

The Keys Of The Kingdom

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Our Writing Staff



Jim Miller

Jim Miller: Preacher at the Gray, church of Christ semi -retired, publisher, writer, editor. A member of the Lords church since 1985. Preached in NC, TN, Ky, and Maine. Two years Co-hosting Bible Talk Radio. 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.



John Maybrey

John P. Mabrey: Preacher at the Hilham Church of Christ, Hilham, TN since July 2007. Has been a guest of the Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN) "Bible Round Table." Attended Freed Hardeman University for two years.



Eric Farrior

Eric Farrior: Gospel Preacher for the church of Christ in Freeport, Florida for the past 3 years. I have one daughter, Jaeda. It is my privilege to preach and teach the word of God in Freeport and have various other opportunities to do so through the use of the internet.



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.



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/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

**Chuck Verkist, 906 East 2nd ave. Ellensburg, Wa. 98926
(509) 925-2593 or cverkist@kvalley.com**

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A Good Preacher's Wife

Paul J. Casebolt

A good preacher's wife would be the female counterpart of what some brethren consider to be the ideal preacher. She would be the composite of a woman 39 years old, with 35-40 years of experience; a mixture of blonde, brunette, redhead; outgoing, yet reserved; always with her husband, but never away from her children; stands beside him in the pulpit and at the door as he shakes hands with the congregation, but stays in the background; fashionable and attractive, yet plain; a social butterfly who is conversant on every topic, but never gossips.

What I mean to say is that no two preachers are the same from the standpoint of personality and ability, yet we have arbitrary concepts of what "a good preacher's wife" should be.

I was preaching for several years before I was married, and I would have to be a polygamist if I had married all the woman that brethren (and sisters) told me would make a good preacher's wife. But, according to some preachers now, I could have done that as an alien sinner, and baptism would have washed away all the polygamy, if not the wives, Of course, I would have to have done it (the marrying), in a country where polygamy was lawful. And every single preacher and every preacher who has become a widower knows whereof I speak.

When I went to one congregation for a meeting, the brethren had three prospects that would make me a good preacher's wife. One was not a Christian, one was only half-converted, and the other one was 15 years older than I was. I guess the latter would be somewhere around 80 now, and brethren would be gossiping as to why I married a woman 15 years my senior.

The sectarian concept of a good preacher's wife for me would be embodied in the title, "Evangelist and Mrs. P.J. Casebolt" – a husband and wife team with the wife singing or playing special music or testifying publicly about what a good preacher her husband was. And the modern concept of assigning (or usurping) public roles for women in the assemblies of the church is becoming all too prevalent among the Lord's people. For the benefit of those who have never read their Bibles, or who have never heard "their" preacher teach on the subject, I refer you to such passages as 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and Titus 2:3-5.

I have no objection to a preacher's wife, or any other woman, teaching children or other women. And if the preacher's wife is capable of doing this in her home

congregation, or in a meeting where her husband is preaching (both by invitation), I have no problem with that as long as she behaves like a woman should and doesn't neglect her other duties as a wife and mother.

Brethren have prayed for me and my wife, and for our family, and such prayers were and are appreciated. But I think (and hope) that they understand my wife's role in her relationship to the preacher as well as I understand it. But within the past few years I keep getting the impression that some folks are making arbitrary qualifications for preacher's wives which may make it either impossible or unscriptural for the next generation of preachers to find "a good preacher's wife."

Even as one preacher may have talents above and beyond those of other preachers, that doesn't mean that all preachers have to possess those talents. In a verse, the qualifications for a good preacher or "minister" (1 Tim. 4:6) are stated in 2 Timothy 2:2 – "faithful" and "able." And while one preacher's wife may have talents not possessed by other women, it doesn't follow that we should use one woman's talents as a criterion for all preacher's wives.

Some preachers are married before they decide to preach. Must they trade in their wife for "a good preacher's wife"? Some preachers quit preaching for different reasons, but should they trade their wife to some other preacher who needs "a good preacher's wife" (by brotherhood standards)? I know that sounds ridiculous, but that's the way I intend for it to sound, to get my point across.

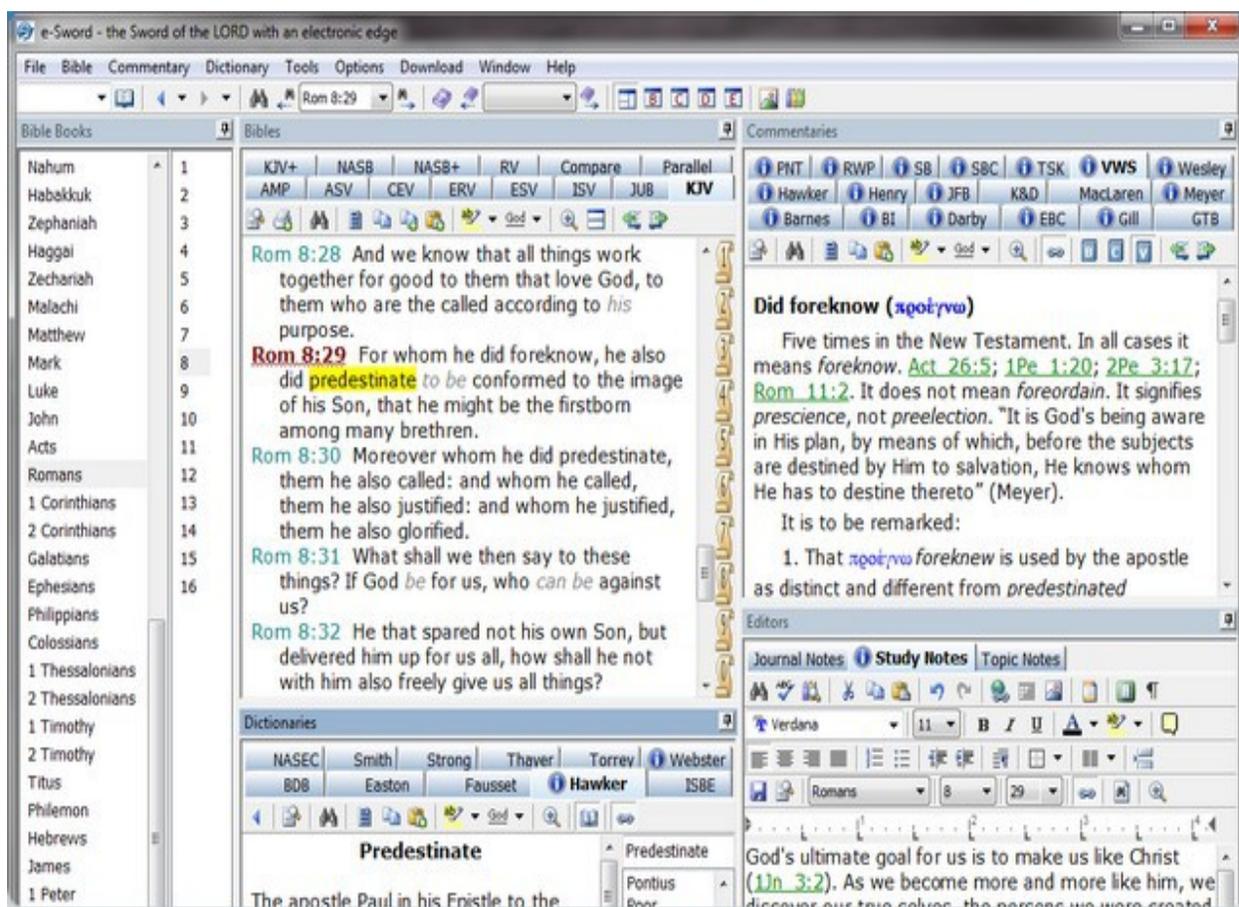
Some preachers' wives have all that they can do being a wife ("help meet" – suitable) to their husbands and a mother (or grandmother) to their children. They may have to try much harder than the many-talented women who can do several things well.

A good wife will make a good farmer's wife, a good carpenter's wife, a good lawyer's wife, a good doctor's wife – or a good preacher's wife. And God will be satisfied, and so should the brethren.

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). And the good wife of Proverbs 31 is not necessarily a preacher's wife. But if a preacher has a wife like that, "she shall be praised" (v. 30), by the preacher, by her children, and by the Lord.

