

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## THE GOSPEL OVERTHROWS THE “PRACTICE” OF SIN

JACK STEPHENS

### INTRODUCTION

This article studies the topic: “The Gospel Overthrows the Practice of Sin.” More precisely stated, it is concerned with what the Bible teaches about a person repenting of sin.

If one has studied the scriptures, heard and understood the gospel message (1 Cor. 15:1-4), and used one’s God-given intellect and ability to reason correctly with the truth of God’s Word (1 The. 5:21), that person ought to be brought to faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the only Begotten Son of God. Moreover, such a person will have the intellectual wherewithall to understand that Christ’s gospel is God’s power to save people from their sins (John 3:16; 8:24; Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 The. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 41, 42, 47; 10:48; 22:16; 1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:18).

In our search of the scriptures, we learn that “**all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,**” (Rom. 3:23), and, thus, conclude that the word *all* includes ourselves.

We learn that sin separates man from God. The prophet wrote in Isaiah 59:1, 2,

**Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot**

**save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.**

Sin not only separates us from God, sin also separates us from one another. This is the case because those who have separated themselves from God have in turn separated themselves from God’s children.

When you finish reading this article, you should be able to go to a world lost and dying in sin, as well as to brethren who have fallen back into sin, and explain to them the fallacies of their sin, their love of it, how to do away with the practice of sin, how to erase the guilt and the power it has over them, and very importantly—how the gospel, and one’s obedience to it, answers the consequences of sinning against God.

So, since “**...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,**” then there is a need for repentance. The gospel of Jesus Christ answers the problem of the practice of sin by commanding us to repent—something personally we can and must do for ourselves.

Thus, from sin to the need for repentance—this brings us to our topic: “The Gospel Overthrows The ‘Practice’ Of Sin”, and, as we will see—repenting of sin—is where we begin our conquest of the practice of sin.

So, the obvious question is. . .

(Continued On Page 3)

### IN THIS ISSUE.....

THE GOSPEL OVERTHROWS THE PRACTICE OF SIN—	
JACK STEPHENS.....	1
EDITORIAL—HIGHER EDUCATION.....	2

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

**David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher**  
**dpbcftf@gmail.com**

*COMMUNICATIONS received by CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH and/or its Editor are viewed as intended FOR PUBLICATION unless otherwise stated. Whereas we respect confidential information, so described, everything else sent to us we are free to publish without further permission being necessary. Anything sent to us NOT for publication, please indicate this clearly when you write. Please address such letters directly to the Editor David P. Brown, 25403 Lacewood Dr. 77373 or dpbcftf@gmail.com. Telephone: (281) 350-5516.*

**FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE**

To receive CFTF free, go to [www.cftfpaper.com](http://www.cftfpaper.com) and sign up. Once done, you will be notified when the current issue is available. It will be in the form of a PDF document that can be printed, and forwarded to friends.

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR THE PAPER EDITION**

*Single Print Subs: One Year, \$25.00; Two Years, \$45.00.*

*NO REFUNDS FOR CANCELLATIONS OF PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS.*

## **ADVERTISING POLICY & RATES**

*CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH exists to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:7,17) and refute error (Jude 3). Therefore, we advertise only what is authorized by the Bible (Colossians 3:17). We will not knowingly advertise anything to the contrary and reserve the right to refuse any advertisement.*

*All setups and layouts of advertisements will be done by CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH. A one-time setup and layout fee for each advertisement will be charged if such setup or layout is needful. Setup and layout fees are in addition to the cost of the space purchased for advertisement. No major changes will be made without customer approval.*

*All advertisements must be in our hands no later than one month preceding the publishing of the issue of the journal in which you desire your advertisement to appear. To avoid being charged for the following month, ads must be canceled by the first of the month. We appreciate your understanding of and cooperation with our advertising policy.*

