Forgiveness is a powerful word and concept to ponder. Volumes could be written regarding the power and blessing of forgiveness, especially as it relates to our (Christians) having obtained forgiveness of our sins from God, and yet this theme would still not be exhausted. Recognizing and understanding that God is willing to forgive all who would come to Him, and that He has forgiven us as His children through our obedience, our task of preaching the Gospel is made all the more urgent. When we preach the Gospel of Christ we are preaching the "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). The goal of "the preaching" (1 Cor. 1:21 ASV) is "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). May we, as the people of God, never take for granted the forgiveness we enjoy; and, may each Christian strive to do all they can (scripturally speaking) to bring the lost to Christ so that they too may enjoy the blessing of God's forgiveness.

Church of Christ Downtown Cedar Hill
332 W. Cedar St. Cedar Hill TX 75104
Invite All To Attend

“God Still Cares”

1 Peter 5:6-8

June 4-Richard Stevens **God still cares that He is known as the Creator...Gen 1:1**

June 11-Marvin Weir **God still cares about mankind...2 Peter 3:9**

June 18-Ivie Powell **God still cares that we obey (only) Him...1 John 5:3**

June 25-David Rectin **God still cares that many teach false doctrine... Titus 1:9-11**

July 2-Robert Dodson **God still cares WHEN we sin against Him... Isaiah 59:1-2**

July 9-Jim Laws **God still cares about repentance...Acts 17:30**

July 16-David McElwain **God still cares about forgiveness...Colossians 3:13**

July 23-Mike Bonner **God still cares that we love one another... Ephesians 5:30-32**

July 30-Hubert Smith **God still cares about marriage...1 Corinthians 7:1-2**

August 6-Mike Crosby **God still cares that we worship Him AS HE DESIRES...John 4:21-24**

August 13-Willie Alvarenga **God still cares about the Lord's church... Matthew 16:18**

August 20-Bob Moss **God still cares about baptism...1 Peter 3:21**

August 27-Bill Burke **God still cares about our salvation...Romans 5:8**

Some “Hard” Questions from Leviticus (2)

Devin Dean
Corner, Alabama

In What Sense was it Feasible, or not Feasible, to Assemble the Whole Congregation Before the Door of the Tent of Meeting (Lev. 8:4)?

When this question is asked we may need first to go into its validity. A question as this should have a simple answer to one of God’s children. We should look at the passage and have the attitude and action of Moses: “*And the LORD spake ... And gather thou all the congregation together ... And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; ...*” (Lev. 8:1-4).¹ **God spoke, Moses obeyed** – and so the simple answer is found. We, as Moses did, should answer that it is **always feasible** (and required) to do as God commands.

God has commanded Moses to bring “all the congregation” together at “the door of the tabernacle.” Now we have found the bone of contention that many skeptics have – how is it feasible to gather the entire congregation of Israel at the door of the tabernacle. Let us look at the argument they place forward.

First the population of Israel was in excess of 600,000 men of war (those men age 20 and over). This number did not include women, children, or the tribe of Levi. Statistics show this would have produced a total male population in excess of 1,000,000. Once females are added, the population would have easily reached 2,000,000.²

Second, the size of the tabernacle was not large enough. We know from the activities and commands of God that the activities of Leviticus 8 took place in the courtyard of the tabernacle (though Moses did have to enter the holy place to anoint the contents per command). The activities consisted of washing, anointing and sacrifice in order to sanctify and consecrate the priests for service unto God. Even if one were to allocate the entirety of the courtyard (some 16,200 square feet of space) it would not be enough space to accommodate the 600,000 men – much less the 2,000,000 that would make up the Israelite nation at this point.³

The door of the tabernacle (taken as the gate of the courtyard) would likewise be no better. Under the argument the congregation if fully assembled would stretch

a minimum of 4 miles back, to a maximum of 20 miles back from the tabernacle.⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown give an effective answer to this argument and its full reading is encouraged. Some excerpts are given here to assist in defining where events are taking place:

These extraordinary conclusions are grounded on two false assumptions in relation both to the door of the tabernacle and to the actual scene of the inauguration service. It is assumed that the service was to be performed within the tabernacle... None but the priests and some of the Levites on certain occasions were admitted into any part of the sanctuary, while all others designated “strangers” were prohibited under penalty of death (Num. iii. 10; iv. 18, 19). It is especially observable that Aaron and his sons could not enter on the day of consecration without washing their feet (Exod. xi. 30-32);... It is said (ch. ix. 5) that they stood “before the Lord,” ... is evidently to be taken in the widest sense, as denoting not the sanctuary merely, but also the court belonging to it – as in Exod. xxxi. 7-9 the altar of burnt offering and the laver, neither of which were stationed in the sanctuary, are included amongst the contents of the tabernacle.⁵

