

The Keys Of The Kingdom

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Dub McClish

H. W. (Dub) McClish: Preached first sermon in June 1954 at Boise, Idaho, at age 16. After 35 years of work as local preacher in 5 states (the last 12 years of which were with the Pearl St. Congregation, Denton, TX), began work under oversight of Pearl Street elders in 1992, devoting time to combined works of Gospel meetings, mission trips, and lectureships and to writing and editing sound Biblical materials.



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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/keys-of-the-kingdom/?page_id=1316 . May God Bless You. Jim and the StaffChanges

Evangelist Needed

There is a real need for a good man willing to start a new work out in Washington State. This preacher would need to be self supporting to start out. There is a couple already in the town of Ellensburg who would like to see the Lord's church established there that will be sound and follow the scripture. This will be a daunting task as the churches around the area have gone into apostasy. If you believe you are up to such a challenge please use the contact information below for more in site and information.

Thank you
Jim Miller

Contact Information

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Voices From The Past

Mark 16:15-16

Paul J. Casebolt

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mk. 16:15,16, KJV).

This last charge which Jesus gave to his disciples is sometimes called the Great Commission, distinguishing it from earlier commissions given to the twelve (Matt. 10:1 f), and the seventy (Lk. 10:1f). These earlier commissions were limited in that they applied only to fleshly Israel, and the apostles had not yet received a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5).

But these "commandments" (Acts 1:2), which were given to the apostles just before Christ "was taken up," were to include Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 1:8). Or, as Matthew and Luke say, "all nations," and as Mark says, "all the world" and "every creature." That includes you and me.

As preachers, one of our earliest efforts was to deliver a "short talk" and "extend the invitation." And even a novice preacher could read, quote, or make a few remarks about Mark 16:16.

The "whosoever will" of the gospel is contained in, and demanded by, the preacher of that gospel (Rom. 1:16; 10:13). Our preaching should find its climax in the grand invitation which is commensurate with the gospel. Of course, if our preaching doesn't contain much of the gospel, then it is not likely to be characterized or much embellished by a fervent exhortation to heed what we didn't preach in the first place.

The growth of the first and nineteenth church hinged upon the preaching, understanding, and reception of such Scriptures as Mark 16:15,16. Even in the twentieth century, a few of us have been privileged to see that growth approximated in such countries as the Philippines, India and Africa. The churches of Christ in America need to give more, not less, emphasis to this matter, and be diligent "in remembrance of these things."

Credibility of Mark 16:15,16 -- Parallel Passages

One of the basic efforts to destroy the force of Mark 16:15,16 is to eliminate the passage altogether, along with vv. 9-20. Some contend that the last 12 verses of Mark 16 are not authentic, since they did not appear in two of the earliest Greek manuscripts. But the credibility of this passage is not only confirmed by other manuscripts, but also by parallel passages in Matthew, Luke and John.

Every subject treated in Mark 16:9-20 -- testimony of witnesses to the resurrection, the preaching of the gospel, belief, baptism, salvation, unbelief, the miracles of confirmation performed by the apostles -- is abundantly confirmed in other New Testament epistles.

Matthew 28:18-20 -- In this passage, Jesus declares his authority and commands the apostles to go and teach all nations, baptize, and further instruct those who were baptized. Luke 24:46-49 -- Based on his death, burial and resurrection, Christ said, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (v. 47).

John 20:21-23 -- John's account of the charge which Jesus gave to "the eleven" (Mk. 16:14) is not as detailed as the other passages, but is not less valid and informative. It harmonizes completely with the other three accounts. Jesus sends his apostles on a mission, again promises them the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 14:26), and promises to recognize whatever sins are remitted or retained by the apostles in the execution of their commission.

The Holy Spirit decided to give us four separate, distinct, though sometimes overlapping accounts of the life of Christ, including the final charge given to his disciples. And as John concluded in his account, the combined evidence is sufficient to make believers of all who have good and honest hearts (Jn. 20:30,31; Lk. 8:15).

Mark 16:16 -- The Grammatical Construction

The grammatical construction of Mark 16:16 is so plain, logical, and forceful that those who do not agree with its message resort to all manner of literary contortions in order to change the text. And those who would separate baptism from salvation recognize the damage done to their position by the language of Mark 16:16.

A familiar ploy of those who would wrest the Scriptures is to question the original translations of the Hebrew/Greek languages into English. When dealing with the average per-son, I have found that the best way to counter this literary "end-run" is to emphasize the scholarship embodied in just two translations of the Bible, the King James Version (KJV), and the American Standard Version (ASV). These words were translated by 148 of the world's best Hebrew/Greek/English scholars.

If some pseudo "scholar" wants to make himself look ridiculous by pitting his learning against such a formidable array of experts, let him do so. I do not want to be caught in the same classroom with him, much less on the same dunce's stool.

Let us notice the simple, grammatical construction of Mark 16:16.

"He" -- This is the generic "he" of "all the world"/ "every creature."

"That believeth and is baptized" -- Not just any "he" will be saved, but the "he that believeth and is baptized."

"And" -- A coordinate conjunction connecting things of equal rank. If belief is essential to salvation, baptism is equally essential. The conjunction "and" demands it.

"Shall be saved" -- A promise which is just as depend-able and sure as the original one given by the prophet Joel: " . . . whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered (saved)" (Rom. 10:13).

The Carcase and the Eagles

"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28).

Like birds of prey which concentrate their attack on a common, prospective feast, various "eagles" have attempted to devour the delicacy of baptism in our text. Like the advocates of "divorce for every cause" who must eliminate the force of Matthew 19:9, so the enemies of baptism testify to the importance of Mark 16:16 in the plan of salvation.

Universalists, Methodists, Baptists, Catholics -- all of these have their own

peculiar "version" of how Mark 16:16 ought to read in order to support their own doctrinal traditions. One holds that everyone will be saved, one tries to include infants who can't believe, another tries to place salvation before baptism, and others will substitute the sprinkling of water for baptism.

Sometimes the quibble is made that Jesus didn't say, "he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be condemned." He didn't have to, for no unbeliever is going to repent, confess something he doesn't believe, or be baptized in the name of one in whom he does not believe.

The conflicting efforts of so many to escape the force of Mark 16:16 only tend to verify and magnify the importance of baptism in God's plan of salvation.