*MAIL ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADVERTISEMENTS, AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 25403 Lancewood DR, Spring, Texas 77373. COST OF SPACE FOR ADS: Back page, \$300.00; full page, \$300.00; half page, \$175.00; quarter page, \$90.00; less than quarter page, \$18.00 per column-inch. CLASSIFIED ADS: \$2.00 per line per month. SETUP AND LAYOUT FEES: Full page, \$50.00; half page, \$35.00; anything under a half page, \$20.00.*

*CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. 25403 Lancewood Dr., Spring, Texas 77373 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.*

**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder**  
**August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

## *Editorial...*

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

For many years higher education as conducted by members of the churches of Christ has considered itself obligated to ridicule and criticize ancient, pure, primitive, New Testament Christianity. They laugh at the idea of “seeking the old paths” as they deny the New Testament to be a divine pattern, an inspired blueprint, and the final, objective authority for determining how/when one is saved from sin and for keeping the Lord’s church faithful to Christ. Fundamentally, they have joined the ranks of their evil elder sister, The Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) in their involvement with denominational churches and their errors. However, at the same time, these pious academic frauds preach tolerance toward the denominations, homosexuals, and the like, they bristle with hot anger when their sins are pointed out. Toward their critics, they display the attitude of “who are you to criticize us?”

Having forsaken their original purpose of helping Christian families to teach and train their children to learn the truth (even the truth about truth) in all matters, being governed in all things solely by God’s Word, they now seek a high standing among their secular and denominational sisters. Thus, they feverishly and tirelessly work to indoctrinate their students (the children of ignorant Christian parents) with old warmed-over denominational soup and long-refuted false philosophies, passed off as newly discovered things of beauty to make the beholders wise. The end result is fellowship with sectarian denominational churches because the “church of Christ” is no more or less than they are—mere human creations.

We can know because of their writings what the founders and early supporters of these schools believed and practiced. How is that the case? Because we have their writings (and they are many) informing us about what they believed, advocated, defended, and opposed. Their writings are historical facts. Thus, we do not hesitate to say that not one of the founders of said schools of higher education would support them as they stand today.

How can anyone honestly and truthfully say that these schools help Christian families to ground their children in sound doctrine (indeed, they belittle the idea of “sound doctrine”? How can any faithful member of the Lord’s church think that these apostate factories are helping the cause of Christ as it appears and is defined on the pages of the New Testament?

They do not believe that true Christianity is the product of New Testament authority. Thus, they do not believe the truth of Paul’s inspired directive to “**Prove all things; hold**

(Continued on Bottom of Page 8)

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

In the Greek, *repentance* literally means a change of mind, a turning—but the meaning goes much deeper than that. It is a change of direction in mind—in heart—and in life. It is a conscious turning from self, from sin, from serving Satan and turning back to God.

The Apostle Paul, preaching in Athens proclaimed the gospel to a people who needed to hear about the “unknown God.” They needed to know about the One who created all things, who gives us life, breath, and all things—and the One in whom we live, move and have our being. They, as well as all men, needed to hear about God’s plan for their lives.

In Acts 17:30, 31, Luke by inspiration records the apostle Paul declaring to the Athenians:

**And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.**

After this bold declaration, Luke shows for all times the response of the people. There were some who mocked the resurrection of the dead and the gospel of Christ. There were some who said, **“We will hear thee again of this matter,”** putting off the decision to obey the gospel in procrastination (v 32).

However, **“certain men clave unto him, and believed,”** (v 34). God demands repentance. Those who receive the word with gladness, and with good and honest hearts, will obey the gospel of Jesus, and repent of their sins (Luke 8:15).

In His earthly ministry, Jesus commanded people to repent of their sins in order to be saved. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”**

One might think that surely this requirement from the Savior of the world would bring about the repentance of men. Sadly, that is not the case—few respond quickly to the Master’s Word.

In Matthew 23:37, Jesus said:

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!**

The multitudes that followed Christ only for food and for healing, left Him when they found out there was a cost to being a true disciple of Christ. That cost of discipleship was more than they were willing to pay. The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:9, **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but**

**that all should come to repentance.”**

God wants us to come home, He wants our fellowship, and He wants us to enjoy fellowship with one another. But for that to be a reality, God demands that people repent of their sins in order to enjoy the blessings of fellowship with God and the faithful children of God (Acts 2:38; 17:30).