As we see the action taking place within the courtyard, then the most likely place for the observers (the congregation) would have been the gate of the courtyard. This is acceptable within the language of the Scriptures, as the tabernacle was not just the sanctuary (containing the holy Place and most holy place), but rather the entire structure – courtyard and its implements as well as the sanctuary and its implements. This lends itself to agreement with the thought of many commentators that the congregation was gathered representatively in the elders.^{6, 7, 8, 9}

Constable provides some additional notes on the meaning of “congregation” within his commentary:

The meaning of “congregation” is somewhat obscure. Sometimes the whole nation seems to be in view (e.g., Exod. 12:3, 6; 17:1; Num. 20:1-2). If this is the meaning in verses 13-21, as seems to be the case, the “congregation” is synonymous with the “assembly.” However in other passages “congregation” seems to describe a representative group within the nation (e.g., Exod. 16:1-2, 9; Num. 8:20; 15:33-36; 27:2; 35:12, 24-25). The context helps determine the meaning.¹⁰

Evidently a representative group of the Israelite congregation, likely the elders, responded to Moses' summons to witness Aaron's ordination in the tabernacle courtyard.¹¹

The natural conclusion is that it would not have been feasible for the entire nation of Israel, some two million in number, to attend the event directly. In fact even today, without it being a long parade or use of mass communication, we still do not have a facility large enough to have such a large group gather in one place. However, it is feasible and acceptable within the Scriptures and practice to have a representative population, as in Exodus 24, come before the Lord as the nation.

Conclusion

The benefits to us of studying these hard passages are worth the effort and time it takes to complete the study. Applying sound reasoning and proper study techniques allows us to fulfill the commands we find within the Scriptures: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We should be as the Bereans were, receiving "...the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). May we all find the time and willingness to study God's Word.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

² Keil and Delitzsch, Kiel and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Taken from e-Sword computer program.

³ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, Taken from e-Sword computer program.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, Kiel and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Taken from e-Sword computer program.

⁷ J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, & Dallas Theological Seminary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary an Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 1:186.

⁸ W. W. Wiersbe, Be Holy (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1994). Le 8:1.

⁹ M. Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Complete and Unabridged in One Volume (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991). Le 8:1.

¹⁰ Thomas Constable, Notes on Leviticus: 2003 Edition (Sonic Light Publisher, 2003), p. 17.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 27.

Lessons for Today from Ananias and Sapphira

Tim Bench
Abilene, Texas

Acts 5:1-11 “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, [2] And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. [3] But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? [4] Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. [5] And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. [6] And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. [7] And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. [8] And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. [9] Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. [10] Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. [11] And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:1-11).

The epic story of the Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 5:1-11 has become, for many, one of the more dissected stories of the entire New Testament; opponents of the Bible will cite the story of this husband and wife duo and their demise as proof of God's wrath, anger, fury, and temper. Those calling themselves “Christians” will often ignore the story altogether (God striking down people for disobedience obviously not a fitting topic for sermons, debates, classes, or discussions in today's “tolerant,” “My God is a LOVING God” type of world). Christians and even preachers today who DO broach the subject will often refer to this story as “disturbing” or “difficult.”

No part of the Bible should be ignored, “difficult” or not. Ananias and Sapphira, and their fate, was ordained by God, executed by God, and is thus just and expedient...Again, by God. Let us look at the story, which now many may avoid completely.

The first century church was much different than now. Early believers shared all their material wealth and possessions, having “all things common” (see Acts 4:32 and Acts 2:43-45). To ensure the very survival of this fledgling faith, members both wealthy and poor gave of their means, and as a result, no one in the community “lacked” (Acts 4:24). Everything was shared and nothing was considered the “property” of a specific individual. Whatever need might arise could be effectively dealt with, and common human failings, such as envy, strife, jealousy, and warring factions, could, ideally, be alleviated.

In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira “sold a possession” (verse 1). Ananias brings the proceeds from this sale, most likely land that the couple had owned, and laid it at the feet of Peter, with the obvious insinuation that this money was ALL that he had received for his sale, and he was thus giving the money IN ITS ENTIRETY for dispersion amongst the faithful.

Peter’s response is scathing (see Acts 5:3-4). Ananias had lied to the Holy Ghost, his heart filled with malice and greed by Satan. Note that Peter clearly contrasted Ananias’ deeds with that of all the other believers, none of whom would dare make the claim that possessions were their own, and ALL of whom would, and did, sell goods and lay the proceeds at the apostles’ feet. Verse 4 is especially notable; it was NOT a sin for the pair to keep back part of their proceeds, and Peter states without ambiguity that while it remained their property, they could certainly give whatever portion they might deem appropriate. The pair had the gall, the unmitigated nerve, the audacity, to actually attempt to LIE to Peter, the early Christians, and most stunning of all, to God, himself.