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A Conversation Between Larry and Fred

By Jim Miller
Gray, Maine

Larry was a nice enough fellow, he had always tried to be good to others and treated people very well. He opened doors for others, he spoke kindly to those who weren't really nice to him he treated others the way he wanted to be treated and always thought God would see how he acted and that he must be in good standing with God.

Larry never went to any particular church long he assumed that they were all about the same that church goers were Christians just like he believed he was.

One Sunday while he was traveling out of town on business he thought to himself I should go to church today after all it had been some time since he had graced the door of a church. So he put on his suite and headed out to find a church to visit. Now Larry didn't go to the Bible classes or Sunday school as he called it so that gave him time to look around for a place to go.

The little town he was in had 2 or 3 churches and one he wasn't going to visit was the Catholic church he wasn't a Catholic at all so it seemed he had to choose between the Pentecostal church or the little church a few blocks down from where he was. Larry had never been to to a church Of Christ as it was called on the sign out front so he thought maybe I should go there and see what it is like. So, he pulled his car into the lot grabbed his old Bible off the seat and headed for the church doors. They were wide open and seemed welcoming to all.

As he stepped through the door he was met by an older gentleman who stuck out his hand and said welcome my name's Fred Mile's are you new around here? I know most folks in these parts but I don't remember ever meeting you before. Larry introduced himself and told Fred he was just passing through and would be departing the little town in a day or two.

Larry asked Fred if he was the pastor and Fred replied I am one of them we have three here. You see Larry we are a small group so three men is enough for now. This caught Larry by surprise he was thinking three pastors? Why there couldn't be more than twenty five or thirty people there for services. Just the same Larry

entered the small auditorium where he was politely greeted by many of the others there. Larry found his way to a pew about five rows back and seated himself comfortably on the end.

One of the men walked up to the front and stood before the congregation and began to make announcements. Larry was again kind of surprised, the man did not say anything about raising money or about a choir singing or any of the things Larry expected. After the man sat back down another one got up with a song book in his hand and asked the congregation to open their books and they all began to sing the selected song. Larry was thinking where is the piano or organ? But he sang the songs and listened to the others sing too and really it sounded good all the voices in harmony.

Larry was again caught off guard when after the third song they all stopped and had communion and a collection and then stood up to sing one more song before the speaker took his place behind the pulpit. Larry noticed it wasn't the man who said he was a pastor so he figure this was one of the other two Fred had spoken of. Larry sat back and opened his bible thinking he would only have to look at a few verses but as the man behind the pulpit worked his way through the sermon Larry had a hard time keeping up with all the references the man gave. At the end of the sermon the man asked every one to stand and sing the invitation song asking if any one there was ready to put on Christ in Baptism and be added to the Lords church.

When all was over Larry wasn't sure what to think and had a lot of question he wanted answered. Larry noticed that the folks there didn't get up and file out of the building like he was used to seeing in other places he had attended. Instead many of these folks walked back to where Larry had been seated and introduced themselves chatted a moment with him and this made Larry feel welcomed there. As the small gathering slowly dispersed Larry looked around for Fred so he could ask some questions before he left.

Fred was up near the front of the room speaking with the man who had given the sermon so Larry walked up slowly as not to interrupt and stood silent for a moment or two while Fred and the other man finished their conversation.

Fred turning around said to Larry it was very nice to have you here today. Let me introduce you to our preacher. Larry this is Marvin Aldren, Marvin meet Larry. The preacher stuck out his hand and firmly shook Larry's and asked are you a

member of the church. Larry said he didn't go to any particular church but he believed he was a Christian. How did you like the services, Larry? I hope you learned a lot today. Larry not wanting to be rude said it was interesting but I do have some questions.

Larry's mind was full of unanswered questions as he stood talking with Fred and Marvin. Before Larry could begin asking what he wanted to know Marvin spoke up and said Larry please do not think I am being rude but my wife is in the hospital in the next town over from here and I really would appreciate it if you would forgive me for rushing off. I will leave you in the capable hands of our Elder here, I am sure he can answer anything you need to know. In fact I have learned a thing or two from him myself. Larry said of course I understand I hope she gets better. Marvin again shook hands with both Fred and Larry saying thank you as he walked toward the door.

Again, before Larry could ask any of his questions, Fred says come on home with me and the Misses and lets have some lunch and we can explore your questions. Fred introduced Larry to his wife Edna and they headed for the door. Larry followed Fred out near the edge of town and down a short dirt road to Fred's old farm house. It was a nice place Larry thought, not a real big farm but nice enough. Once they were all inside Edna asked if sandwiches and soup would be alright for lunch? All agreed and in a very few minutes they were all seated around the kitchen table. Fred took Edna's hand and they both reached out to Larry for his. Larry took their hands and bowed his head while Fred gave thanks for the meal. They sat at the table making chit chat till all had finished. Larry said thank you Edna that was some of the best soup I have had in a long time. Edna said nothing better than homemade soup thank you. Now you two get out of my kitchen and Fred you answer this young mans questions while I clean up and tend to my work.

Fred and Larry went into the living room where Fred took his place in his favorite old chair while Larry sat across from him where Edna usually sat. Once both men were settled in Larry spoke up and asked, Fred when you met me at the door you said you were a pastor and that there were two others. When you introduced me to Marvin you called him the preacher and before Marvin left us he said you were an elder. I have to admit that I am a bit confused.

Fred smiled and said I can see how you might be since most religious groups have mixed up the meaning of these words. Mixed up the meanings Larry said

puzzled yet even more. Yes Sir, mixed up their meanings let me show you, take out your bible there and lets see what it says.

Larry, said Fred before we start I owe you an apology, I took for granted when you asked if I was a pastor that you knew that the Bible teaches that a pastor an elder a shepherd and a bishop are all one in the same. I also took for granted that you knew that the preacher has a different role to fill in the Lord's church. Now that is not to say that the preacher can't be an elder but the roles are different.

Larry lets see what God says about your question, elders are a necessity for the well-being of church. Titus was told to "ordain elders in every city" in (Tit. 1:5). Paul, on the return trip of his first missionary journey, appointed elders in every church in (Acts 14:23). So we clearly see churches are to have elders. It is God has assigned the role of elders not man. This is a grave responsibility and not to be taken lightly. Those who take this position lightly, treat it as some kind of glorified bosses position rather than as a work to be done. The scriptures teach "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" we find this in (1 Tim. 3:1). So Larry from these scriptures we see the words bishop and elder used and the importance of the role these men fill. So Fred, you mean that all these words are talking about elders asked Larry? Yes that is correct lets look at what else the scriptures teach about these men. In addition to being leaders, elders are shepherds or pastors of God's flock. Paul told the Ephesian elders "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" that is stated in (Acts 20:28,). Peter exhorted elders to "shepherd the flock of God among you. . ." over in (1 Pet. 5:2,). The King James uses the word "feed" instead of "shepherd." Feed the flock. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he must be "apt to teach" according to (1 Tim. 3:2). This indicates that he must know the Scriptures and be able to nurture and strengthen those whom he watches over. Also notice Larry that in scripture elders is always plural that is why I told you I am one of three. I think I am beginning to understand now and I will study this more on my own say's Larry.

Fred, before I ask another question can you tell me why the preacher is not a pastor like in the other churches I have visited? Fred thinks for a minute not wanting to confuse Larry again and says well Larry it is like this. The word "pastor" is found only one time in the New Testament of our English Bibles, this being in Eph. 4:11. And although the function of a pastor is not here specifically identified, it is seen to be distinguished from that of the evangelist (or preacher).

"He (God) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teacher." Thus, the Bible identifies these two function separately. I think I see now says Larry.

Lets see if we can answer some of the other questions you have before Edna calls us for dinner. Dinner Larry says kind of startled, I didn't realize how the time was flying by I am so sorry I have taken up your whole afternoon. That is not a problem Fred says it is important that you get your answers what is the next question on your mind Larry.

Well Sir I did not see a piano or organ in the building and no one seemed to miss having music to accompany their singing. I have to admit the songs were beautifully sung and I really enjoyed the wonderful harmony of you all. But why no instruments? Fred just smiled and said the simple answer is that God did not authorize us to use them. This might surprise you but before we as Christians can do a thing it must first be authorized by God in scripture. But, Larry says, didn't they use harps and all in the Old Testament times? Yes, they did, God allowed them at that time. Then Fred pointed out that we no longer live under the old law given by Moses. When Jesus died for us on the cross He did away with that law. We, Larry now live under the law of Christ the New Testament. In all the times you have read the scriptures of the New Testament have you ever read about using instruments? Well, no Sir I haven't.