God’s desire for our repentance is written for all mankind in His revealed Word, the Bible. It is the number one selling book of all time and to this day continues to be the number one best-selling book in the world. One survey revealed that over 90% of American households own at least one Bible. However, just because many people claim to believe in God—and own one or more copies of the Bible—does not mean that they are willing to submit their lives to the truth taught in the Word of God. Very few are willing honestly and objectively to examine their lives, repent of their sins, and turn to God.

J. W. McGarvey, in his book of sermons (pp.97, 99-100), said that the greatest obstacle to salvation is man’s obstinacy, man’s stubbornness. In his excellent sermon on repentance, McGarvey suggested that if he were to ask individuals, “What is repentance?” that he would probably get, from the large majority, the answer that it is godly sorrow for sin; and that would be a very imperfect definition, a common mistake.

## GODLY SORROW IS NOT REPENTANCE, BUT IT PRODUCES REPENTANCE

There is no repentance without sorrow toward God for our sins against Him, and it is impossible for any person to sorrow for them too deeply. But that is not exactly how the Bible defines *repentance*. We know this from a single statement from the Holy Spirit inspired Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 7:8-10). The *ASV*, 1901 translation of this passage reads:

**For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.**

Paul had awakened a very keen sorrow in their hearts toward God because of their sins against Him. He pitied them when he learned how deeply distressed they were. However, when he learned that this godly sorrow worked repentance in them toward God, he was made glad that he had caused them to be sorry for their sins against God. This remark proves that repentance is the ultimate result of godly sorrow, not sorrow itself.

There is such a thing as **“sorrow of the world.”** The

difference between “**godly**” sorrow and “**worldly**” sorrow is that worldly sorrow is a selfish kind of sorrow. It comes about when one is sorry because he got caught—when one is sorry because what he did made himself look bad. Indeed, there is much “**worldly**” sorrow in the penal systems of America and elsewhere!

The “bottom line” is this, “**worldly sorrow**” is concerned with one’s self! But “**godly sorrow**” is sorrow directed toward GOD because of one’s sins against Him.

People have godly sorrow because their actions are sins against our Holy God. You see this in the attitude of repentant David in Psalm 51:4; “**Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...**”

Also, one has godly sorrow because of the price God had to pay to have our sins removed—it cost Him His only Begotten Son who was the sinless sacrifice in His suffering and death on the cross of Calvary.

So, “**worldly**” sorrow produces regret for self and spiritual death — “**godly sorrow**” produces repentance leading to salvation and life. So, repentance is godly sorrow for sin is a flawed definition, a mistake.

This being the case, McGarvey said that some scholars have concluded that repentance is reformation of life, but this is another mistake. Of course, every man who sincerely repents reforms his life, but we learn from John the Baptist in Luke 3:7-14 that reformation of life, instead of being repentance, is the fruit of repentance. So, let’s examine...

### THE SIGNS OF REPENTANCE

The result of repentance is “a changed life,” a reformed life, or a converted life. Peter commanded believers in Christ to “**repent**” and “**be converted.**” He is not being redundant; rather, the one leads to the other—repentance leads to conversion, reformation of life.

Acts 3:19 shows that repentance and conversion are two separate things. Here, Peter says; “**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.**” (*Compare Acts 2:38 with 3:19 and it is readily seen that repentance and baptism of Acts 2:38 is the repentance and conversion of Acts 3:19. At baptism, one’s sins are washed away by the blood of Christ as one moves from one who is dead in sin to the state of being free from sin, alive to God—a new creature in Christ (Rom. 6:3-6, 11, 17, 18; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 1:3)—Editor.*

In Luke 3:7-14, John said to the multitude that came to submit to his baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; “**Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.**” Some of the people said, “**Master, what shall we do then?**” John went on to say, “**He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.**” John told them to be generous with their

material blessings and be kind.

