

When the current issue is available you will be notified.

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Matthew 6:33

Guy N. Woods

The following sermon comes from *Sermons on Salvation*, a book of sermons by the late brother Woods. In writing the introduction to the book, the late Gussie Lambert tells us the “sermons were delivered in a gospel meeting at the Creswell Street Church of Christ, Shreveport, Louisiana, November 29 to December 8, 1957.” It was published by the Gospel Advocate Co. An audio version may be found on the internet.

This particular sermon was one of brother Woods regular gospel meeting sermons and it appears in his book on pages 52–65. He preached it all over the country for many years. On more than one occasion, I have heard him preach it and as a young preacher he told me that it needed to be preached at least once a year in every congregation. The scriptural sentiments expressed in it are always needful if people are to become Christians and especially if brethren are to persevere to the end in faithful service to our Lord.—Editor

For the next twenty-five minutes, I desire to speak to you on the theme, “First Things First.” In Matthew, chapter 6, verse 33, our Lord said, **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”** This statement occurs in a context where Jesus had been discussing God’s providential care. At some length, he developed that theme, made a number of statements regarding it, and used several illustrations to enforce it. He tells us that God sees the sparrow’s fall; he makes mention of the fact that the grass which today is, and tomor-

row is cast in the oven, is an object of God’s care; and from that draws this conclusion, if God cares for the grass of the field, will he not care for you, **“O ye of little faith”**? Thereupon he makes the statement to form the basis of our study today: **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

An analysis of this passage will reveal that it divides itself into four propositions or movements. (1) It contains an obligation; (2) it designates an object; (3) it establishes an order; (4) it offers a conditional promise. I desire to discuss it from those four viewpoints today.

I mention first that it contains an obligation, for it bids us to **“seek.”** The word **“seek”** carries with it a suggestion of diligent search, of patient inquiry. There is in this obligation our responsibility to ascertain what our duty is and, in that fashion, to discover our obligation to God. As a matter of fact, friends, the New Testament simply abounds with instruction and admonition along that line. May I make this suggestion to you: One of these days, take your Concordance and run the different references in the New Testament dealing with the Christian life and observe two things: (1) the frequency of such passages; (2) the emphasis that is given to activity in each one of them. Let us take a cross-section view of them: For example, in Philippians 2:12, **“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”** 1 Corinthians 15: 58, **“Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”** Galatians 5:6, **“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but**

(Continued on Bottom of Page 3)

IN THIS ISSUE.....

FIRST THINGS FIRST—GUY N. WOODS.....	1
EDITORIAL—WE PREACH BY WHAT WE DO AS WELL AS BY WHAT WE SAY.....	2
BAPTIST PREACHER DENIES THE TRUTH OF MARK 16:16—DANNY DOUGLAS.....	6

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, P.O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383 or dpbcftf@gmail.com. Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE

To receive CFTF free, go to 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, P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357. 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. CHURCH DIRECTORY ADS: \$30.00 per line per year. 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. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

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

Editorial...

WE PREACH BY WHAT WE DO AS WELL AS BY WHAT WE SAY

To preach one thing and practice something else is hypocrisy. This, therefore, is a lesson on how not to become a hypocrite. Remember God has always condemned hypocrisy (Luke 12:1; 1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 2:1; Mat. 23:13; 24:51). While engaging in self-examination, every person ought to take note of the consequences of the hypocritical lives of Ananias and Sapphira (2 Cor. 13:5; Acts 5:1-11).

Self-discipline is the hallmark of the Christian life. No one has been faithful to God without denying himself (Mat. 16:24). The standard of discipline to which the faithful subject themselves is the Word God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Jam. 1:25; John 12:48). Every effort of the child of God is concentrated and centered on “...bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Let us now study some specific subjects involved in preaching Christ by example or by the pattern of one’s life.

Pornography has no place in the Christian’s life. Anything that is “filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness,” and “filthiness, foolish talking, jesting,” and so on is pornographic (Rom. 1:29; Eph. 5:4). When Biblical characters involved themselves in the foregoing activities, they were condemned and so are people today who do them.

All around every child of God is the promotion of the “lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). The Christian will read and view material that will exalt things honorable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report for his learning and entertainment (Phi. 4:8, 9). When such is diligently pursued, “the works of the flesh are” destroyed and the singular “fruit of the Spirit” manifested.