Ananias falls and dies on the spot (Acts 5:5). Later, Sapphira, unaware of the fate of her husband (but fully complicit and aware of his nefarious, vile, tepid, and repugnant plot) approaches Peter, who, in verse 8, asks the woman “whether ye sold the land for so much,” or, in more modern terms, “Is this the full amount you received for your sale?” Peter provides her every opportunity to be honest. Like her forked-tongued husband, Sapphira lies, and like her husband, dies on the spot and is carried away and “buried by her husband” (verse 10). The pair had believed that they could deceive almighty God, an utter falsehood presented as truth, and it cost them their physical lives.

The modern-day “tolerant” among us will suggest that this was “wrathful” on God’s part, “certainly not very loving,” and thus the story becomes, as we have discussed, uncomfortable for many. But, let us keep in mind that EVERY

member of the early church was giving of their means (which were often VERY limited) to ensure that the church would even survive. Luke 21:1-4 reminds us of the poor widow who provided the ‘two mites’ (ALL that she had) to the early church, giving out of duty and sheer faith in Jesus Christ, and NOT from abundance. How DARE this husband and wife scheme together to sell a belonging and LIE about it, in order to make themselves appear more dutiful, diligent, and dedicated, when in reality their hearts were filled with greed and hypocrisy; there is no other term BUT hypocrite for a person who wants himself or herself portrayed to the world as concerned about supporting the winning of souls for Christ, when in reality, their concern is actually fulfillment of their own desires and wants. It is stunning that a person would knowingly and willingly lie TO GOD, when it is God who has provided him or her with EVERY physical/material blessing they have had, or ever will have, in the first place. Yet, this is the crime of Ananias and Sapphira.

The lessons to be drawn from this story are as applicable today as they were in the first century. Many of us have seen the poorest (in monetary terms) among us be the most generous with their wealth, providing money or food or whatever else might be needed to their local congregation, even to the extent that they themselves are forced to suffer or “do without.” I know of people who, on a fixed income, delved into their limited bank accounts to help fund missionary and evangelical efforts in which the church is involved, with no fanfare or applause. Meanwhile, other more affluent and wealthy members often are the most stingy and hoarding with their monies, saying, “I might be able to help out with some donations later next year, depending on how some of my investments pan out,” or a similar refrain, all too common.

Do you think the widow woman who gave the two mites was worried about how her investment portfolio might turn out? Or, were she and the other first century Christians, living a communal lifestyle with no thought of their own “belongings,” more concerned with spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Is this narcissistic, self-centered, “flash over substance” obsession with portraying self as positively as possible applicable to our churches today, and not just to individuals? Do we sometimes worry about the mere “**form** of godliness” (2 Timothy 3:5), trying to impress others with vanity and lies? How about a congregation that focuses its “evangelism” on flashy, showy attributes such as fancy buildings and expansion, gymnasiums, “entertainment” facilities, and so on, instead of their Biblically-decreed true mission of glorifying God and winning souls to Christ?

There are other examples from the Bible of consequences inflicted upon those who would defiantly attempt to deceive and lie to an all-knowing, all-seeing God (see Gehazi, servant of the prophet Elisha, who practiced deception and lied to Elisha and was stricken with leprosy in 2 Kings 5:25-27). Rather than get leprosy, however, Ananias and Sapphira were summarily struck dead, and while some might consider their deaths as overly severe, let us keep one thing firmly in mind: it was God's decision, and God, without exception, does what is right. Questioning the "morality" of the deaths in this story is tantamount to questioning God himself, it seems.

We would be well served today to remember that God knows our hearts, our minds, and our souls, down to the most minute detail and thought, and there can be nothing more absurd than to consider and believe that somehow, a repellant and self-serving heart can be "hidden" from an omnipotent God. Our lies, if not repented of, will cost us far more than our physical bodies (see Revelation 21:8); this should be what the story of Ananias and Sapphira serves to remind us. We cannot serve both God and mammon (see Matthew 6:24-25); the heart of this husband and wife learned this lesson too late. Let this not be the case for us, and let each of us have an appropriate appreciation and value for possessions, the proper sense of priorities (specifically in supporting church efforts), and perhaps most of all, let us each never be foolish enough to think for a moment that nefarious lies, deceit, and trickery will go unseen by almighty God.

Something To Ponder

After Jesus had died to purchase our redemption, and after his body had been resurrected from the grave in complete victory over death, but before he ascended to the throne in heaven, he gave orders to his disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mk. 16:15). His orders, as recorded by Matthew (28: 19, 20) also include the requirement that those who would be converted should be commissioned also to "Go." The first disciples were to teach the saved to observe the same things the first disciples had received of Jesus. So it is that it can be concluded that Christians today are ordered by the Lord, "Go preach the gospel."

Insights from the church in Galatia, Part 1.