The publicans also said, “**Master, what shall we do?**” John told them to “**Exact no more than is appointed you.**” They were in the habit of demanding more and putting the surplus in their pockets. John instructed them to quit their wicked conduct.

Then the soldiers also asked John, “**What shall we do?**” John replied, “**Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.**” And thus, in calling on them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, John explained that he meant better conduct—a change, or reformation, in their lives.

So then, a change of life for the better is a result, or an effect, of repentance. It is not repentance itself. Repentance, then, is something that stands in between godly sorrow for sin and the change of the life in which sins are abandoned and a better course of conduct begun. So, then...

### WHAT EXACTLY IS REPENTANCE?

McGarvey continues in his sermon to explain that *repentance is a change of that stubborn will which is the seat of all rebellion and all sin against God.* When a man is so thoroughly filled with godly sorrow, and mourning, and self-reproach on account of his sins against God that his will is subdued to the will of God, and he says, “I will sin no more, I will hereafter submit to the will of my God”—that is repentance, a change of our will in regard to sin—and this results in a changed life, a life in which the practice of sin is abandoned, overthrown if you will, and a better way of conduct and living is begun according to the scriptures.

To the alien sinner, this means that upon learning the gospel truth he must come to an understanding of knowing that his sins have separated him from God.

Then suffering from godly sorrow, he repents—changing his stubborn will to submit to the will of God. He then is able to show forth the fruit of repentance with a changed life that includes confessing Jesus as his Lord and baptism for the remission of his sins. Then, as he continues to learn, grow, and live faithfully according to the scriptures, he enjoys fellowship with God and the faithful brethren in the Lord’s church.

To the child of God that has sinned, who has once again rebelled against the will of God, he also must understand that his sin has separated him from God. And suffering godly sorrow, come to the knowledge that he needs to repent—change his stubborn will and return to submitting to the will of God.

He then is also able to show forth the fruit of repentance with a changed life, putting behind him the sin he committed, continue living faithfully, and once again be in fellowship with God and the faithful in Christ.

What is so hard to understand about what the Bible

teaches concerning repentance? The simplicity of the gospel shows forth the love of God for man. It is man who makes compliance difficult!

For those in sin who have heard and understood the gospel truth—or those who know the truth and once obeyed it—*only their own stubborn will stands between them and repentance.*

Having therefore defined repentance—how it is produced by godly sorrow and how it results in a reformed life, a change of life for the better as the Bible defines better. Understanding what repentance is, let us now study...

### **SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT REPENTANCE**

There are many misconceptions about repentance, especially in man-made churches and religions, but also in some of the wayward churches of Christ that have strayed from the **“strait and narrow way which leads unto life”** (Mat 7:14).

This might be a good time to recall a couple of biblical principles before we launch into this topic. First, God’s word is truth. King David said: **“Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth,”** (Psa. 119:142). Jesus said, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”** (John 17:17).

I made a note of something David Brown once said; “Truth is just what a thing is—nothing more, nothing less.”

That statement alone helps to explain why witnesses take an oath in our court systems today to; “tell the truth [just what a thing is], the whole truth [meaning nothing less], and nothing but the truth [meaning nothing more].

One cannot add to, or take from the truth and expect to have the truth regarding someone or something in the end. Hence, the warning in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, is not to add or take away from God’s Word (Deu. 4:2, 12:32; Rev 22:18, 19).

We might also remember that truth has certain attributes. One of which is that truth cannot contradict itself. Eventually ungodly beliefs, including denominational teachings and practices of men, will contradict the simple, plain teachings of the Bible—but truth can NOT contradict itself. Thus, their teachings must be in error.

The second principal we may want to call to mind is that of biblical authority. One of the many failings of people today is their unwillingness to acknowledge that Bible authority is to be recognized as being absolute.

It is sad to realize that many today—even some who are members of the Lord’s church—will argue that one does not need authority in general or especially Bible authority for all that people do in religion. Yet, the apostle Paul sets forth a principle regarding the necessity of authority for our religious beliefs and practices that will be binding as long as this earth stands.