Larry lets again look and see what the word has to say about Instruments in worship. Turn with me to Ephesians 5:19 it states that each one of us is to be "singing and making melody in our heart." Notice that the melody by which we sing is to be made in the heart and not upon a mechanical instrument , but is this all that the scriptures say? Paul, in the book of Colossians chapter three and verse sixteen, says that this singing is to be done with "grace in our hearts." This grace" carries the idea of gratitude, favor, pleasure, or joy. So, God is telling us through Paul that when we sing we should sing with an attitude of happiness and joy in our hearts because of gratitude to God. Larry, think of it as our songs should pour out from a heart that is filled with happiness and thankfulness. All our worship should come from the heart, and we do not wish to encourage some mechanical process for simply stirring emotions. We could go into a long study of this topic Larry but I think you can understand what God's word is saying. Yes, this too is something I am going to have to take another deeper look at. But I think I see where your coming from.

Just about the time Larry finished speaking Edna came in the room and asked, Are you two fellows ready to have some dinner?

As Larry and Fred rounded the corner into the kitchen after washing up a bit Larry could see that Edna had been busy, it wasn't a fancy meal but there was plenty of it. Edna had made some fresh biscuits and there was a plate with corn on the cob and a bowl of white beans a nice sized roast surrounded by carrots on a platter set in the middle of the table. Larry also noticed on the shelf by the stove was an apple pie piping hot just out of the oven. Larry was pleasantly surprised and looked at Edna and said I haven't eaten like this in a long time you shouldn't have gone to all this trouble. Edna said, Larry it is no trouble at all sit down here and enjoy. After holding hands again and Fred leading the prayer thanking God for all the blessings that they received Fred told Larry to dig in, you won't go hungry here Edna sees to that.

During dinner Larry asked if Fred and Edna had any kids? Fred said yes we have a son he lives out in California but that they didn't see him much anymore. Fred explained that Tom his son had moved out there after collage and other than for a few visits and phone calls each year that they didn't see him much. We raised him as best we could said Edna but after collage he was dead set on leaving and becoming his own man. He said he wasn't going to end up a dirt farmer like his dad that he was going to be a somebody in this life. Fred spoke up and said the boy never understood that it was this dirt farm as he called it that had given him a good life and put him through school. Larry said he was sorry to hear that but that he supposed people would do as they pleased. Fred agreed and then said to Edna how about a piece of that pie you made. Edna makes a great apple pie Larry sink your teeth in that and you will see.

It was about six o'clock now and Fred says lets go back in the living room and see if we can finish answering your questions. I warn you though you might have more before we are through. Larry agreed and they retired back to the living room.

Fred after opening his Bible said alright Larry what else can we help you with. Larry said well Sir I noticed that about half way through the singing you had what I call communion and took up a collection and then you sang some more and then Marvin delivered his sermon. By the way it was a good lesson please tell Marvin I appreciated it very much. Fred replied I will do that Larry. I gather Larry that you are wondering why we hold our services the way we do?

Yes, I was wondering do you do this every Sunday in the same way? Yes, Larry we do and there is a reason for it. God gave us a pattern to follow kind of like a blueprint that a contractor would follow when building a house. Really? Larry said, would you show me? Sure lets go back and see what the scriptures teach because that is the only place we can learn what God wants us to do.

Larry, the New Testament church was led by the apostles and they were led by Christ we learn this from reading (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18) So the Scriptures were being written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, we can rest assured we are on safe ground when we imitate or follow the apostolic examples. Lets also look at (Phil. 4:9).

A true Christian will attempt to follow the scriptural patterns or blueprint if you will, taught in the word and not invent unscriptural ideas or follow traditional practices which are not rooted in God's word. That makes sense Larry said, I do not think God is pleased if we do not do what He says. That is correct Larry and Fred continued, the New Testament teaches us that worship is an act of devotion or praise it can be (either public or private) or an act of service directed toward God. The church of Christ in the first century began in Acts chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost when Peter gave the first sermon. So lets continue to examine the Scriptures to learn what these early Christians did in worship to God.

Starting with prayer we see that God's people are praying people, as were the early disciples. ". . . prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God. Turn to (Acts 12:5). We also learn in (Acts 2: 42) "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers". We need to look also at (Romans 15:30; and Eph. 6:18; along with Phil. 4:6; and 1 Thess. 5:17).

My, Larry says I never really studied like this before I just usually open the book and start reading hoping it will sink in. You sure know your Bible Fred I will give you that. Thanks Fred said but it has taken lots of study and many years to learn what little I know but let us move on for now.

We talked a bit about singing already it too is part of worship, God's people are people who sing. The church of the New Testament did not use choirs, quartets or special singing groups in their worship. They practiced congregational singing. New Testament Christians sang as part worship. The Holy Spirit did not authorize anything but vocal music. Note carefully these passages Larry and

you will better understand. Lets begin with Matt. 26:30; then Mk. 14:26; and Acts 16:25; We can also look at Rom. 15:9; and 1 Cor. 14:15; we went over Eph. 5:19; and Col. 3:16; earlier and in Heb. 2:12 we find even more help in understanding singing.

So you see Larry we can know that our worship is scriptural when we sing praises to God as He instructed. Larry sat thoughtfully for a moment and said Fred I think I understand but why did you stop and have communion I thought that was just done on special occasions?

Well again we have to look to the word to answer your question. Communion or Lord's Supper as we call it was instituted by the Lord before ascending back to heaven, Jesus gave the apostles instruction about the memorial to be observed read (Mat. 26: 26-29). You see Larry, Christ shared this first supper with the apostles and through the apostles, He (Jesus) set it in the church for regular observance lets look at (Acts 2:42) and it will be clearer for you. Another thing Larry, is the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul (who was not present at the first supper) how it was to be observed. We can turn over to (1 Cor. 11:17-34) we see here the church at Corinth was observing the supper but not in accordance with truth and Paul wrote to them to correct it them. We can also read that Paul was present in at Troas when the church there met to remember the Lord's death by eating the feast (Acts 20:7). I think now you should have a clearer picture in your mind from reading these Scriptures that we learn the early church, with apostles present, ate the supper regularly on the first day of the week. We also can conclude that no other day is authorized to do this.

Larry, now very interested in what Fred is teaching him says yes Sir I can see that every week has a "first day." and from what we have studied I can only conclude that Scriptural worship includes eating the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week, every week. Fred smiles and says Larry, now your getting it we do things by the pattern given to us.

We have a few more things to look at yet would you like some coffee before we continue? Ye please replied Larry. Fred got up and walked to the kitchen door and looked in Edna was just finishing up the kitchen putting some stuff back in the cupboard. Edna dear would you pour us some coffee please? Larry do you take cream and sugar? No, just black please will be fine. Edna in no time was bringing in a tray with a steaming hot pot of coffee and three cups. She poured the coffee for them and sat down on the sofa near Fred and said are you men learning anything? Why yes we or I am say's Larry. Well I will just sit here and

listen for a while said Edna I am due for a break.

Larry asked how much more Fred thought he needed to know as it was now getting close to eight O'clock and he was starting to feel like he was imposing. Fred says there are just a couple of things I feel you should consider but, Larry if your tired or would like to go please just say so we do not want to keep you if you need to do something. No Sir, I have nothing to do if you would continue that would please me just fine. I am learning a lot and really need to learn how to study like you have been doing here with me today.

Well lets see I think we were coming to the giving part of worship. The Bible teaches that God's people are people who give to the Lord. Christians were liberal in their giving. Oh, you mean tithing right asks Larry? Not really Larry, the Old Testament specified that an Israelite was to give a tenth of all (tithe), the New Testament does not state any given amount we give as we are prospered. Really says Larry? Fred continues, the principle is given that we are under a better covenant with better promises according to (Heb. 8:6), having a better sacrifice according to (Heb. 9:23). We are to give accordingly, (2 Cor. 8:2), Larry we should have a ready mind when giving according to (2 Cor. 8:12), not sparingly (2 Cor. 9:6) we also need to give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). We are also shown that this kind of giving is to take place on the first day of the week according to (1 Cor. 16:1, 2), Larry, when Scriptural giving is faithfully observed, the Lord's church will have the funds necessary to fulfill its work.