"Into All the World"

As the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere" (Mk. 16:20), we can see clearly that water baptism was an integral part of preaching "the gospel to every creature."

Acts 2 -- The apostles received the promise of the Spirit (vv. 1-21), "Christ and him crucified" was preached (vv. 22-36), souls were convicted (v. 37), they were told to "Re-pent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" (v. 38), and "they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

Acts 8:1-25 -- Philip preached Christ (v. 5), and "both men and women" believed and were baptized (v. 12). Luke said that Simon the sorcerer "believed also . . . and was baptized" (v. 13). Jesus said that when people did what the Samaritans and Simon did, they "shall be saved." Do you want to question the word of Luke, the word of Christ, or neither?

Acts 8:26-40 -- Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch (v. 35), the eunuch believed, requested water baptism, confessed Christ, was baptized by Philip, and "went on his way rejoicing."

Acts 10 -- Peter preached Christ to the Gentiles of Cornelius' household (vv. 36-43), God poured out of his Spirit on the Gentiles as evidence of their right to salvation (11:17,18), and Peter commanded water baptism "in the name of the Lord" (10:47,48). Cornelius was not saved by a direct operation of the Spirit, but rather by obedience to the words preached and commanded by Peter (11:14).

Acts 18:1-8 -- Paul preached Christ to the Corinthians (v. 5), "and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (v. 8).

Acts 22:16 -- A believing, penitent Saul of Tarsus was commanded to "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This same Saul later explains how he and others "call on the name of the Lord" (Rom. 10:9-15), and gives inspired instructions relative to baptism and salvation (Rom. 6:3-5,16-18; Col. 2:12).

And when Peter said "baptism doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Christ" (1 Pet. 3:20,21), he was teaching the same thing he taught some 30 years earlier on the day of Pentecost, and the same thing he had earlier commanded at the house of Cornelius.

Only Christ could baptize "with the Holy Ghost" (Jn. 1:33), and we have seen that water baptism was commanded and administered in the execution of the great commission. About the year A.D. 64, Paul said, "There is . . . one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). This is the baptism enjoined in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16.

Conclusion

As a people, we sometimes forget that the primary mission of the church is to preach the gospel and be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). When we forget the mission of the church, it is not surprising that we forget such passages as Mark 16:15,16 which emphasize that mission.

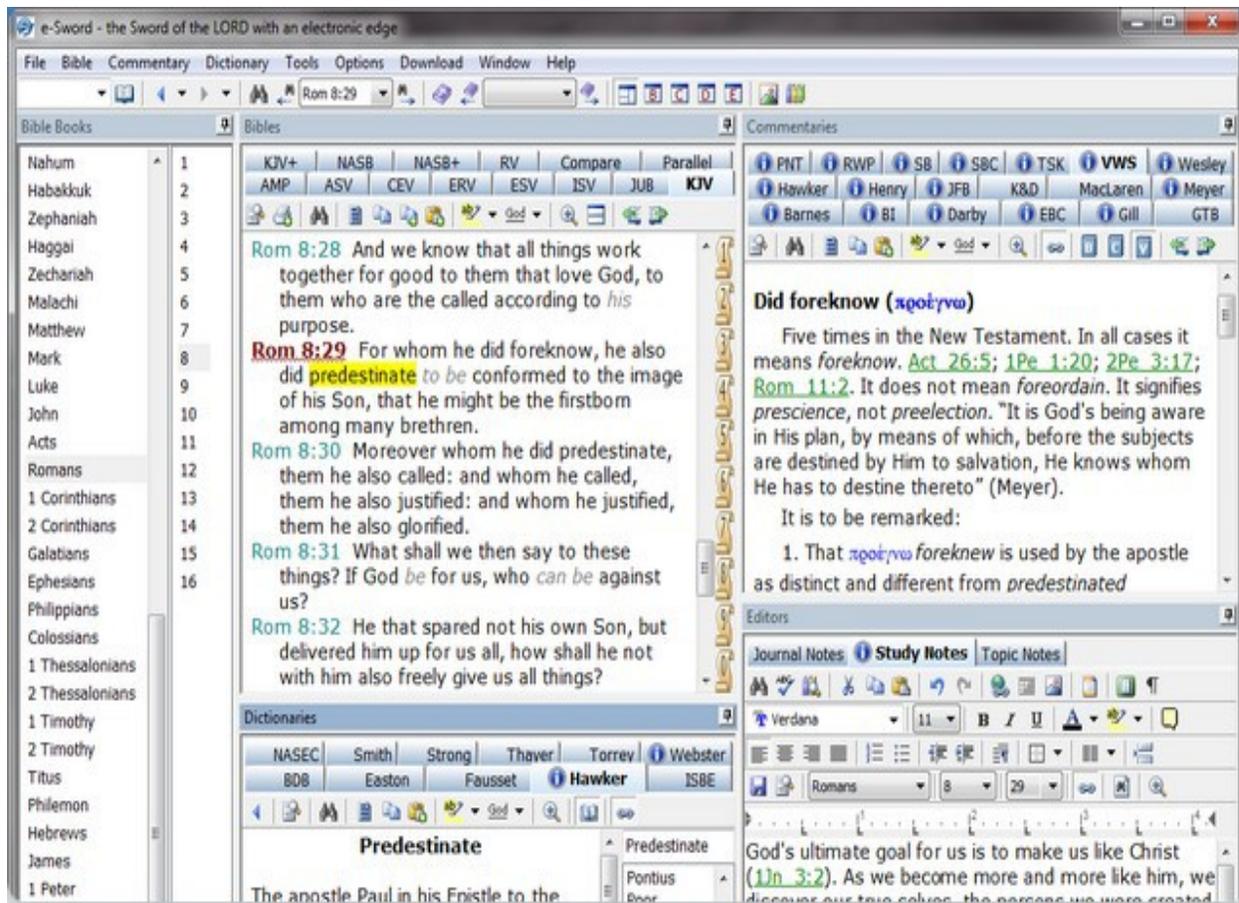
If just one generation fails to preach the gospel, the ranks of the church will be decimated by such a failure, and its attendant apostasy. If we follow the pattern of some, the gospel plan of salvation and its urgent invitation would soon become extinct. Souls would not hear, believe, or be baptized, and they would remain unsaved.