Paul told the Colossian brethren, **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”** (Col. 3:17). I find it particularly ironic that this verse follows Colossians 3:16 that identifies the kind of music—vocal singing—that is authorized by God and consistently mentioned in connection with New Testament worship, but is an issue in almost all sectarian denominations. So much for “submitting to the will of God”—the crux of repentance!

**“...Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”** To do something in the name of the Lord is to do it by His authority. Any teaching or preaching not authorized by God is in vain. We must not allow traditions of men to make the commands of God of no effect.

In Mark 7:5-13 Jesus said the Pharisees were guilty of **“vain worship.”** In view of this warning, we should evaluate our religious practices, and ask:

- Are they based upon traditions of men, or the commandments of God?
- If they are based on the traditions of men, does our keeping them render the commands of God of no effect?

Our Lord and Savior has all authority. The words of Christ could not be clearer than when he stated, **“All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth”**, (Mat. 28:18). Or, when God said; **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”** (Mat. 17:5). Jesus drives this truth home by saying; **“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48). That said, let’s consider...

### **SECTARIAN DENOMINATIONAL TEACHING REGARDING REPENTANCE**

Actually, there are too many to consider them all, so I will limit this to looking at a few of the “major” denominations of which we are all likely familiar. Incidentally, to say “there are too many” is a bit of understatement.

It is reported that there existed roughly 43,000 Christian denominations worldwide in 2012. That was up from 500 in 1800, and 39,000 in 2008—and this number was expected to grow to 55,000 by 2025. It was estimated that a new Christian denomination is formed every 10 ½ hours each day. Accuracy aside, you get the idea there are many unauthorized man-made churches—no denomination is authorized by the New Testament of Christ to exist.

Consider with me the topic of the “Means of salvation” listed at [learnreligions.com](http://learnreligions.com) for these major denominations: Anglican, Episcopalian, Assembly of God, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Understand that there are many divisions within these main denominations, having many nuances with varying beliefs.

But they primarily profess the following regarding the

“Means of salvation”— “God’s grace by faith only.” I am not sure they understand the meaning of “only” since there seems to be two things listed, grace and faith. Regardless of their weakness in arithmetic regarding addition, I am sure when Jesus said: **“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”** (Mat 4:10) that He did not mean the Lord thy God and something else!

The word rendered as *only* in that verse is *monos* which according to Strong’s Greek dictionary means: sole or single; by implication alone, only, by themselves.

We see this again in James 2:24 where James writes: **“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”** The word rendered *only* is the neuter adverb form of *monos*, the word rendered **only** in the previously cited Matthew 4:10 means: merely—alone, only. This does not give us confidence in their “Means of salvation” statement—or their ability to count!

Regarding baptism, when asked “Who can be baptized”: most declare “Infants and professing Christians.” The Assembly of God will say “Only professing Christians,” but with them you have to wonder if they are speaking of water baptism, or baptism of the Holy Spirit, or both.

Baptist declare: “Only professing Christians,” but the Bible teaches belief plus baptism saves. Thus, one is not a Christian before being baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

I mention all of these things because denominational teachings and practices vary and most will contradict the simple, plain teachings of the Bible — but please remember truth can NOT contradict itself. And, then there is the question of the second principal we spoke of and that is biblical authority.

Many of these practices are based upon traditions of men, not the commandments of God. We asked earlier, “if such practices are built on the traditions of men; does keeping them render the commands of God of no effect?” I submit to you, yes, they are rendered of no effect and are, thus, themselves sinful.

The Bible plainly teaches that we are not saved by faith alone at the point of belief, nor is there any authority for sprinkling or pouring when baptizing someone. Baptism is an immersion, thus, there is no authority for anything else. I have yet to see, or hear of, a sinful infant who understood the gospel, came to believe it, repented, and confess Jesus to be the Son of God before being baptized! It is all a bunch of contradictory, unauthorized nonsense!

If you thought all the other denominational teachings were a mess, just take a look at sectarian denominational teachings regarding repentance. Trying to understand what denominations teach and practice about repentance is like nailing jello to the wall.