Logan Summers
Midland, Texas

A Brief Introduction to Galatians

When one begins to study Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, the theme of the book quickly becomes evident. "*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)*" (Gal. 1:1 cf. Gal. 1:10-24), and just a few verses later, "*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Gal. 1:6-7). Generally, one identifies two themes from these statements: (1) The defense of Paul's apostleship and (2) Defending the Gospel of Christ against false gospels (specifically that of binding parts of Judaism). However, a general theme may be combined from these two: Authority must come from God. Paul's argument that He is a true apostle of God is simply that the gospel he preached was not from man, but through revelation by Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). He did not learn his teachings from the apostles, for He had not spent enough time with them to learn the gospel from them for at least 17 years (Gal. 1:15-19; 2:1), yet the apostles were in full agreement with what he taught (Gal. 2:7-9). From this, it is deduced that Paul must have received His authority from God. Furthermore, the Gospel that was first preached is the only Gospel authorized by God (Gal. 1:6-9). Just as Paul's apostleship is not from man but from God, so is the Gospel Paul preached (Gal. 1:11-12).

Proceeding through the book of Galatians, the latter half of chapter one and the entirety of chapter two are devoted to defending Paul's apostleship being authorized by God, not by man. Chapter three is a turning point in the book, focusing more upon the subject of authority as it relates to the Gospel of Christ. Specifically, some people came into the church in Galatia teaching that certain parts of the Law of Moses (especially circumcision) must be obeyed in addition to faith in Christ (Gal. 1:7; 4:10; 5:2). The thrust of the book is that there is no authority to change the Gospel of Christ. To bind what God has not bound, or loose what God has not loosed is to change the Gospel of Christ into a different gospel, one that has no power to save (Gal. 1:6-9; 5:4, 13).

The focus of this study examines various characteristics of the congregations of Galatia and to apply them accordingly. First, several negative characteristics are

presented followed by some positive characteristics. At the last, specific lessons that apply today to local congregations today are submitted for contemplation.

Negative Characteristics of the church in Galatia.

The Church in Galatia Did not Rightly Divide the Word of Truth.

The largest problem that the Galatian church had involved incorrectly handling the Scriptures. Paul's main point of contention deals not with what some worldly philosopher of the past said, but with what men in the church presently said about the Law of Moses. A casual reading indicates that the church had added certain areas of Judaism to the Gospel. Notice the following indications of this: *"This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"* (Gal. 3:2)? *"Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"* (Gal. 3:5)? *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them"* (Gal. 3:10). *"And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise"* (Gal. 3:17-18). *"You observe days and months and seasons and years"* (Gal. 4:10). *"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing"* (Gal. 5:2).

Changing the Gospel to something dangerous or perverted (such as being baptized in acid or sacrificing young children for Christ) is easy to see as false. Yet, when those around proclaim that the Word of God teaches X, many have trouble dividing truth from error. For example, many argue that the Scriptures give authority to worship God with mechanical instruments of music because the Old Testament gives authority for it. The Law of Moses DOES give authority to worship God with mechanical instruments of music (2 Chr. 5:13-14; 7:6; Ps. 150). However, the Law of Moses is not the binding law today (Col. 2:13-14; Heb. 8:6-13), but Christ's law (Col. 3:17). The false teachers in Galatia used God's Word in a way that was not "rightly dividing" the Word of Truth, resulting in the confusion that the Galatian church had toward the Law of Moses.

This tragedy becomes all the more clear when one sees that Paul laid forth the Gospel in an intelligible, precise, and clear fashion (Gal. 3:1). Leaving the Gospel

to head towards a different Gospel stunned Paul because it happened so quickly after his clear demonstration of the true Gospel (Gal. 1:6). Many passages in the Bible deal with the incorrect handling of scripture (Mt. 22:23-33; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:15-18 et al.). Paul too gives a powerful warning against those in Galatia who incorrectly handled the scriptures: *“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace”* (Gal. 5:4 ESV). History does not record for us the response these brethren had to Paul’s letter. Certainly it is the desire of all that these brethren saw the error in their teaching, repented, and began to once again rightly divide the Word of God. Furthermore, those in the church now need to continue to rightly divide the Word of Truth and stand strong against all who would manipulate God’s Word.

The Galatian Churches failed to use Rational Thinking.

In rebuking the Galatians on their falling away, Paul calls them “foolish” (Gal. 3:1a). The word indicates not a lack of intelligence, but of an “inability or a refusal to recognize the real situation.” The Galatians heard and believed the Gospel, but then changed their minds on it because their powers of rational thinking were not used. He says again in Galatians 3:2-3, *“This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? **Are you so foolish?** Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”* The point Paul makes is clear: If the Galatians began with something different than the law (i.e. hearing of faith), why would the law then be necessary to perfect them? To believe such is contradictory and irrational. When Christians as well as congregations set their faith on “autopilot” (when no thought goes in to what is being taught), error will soon creep in.