Paul said that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3,4). And he said that those are lost who have the gospel hidden from them.

It is ironic and tragic when Satan is allowed to use a forgetful and slumbering church to accomplish his mission.

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So, My Preaching Offends You? Good!

By Jim Miller
Gray, Maine

Acts 20:27-29: For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

There are times that others will come to you and say that they are offended by something you proclaim concerning the scriptures. Today more often than not you will hear that you are not being “Christlike” or that you are “Unloving” in your speech because you tell them the truth based on God's word. When we preach the truth many will be offended just as the Pharisees were in Jesus day.... *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Mat. 15:12-14).*

Today the seeds of error have been planted deep and spread throughout the world. The “love and mercy” crowd who preach a watered down version of the Gospel have invaded even the church of the Lord. These ear-tickling preachers are a real and present danger to all they teach. They will not preach the whole counsel of God, they must either add to or take away from God's counsel or even redefine its meaning in order to deceive their listeners into believing the error they so boldly proclaim. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pe 4:11).*

The Christian cannot be ambivalent in attitude toward truth and error. Every Christian must be at war against error: *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but*

mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled (2 Cor. 10:4–6).

We have had our weapons and armor issued by God: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

When we engage the enemy we can give no quarter: This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck (1 Tim. 1: 18-19).

Our preaching is only offensive to those in error. The plain truth of God's Word is like a two edged sword that cuts to the heart: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12).* Stephen used it on his rebellious brethren, who put him to death (Acts 7, 8). Paul used it on the brethren at Corinth who were in sin (1 Cor. 5). Jesus used it through John to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2, 3).

“My preaching offends you (because of the way it is presented).” This is what we are often told. “Oh, its not the truth that offends me,” they say, yet all the while they imply that there is a better way to preach than the way we do. “You are too

hard, too harsh. You are not loving enough, kind enough, sweet tempered enough.” We are told, “You are too quick to jump, too rash, head strong, and divisive.” How many times have you heard people say, “You are driving folks away with your preaching; is it any wonder they do not want to come back?” What these folks fail to realize is, it is not we who are offensive, but the truth is what offends them just like it did the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. When we stand firmly on the word and proclaim it so others can understand some are going to be offended, because deep down they know that they are living in sin and do not want to admit it. Preaching the Truth will always offend those in error. The purpose of Gospel preaching is to bring others to the truth of God’s word. The message of the cross to those in sin is “repent.” Jesus said, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). Jesus said to the disciples, “All of you will be offended because of me this night...” (Mark 14:27). There was no way Jesus could do the Father’s will and not offend the Pharisees, or even his apostles.

False teachers do NOT like to be exposed and once they are they will say anything to make their followers believe that the sound teacher is the one in error. When they find that they cannot use their twisted and vile doctrine to refute the truth they will then stoop to personal attacks. The followers of these false teachers are taught early on to become offended by the teaching of the truth.

What we see being taught today is a “better felt than obeyed” gospel of man, not God. It has been said we have a heart problem, and to some extent this is true. The real problem I see is an attitude problem. The attitude that we can worship and live and make up our own rules and that God will just have to accept it. This is the real problem. We should be bringing our lives into subjection to God's will, not trying to bring God's to our own. Paul knew well this attitude when he wrote to the Corinthians: *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that*

striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Cor. 9:19-27).

Sound Gospel preaching is preaching that exposes man's sin and brings him to repentance. It cuts to the very heart it brings man to the understanding that the truth of God's word is what saves. The truth we preach is what men today do not want to comply with and therefore they twist and turn like torn sails in the wind with their false doctrines and teachings. When confronted with the truth the wolves will then show their teeth and try to devour all around them. Sound preaching keeps these wolves out of the Lord's church. Sound men of God's word know not to fellowship these evil heretics: *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 1:7-11).* This is why the false accusations fly and the character of those who preach the word is attacked so vehemently. The false teacher—the wolf at the door—knows the truth will show them for who they are.

For those who want to complain that my preaching or any other sound brother's preaching is too harsh, too plain, or too offensive, I ask you this: Since you proclaim that you are preaching the same truth that we are yet we are faulty in our approach to the truth of God's Word and since you believe you can do so much better, why don't you get to it? When will we see these false teachers and preachers start teaching the real word of God and not some man-made gobbledy gook? Where are the men who teach that fellowship with sin is wrong? Where are the sermons showing the error of man-made doctrines? Where are the sermons teaching the whole counsel of God, not just that which tickles the ear.

So my preaching offends you? GOOD! Come hear the truth.....

Footnote: Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the KJV Bible.

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Cloyd Frock

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Outline of the book of Romans Part 5

Eric Farris
Freeport, Fl.

(Continued from part 3, speaking of Romans 6 and specifically verses 3-5) Those who have been baptized into Christ have “died to sin” and can no longer “serve sin” (vv. 6-7) Just as Jesus died once, yet rose to a position where death had no more dominion over Him, we as Christians must die to sin (notice also the physical aspect of the “death” of Jesus, He did not “die spiritually”, as some falsely contend!)... To such a point that sin has “no dominion” over us (vv. 9-10). The Christian’s days of living in constant, unrepentant sin are over, that man is dead! The Christian must now live his life in such a way as to be constantly submitting to the will of the Father, thus “alive to God” through Jesus (v11, cf. 1 Jn. 1:5-10). If one is dead to sin, would “sin reign” in their body?? Of course not! Folks, do you not realize that you cannot serve Jesus while also serving yourself?? Do you really think that God is pleased when you wear the “I Love Jesus” tee shirt, yet you are living in adultery? Such a person has no love for Jesus, if so they would heed His teaching on such matters (cf. Mt. 19:6-9)! The Lord Himself said that a person cannot serve two masters (Mt. 6:24), you cannot be a Christian and practice constant, unrepentant sin (1 Jn. 3:7-10).

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:12-13). Wow! What a wake up for so called “Christians” today! You better break out the bible and study up, for it will be your standard in judgment (Jn. 12:48, Rom. 2:16). This chapter is included in such a standard! You absolutely CANNOT allow sin to “reign” in your mortal bodies. You cannot engage in sinful activities. You cannot give into sinful temptations. You cannot live in sinful situations (adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc.). You cannot continue to willfully sin (theft, drinking alcohol, drug use, etc.). You CAN do these things, but you will pay for it! Notice what Solomon said long ago: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* (Ecc. 11:9). The body is given to

each person by God and cannot be used for lustful pleasures, but for service to God. The Christian must live his life with such an attitude, as “alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”!