You know Fred I never thought of it like that in fact I do not know what for or even where any of the money I have given goes. This has been a real eye opening day for me Thank you and Edna very much. Thank you Larry for the kind words we have just one more thing to look at before we end this study of worship.

Lets open the word again and take a look at teaching or preaching: The scriptures teach us Larry that Gods people are evangelistic. Maybe you have wondered if teaching or preaching is really a an act of worship. I think we have seen thus far that the New Testament teaches, we are not only to be obedient, but also to do reverence and to serve. Larry we render service or homage also by preaching God's word. We can correctly understand preaching and teaching as an act of worship in the light of these definitions. Preaching is an act of service to God. Paul felt it an obligation toward God to preach to lost men when he said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel", we find that in (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul considered preaching the gospel to be his stewardship entrusted to him from

God in the very next verse (1 Cor. 9:17), Larry many other passages stress the importance of this act. I will jot them down so you can study them for your self but I think I have shown you the importance of preaching. Fred took a piece of paper and wrote down the following scriptures for Larry to study. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 5:42; 8:4; Acts 15:35; 1 Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 2:17; 3:8; Col. 1:23; 2 Tim. 2:2.

Larry looking at his watch said oh my it is nine thirty and I have taken up your whole day. Fred looked at Edna and smiled and said we have enjoyed every minute of it Larry you are always welcome here. Before you leave I want you to have something to take with you. Edna where are those little booklets we have? Edna looking down in the book rack beside the sofa picked up a small book and handed it to Fred. Larry, Fred said, this little booklet will teach you the other plan in the Bible and that is the plan of salvation. Please take time to read and study it like we did today about worship. By the way is there a church of Christ in the town where you live? Yes Sir, there is they too are a small group and I just never got around to visiting them to be honest with you. Fred I want to thank you and Edna for being so kind to me and taking your time to teach me. I will be looking into going to that little church where I live you can take that to the bank. Larry, I am sure they will be more than willing to help you too, we are all God's children and want others to be saved just like He does. You just be sure to read that booklet with an open Bible and if you have questions you talk to the preacher or an elder there where you live.

Larry said goodbye and headed out to his car. Edna and Fred stood on the porch till Larry was out of sight. Well Fred said to Edna as they readied for bed, we planted a seed today lets both pray it has fallen on fertile ground. As they turned out the light after praying for Larry and thanking God for their many blessings Fred said good night Edna replying, Edna said Good night Fred.

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

Church Websites

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Outline of the book of Romans Part 6

Eric Farris
Freeport, Fl.

The previous article dealt primarily with Romans chapter 7:14 through 8:6. It was needed to look at the first part of chapter 8 to see the proper contrast that inspiration was making. We will briefly go over those verses again as we study chapter 8

Chapter 8 begins with the contrast of the previous chapter (those outside of Christ) to those who have obeyed the gospel and thus are “In Christ”. The result being “no condemnation” because the spiritual mind “walks after the Spirit” (this refers to the person who has learned and applied the teaching of the Spirit and lives in accordance to them- Rom. 6:6-18, cf. Jn. 6:63). Keep in mind that the result of being outside of Christ (chapter 7) was “condemnation”, yet those in Christ have no such fate! How though, is man spared from such?

Notice the text: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* (Rom. 8:2) The “law of the Spirit of life” is the gospel of Jesus, the exclusive means of man’s salvation (Rom. 1:16-17, 3:24-26, 5:1-11), for God saves man when man responds to the commands of God in the obedience of faith, thus having “faith in the operation of God” (Col. 2:11-13). The law of sin and death is a reference to the law of Moses, since “sin and death” was the result of man’s failure to keep it (cf. Acts 15:10, Gal. 5:1).

Don’t misunderstand; the law served it’s purpose (Gal. 3:24). Yet it was never meant to be permanent (Heb. 8:7ff) and had no redemptive aspect (it was a standard; man should have realized that he was not “good enough” and needed saving- Gal. 2:16). Jesus was sent in the “likeness of sinful flesh” in that He was made in the image of man (Phil. 2:7-8), who CHOOSES to sin (Jn. 8:34, Jms. 1:12ff). This certainly does not teach the false doctrine of “total depravity”, rather, it shows that Jesus would be made in the same image of those He was sent to save for their OWN sins and do so as a sinless, perfect sacrifice (1 Pet. 2:22). Thus in the same “flesh” human form), Jesus condemned (brought to an end the power of- cf. Mt. 26:28, Acts 2:38) sin through a perfect life and vicarious death (1 Pet. 1:18-19, 2:24). What is the result of being “In Christ”? The same result one would have IF he lived in perfect accordance to the law

(which Jesus did!), thus Jesus made righteousness (thru the gospel- Rom. 1:16-17) possible for any who would submit to His authority (cf. Rom. 6:17-18, Jms.1:21-22, Heb. 5:9, 1 Jn. 3:7).

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom. 8:5-6). The reference to those “after the flesh” is to those spoken of in 7:14-25. These are the folks outside of Christ that do not mind the teachings of grace (Acts 14:3, 20:32), but rather follow their own path (Prov. 14:12). The result of such a life is death (Rom. 6:23). If you notice the contrast to a carnal mind is a spiritual mind, the very concept of chapter 8. A spiritual mind will result in “life and peace” because such a mind will seek after and hearken to the teachings of Christ (Jn. 6:63). These folks understand that the word of God is able to make them “thoroughly furnished” unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and should guide their every step (Ps. 119:105).

The carnal mind is “enmity” (in opposition to) against God. The phrase “for it is not subject to the law of God” does not mean that carnal folks are not amenable to the law of God, if that was the case, these folks would not be lost (cf. Rom. 4:15, 1 Jn. 3:4)! This does mean that such an attitude of rebellion will not submit itself to God (cf. Mt. 6:24). It is not “subject to the law of God” in that such a law, with all of its regulations and restrictions is not in agreement with an attitude of “serving self”; yet such an attitude will result in eternal damnation (2 Thes. 1:7-9, cf. Prov. 14:12). They that are “in the flesh” cannot please God (v8). This is a continuation of the thought of v7, notice please that there is a contrast between those who “walk in the Spirit” and those who “are in the flesh”. Contrary to what liberals claim, it is possible for folks to “live in sin” (Col. 3:5-7). Verse 9 is an often misunderstood verse, yet we can know exactly what is taught from the context.

Keep in mind that we have been discussing that pleasing God requires a spiritual mind (v6), thus the “spirit of Christ” of v9 is not the Holy Spirit, but the same humble, submissive attitude displayed by Christ (cf. Mt. 26:42, Phil. 2:8, Heb. 5:7-8). Without such an attitude, one cannot be “In Christ” (Rom. 6:6-18, cf. Rom. 8:29, Gal. 3:26-29). Now, notice vv. 11-15; But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if

ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The “spirit” required to “dwell in us” is one of humility and submission, as per the context.

When a penitent believer submits to the terms of pardon (set by God- Ps. 119:89), he goes from “death to life” (Col. 2:11-13—This is speaking of spiritual death/life, folks and those who “were dead” and made alive thru the gospel- Jn. 5:29.. it makes no sense to say that the Holy Spirit dwells in dead bodies and is required to raise them from the dead!). This is how YOU (notice that it requires action on the part of man- Jms. 1:21-22) “mortify the deeds of the body”, by heeding the commands given by the Spirit and complying with them (Jn. 3:3-5, 1 Pet. 1:22-23). This explains HOW the saints are “led by the Spirit”, by trusting compliance with the terms revealed by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 2:7,11,17, cf. Jn. 6:63). This is also HOW the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (v16). For the Holy Spirit bears witness through His inspired word (Heb. 10:15, cf. Jer. 31:31ff) and when we comply with those terms, we receive the blessings promised (Acts 2:41, 47; Rom. 6:17-18)

(All scripture from KJV unless otherwise noted)

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Nero (Part 9)

Tim Bench
Abilene, Texas

The famed Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote of Nero in his “Antiquities of the Jews” (Book XX, Chapter 8, verses 2-3). The comments of Josephus are a bit puzzling; he confirms many of Nero's killings, such as Octavia and Agrippina (along with “many other illustrious persons”); however, he also states that many of Nero's crimes have been both understated, by those receiving benefits from him, and likewise OVER stated, by his numerous enemies....