We have already seen that they do not respect the authority of God’s truth and are themselves not “submitting to the will of God,” (the core of repentance) in the matters we have studied. So, why would we expect them to submit to the will of God regarding repentance?

Most denominations will list “turning from sin” as their definition of repentance. Some will mention godly sorrow as the cause of turning from sin, and most all mention repentance will lead to a “reformed” life. However, there is no real depth to their definition. That is what they say—but what do they do?

We know that repentance is produced in one by godly sorrow for a person’s sin against God and that repentance results in a reformed life as the Bible defines a reformed life. However, what do we see when we look closer at sectarian denominations?

Let us note the Methodist Church and examine it closely. We return to the Internet address, *learnreligions.com*, under “Methodist Church Beliefs and Practices.” From that Internet address we learn the following regarding their belief about baptism:

Baptism is a sacrament or ceremony in which a person is anointed with water to symbolize being brought into the community of faith. The water of baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

Baptism is symbolic of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a rebirth in the name of Christ, and dedication to Christian discipleship. Methodists believe baptism is God’s gift at any age but should be performed as soon as possible.

Before we compare that erroneous statement with God’s truth, I found it interesting that on the same page, under “Logic and Reason” Methodist doctrine on baptism is this: “The most fundamental distinction of Methodist teaching is that people must use logic and reason in all matters of faith.” Well, using “logic and reason” let us see what is actually taught in the Bible.

In Acts 2, on the day the Lord’s church began, the inspired Luke tells us that the apostle Peter commanded believers in Christ to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38), not to symbolize being brought into the community of faith. Those who gladly received the Word preached to them were baptized and the Lord added the saved to His church (Acts 2:41, 47), not the Methodist denomination.

Paul tells us it is baptism that puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:27). This is where God has located all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3)—forgiveness of sins and sonship being two of those blessings. Peter plainly said that baptism **“doth also now save us”** (1 Pet. 3:21). However, please note that Peter, nor any other inspired writer of the New Testament, taught that baptism alone will save anyone any more than faith alone, or repentance alone, or confession of Christ

alone will save one from sin.

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is one of the clearest cases of conversion in the New Testament. The question, “**See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?**” brings us to a case of New Testament baptism. Philip takes the Ethiopian’s confession that Jesus is the Son of God and then baptizes him. Why bring up baptism?

Because Philip preached not only the purpose and promises of Jesus, but must have also preached the teachings of Jesus, including belief that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24) and repentance (Luke 13:3), but also baptism for the remission of sins—in order to obtain salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

With the confession of Jesus on his lips, nothing remained for him to do but to be baptized. In response, the eunuch commanded the chariot to stand still and they went down, both of them, into the water, and Philip baptized him.

Baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12), a part of the new birth (John 3:5). Immersion alone pictures a burial. Sprinkling or pouring some water on someone does not fulfill the meaning of the Greek term for baptism or the meaning of the English word *burial*—both words indicating an immersion, a going down into, and a coming up out of.

In general, most denominational churches do not believe, teach, or practice that one who believes in Christ must be baptized in water by the authority of Christ to be saved from one’s sins. This is the case because most denominational churches erroneously teach that people are saved by Jesus before baptism and that they are baptized for some other reason—such is a lie and thus it is sin. So much for “turning from sin” as they defined repentance!

The Bible teaches that the person who has believed in Christ, repented of one’s sins, and confessed one’s faith in Christ must then be baptized by the authority of Christ to obtain the remission of sins. There is no other way but Christ’s way. More than these essential steps in the plan of salvation—Christ does not demand of one seeking salvation from sins—but anything less than what is taught, then one remains lost in their sins.

Question: Has any person who remains a member of a denomination actually really and truly repented? If so, why have they not changed their stubborn will, which is the seat of all sin and rebellion against God, and submitted their own will to the will of God!?