What an interesting question Paul frames in v15: *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

Paul specifically states that we CAN sin. Yet we are not under the law (of Moses), but under “grace” (this is a contrast of covenants, “grace” is making reference to the offering of grace through the gospel of Jesus- cf. Rom. 1:16-17, Titus 2:11-12). If there were NO law, we could not sin (Rom. 4:15, 1 Jn. 3:4). So we must understand that even under the New Covenant system, described as “grace” there is still “rule of action” (Law)! God did not devise such a system for folks to willfully and flippantly abuse the grace offered by constant sin, rather, He designed it to make imperfect man “holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before Him” (Col. 1:22- by continued compliance with the gospel system! v23). This system DEMANDS “holy living” (1 Pet. 1:15-16)!

I think the next 3 verses are of HUGE importance and unfortunately, our denominational friends have no clue about the teachings thereof. Notice: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (vv. 16-18)*

The phrase “know ye not” is framed rhetorically, thus implying the understood truth of the question. To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are- There you have it folks, whatever you yield yourselves to in obedience is your master. So what is it for you? Do you give into the carnal pleasures of sin? If so, you are serving sin (Jn. 8:34). How terrible it is to have sin dominating your life, rather than a good and honest life in service to God! Inspiration says there are two choices:

- Sin unto death

- Obedience unto righteousness

So every person walking this globe is either serving sin or serving God. As we said earlier, you cannot do BOTH! Serving sin leads to spiritual death (cf. Rom. 6:23), serving God is right, thus results in righteousness! The saints in Rome were not always thus. In time past they were servants of sin, as others

were; but just as those in Corinth (1 Cor. 6:11) and every other place where gospel obedience has been rendered, something changed! The saints in Rome “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered” to them. Now folks, of this notice:

#1- Their obedience played a part in their salvation! cf. Mt. 7:21, Heb. 5:9

#2- They did not just obey “any old thing”, rather they obeyed a certain doctrine- cf. Lk. 6:46, Jn. 7:17, 17:17

#3- The doctrine delivered to them, was the gospel of Jesus (Rom. 1:16-17, 3:22-26, 5:1ff). The very gospel that was to be obeyed, notice the phrase “obedience to the faith” (Rom. 1:5, cf. Acts 6:7). This is speaking of the humble submission to the gospel system, which looks to God to save man (Rom. 16:26, Col. 1:22, 2:11-13)!

Would any honestly contend that the saints in Rome obeyed some other gospel than the saints in Ephesus? The Ephesians obeyed the gospel of Jesus (Acts 19:1-5) and inspiration says that they were recipients of “all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3-7) as a result! I wonder if the saints in Rome were made so by compliance with some OTHER gospel than that which was obeyed on Pentecost in Acts 2 (cf. v38,41,47)? Would any affirm such in light of Gal. 1:6-9 and 2 Jn. 9? Friends, be not deceived, the saints in Rome were saved from their sins when they trusted in the Lord enough to obey His commands (see Rom. 6:3-5)!

It must be quite a difficult thing for our Baptist friends to argue against the teaching of v18; specifically, dealing with obedience leading to being made free sin. What commands must one obey in order to be “made free from sin” if not the terms given to those:- By the Lord Himself (belief, repentance, confession, baptism- Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 13:3-5, 24:47)- In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost- Acts 2:38 (repentance and baptism for remission of sins) Is not our submission to the divine commands spoken of being the point at which we are “forgiven all trespasses” and made “alive from the dead” (Col. 2:11-13)? Is not our immersion in water the point where we are made “sons of God by faith” (Gal. 3:26-27). Who could argue against baptism being the act in which the penitent believer is sanctified, being “washed with water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). What powerful teaching indeed!

What is the result of “yielding your members as servants to righteousness” if not holiness (v19)? Is not this a MANDATE for the servant of God (Heb.

12:14)? Can one be “set apart” and holy if they are living in constant sin? NO!! In fact, when these folks were servants of sin, they were “free from righteousness” (v20). They were so because they were not “doing right” (1 Jn. 3:7)! What simple concept, yet so foreign to most folks thinking: He that does right is righteous! What was the fruit of such behavior? What was the end result of living in wickedness? The text says very plainly that “death” is the result of those things in which saints ought to be ashamed! Who are the servants of God, but those made free from sin (v22)? What is the “fruit” of such service? The text plainly says “holiness.. everlasting life”! What a contrast to the “fruit of wickedness”! This contrast is emphasized in the last verse of this wonderful chapter, spiritual death awaits those who live in sin and eternal life for those obedient to God!

(All scripture from the KJV unless otherwise noted)

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Nero (Part 8)

Tim Bench
Abilene, Texas

“One of the ways the Imperial cult was reflected in Roman religion was in the notion of a divine apotheosis of the emperor at death (i.e. deification or, more literally, a “godding” away to heaven. Julius Caesar had been deified in this manner. Imperial art often shows an emperor or empress being carried away to heaven from the funeral pyre of an angelic figure.

Some of the Roman emperors, however, would show even less restraint in accepting or adopting divine status while still alive. During the first century CE, Caligula (37-41), Nero (54-68), and Domitian (81-96) were criticized for such megalomania, but in later centuries it became more common.”

From “From Jesus to Christianity”, L. Michael White, page 50.

“Julius Caesar allowed himself to be worshiped as a god, but his successor Augustus only allowed emperor worship outside of the city of Rome. Augustus is known in some inscriptions as CAESAR DIVI FILIUS, Son of God, that is, Son of eternal Caesar. Oaths were taken on the divine spirit of the emperor. His image was publicly adored. Worship of the image was a regular military duty. Caligula was the first emperor to demand to be worshiped, he demanded that citizens everywhere bow to his statue.

Nero also claimed to be divine, although in neither case was there a requirement to worship the emperor. As Augustus had been Zeus incarnate, so Nero was Apollo incarnate. Even Seneca called him as the long-awaited savior of the world.”

From “The Roman Cult of Emperor Worship” at www.readingacts.com.