Immodesty is a constant problem in our society and all too often it is in the church. But the godly person still believes and obeys 1 Timothy 2:9. “Modest apparel” continues to “adorn” the Christian. It does so because modesty is a godly character trait. Clothing and *how* it is worn de-emphasizes the sexual aspects of the body. Such derives from the modest attitude formed by the scriptures concerning Christian character and seen in the conduct of Christians in every aspect of their lives.

“Lasciviousness” is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19) and it designedly produces lust. Hence, men as well as women may so dress as to provoke lustful thoughts in others. Fornicators, homosexuals, trans-genders, transvestites, and such like are promoted in every way and place today. However, regardless of the sacrifice, Christians will obey God’s Word and not compromise the truth in dealing with all immorality of every kind.

A Christian does not use beverage alcohol, “recreational” drugs, nor will they abuse prescriptions drugs. There are different degrees of drunkenness. One drink makes one “one drink

drunk.” Drunkenness is developed incrementally and, thus by degree. Any substance that causes one to lose control of one’s self is sin (Isa. 28:7; 1 Cor. 6:9-12; Gal. 5:23). Such, of course, would apply to any mind-altering substance.

Previously cited is Galatians 5:23, wherein Paul is discussing **“the fruit of the Spirit.”** The *King James Version* translated the Greek word *kratos* as “temperance.” The *American Standard Version* (1901) translates *kratos* into “self-control.” W. E. Vine in his *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives the following comment regarding “self-control.”

...the various powers bestowed by God upon man are capable of abuse; the right use demands the controlling power of the will under the operation of the Spirit of God; in Acts 24:25 the word follows “righteousness,” which represents God’s claims, self-control being man’s response thereto;...(p. 114).

Self-control not only involves rejecting **“the works of the flesh,”** but also adding to one’s life the principles that produce **“the fruit of the Spirit”** (Gal. 5:23-26). One is not preaching the gospel by *what he does* if he *professes* the importance of Bible study, prayer, giving of one’s means, attendance to all assemblies of the saints, obedience to the elders, restoring the unfaithful, discipline, etc., when these matters are not practiced in his life. The judgment parables condemn men for leaving undone good deeds (Mat. 25:41-46).

Influence is the power for good or evil our lives have over others. One’s influence may change from bad to good or vice versa, but one will *never lose* one’s influence (Rev. 14:13). Assuredly, this must be remembered by all parents in rearing their children (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:15). Thus, James

wrote, **“shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works”** (Jam. 2:18). He also penned: **Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”** (Jam. 1:27).

Paul knew that it would take more than preaching God’s truth with his mouth and pen for him to be acceptable to God. He fully understood that he must preach God’s truth through the actions of his body no matter the sacrifice to himself (1 Cor. 9:21).

With all the false doctrines troubling the Lord’s church today, let us not lose sight of the importance of teaching the truth by mouth and in print, but most of all by our actions. (Rom. 12:1, 2). The spiritual mind is seen in the acts of one’s body. We must be able to say with the apostle Paul: **“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you** (1 The. 2:10; Also, see Acts 20:18, 19; 33-35).

We build the right image not only by what we say and write, but also by what we do, when we do it, in the way we do it, and for the reason(s) we do it. When we refuse to stand in the gap where the wall of truth is being breached because of our friendship, or fear of losing our jobs, or because of respect of persons, or whatever it may be that we think threatens us and our “comfort zones,” the example we set does not correspond with the truth we teach no matter how often and how well we teach it.

—David P. Brown, Editor



(Continued From Page 1)

faith which worketh by love.” In John 9:4, the Lord tells us, **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”**

There is a lesson in that alone for us! Look at it: **“I must work”**; not I ought to work, not it would be best if I worked, not, I should work, but I must work! There is definite obligation. Then secondly, I must work **“the works of him that sent me.”** That is what I must do. Not my work, not man’s work, and certainly not the devil’s work; but the works of him that sent me. Then, thirdly, **“while it is yet day,”** that designates the time when this work is to be done. It is an interesting and significant fact that there is not an obligation in the book which we are required to do tomorrow. Not one. I am glad that it is that way; because, I might not be here tomorrow to take care of it. We cannot work yesterday because it is gone; we are not expected to work tomorrow because we may not be here to do it; and so the affirmation of the passage is, **“while it is yet day.”** Then, note the final statement: **“for the night cometh when no man can work.”** That signalizes the end of opportunity. So, friends, the New Testament

places much emphasis on our obligation to be active.