Have they truly repented if they continue in an unauthorized sectarian denomination, or they continue to preach, teach, and worship contrary to the truth of God whereby one is sanctified (John 17:17)? Do they think that the fruits of repentance include disobedience by NOT doing in word or deed all in the name of the Lord—by His authority (Col. 3:17). All sectarian denominations have their erroneous

teachings and problems, the primary one being they themselves are not authorized by the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

For example, concerning the Catholic church. The concept of a pope ruling over their “church,” infant baptism, how they are organized, Mary worship, and many other such practices that are contrary to the plain teachings of God’s truth as given in the Bible.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, aka ELCA, the largest Lutheran church body in the United States, allows for LGBTQ+ ordination of clergy and marriage. Their policy states that these individuals are welcome and encouraged to become members and to participate in the life of the congregation—never mind that they continue in sin. They even provide supplemental resources for the rite of marriage and worship which uses “inclusive language” and are suitable for use in LGBTQ+ marriage ceremonies.

In 2014, the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to change its definition of marriage, allowing its pastors to officiate same-sex marriages wherever gay marriage is legal in civil law—though it plainly contradicts God’s law.

I could go on, but let me ask this of the preceding descriptions of various denominations; where is the godly sorrow for their sin? They continue to practice sin contrary to God’s Word. Where is the changing of their stubborn will to submit to the will of God? Where is the “turning from sin” as their definition of repentance stated? They do whatever they will concerning religion no matter how contrary to the will of God it is. Where is the evidence that the fruit of repentance is a changed life as God’s Truth defines a changed life? I am having a hard time seeing it for the simple reason one cannot see what is not there!

But I do see this: first, perverting the truth and teaching false doctrine does not produce true repentance! And second, you can not be taught wrong, devoted to practicing spiritual error and be baptized right!

### **THERE IS A REPENTANCE PROBLEM WITHIN THE LORD’S CHURCH**

One other aspect of repentance must be noted. Confession of sins, by itself, does not equal repentance!

There are many in the Lord’s church who confess sin in their lives, ask for the prayers of the saints, and then never make the necessary changes in their life. How often have we seen people go forward for sins, such as forsaking the assembly, only to quietly slip back out of duty? Quite often, when the preacher reaches the conclusion of his sermon, a member will be struck by their own guilt and walk the aisle to make confession of sin—but when the emotion of guilt fades in a few days, they, all too often, go right back to where they were before.

The problem? Confession of sins, by itself, does not

---

equal repentance! There must be godly sorrow that produces repentance, meaning a breaking down of their stubborn will with the resolve to submit to the will of God. Then we should see fruits of repentance, and a reformation in their life. If not, then either that person's repentance was "short-circuited" by the cares of this world—or it never truly existed in the first place.

#### CLOSING

In summary, how does the gospel overthrow the "practice" of sin? Repentance is a key element in doing so. Repentance is a change of man's stubborn will, which is the seat of all rebellion and all sin against God, a change that brings one to submit to the will of God in all things.

By obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ, submitting our will to the will of God in all things—in word or deed—which is the essence of repentance. Yes, the gospel does overthrow the practice of sin.

#### Works Cited

McGarvey, J. W., *Sermons*, Cincinnati, Ohio, The Standard Publishing Company, 1894. 97, 99-100.

LearningReligions.com & Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

—P.O. Box 989  
Trinity, TX 75862

---

(Continued From Page 2)

**fast that which is good**" (1 The. 5:21). This means they are not going to teach how one proves an idea or doctrine to be true or false. Furthermore, you will not hear them teach what Jude did, namely:

**Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 3, 4).**

How could anyone contend for something if they do not know how to determine whether it is acceptable to God or it is not?

#### CLOSING

Ask members of the church today, especially the board

members, administrations, students, and faculties of the schools of higher education if they believe one will sin so as to be eternally lost if they believe the following to be acceptable to God:

1. Using mechanical instrumental music in the worship of God;
2. Eating the Lord's Supper as an act of worship on any day other than the first day of the week;
3. Pious unimmersed saved Christians are in the denominations;
4. Sisters in Christ are authorized by the New Testament to serve in leadership capacities (exercising dominion over) their brothers in Christ by song leading, prayer leading, making announcements, preaching, etc.

—David P. Brown, Editor