The Churches of Galatia Attempted to be Justified by Something other than Faith

This is the main strike against these brethren. It starts with false doctrine. False doctrine cannot simply happen, it must be taught. Throughout Galatians, Paul indicates that there are some in the congregations who are teaching something different than the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-8; 5:7-12; 6:12-13). Although undoubtedly they were claiming that the doctrine originated with God, it did not (Gal. 5:8). Teaching that some or all of the Law of Moses, or the Patriarchal Law (cf. Eph. 2:11-22), or any other law/rule of faith is binding today is to teach doctrine created by man and unknown to God. It is impossible to be justified by anything but faith in Christ. Paul asks, *“Did you receive the Spirit by*

the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith” (Gal. 3:2)? The obvious answer is by faith since when they first heard and obeyed the Gospel it was not taught that they should obey the Law of Moses. Paul in addition points out that the Gentiles would be justified by faith (Gal 3:8), just as Abraham. Anything added to the Gospel, taken from the Gospel, or changed in the Gospel makes the Gospel a different gospel, one that is false.

Next month, we will examine some positive characteristics of the church in Galatia, and what applications we might draw from it for our own encouragement and growth in the faith.



The image is a screenshot of the Churches of Christ website. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the text "Churches of Christ.com" in white. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: "Home", "Work of the Spring Congregation", "Recommended Links", and "Contact Us". Underneath the navigation bar are several smaller links: "Sermons", "Articles", "Debates", "Spring CFTF Lectures", and "World Wide Gospel Preaching". The main content area features a red and white logo for "Contending FOR THE Faith". Below the logo, the text reads: "2014 Spring", "Contending For The Faith Lectures", "WHAT MUST A CHRISTIAN DO TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO CHRIST?", "February 19—February 23, 2014", and "David P. Brown, Lectureship Director".

[*Click Here Watch The Lectures*](#)

“The god of Atheism or the God of the Bible?”

Cloyd B. Frock, Jr.
Parsons, Kansas

Everyone believes in God (or a form of god).

Did you know that it's impossible for God not to exist? Even atheists, who claim there is no God, must invent “something” in order to explain all reality. Last month we observed that the “something” invented by atheists to explain all reality is called the “*law of conservation of energy*,” which states that “*Energy can be transformed into another sort of energy [such as physical matter – cbf]. But it cannot be created AND it cannot be destroyed. Energy has always existed in one form or another.*”²

Atheists, who aren't willing to “punt the ball” of their religion down the road, must explain all reality according to this invented law (god?) of eternal energy/matter. Make no mistake about it: atheism IS a religion – one that requires “blind faith,” upon which conclusions must be reached absent of any evidence whatsoever, unlike Christianity, which requires a thorough examination of the evidence (1 Thess. 5:21). And so, this is what they hold to be the “creator” of all that has ever existed, presently exists, or ever will exist in our universe today – it's their “form” of god.

What the Atheist's “god” CANNOT explain.

Sadly, the god that atheism has invented cannot explain several key components of our present reality. Their “blind faith” forces them into a prison of absurdity, which includes a foundational theory known as “Spontaneous Generation,” but was later re-termed “Abiogenesis,” which I assume was intended to obscure the obvious contradictory nature of the original term. A dictionary definition best describes the theory as follows: *Abiogenesis is “the supposed spontaneous origination of living organisms directly from lifeless matter.”*³ In other words, the origin of all life began from that which had no life. Another way of putting it might be to say, “*Things that are alive, today, were born from things that were dead, yesterday.*” That's the logical end of the atheist's argument. Who can believe it?! And, as is normally the case when one builds upon the foundation of

²California Energy Commission. (1994). <http://www.energyquest.ca.gov/story/chapter01.html>.

³“abiogenesis.” Merriam-Webster.com. 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (22 April 2014).

an absurd conclusion, a whole host of other absurd conclusions stem from that first one, including (but not limited to) the following:

Consciousness originated from that which was not conscious. One unique aspect of humanity is that we are conscious of our existence. For example, I know that I exist, and that I am typing this sentence as I am in the process of typing it. To my knowledge, neither rocks, nor lesser animals, share such a capacity.

Intelligence originated from that which had no intelligence. We live in an incredible age, in which computers have nearly become interwoven into our existence here on earth. Would you believe me were I to suggest that the intelligence behind the advent of the “computer” was nothing more than stupid chance – that such intelligence “spontaneously generated” by chance, over time? I am certain that nobody would grant me such an allowance of absurdity! Yet, we are to believe that human intelligence “spontaneously generated” by chance (from rocks and dirt), over time?

Moral values originated from that which had no moral value. The atheists with whom I have personally discussed this issue have universally agreed that human morality does, in fact, exist, but not as an “objective standard” applicable to all human beings. That’s an argument that I intend to tackle next month, but for the moment, let’s just ask the question, “From where might have the ‘factual existence’ of human morality originated?” Have you ever met a rock with a conscience? If humanity originated from dead, lifeless, matter, then it necessarily follows that human morality originated from dead, lifeless, matter. In other words, moral value “spontaneously generated” by chance, over time. Again, who can believe it?