“2. But now Agrippina was afraid, lest, when Britannicus should come to man's estate, he should succeed his father in the government, and desired to seize upon the principality beforehand for her own son [Nero]; upon which the report went that she thence compassed the death of Claudius. Accordingly, she sent Burrhus, the general of the army, immediately, and with him the tribunes, and such also of the freed-men as were of the greatest authority, to bring Nero away into the camp, and to salute him emperor. And when Nero had thus obtained the government, he got Britannicus to be so poisoned, that the multitude should not perceive it; although he publicly put his own mother to death not long afterward, making her this requital, not only for being born of her, but for bringing it so about by her contrivances that he obtained the Roman empire. He also slew Octavia his own wife, and many other illustrious persons, under this pretense, that they plotted against him.

3. But I omit any further discourse about these affairs; for there have been a great many who have composed the history of Nero; some of which have departed from the truth of facts out of favor, as having received benefits from him; while others, out of hatred to him, and the great ill-will which they bare him, have so impudently raved against him with their lies, that they justly deserve to be condemned. Nor do I wonder at such as have told lies of Nero, since they have not in their writings preserved the truth of history as to those facts that were earlier than his time, even when the actors could have no way incurred their hatred, since those writers lived a long time after them. But as to those that have no regard to truth, they may write as they please; for in that they take delight: but as to ourselves, who have made truth our direct aim, we shall briefly touch upon what only belongs remotely to this undertaking, but shall

relate what hath happened to us Jews with great accuracy, and shall not grudge our pains in giving an account both of the calamities we have suffered, and of the crimes we have been guilty of...”.

Nero’s ultimate fate was an ignoble ending. In 68 AD, Nero’s reign was undermined by a military coup. Suetonius’s description of Nero’s final moments shows that even in the face of impending death and/or capture, Nero’s obsession for himself and ego never faltered...

“A runner brought him a letter from Phaon. Nero tore it from the man's hands and read that, having been declared a public enemy by the Senate, he would be punished in 'ancient style' when arrested. He asked what 'ancient style' meant, and learned that the executioners stripped their victim naked, thrust his head into a wooden fork, and then flogged him to death with sticks. In terror he snatched up the two daggers which he brought along and tried their points; but threw them down again, protesting that the final hour had not yet come.

Then he begged Sporus to weep and mourn for him, but also begged one of the other three to set him an example by committing suicide first. He kept moaning about his cowardice, and muttering: 'How ugly and vulgar my life has become!' And then in Greek: 'This certainly is no credit to Nero, no credit at all,' and: 'Come pull yourself together, man!' By this time a troop of cavalry who had orders to take him alive were coming up the road. Nero gasped: 'Hark to the sound I hear! It is hooves of galloping horses.' Then, with the help of his scribe, Epaphroditos, he stabbed himself in the throat and was already half dead when a cavalry officer entered, pretending to have rushed to his rescue, and staunched the wound with his cloak. Nero muttered: 'Too late! But, ah, what fidelity!' He died, with his eyes glazed and bulging from their sockets, a sight which horrified everybody present. He had made his companions promise, whatever happened, not to let his head be cut off, but to have him buried all in one piece.”

From Suetonius, Nero, 49-50.

“...by the end he was a monomaniac with no regard for human life - a monster of the order of Idi Amin.”

from “Nero emerges as ruthless but less baffling”, Eric Pace, New York Times, June 18, 1985.

“As it turned out, Nero's end was encompassed not by senatorial conspirators or praetorian guardsmen but by the troops stationed in the provinces, whose loyalties Nero had done little to secure. A minor revolt in Gaul in March AD68 led to the Spanish legions renouncing their allegiance to Nero and declaring their general, Galba, emperor. Returning from Greece, Nero panicked and fled Rome, finally committing suicide in a friend's villa with the last words “What an artist dies in me!” (*qualis artifex pereo*).

From “Who were the Julio-Claudians?”, CLIO journal.

Amazingly, even Nero's death in 68 AD would not calm the fears of the Roman population. Many believed that reports of Nero's death were untrue, and that the evil despot had simply fled to another nearby nation and would assemble an army in order to once again seize control by force of Rome (“The Sibylline Oracles” is the earliest written record of this belief, which came to be known as the “Nero Redivivus” legend). These “Oracles” specifically state that Nero had fled to Parthia and would soon return with a military force.

Nero imposters (or “Pseudo-Neros”) began to arise, the first appearing in 69 AD during the reign of Vitellius. The “imposter” shared physical characteristics with Nero (and also played the lyre) (Tacitus, *Histories* II.8). A second imposter (“Terentius Maximus”) appeared during the reign of Titus (79-81 AD) (Dio, LXVI.19.3), and finally, some 20 years after Nero's death, a third Nero pretender appeared during the reign of Domitian. In short, the terror that Nero had spawned did not abate with his death, nor did Christian persecution, as fear continued for decades and even centuries that Nero, and all of his horrors and evils, would soon reappear.

“After Nero's suicide in AD 68, there was a widespread belief, especially in the eastern provinces, that he was not dead and somehow would return (Suetonius, LVII; Tacitus, *Histories* II.8; Dio, LXVI.19.3). Suetonius (XL) relates how court astrologers had predicted Nero's fall but that he would have power in the East. And, indeed, at least three false claimants did present themselves as Nero *redivivus* (resurrected).

The first, who sang and played the cithara or lyre and whose face was similar to that of the dead emperor, appeared the next year but, after persuading some to recognize him, was captured and executed (Tacitus, II.8).

Sometime during the reign of Titus (AD 79-81) there was another impostor who appeared in Asia and also sang to the accompaniment of the lyre and looked like Nero but he, too, was exposed (Dio, LXVI.19.3).

Twenty years after Nero's death, during the reign of Domitian, there was a third pretender. Supported by the Parthians, who hardly could be persuaded to give him up (Suetonius, LVII), the matter almost came to war (Tacitus, I.2). Such fidelity no doubt can be attributed to the magnificent reception (and restoration of Armenia) that Tiridates, the brother of the Parthian king, had received from Nero in AD 66 (Dio, LXII.1ff).

As popular belief in Nero's actual return began to fade, he no longer was regarded as an historic figure but an eschatological one.”

from “Nero as the Antichrist”, www.penelope.uchicago.edu.

Fears of Nero's return, even from the dead, would continue for decades and even centuries. The Sibylline Oracles, from the second century, specify Nero returning to spawn destruction and revenge (Books 5 and 8). 11 In 310 AD, some 240+ years after Nero's death, as per Lactantius, Nero “*suddenly disappeared, and even the burial place of that noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen. This has led some persons of extravagant imagination to suppose that, having been conveyed to a distant region, he is still reserved alive; and to him they apply the Sibylline verses*”. 12 Alexander of Hippo would write in 422 AD of the ongoing legends of Nero's imminent return 10.

“..there soon arose a belief that Nero had not really died, but was living somewhere in retirement or had fled among the Parthians, and that he was destined in a short time to return and bring great calamity upon his enemies or the world (quasi viventis et brevi magno inimicorum malo reversuri: Suetonius lvii). This belief was a force among the Parthians who were ready to take up arms at the report of a pseudo-Nero (Tacitus, History i.2).

From “Nero” at www.biblehub.com.

And what would become of Sporus, one of history's most pitiable characters?

“Little is known about Sporus' background except that he was a young man to whom Nero took a liking. Nero considered Sporus to be his wife, and their

marriage ceremony included Sporus wearing a bridal veil, Nero providing Sporus with a dowry, and afterwards, a wonderful honeymoon in Greece. (Nero also married two other men, although they were not castrated because in those marriages, Nero was the wife).

It's possible that Nero used his marriage to Sporus to assuage the feelings of guilt he felt for kicking his pregnant wife, Sabina, to death in 65 AD. Sporus bore an uncanny resemblance to Sabina, and Nero even called him by his dead wife's name. The affair was short-lived, however, because Nero killed himself in 68 AD.