“..Two titles given here to Nero should be noted. The first of these is actually "Augustus" (English Revised Version margin), which was the title given by the Roman Senate on January 17,27 B.C. to Gaius Caesar Octavianus (63 B.C. to A.D. 14). "Augustus" also translates "Sebastos," and sometimes emperor, as in this verse. It was later applied as a title to any head of the Roman state. The

same is true of "Caesar." Still a third title of Roman emperors, "Lord," is used a little later in this chapter (Acts 25:26). This title of "Lord" or "Dominus" carried a divine connotation and was first used by Caligula (A.D. 12-41). "Augustus and Tiberius rejected such a title and would not suffer it to be applied to them." However, we may suppose that Nero would have received it gladly".

From Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible, Burton Coffman, see www.studylight.org.

Some opposing views exist on whether Nero "worship" was mandated and obligatory or not, and are included as follows....

"As history records, there were only two Roman Caesars who persecuted Christians on a scale comparable to what Revelation may suggest or be inferred to, considering John of Patmos is alleged to have died at the close of the first, or just following the turn of the second century. These Roman emperors were Nero and Domitian. There were those that followed them that sent our gracious brethren to their martyred deaths indeed, but historically, tyrants by name, as is recorded, Nero and Domitian fit the bill. Nero is responsible for the deaths of Paul and Peter, yet there is no evidence or historical record that Nero banished Christians, including John, to Patmos. Nero had a preference for keeping his atrocities much closer to home, as his actions against the Christian church were local and short lived, and his disturbed purge fueled by the fire in Rome, not based or founded on the Christian's unwillingness to submit to him as god or the son of god.

Yet, this persecution was the first time the government of Rome differentiated Christians from Jews. Tertulian referred to this as *institutum Neronianum* which was written describing the persecutions starting with Nero and those who followed in his footsteps.

(1) After Nero it became a capital crime to be one, unless you renounced Christ publicly and acknowledged the Roman gods. "Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ— none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to

do — these I thought should be discharged.”

(2) Nero did not, as William Henry Simcox states in *Revelation of St. John the Divine*, “reign and claim divine honors..” to anything as suggested in Revelation. It can be argued based on the varying degrees in which Christian persecutions took place during Nero or Domitian’s reign, or even whether they existed at all. But in the end, the patrological consensus attribute that they did indeed exist pointing directly to these two men, and it is believed to be first rate”.

From “Preterism, Nero and Domitian” at [Www.historicalpreterism.com](http://www.historicalpreterism.com).

“The basic problem with the Neronian application is that there is no historical evidence that Nero enforced emperor worship, especially on the level portrayed in Revelation and against Christians in particular. In fact, Nero refused but a few years prior to his death, while his persecution was in full swing, to accept an official senatorial decree, advanced by one of his few friends, proclaiming him to be a living god. He was afraid that some would take as a portents of his imminent death. Also, Nero died two years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reigning emperor at the time of this event was Vespasian, who had basically an indifferent attitude toward Christianity before that event. The destruction of Jerusalem, as previously noted, would change his perception. This is based upon a document cited by Sir William Ramsay describing Titus, the eldest son of Vespasian and the general completing the siege of the city, and his observations that he thought the Christian sect, like a vine, would die with the death of its root, Judaism. However, as Ramsay notes that did not happen, which fact affected the attitude of the Romans toward the church”

Howard Daniel Denham, Truth Bible Institute. 9

As perhaps an interesting aside, history provides additional insight into Nero’s massive ego. The nefarious ruler would himself participate in the Olympic Games in 67 AD, racing a ten-horse chariot, from which he was thrown (he also performed as a singer for the entertainment of those in attendance). It should come as now surprise that despite Nero’s failings within the competition, he was awarded the crown, likely as a result of bribery and/or fear of what might transpire if he were NOT named the victor.³

“Nero...went to Greece to display his artistic abilities in the theatres of Greece. He won contests in the Olympic Games, - winning the chariot race although he fell of his chariot (as obviously nobody dared to defeat him), collected works of art, and opened a canal, which was never finished.”

From www.roman-empire.net.

“When the Roman emperor Nero opted to compete at Olympia in A.D. 67, he bestowed astronomical bribes on the judges, who then agreed to add musical events and poetry reading—activities that Nero considered to be his strong suits—to the Olympic program. The Roman emperor entered the four-horse chariot race with a team of 10 steeds. Although Nero fell out of the chariot and was unable to finish the race, the judges still awarded him the top prize. Nero returned from the Olympics and other Greek sporting events with a haul of 1,808 first-place prizes.”

From “5 Myths about the Ancient Olympics” by Christopher Klein, 8-10-2012.

“Nero was certain that he was a great artist. And if he was not, no man in Rome dare say so. Nero added his own touch to dramas, when the story called for a character to die, he put a prisoner on the stage and actually killed him.

From “Nero” at www.latter-rain.com.

“The sums of money which Nero spent in the pursuit of sensual pleasures were incalculable. In fact there were no bounds to his extravagance and profusion. He had command, of course, of all the treasure of the empire, and he procured immense sums besides, by fines, confiscations, and despotic exactions of various kinds; and as he undertook no public enterprises—being seldom engaged in foreign wars, and seldom attempting any useful constructions in the city—the vast resources at his command were wholly devoted to the purposes of ostentatious personal display, and sensual gratifications.

The pomp and splendor of his feasts, his processions, his journeys of pleasures and the sums that he is said to have lavished sometimes in money and jewels, and sometimes in villas, gardens, and equipages, upon his favorites, both male and female, are almost incredible.

On some of the pleasure excursions which he took to the mouth of the Tiber, he

would have the banks of the river lined with booths and costly tents all the way from the river to the sea. These tents were provided with sumptuous entertainments, and with beds and couches for repose; and they were all attended by beautiful girls who stood at the doors of them inviting Nero and his party to land, as they passed along the river in their barges. He used to fish with a golden net, which was drawn by silken cords of a rich scarlet color.

Occasionally he made grand excursions of pleasure through Italy or into Greece, in the style of royal progresses. In these expeditions he sometimes had no less than a thousand carts to convey his baggage—the mules that drew them being all shod with silver, and their drivers dressed in scarlet clothes of the most costly character. He was attended, also, on these excursions, by a numerous train of footmen, and of African servants, who wore rich bracelets upon their arms, and were mounted on horses splendidly caparisoned.”

from “Extreme Depravity” at www.heritage-history.com.