What the God of the Bible CAN Explain.

Where the god of atheism cannot explain the origins of life, the God of our Bible certainly does. We read in Genesis 1:1 “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*”⁴ and in Acts 17:24 Paul said, “*God...made the world and everything in it...*” Of course, our atheist friends would simply scoff at this contention, because they insist that we have no proof concerning such assertions as these. Are they right? Let’s take a moment to consider just two characteristics about our God.

He is conscious (alive and aware). The prophet Isaiah wrote, “*Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: ‘My way is hidden from the Lord, And my just claim is passed over by my God?’ Have you not known? Have you not heard?*”

⁴All Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

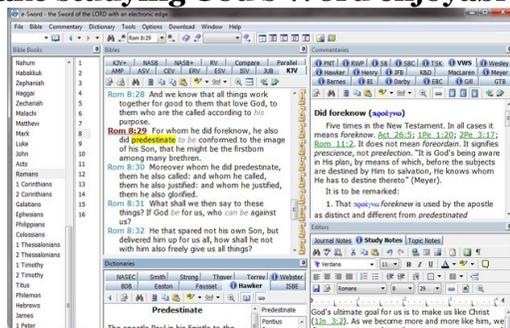
The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary” (Isa. 40:27-28), and the Psalmist wrote, “...the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Ps. 1:6). If it’s impossible for that which is dead to create that which is alive (and, that is what we know to be scientifically true [observable and repeatable]), then we know that our own consciousness (knowing that we are alive and aware) could only have originated by one who was first conscious, and the God of the Bible fits that requirement.

He is intelligent (rational and creative). The prophet Isaiah again helps us to recognize this aspect of God when he wrote, “*‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’*” (Isa. 55:8-9); and, in his first epistle, the apostle John wrote, “*...God is greater than our heart, and knows all things*” (1 John 3:20). If it’s impossible for dead matter to produce something with intelligence (rationality and creativity, capable of inventing a “computer”), then we know that our own intelligence (rationality and creativity) could only have originated by one who was first intelligent, and the God of the Bible fits that requirement.

The god of atheism has left us with nothing but unanswered questions and logical absurdities, while the God of the Bible provides every necessary answer to those questions concerning life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

In our next installment, we will consider the question of morality as it pertains both to God, and to His beloved creation, mankind.

e-Sword is feature rich and user friendly. This combination is what I pursued, so there were decisions I had to make when implementing features. If a feature became too complicated, I abandoned it to keep things simple. The \$500.00 software might be able to do more, but does the average user know how to take advantage of it? No! Below are features that make studying God's Word enjoyable and enriching.



Get E-Sword [Click Here](#)

Analysis of Romans 14 (Part 1)

Discerning Between Matters of “*the Faith*” and Indifference

Doug Post
Vernon, CT

When Christians disagree on a passage of Scripture, either one or the other side is wrong (this applies to groups of Christians as well). It may be true that both sides are wrong. If the disagreement is over a matter of personal opinion or an expediency, which doesn't matter to God, then both of them may be right. But, certainly, both cannot be right when there is disagreement over *specific* revelation; that does matter to God.

The apostle Paul wrote, “*Receive one who is weak in the faith...*” (Rom.14:1). In the Greek text the word “*faith*” is preceded by the definite article which would indicate “***the faith***,” referring to that body of teaching contained in the Scriptures – God's revealed Word! The word “*faith*” is found four other times in the chapter, meaning “confidence” in each place –

Romans 14:2 – “*For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables*” (14:2). Here “*faith*” refers to the man's *confidence* that it is all right to eat meat, based on God's revelation. The weak brother does not understand that and, from his own human reasoning, makes a law where God has not.

Romans 14:22-23 – “*Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin*”

In these verses, other than verse one, there is no definite article preceding “*faith*.” Paul is saying that whatever one does, he must have complete **confidence** in what he is doing, that it is right, *in this category of things!* “*Faith*” is set across from “*doubting*.” Of course, we cannot do something wrong with complete confidence that it is right and expect God to be pleased just because we are honest and sincere. Complete sincerity and confidence doesn't make something wrong to be right.

In a similar situation, Paul clearly says that there is nothing wrong with eating

meat sacrificed to idols; the idol is nothing and the meat is not contaminated in any way. In 1 Corinthians 8:10-13, Paul discusses the “*weak*” brother. He is set opposite the one who has knowledge, one who knows the truth from God and can make the distinction in regard to meat offered to an idol. The knowledgeable one knows that an idol cannot contaminate the meat and thus eats it. The weak brother does not understand that difference and so eats the meat “*as a sacrifice to idols*” and thereby sins. And, like Romans 14:20-21, he says that if meat causes this weak brother to stumble, he will eat no flesh.