Sporus was not widowed for long. He soon married Nymphidius Sabinus, who made an unsuccessful bid for emperor that ended with his death at the hands of his opponent's followers. Sporus again became involved with another powerful man, Emperor Otho, who was also killed by his enemies. Sporus then became linked to greedy, gluttonous, and debauched Emperor Vitellius, who later had a villainous idea for a halftime show during one of the gladiatorial combats: he planned for Sporus to dress as a young woman and be raped for the viewing enjoyment of the crowds. Sporus committed suicide to avoid the humiliation."

From "6 famous eunuchs" by Martha Brozyna.

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

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THE TRUTH ABOUT TRADITION

Dub McClish
Denton, Texas

Introduction

Is everything that we call “tradition” bad, dangerous, or even prohibited? Is there such a thing as “good” or even “mandatory” tradition? This word occurs thirteen times in the New Testament (ASV), and we still frequently employ it in religious discussions. Since it is often misunderstood, it is worthy of our attention.

Tradition translates the Greek word *paradosis*, meaning “a handing down or on” (*Vine’s*). In common parlance we use the term to indicate a religious teaching or practice that has been handed down or passed on to us by others. *Tradition* is an innately neutral term, not connoting on its own either right or wrong, Truth or error. It takes on a definite negative or positive character only as indicated by its context. Inspiration uses it in both negative and positive connotations:

1. Negative traditions include practices that: (a) men blind as obligatory when they are not, and (b) are innately wrong
2. Positive traditions include practices that are either: (a) optional or (b) obligatory

Negative Traditions

By far the most frequent occurrence of *tradition* in the New Testament refers to the uninspired teachings the Jewish elders had added to their law (9

times). The scribes and Pharisees so used the term twice (Mat. 15:2; Mark 7:5), Mark commented on these traditions once (7:3), Jesus referred to them five times (Mat. 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8–9, 13), and Paul mentioned them once (Gal. 1:14). Additionally, Paul wrote once of the “traditions of men” in general (Col. 2:8). The foregoing are condemned and forbidden.

The traditions stated

Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for two of their traditions: First, they apparently believed in washing everything—hands, bodies, cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables (KJV) (Mark 7:3–4). Those who neglected such washings were “unclean,” “defiled” (Mat. 15:20). To those fanatics, outward “cleanliness was not merely **next** to godliness”; it practically **was** godliness.

Second, a tradition called “Corban” (from the Heb. word *qorban*, offering [Lev. 1:2–3, et al.]). The scribes and Pharisees allowed people to “verbally dedicate” money to God and thereby evade their responsibility to support their aged parents (Mat. 15:4–6; Mark 7:11–12). However, the “donors” were allowed to have continued use of the “donation.”

The washings traditions—allowable, but condemned because bound

There is no indication that Jesus rebuked the Jewish leaders for their cleanliness as such. Their washing's were innocent and optional and may have even promoted hygiene. God in Moses' law required certain washing's (e.g., Lev. 15:5–27; 17:15–16; Num.19:11–22; et al.), but the “traditions of the elders” went far beyond these.

Jesus chastised them regarding their traditional washing's on the following grounds: **First**, they made these washing's as binding as those of the law itself, and condemned those who did not keep them (Mat. 15:2). They were thereby

“teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (v. 9). **Second**, they revered these washing's above the requirements of the law (specifically, the responsibility to honor their parents [Mat. 15:3–4]). **Third**, the nature of this tradition also rendered it evil. As described by Isaiah (and other prophets [e.g., Joel 2:13; Mic. 6:6–8; Eze. 33:31]), Judaism had degenerated—long before Jesus’ time—into a religion that was all mouth and no heart—wholly external and ritualistic (Mat. 15:7–9; Mark 7:6). Such lack of involvement of their spirits and hearts in their religious practice, even when following the letter of the law, rendered their worship vain.

In this same context, Jesus further emphasized the necessary involvement of the heart—particularly the obligation to keep it pure—in true religion:

For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man
(Mat. 15:19–20).

Jesus had already, in the Sermon on the Mount, rebuked the pretended piety these traditional washing's evinced. He verbally scourged those who gave alms, prayed, and fasted in public places to attract the praise of men (Mat. 6:1–18). Likewise, His final sermon stridently exposed the superficial elements to which they meticulously attended, while totally ignoring their own inward corruption (Mat. 23:25–28).

The Corban tradition—unconditionally prohibited

The Lord did not rebuke the Jewish leaders for allowing men to bring offerings to the temple. The Mosaic system obligated the Jews to make offerings of various types (viz., sin, burnt, peace, wave, and free-will) that involved their

livestock, produce, and money. However, the Corban tradition was far removed from these God-ordained offerings.

Jesus did not rebuke the Corban tradition because the scribes and Pharisees bound it as obligatory; there is no indication that they did so. Also unlike the washing's, this tradition was not innocent or allowable under any circumstances. Rather, the rebuke of Corban stemmed from the following: **First**, it was innately evil because it was a substitute for and was in conflict with God's law that required children to honor their parents (Mat. 15:3–4; Mark 7:10). Therefore, Jesus unconditionally condemned it. **Second**, the Jews elevated this tradition above the law and thereby set aside the law concerning parental honor. They thereby "*transgressed the commandment of God,*" "*made void the word of God,*" "*left the commandment of God,*" and "*rejected the commandment of God*" (Mat. 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8–9).

Third, this was a merciless and cruel practice, causing helpless parents to suffer severe hardship. **Fourth**, the behavior of these tradition-binding Jewish leaders was grossly hypocritical (Mat. 15:7; cf. 23:23–28; Mark 7:6). In their Corban scheme they were absolutely unconcerned about their helpless parents (and God's law concerning their care), but they were gravely concerned about their frivolous washing's. Their behavior was a prime exhibit of straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel (Mat. 23:24; cf. Luke 11:38–42).

“General traditions” condemned

Paul links “the traditions of men” with “philosophy of vain deceit” and “rudiments of the world” (Col. 2:8). These may have involved both Jewish and incipient Gnostic influences (vv. 16–23). These traditions were decidedly harmful and negative. They would “spoil” (i.e., carry off as booty) any saint who

embraced them because they were “not after [i.e., contrary to] Christ.”

Modern applications

Like the washing's traditions of the Jews—harmless in themselves—there are many “traditions” among the Lord’s people today. Most congregations have a set order of worship on the Lord’s day, as determined by their bishops. This arrangement is followed in keeping with doing all things “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). This practice, as long as it involves all five avenues of worship, is not only allowable, but commendable. Some congregations have followed the same order for several years, and this “tradition” has been handed down to succeeding generations. This tradition is not forbidden, bad, or negative. It is fully allowable, for the Lord has not bound a certain sequence of acts of worship.

What if the leaders of this congregation decided that its worship order is the only one that is Scriptural, binding it on other congregations and accusing them of sin if they did not follow it? This would change the issue entirely. This formerly innocent tradition would thereby become negative and harmful, akin to the washing's tradition of the Jews.

Those familiar with church history are aware that this very thing occurred in the early twentieth century. A small segment of brethren professed seeing in Acts 2:42 an inviolable “pattern” for the order of worship. They insisted that the sermon must be first, the contribution second, the Lord’s supper third, and prayer fourth. They sought to bind this on all of the church. Brethren who resisted correctly pointed out that, since there is no singing in this passage at all and that it was a stretch to identify *fellowship* with the contribution, this passage could hardly be a binding pattern. The tradition-binders were unsuccessful, as they should have been.

A similar phenomenon occurred several years later over the employment of full-time preachers, having Bible classes, using uninspired study guides, and employing multiple cups in the Lord's Supper. None would question a congregation's right not to employ any of these things if it so chose. However, some brethren began to bind upon every congregation their choices (i.e., traditions) not to use these aids. They simply followed the sorry example of the scribes and Pharisees who bound their otherwise allowable tradition of washing's.

An even later iteration of this behavior arose at the middle of the last century. Some brethren decided they should not (1) eat a meal on church-owned property, (2) care for orphan children out of the church treasury, or (3) send money to another congregation for evangelistic work. Those (individuals or congregations) who believe—on the basis of Scripture—that the foregoing practices are authorized have no fellowship problems with those who entertain scruples against engaging in them—as long as they do not seek to make them into law. This approach is simply in keeping with congregational autonomy.