We will continue with part Eight next month.....

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THE SHELTER OF HELL

Dub McClish
Denton, Texas

Introduction

Those who faithfully preach and teach the Word must include the subject of Hell. Just as Jesus did (Mat. 10:28), we warn people about Hell and its torments. We tell all who will listen about God's grace through Christ's death. We tell them what the Bible teaches they must do in order to be saved from the practice and eternal consequences of unforgiven sin. We urge Christians to live such a life of purity and service that the Lord will not have to send them away into everlasting punishment at The Judgment (25:46).

As awful as the Bible depicts it to be, it is only right for us to consider another fact about Hell: Along with its evil environment (Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 21:8; et al.) and unending torment (Mat. 25:46; 2 The. 1:8–9; Rev. 20:10; et al.), it is nonetheless a place of eternal shelter and relief. It will provide a haven for its inhabitants from many of the things that so greatly irritated them and that they despised and rejected in their earthly sojourns.

Bothered by the Bible

History revisionists are zealously denying the obvious when they deny the Bible's influence on our founding fathers and on the Constitution and Bill of Rights upon which our republic rests, yet they boldly proceed to do so. A populace ignorant of history has seemingly believed their lies on a large scale. Principalities in high places have launched an all-out attack against the Bible which they so despise. It stands directly in the path of the wicked agenda they are pursuing.

The day will come when the Bible will forever be prevented from aggravating them. When that day arrives Atheists, Humanists, and all other Bible-haters will never again have to deny or attempt to explain away what the Bible says about God and His marvelous work of creation of the universe (Psa. 19:1–6). Those fools who delight in saying in their hearts (or with their mouths) that “there is no God” (Psa. 14:1) will no longer have any disputants. The grand and sweet story of redemption through the grace and love of God and the blood

of Christ will never again grate on their ears.

Those who pontificate that “there is no objective standard of right and wrong,” and that “all ‘truth’ is relative” will be protected at last from the Lord’s declaration, “Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17) and “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free 8:32). Those who have so loudly declaimed that it matters not what one believes as long as he is sincere will never again be disturbed by Jesus’ words, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). They will be in a place where the Bible is outlawed, banished, and prohibited. What bliss can the souls in Hell anticipate in forever being free from that terrible book, the Bible!

Bothered by Biblical Morals

Our nation’s cultural and moral meltdown is threatening its very foundations. An apparently large percentage of the populace of our nation has little, if any moral conscience left. Loud and influential voices are doing their best to convince us all that what the Bible calls “unnatural” and “evil” behavior is actually “normal” and “innocent.” Few folk seem to associate any moral negatives with such things as drinking, dancing, gambling, and public nakedness any more. Filthy four-letter words, once rarely uttered in public even by grown men, one can now hear at almost every turn—often from the mouths of women and children.

Magazines, books, movies, and television sitcoms have discarded all standards and limits in their frenzied efforts to make money. Divine law concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, once upheld by civil law, is unknown to most folk, and ignored by a large number of those who know it (including many brethren). Fornication and adultery are foreign concepts to the masses who are so accustomed to seeing the entertain media portray them in a favorable light that they accept them as harmless behavior, defending them, if not engaging in them. Moreover, the news media, along with many politicians and large corporations, insist that everyone accept without a whimper the abominable and unnatural sexual behavior for which God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. That President Bill Clinton could remain in office in spite of his outrageous amoral philosophy and behavior is sadly symptomatic of the moral decadence of our nation.

Folk who thus think and behave do not appreciate Biblical morals. They cannot abide the Bible’s consistent condemnation of their behavior (e.g., Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 21:8; et al.). They despise its elevation

of righteousness and self-control and its warnings of judgment of all unrighteousness (Acts 24:25). These people cannot tolerate the Bible's consistent condemnation of wickedness, evil, corruption, and sin which would restrict and restrain their animalistic ungodliness. It does not require the IQ of a genius to see the correlation between ascending rates of crime and immorality in and the removal of emphasis upon Biblical morality from the schools—replacing such with courses in how to commit fornication and not get caught.

Eventually, these godless people will at last achieve that for which they have so earnestly striven in this life—an atmosphere utterly devoid of condemnation of their immorality. There will be no one emphasizing godly behavior where they will be forever. They will have at last attained protection and shelter from that “goody-goody” way of life upheld by that despicable book. Its influence will no longer interfere with their lifestyle as it sought to do during their earthly lives at every turn. Biblical morals will exist only in their tormented memories, for there will not be anyone in Hell advocating them.

Bothered by Faithful Children of God

Those who hate the Bible and the teachings of the Bible generally have little use for those who believe in and live by the Bible. The politically correct thought police (i.e., liberal academics, politicians, entertainers, religionists, et al.) have done all in their power in recent years to demonize anyone who indicates respect for the Bible and “Christianity,” even in the broadest sense of the term. To hear such folk talk one might think those who try to pursue lives of integrity, righteousness, peace, and decency are the very cause of our national declension. To them, our world would be much better off if there were no Christians in it at all and if every Bible were burned. Such folk are insulted and annoyed by anyone who might ring their doorbell and invite them to worship or to engage in Bible study. They think that all religion is a racket just because some of it is, and they fasten on this assumption as an excuse to berate and blaspheme genuine saints of God.

One day, all such Christian-haters will have the relief they seek. When they awaken in Hell they will not find any of those despicable and radical sorts to bother them. None of them will ever get a visit, a phone call, or a piece of mail from a Christian or from a congregation of the Lord's people. They will no longer have to associate with those who live and love the Truth of God's Word. They will at last be in a much better place than this world was, which had those narrow-minded, pharisaical, judgmental folk who were too good to lie, steal, commit fornication, use profanity, and do all of those other enjoyable things.

Surely, Hell will bring sweet and welcome relief to those who hate God's people.