Though there are some similarities between 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14, there are some differences as well. The “*weak*” brother in each of the places is different. In 1 Corinthians 8, the “*weak*” one does not understand truth regarding meat offered to idols, but, neither is he a vegetarian; this “*weak*” brother eats meat just as the “*strong*” one does. In Romans 14, the “*weak*” one does not understand truth regarding eating meat *versus* vegetarianism. In 1 Corinthians 8 the “*weak*” is not only uninformed but is weak in *resolve* as well; he has no specific conviction and can be influenced by the example of the “*strong*” to eat the meat sacrificed to idols. However, in Romans 14, the “*weak*,” while lacking understanding, has certain convictions about being a vegetarian; he condemns the meat-eating brother for his eating meat. In 1 Corinthians 8, the “*weak*” brother is emboldened to eat meat *as a sacrifice to idols* and thus sins. In Romans 14, the “*weak*” is “*grieved*” by the brother’s eating meat and does wrong in condemning the meat-eating brother.

Yet, “***the faith***” gives us guidance on both subjects. 1 Corinthians chapters 6, 8, and 10 give instruction on meat offered in sacrifice to idols and 1 Timothy 4:1-4 tells us it is all right to eat meat, period. A mark of falling away from “***the faith***” is to make a law that bans eating meat. In Romans 14, if the weak ones had understood “***the faith***,” they would not have insisted that eating meat was sinful. Being a vegetarian was permissible as long as no one made a law where God had not, a law that said one cannot eat meat. In 1 Corinthians 8, if the weak had understood “***the faith***,” he would have eaten the meat anyway, but *not as a sacrifice to the idol*.

Romans 14:3 says, “*Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.*” The one who eats meat and the “*weak*” brother are not viewed exactly the same here. To “*despise him who does not*” means to treat with contempt, someone not worthy of notice. We also find this term used in elsewhere. For instance, Paul tells the Corinthians to accept Timothy without fear (1 Cor. 16:10-11), and so “*let*

no man therefore despise him.” That is, no one was to treat him with contempt. Paul’s enemies claimed, in 2 Corinthians 10:10, his speech was “*contemptible,*” or not worthy of consideration.

In Romans 14, on the other side, the weak were “*judging*” the others. The word literally means to *condemn*. They were condemning those who ate meat for their meat eating. So, the weak had **made a law** that one cannot eat meat and those who knew the truth were treating them with disdain. This interplay of antagonism between the two sides is noted again in the same context: “*But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*” (Romans 14:10).

Now, with reference to “*for God has received him*” (Rom.14:3), we must ask ourselves, who is the antecedent of “*him*”? If it referred to both sides, it would have said “*for God has received **them**.*” However, the flow of the context reads as follows: “*Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.*” The weak were condemning the meat-eaters and they must understand that the meat-eaters have been received of God. On the other hand, the meat-eaters must understand that vegetarianism is acceptable also, as long as a law is not made that requires it, and they are not to *despise* the weak, that is, “*Receive one who is **weak in the faith***” (Rom.14:1). We should also note what Paul wrote in Romans 15:7: “*Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*” These statements taken together, along with other like admonitions in the chapter, and understanding whatever were the items therein, those who believe and practice them are all acceptable to God and should be to one another. What each side is doing in either eating meat or not eating meat is inherently acceptable.

Additionally, there were some who were making one day more important than another while others observed every day alike. This is slightly different from the meat-eating versus vegetarian controversy, though it is in the same category and context with it. We also know from “***the faith***” that observing certain days as religious days is condemned in the Scriptures: “*But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain*” (Gal.4:9-11). Though there is nothing inherently wrong with coloring eggs and letting children search for them, observing “Easter” as a religious holiday, a celebration of the resurrection of Christ, is

sinful. The same applies to Christmas, Halloween and other cultural “*days*.” It would certainly be unlawful for a Christian to observe pagan holidays just as it would be to eat meat as a sacrifice to idols (1 Cor. 8:10-12). Outside of the first day of the week, God does not care if we place emphasis in some way, for some reason, on particular days as long **as they are not religious observances**. Many people in our country go all out to celebrate the fourth of July with flags, parades and fireworks. Some do not do any of that and some of those who do charge the others with being unpatriotic. Even if some think they are doing God’s will in observing days, it does not mean that they are right in that opinion nor that they should be tolerated. Whatever items can be included in Romans 14, all such things are “*clean*” in and of themselves: “*I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean*” ... “*Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense*” (Rom.14:14, 20).