However, some brethren began trying to bind their scruples/traditions in these matters upon the whole church. (Significantly, for the most part, the leaders in said binding attempts had—in earlier years—engaged in them.) Those who refused to be bound by these “traditions” were labeled “liberals,” “digressives” and “sinful” and unworthy of fellowship. The Lord could not allow the scribes and Pharisees to bind doctrines or practices that He had not bound, and neither can His followers allow such, even though the things being bound are optional, as were the washing's of the scribes and Pharisees. No man or group of men has the right to bind human practice or doctrine (even if it is

innocent or allowable) as Divine law. To do so is to “*transgress the commandment of God by...tradition*” (Mat. 15:3).

The other class of negative traditions relates to things the Lord unconditionally prohibits. **Such things are not allowable even if not bound.** Such things are innately wrong because, like the Corban tradition, they involve unauthorized practices that add to, contradict, and/or supersede the law of God. One need only glance at Roman Catholic dogma and practice to find ample manifestations. Protestant denominationalism provides a similar long list of forbidden traditions. Traditions such as these are the ones about which Paul warns (Col. 2:8).

It is unspeakably lamentable that erring brethren (the true liberals) have for some time been borrowing unabashedly from these forbidden “traditions of men” and are fastening them upon congregations of the Lord’s people as rapidly as they dare. The great irony of the behavior of these change agents is that they often excuse what they do and teach as an effort to **resist** “tradition.” They cry out against the allowable “two songs, a prayer, a song, a sermon,…” order of worship as an unhealthy “tradition,” which they aim to replace with unauthorized acts—new human traditions of their own making.

They begin by changing the order of worship every week. Then they gradually begin changing the acts. Before long, the innovations are so many and the performances so intricate as to require the hiring of a “Praise Minister” to choreograph and coach the theatrics of the “praise teams.”

The restriction of Scripture, not tradition, is what they cannot abide. Truly, they are traditionalists of the deepest dye, only they prefer the forbidden traditions of men to the traditions which the Lord either allows or

mandates. There is the rub. God's faithful people must resist all such efforts to establish unauthorized and forbidden traditions with the same zeal—and for the same reasons—that God charged Israel to resist the gods of the Caananites.

Positive Tra"ditions

The New Testament allows a wide variety of practices that expedite authorized and obligatory actions in the work and worship of God (note: a practice cannot be “expedient” if it is not authorized). The Lord commands us to preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15–16), but He does not restrict our means of going or preaching. Thus, any means of travel and preaching that expedites this command is allowable. All of our expedient options (e.g., song books, a baptistery, a place to assemble, a public address system, times of meeting, et al.) may be rightly called “traditions,” for they have been handed down to us. All such things are “positive traditions,” allowable and expedient, but not obligatory.

The keeping of some traditions is obligatory, however. Hence Paul **commanded** the keeping of “traditions” in two passages and used *tradition* an additional time in a favorable way:

*Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the **traditions**, even as I delivered them to you (1 Cor. 11:2).*

*So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the **traditions** which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours (2 The. 2:15).*

*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the **tradition** which they received of us (2 The. 3:6, emph. DM).*

The traditions Paul enjoined were those he delivered, and they involved the things which he taught and which others received, both orally and in writing. He was obviously employing this word in these passages to refer to the **inspired message** he received—the revelation of Truth he delivered to them. The keeping of **these** traditions is not optional, but obligatory, because they are the authoritative message of the inspired New Testament.

Conclusion

May we all carefully learn to recognize **negative/forbidden** traditions (either because they are innocent practices some bind as law when God has not bound them or because they contradict and supplant God's law). May we also allow each other freedom to practice **optional** "traditions," while being ever careful to hold to the **obligatory** traditions—God's inspired Word.

Endnote

All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

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Learning to Give an Answer (8)

John P. Mabrey
Hilham, TN

This article addresses the importance of learning to give an answer to people regarding church membership, worship, and service to God.

One can aspire to be a member of no greater organization on this earth than to be a member of the Lord's church. There is no club, lodge, society, or any earthly organization that can do what the Lord's church can do. All saved people are in the church, and there are no saved souls outside of the church. The church of Christ is a living, breathing organism. The Lord has set up her organization from the highest earthly office (the eldership) all the way down to what mere mortals might think of as the lowest ranking member. Although the church has an organizational hierarchy (Refer to Lesson II., AUTHORITY) one member is just as important as the other. On the great judgment day, we will all be judged out of the same book(s) according to our works. (Rev. 20:11) *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."* At that time, in God's eyes, we will all be the same. Jesus said it best, when He said, *"But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."* (Mark 10:31)

How do I become a member?

There is much confusion in the world concerning this question which breeds statements such as: "I joined the church" or "join the church of your choice." The church of Christ as portrayed in the Bible is an organization which cannot be "joined." Nowhere in the scripture do we find where anyone (man or woman) "joined" the church, or were told to "join" the church. Therefore, let us start at the beginning and find out what the Bible says about becoming a member of the Lord's church.

When Nicodemus came to see Jesus, Jesus told him, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,*

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3-5)

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* We can see from these two statements that entering into the kingdom (the church) requires 1) a new birth, and 2) a conversion (a change). We recall when Jesus gave the great commission to his apostles that he sent them into the world to *“... teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matt. 28:19) This “baptism” is representative of both the “new birth” and “conversion.”

We have already examined the steps of salvation in a previous section, but we are compelled to repeat much about salvation in order to understand how we become members of the Lord’s body (the church). The apostles taught *“...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* (I Cor. 1:21) We know also, that we must hear in order to believe. (Rom. 10:17) If we do not believe then we shall die in our sins according to John 8:24—*“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”* To keep from dying in our sins we must repent and be converted. Look at Acts 3:19—*“Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”* It is by faith that we make the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. When the eunuch desired to be baptized, Philip told him, *“If thou believest, thou mayest.”* (Acts 8:37) and in the same verse we hear the eunuch reply *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* Once the confession was made, they went down into the water, and the eunuch was baptized. When a person is baptized, he is baptized *“into Christ”* (Rom. 6:3), hence becoming a part of the Lord’s body. Since the Lord’s body is the church, then we can say that we are added to the church just as the word of God states in Acts 2:47—*“Praising God, and having favour with all the people, And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

The only way to become a member of the church of Christ is when the Lord adds you to it. In order to be added, you must submit yourself in obedience to God’s will by obeying the gospel of Christ. People are dying in sin because they refuse to obey the gospel. Romans 10:16 says, *“But they have not all obeyed the gospel, For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”*

In short, when you obey the gospel (i.e., you hear the word of God, you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you repent of your sins, you confess the name of Jesus

as Lord and Savior, and you are baptized into Christ), the Lord “adds” you to his church that he shed his life giving blood to purchase. Ephesians 1:14 says, *“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”* That “purchased possession” is none other than the Lord’s church. To prove this, turn to Acts 20:28 and read the admonition which the writer of the book of Acts issued to the church elders. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made your overseers, to feed the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

Membership and its Responsibilities:

Now that I have been added to the Lord’s body (the church) is there anything that I have to do in order to satisfy my membership requirements? Some people, once having become members of the church, live as though they have fulfilled all obligations to the Lord, and there is nothing else that they are required to do. Is this true? Let us take a look at what Paul has to say about this issue in the book of Philippians. He said, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 3:13-14) Paul is saying here that he has not grabbed on to that great reward, but he is still striving for that “prize” of eternal life. He is saying that his work here on earth is not yet finished, but he has things left to do before he can inherit his “crown” of glory with God, Jesus, and all the heavenly hosts.

So, what specifically was Paul talking about as far as pressing “*toward the mark?*” And, what and how was this to be done? In answer to these questions, let us go back to the fourth chapter of the book of Matthew. When Jesus was tempted of Satan in the wilderness for the third time, Satan tried to persuade Jesus to “*fall down and worship*” him, and he would give him “*all the kingdoms of the world.*” (Matt. 4:8-9) But look at Jesus response in verse 10—“*...it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*”

“*Worship*” and “*serve*” are two different words and the result is two different and distinct actions. Basically, these two combined make up the entire responsibility of the Christian life. We are going to examine what each of these actions involves and see for what we, as Christians, are responsible.