Bothered by Faithful Gospel Preachers

According to the Bible, there will be plenty of preachers in Hell (including some who were once faithful to God) (Mat. 7:15, 22–23; 15:13–14; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Tim. 1:18–20; et al.). They will have an eternity to regret the false doctrines they have preached and/or the evil lives they have lived. However, the Hell-dwellers who have despised the Bible and those who have faithfully preached it, as they sought to persuade sinners to live for Jesus and thus avoid Hell, will be forever shielded from any further the work of these men. The Gospel story of love, grace, faith, and obedience which so many ridiculed and rejected on earth will never bother them again.

Residents of Hell will not have to put up with listening to good men publicly and privately plead for them to obey the Gospel and be saved. They will never again hear a preacher say, "Repent or perish" (Luke 13:3). There will be no preacher in Hell quoting the Lord's words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark. 16:16). In Hell they will never again have to tell a preacher, "Leave me alone; it is none of your business how I live." These folk can look forward with great anticipation to one day being rid of all faithful preachers of the Gospel of Christ, who were nothing more than a nuisance to them on earth.

Bothered by Faithful Elders

Members of the Lord's body sometimes become irritated with godly elders who are trying to help them go to Heaven (Heb. 13:17). Such brethren resent being called, visited, led, or taught by these good men. They resent all attempts to try to get them to attend worship faithfully, give generously, study seriously, serve sacrificially, and live purely. They want to be known as "Christians," but they want to be left alone when it comes to involvement in the good work Christ calls us to do in His church.

There is a place where elders will never visit or call them again—a place where no elders will challenge them to seek first the Lord's kingdom (Mat. 6:33) or remind them of their spiritual responsibilities and obligations. They will find shelter at last from those meddlesome men who seem always to be telling them what to do and what not to do. They can look forward to Hell where there will not be one faithful elder to every bother them again.

Conclusion

While those who find themselves in Hell for eternity will at last be rid of those righteous things and people they have despised on earth, the shelter from them will hardly be any consolation for their misery. They will all still possess the fulness of memory (Luke 16:25) of the very influences, persons, and opportunities—and the Bible—they rejected, which, if accepted would have spared them their misery and torment. All such memories will but multiply their eternal suffering. The account of the evil rich man’s experience in Hades indicates that those who sentence themselves to Hell will yearn in vain to warn others to live for God, instead of rejecting Him (vv. 27, 29–31).

We should all shudder at the awful prospect of the eternal fire that awaits those who despise God, His Word, His church, His people, and His way of life for mankind. Let us never cease our efforts to persuade and lead as many as we can to submit to God and His Son while they live here and now. When they awaken in Hell, their first cry will be, not one of thanksgiving that at last they are free of all such influences, but that they may have one more opportunity to embrace them.

[NOTE: I wrote and published this MS as my “Editorial Perspective” in the July 2001 issue of THE GOSPEL JOURNAL, of which I was editor at the time.]

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Learning to Give an Answer (7)

John P. Mabrey
Hilham, TN

In “Learning to Give an Answer” there is perhaps no greater task presented to Christians, than that of presenting, proving, and following God's “plan of salvation.” The churches of Christ have been called “five-steppers” simply because we bring to attention the five simple steps that puts one into Christ. Last month we concluded the article with man's responsibility in fulfilling this “plan.” An objection is often raised by those who object to the gospel plan of salvation saying: “*Why didn't God put all those steps in one place in the scripture so we can know that that is what He meant for us to do?*” That is a fair question, and it deserves a scriptural answer. Let us answer this question with the affirmation that God did put all the steps in one place, and he put them in the order in which they are to be obeyed. Consider the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8:

Beginning in verse 26 of this chapter we find Philip being instructed by “the angel of the Lord” telling him to go south to the road (the way) that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. In verses 27 & 28 we learn that an Ethiopian was on that road, who was returning home to Ethiopia from Jerusalem; he had been to Jerusalem to worship God. Next, in verse 29 we see the Spirit speaking to Philip, telling him to go and to “join thyself to this chariot.” (Side note: Notice that the angel of the Lord did not speak directly to the eunuch, nor did the Holy Spirit tell the eunuch what to do to be saved. That is because the delivery of the gospel is not done by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit, nor is it delivered by angels. In Second Corinthians 4:7 we know that “...we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” “This treasure” is the gospel of Jesus Christ; the “earthen vessels” are men who carry that gospel to every living creature. No longer does God speak directly to mankind as we learn in Hebrews 1:2 that God now “...in these last days spoken to us by his Son...” And his Son is the word of God which is now written for you and I to read and understand; and the “power” is the power of the message that is able to save the souls of men, NOT their own power. Romans 1:16 affirms that the gospel is “...God's power unto salvation.”)

In Acts 8:30 Philip finds this eunuch reading the prophet Esaias (Isaiah) and

asks him if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch, being an honest man told him that he needed guidance to understand what Isaiah was referring to. (Acts 8:31) The passage as quoted in the book of Acts is this: *“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.”* (vs. 32-33)

And so our story begins in verse 35 where it is recorded that Philip “preached unto him Jesus” from that same scripture. It was then, for the first time, that the eunuch HEARD the word of the gospel preached. So here in verse 35 we have the first step that man is responsible for in God's gospel plan of salvation. One must hear the word in order to believe. Did the eunuch believe what Philip preached? Let's find out.

Much can be learned in questions that people ask. In fact, Jesus asked many questions as tools to teaching others. The eunuch asked a question while he and Philip were riding along in the chariot, and we can learn much from his question. I call your attention to verse 36 which says: *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”* What can we possibly learn from this simple question (request)? I suggest we can learn several things. Truth in the scripture basically falls into three categories: (1) Direct command. (2) Biblical example, and (3) implied teaching (or what men of old called “necessary inference.”) So, what can we learn from the question which the eunuch asked?

1. The scripture records that “Philip preached Jesus unto him.”
2. Nowhere does the scripture say that baptism was preached unto the eunuch.
3. The eunuch requested to be baptized.
 1. From his request, we know that he “believed” what Philip had preached.
 2. From his request, we know that he was ready to “repent” (i.e. change his mind; in the eunuchs' case that meant turning from the old life of Judaism, and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ.)
 3. We can read his “confession” (Acts 8:37) when he said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (This is not a confession of his sins; rather an affirmation of his faith in the one that bled and died for his sins on the cross.)
 4. And, in his request to be baptized, we **know** that baptism was a

part of preaching Jesus. Why else would he have made such a request?