Yet there are many things unclean of themselves because God says they are, either explicitly or implicitly! Fornication, drunkenness, murder, theft, and all other works of the flesh are unclean of themselves. Is there anything “*clean*” about perverting congregational organization, instrumental music or any other departure in worship, rejecting the full deity of Jesus or any other revelation of the scriptures? To ask is but to answer. When specifics are given, we are told not to go beyond what is written or more specifically, “*...not to think beyond what is written*” (1 Cor.4:6). Therefore, to add something that is not stated in Scripture (written), when there are specifics already provided, is to be guilty of going beyond what God has written in His Word. Adding to what is specified or addressed in writing, is not a matter of opinion or a mere optional matter. It is sinful! (Gal.1:6-9). “*Luke records Paul saying the same thing in a different way: “Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law” — **to whom we gave no such commandment**” (Acts 15:24). Moreover, whatever Paul wrote was a commandment of God: “*... let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the commandments of the Lord*” (1 Cor.14:37). That which is written, then, is considered authoritative, especially that which is imperative. Therefore, going beyond what is written is not a matter of opinion; rather, it becomes a matter of doctrine!*

End Notes: All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Of Interest

39th Annual Bellview Lectures June 6 – 10, 2014 (Friday – Tuesday) Understanding The Will Of The Lord

Friday, June 6

7:00 pm **Theme of the Bible**

Wayne Blake

7:45 pm **God's Scheme of Redemption**

Charles Pogue

Saturday, June 7

9:00 am **Dispensations of Time**

Dub McClish

10:00 am **Patriarchal Dispensation**

Michael Hatcher

11:00 am **Mosaic Dispensation**

Dub Mowery

Lunch Break

1:00 pm **Christian Dispensation**

Charles Pogue

2:00 pm **Ante-Diluvian Period**

Roelf L. Ruffner

3:00 pm **Open Forum**

Dinner Break

7:00 pm **Post-Diluvian Period**

Harrell Davidson

8:00 pm **Arrangement of the Bible**

Jerry Brewer

Sunday, June 9

9:00 am **Patriarchal Period**

Roelf L. Ruffner

10:00 am **New Testament Worship**

Ken Chumbley

Lunch and Dinner Break

5:00 pm **Period of Bondage**

Dub Mowery

6:00 pm **Wilderness Wanderings**

Harrell Davidson

7:00 pm **How We Got the Bible**

Doug Post

Monday, June 9

9:00 am **Period of Conquest**

Ken Chumbley

10:00 am **Period of Judges**

John West

11:00 am **Period of the United Kingdom**

Paul Vaughn

Lunch Break

1:00 pm **Period of Divided Kingdom**

David P. Brown

2:00 pm **Period of Judah Alone**

Wayne Blake

3:00 pm **Open Forum:**

Dinner Break

7:00 pm **Worship**

Michael Hatcher

8:00 pm **The Church – the Eternal**

Purpose Gene Hill

Tuesday, June 10

9:00 am **Period of Exile**

Doug Post

10:00 am **Period of Restoration**

Jerry Brewer

11:00 am **Inter-Testament Period**

Dub McClish

Lunch Break

1:00 pm **Period of the Life of Christ**

David P. Brown

2:00 pm **Period of the Church**

Gene Hill

3:00 pm **Open Forum:**

Dinner Break

7:00 pm **Second Coming and Judgment**

John West

8:00 pm **The Whole of Man**

Paul Vaughn

Bellview Lectures Information: New Dates for the Lectureship This year's lectureship will start Friday evening and go through Tuesday. Please make note of these new dates.

Housing The Red Roof Inn (2591 Wilde Lake Blvd; Pensacola, FL 32526) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax

not included) is \$59.99—single bed and \$69.99—double beds. Their phone number is 850.941.0908. Tell them you are attending the Bellview Lectures when making your reservations. If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early.

Meals: The ladies of the Bellview Church of Christ will provide a free lunch on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants will be available at the registration tables.

Books: The lectureship book, Understanding The Will Of The Lord, will be available for purchase. The price has not yet been determined. The book will contain 28 chapters and will be a soft-cover book. Everyone will want to purchase a copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts. The books will not be mailed until after the lectures are over.

Books-on-CD: The Bellview lectureship books (1975-1976, 1978, 1988-2005, 2007-2014) will be available on CD in Adobe PDF. The price of the CD is \$37.50. The CD will also include the Defender (1970, 1972-2013), Beacon (1972, 1974-2013), and other material.

View Lectures Live on the Internet: If you cannot attend the lectureship in person, please view them live on the Internet: www.bellviewcoc.com

LG Ministry

LG Ministry is a new video production work that is overseen by the elders of the Lone Grove Church of Christ. Cougan Collins is the speaker/producer of this work. We already have over 100 full sermons and 60 devotionals to offer at this time. They can be seen online at <http://www.lgchurchofchrist.com/videos.html> or you can catch them on GBN on Fridays at 5:30 pm. central and M - F 12:30 pm.

Here you will find video lessons from the Bible by Cougan Collins.

[LG Ministry Video Center](http://www.lgchurchofchrist.com) www.lgchurchofchrist.com