Worship. We must worship. (John 4:23-24) “*But the hour cometh, and now*

is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

God has always told his people how to worship him. Let us first look however at the verse above and notice two required characteristics of our worship. We must first of all, worship God “*in spirit*.” This means that we must offer our worship to God in sincerity and with the proper attitude. As God’s children, we are blessed in this country to come together to worship God without fear of persecution. When we worship God, we need to approach the throne of God with thanksgiving in our hearts, reverence, respect, honor, and humility. If we worship God thinking of worship only as a requirement that God has imposed upon us, then we need to search our hearts and adjust our attitude toward worship. We should count it a joy to come together to worship our creator, and be thankful unto the Father in heaven that sent his only begotten Son that we might be afforded the opportunity of eternal life if only we take advantage of that great opportunity. As members of the Lord’s church, worship is not just a ritual that we go through; but rather a privilege.

But we know that “*in Spirit*” is only one characteristic of worship, even though it may be the most difficult to master. The other characteristic of worship that is required is “*in truth*.” This is probably the easier of the two to grasp; for we have been left with the guidelines in the scripture that tells us what acts must be accomplished in proper worship to the Almighty. Lord willing, we will cover each one of these acts in future articles as we proceed to learn “how to give an answer.”

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

“DEAVERISM” (Part Three)

Refuting Mac Deaver’s False Teaching On The Work of the Holy Spirit

Doug Post
Salisbury, Maryland

This month we give attention to the Mac Deaver’s second proposition:
“The word of God teaches that the Holy Spirit directly helps (in conjunction with the word and never separate and apart from it) the inward man of the faithful child of God.”

To better understand what Deaver is suggesting, let’s analyze this proposition more closely by defining our terms. First, the word “directly” is defined as, “immediate, without means, with nothing or no one in between.” Therefore, Deaver is teaching that the Holy Spirit provides “direct” help, directly influencing the Christian’s mind or heart. That the Person of the Holy Spirit, Himself, directly manipulates the inward man and man of the Christian. This supernatural force or power is provided to the Christian immediately.

The phrase “*in conjunction with*” implies a separate and distinct influence by the Spirit. It implies something “**in addition**” to the influence of the Word of God. It is an influence that is “*separate and apart from*” and “**in addition**” to the Word of God. Deaverism creates a scenario whereby the Word of God influences the Christian, then, **AND IN ADDITION** to (over and above) the influence of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit comes along and **DIRECTLY** influences the Christian’s mind.

The very phrase, “*in conjunction with,*” demands a work or influence that is indeed “*separate and apart*” from the work or influence of the Word of God. Deaverism has two separate influences; one from the Word and the other from the Holy Spirit. However, according to Deaverism, these two distinct influences are said to be in complete agreement with each other, i.e., the Holy Spirit does not contradict anything the Word of God teaches.

Brethren, if the Holy Spirit does not contradict the Word of God and does not contradict the Truth therein; and is in complete agreement with the Word of God, then there is no need for an additional and redundant influence. If the Holy Spirit must come along once the Word of God influences the individual, not adding new truth or new information; not adding new revelation or a new

message; providing only what the Word of God has provided, then what is the point of having some alleged, second, “*in conjunction with,*” additional, and identical influence? Obviously, none!

The apostle Paul writes:

“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” (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Let us identify the “**whole armor of God,**” which we are to dress ourselves with for battle against Satan. First we note there is mentioned “**TRUTH,**” “**THE GOSPEL,**” “**shield of THE FAITH,**” and “**THE WORD.**” All of these terms are synonymous and simply refer to the same body of doctrine – the Word of God, the Scriptures! Next we note two more phrases, the “**BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**” and the “**HELMET OF SALVATION.**” The question is, are these two phrases also synonymous. We understand that “righteousness” is a resulting condition of the Word of God. It is a state or condition acceptable to God. It is a condition which is a direct result of the Word of God – a condition produced by the Word of God. Of course, the Holy Spirit defines “righteousness” as “**the commandments of the Lord**” (Psa.119:172), which is synonymous with “**the word of thy righteousness**” (Psa.119:123) and “**thy law**” and “**the truth**” (Psa.119:142).

The “**helmet of salvation**” is the final piece, but what is it? Salvation is comprised of “sanctification,” “purification,” and “justification” and/or “righteousness,” which are essentially the same Greek word. Each of these are the direct result of the Word of God (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 1:16-17). Moreover, it is through the Word of God that one is “begotten” (James 1:18); “born by” (1 Peter 1:23); “made clean” (John 15:3); “given life” (Psa.119:50); “given light” - wisdom, knowledge, understanding (Psa.119:130); “saved” (James 1:21).

The Word of God is called the “**word of reconciliation**” (2 Cor.5:19); the “**word of life**” (Phil.2:16), and the “**word of salvation**” (Acts 13:26). It is my

conviction that the “breastplate of righteousness” and the “helmet of salvation” are also synonymous with the “the truth,” “the gospel,” “and “the faith,” which are all synonymous with the “**sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**” (Eph.6:17). Therefore, the entire armor of God is simply the Word of God. Is this not the point of the Parable of the Sower? The seed is the Word of God and the individual with a good and honest heart will continue to bear fruit (Luke 8:11-15). Even if the “breastplate of righteousness” and the “helmet of salvation” are not synonymous with “the truth,” “the gospel,” “the faith,” and “the word of God,” they are direct results of the same. In which case the armor of God is still that which is comprised of the aforementioned synonymous terms and is that which produces “righteousness” and “salvation.” There is very little change in meaning.

According to Ephesians 6:17 the Word of God is the “**sword of the Spirit,**” which is what the Spirit uses in His work of influence. Why is that? Because the Holy Spirit, Himself, tells us:

“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” (Hebrews 4:12).

We are, therefore, influenced by the Holy Spirit only through the Word of God. He does not supernaturally and directly manipulate the human mind, but rather has provided us the Scriptures. It is these very Scriptures that the Holy Spirit, Himself, says makes us complete and through equipped (2 Tim.3:16-17). If we are made complete by the Scriptures, then there is no need for additional help or direct influence (manipulation) of the Holy Spirit. This is the point made by Foy E. Wallace:

“No one believes more firmly than this writer that true religion is begun, carried on and completed by the Holy Spirit--but it is continued and completed in the same way that it begins--through *the Word*. The phrase “through the Word” does not mean the *Word only*. The preposition *through* expresses medium --it is the Spirit working through the Word. There IS a wide difference between the word only and the phrase *only through the word*.”¹

Regarding Alexander Campbell’s debate with Rice, Wallace writes:

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“Here the proposition that he affirmed in debate with Rice—“*in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Holy Spirit operates only through the word*—is applied to Christians.”²

The point that brother, Wallace made is that the Spirit works only through the word of God and in no other way.

Of course, the objection raised is that the Holy Spirit works “*together*” and “*in conjunction with*” the Word of God. There is not a single context of Scripture wherein such a concept is taught. That is simply in the fertile imagination of Mac Deaver. Every influence or work the Spirit is the exact same work of the Word of God. Note the following:

1. The Holy Spirit does not enlighten the soul of man apart from the Word of God; He does this through the Word.

Psalms 19:8 -- "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Psalms 119:130 -- "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Ephesians 5:17 -- "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

2. The Holy Spirit does not convert the soul of man apart from the Word of God; He does this through the Word.

Psalms 19:7 -- "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Romans 1:16 -- "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

1 Corinthians 4:15 -- "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"

3. The Holy Spirit does not make us wise unto salvation apart from the word of God; He does this through the Holy Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:15 -- "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

4. The Holy Spirit does not cleanse us apart from the Word of God;

He does this through the Word.

John 15:3 -- "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

5. The Holy Spirit does not sanctify apart from the Word of God; He does this through the Word.

John 17:17 -- "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

6. The Holy Spirit does not save apart from the Word of God; He does this through the word.

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

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

7. The Holy Spirit does not make men free from sin apart from the Word of God; He makes them free from sin through their obeying that "form of doctrine."

Romans 6:17-18 "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."

8. The Holy Spirit does not work apart from the Word of God in order to bring about the new birth; He brings about the new birth by the Word.

1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

9. The Holy Spirit does not produce faith in the hearts of men apart from the Word of God; He does this through the Word.

Romans 10:17 -- "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

10. The Holy Spirit does not produce fruit in the life of a Christian apart from the Word of God; He does it through the Word.

Wallace, Foy Esco. The Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit. Nashville: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications, 1967. Page 19.

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