It has long been argued by certain denominationalists that baptism has nothing to do with salvation; that all you have to do is believe (faith only) say the “sinners prayer” and you are saved. As further evidence that baptism is essential to salvation let us examine the events that followed the baptism of the eunuch. Consider Acts 8:39-40 – *“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”* Two questions arise here that cannot be explained by those who insist that baptism has nothing to do with salvation.

1. If the eunuch was saved when he first believed, then why did he not go “on his way rejoicing till after he was baptized?
2. If Philips' work was complete at the time that the eunuch believed, then why did the Spirit wait till **after** the eunuch was baptized to carry Philip away?

As for the false doctrine of faith only (or any false doctrine), it has long been this preachers contention that any doctrine that raises more questions than what it answers is a doctrine that needs to be shunned and put as far away from us as possible because it does not relate the truth of God's word. But I digress.

The important thrust of this article is to expound upon God's simple plan of salvation, and I pray that this will suffice to show that the eunuch had to 1) Hear the word (Philip preached Jesus unto him). 2) He had to believe. (because *“Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Heb. 11:6) 3) He had to repent of his past sins (seeing that sins were remembered under the old law of Moses, but now they are remembered no more as stated in Hebrews 10:17) 4) He was required to confess his belief that Jesus is the Son of God. (Acts 8:37) 5) And he obeyed the instruction to be baptized for the remission of his sins. (Acts 8:39)

To those of you that have already followed these instructions (plan) then you have been added to the Lord's church. (Acts 2:47) And you are qualified to wear the name “Christian.” May you be ready always to give an answer to others concerning God's plan of salvation.

To those of you who have never obeyed the gospel, it is my prayer that you follow God's plan before it is everlastingly too late.

Next month, Lord willing we will continue "learning to give an answer" concerning church membership and responsibilities.

All scripture references are from the KJV except where otherwise noted.

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The Insufficiency of Fear

Archie Green
DeSoto, Texas

On Saturday March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued forth these famous words in his inaugural address; *“So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”* The 32nd President of the United States used these arguments to encourage Americans into pressing forward at one of the darkest moments in US history. American had plenty of reasons for listening too. The nation was facing an unprecedented low in the financial realm, fascist conflict was gaining momentum across the globe and approximately 100 million farm acres had been consumed in dust, leading to the decimation of homes and many futures of Mid-West Americans.

As tangible as these terrors were, Roosevelt was able to encourage Americans to understand that fear is a state of mind and not a state of place. He did not lie to Americans by trying to get them to imagine what they were going through was fictitious, but only to recognize the times for what they really were...temporal. A transitory “speed bump”; one which could not be overcome by paralyzing and/or hesitant actions. The only way out of this particular situation was to proceed with what ALL other hopeful people had used before to overcome similar salient issues...enacting upon the right conviction. Blood, sweat and tears, coupled with “old fashioned” assertiveness, helped America regain its balance and catapulted itself into the well matched seat of prominence it still enjoys today!

How does this relate to the Christian today? Simply put, we appear to be in an unprecedented time period of sin. Because of this, fear and his evil partner, **apathy**, have come calling. At this juncture in time, the Lord could use courageous men and women to rise above their own personal fear to achieve spiritual greatness. Instead we have become listless and run headlong into spiritual retreat. Many Christians have allowed fear to rule in their lives so commonly they have become unsatisfactory to the cause which first redeemed their soul. Some of whom claim Son-ship are immobile in their work for the Lord because they dread the people and the countenance of their faces moreso than they love God and His word. Ezekiel 2:6 We have placed more faith in

larger, more beautiful buildings than in the work which should be going on in them. We have decided that “*in-reach*” is more of a pressing concern than outreach or even “*upreach*”. More often than not we place a greater priority on seeking those who have “*lost their first love*” (many of which would rather not be recovered; that’s why they left in the first place) versus seeking out those who would love to be found and come into the knowledge of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:9 Some have developed a pattern of “*preacheritus*” so deeply entrenched in their psyche it could not be uprooted by an earth mover. And the fascination with preachers who “*MUST be college accredited*” have made the simple oration of the Gospel a monumental spiritual experiment; not only for him, but the Body of Christ in general! Unwarranted and unparalleled fear sits at the very root of all these make-believe advancements. Embattled with desperation, some continue to try and “*keep up with the Jones*”; more correctly labeled denominationalism. Ecclesiastes 4:4 Instead of trusting in God and allowing Him to have the increase, we have foolishly chased after our own tails! Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that, “*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” Does this not still apply today? Yes, unfortunately it does.

When we walk in abhorrence of God’s will, we declare to a lost and dying world that He is not love and cannot be trusted. Our Father in Heaven affirms this as cowardice and we are then not walking worthy of calling. Our election definitively cannot be assured at this point. Fear will cause a person to bring false witness and seek to kill the innocent. Mark 11:18 Misdirected anxiety will bring about sedentary actions...needlessly wasting opportunity and talent. Matthew 25:24-29 Panic will cause a person to seek old habits and the past, along with its inability to save. We become hypocrites and deny the very salvation which brought us to the base of the Cross. Galatians 2:12, Romans 8:15 Duress will cause one to be “*careful and troubled about many things*”, but NOT the one thing we should be considerate of; the one “*needful thing*” which leads us to glory, sitting at the feet of the master and taking upon ourselves His yoke and learning of HIM. Matthew 11:29

So what then makes one sufficient? What allows us to stand victorious in Christ and be able to “bear up” under every circumstance? Let me suggest an old, but very true adage; “*in faith - out fear*”. What an amazingly novel idea. It is the direct OPPOSITE of the “*in fear - out faith*” principle which ideally reigns rampant today. Faith in the life of a Christian sends doubt and fear rambling

aimlessly in the other direction! James 4:7 The Bible instructs us “*Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD **all the day long**. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.*” Proverbs 23:17-18 Obviously there is value in Godly fear...one which leads to repentance and life eternal. It also relieves us of the day to day worry in which this world constantly settles. Matthew 6:25-34 It allows us to be reserved unto Judgment in good faith towards God and His promise. 1 John 4:13-18 What else could one ask for?

Have you “*made your bed*” in fear? Isn’t it time we rise up and reclaim the abundant life we have been given by the blood of Christ? 2 Peter 1:3 Why tarriest thou? Think on these things. God Bless.

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