The various illustrations in the New Testament that deal with various phases of the Christian life, likewise, emphasize that characteristic. For example, sometimes it is represented as a battlefield. 2 Timothy 2:1, **“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”** And then he says, **“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of his life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”** This suggests the idea of armies locked in a desperate conflict, each seeking to gain the supremacy. Sometimes it is pictured as a vineyard, into which men enter before the coming up of the sun and labor diligently until after it has gone beyond the horizon. Sometimes it is pictured as a racetrack: Hebrews 12:2, we are admonished to **“lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,”** and **“run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”**

In the parable of the shut door, found in Luke, chapter 13, our Lord says, **“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not**

be able.” The word “**strive**” in that passage is translated from the Greek word *agonizomai* (noun form, *agonia*). This, you will observe, is almost the same as our English word “agonize.” Agonize to enter in at the strait gate! Friends, that speaks not only of effort, but of wearisome, and even painful, toil. May I raise this question, please? How much agonizing is the average one of us doing in seeking to gain heaven? So be impressed, please, with the realization that this passage contains an obligation.

We find, in the second place, that it designates an object. It not only requires us to “**seek**”; it tells us what to seek. “**Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.**” The world is full of people who are aware of the unsatisfying character of their philosophy. They know that they haven’t found that for which the heart sighs. They are constantly trying, and then discarding, one type of philosophy after another; and, while they are seeking, they are not seeking for the right thing. Observe that this passage designates the object. “**Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.**” May I raise the question, “What does it mean to seek the kingdom?” Obviously, to seek the benefits and blessings and privileges of it. But how does one do that? By becoming a subject of it. But how does one become a subject of the kingdom? Jesus said in John 3:3, “**Except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God,**” by which he meant you can’t enjoy the benefits of the kingdom without being born again. Then, in the 5th verse of the same chapter, he particularizes, and says: “**Except a man be born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**” So, in order for a person to become a subject of the kingdom, he must be born again. But what does it mean to be born again? In Mark 16:16, our Lord said, “**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.**” To be saved is the equivalent of being in the kingdom; but, in order to get in the kingdom, one must be born of water and the Spirit; and in order to be saved, one must believe and repent and confess and be baptized in water for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3; 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:21). It follows then that since things equal to the same thing are equal to each other; and since to be in the kingdom is the same as being saved, to be born of water and the Spirit is simply to believe and to repent and confess and be baptized in water for the remission of sins!

Not only are we admonished to seek the kingdom, but also to seek his righteousness—that is, Christ’s righteousness. Just what is righteousness? In Psalms 119:172, David said, “**All of thy commandments are righteousness.**” The best brief definition that can be formulated for righteousness is simply “right doing.” 1 John 2:29, “**Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him.**” 1 John 3:7. “**He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous.**” What does it mean then to seek righteousness? To seek to know the will of God and do it.

Notice thirdly that the passage contains an order. It not

only bids us to seek; it not only designates that which we are to seek; but it sets out the order that is to characterize it. We are to seek the kingdom and his righteousness, first. Now, friends, may I say to you that our difficulty with this statement is not in any inability to understand it! The word “first” is a term that occurs in the phraseology of us all. It is used repeatedly every day. Our difficulty with it is not in any inability to understand it, but unfortunately in an inherent unwillingness to apply it. How many of us really follow the order that is designated here? *Actually, friends, this passage admonishes us to make all else secondary and subsidiary to the interests of our Lord* (Emphasis mine, Editor). More concretely put, it simply means this: if I have two places to go, one of them involving a trip for the Lord, and one of them involving my own interests, I must make the Lord’s trip first. That is what it means. It means if I have two tasks to perform, one of them involving my own affairs; and, another involving affairs for the Lord, I must take care of the Lord’s task first. How many of us really put it in that order? Our Lord admonishes us in this passage to so do. I am aware of the fact that we oftentimes make excuses for our failures, and we seek to extenuate our neglect by offering pretexts, in justification. Not infrequently somebody will say, “I’d just like to attend the meeting the best ever; but I tell you, I can’t come! I’m just too busy.” I never thought there was a word of truth in that in my life. I know that when a person makes such an observation, he is not too busy to go the hospital when he gets sick. He is by no means too busy to go to the cemetery when he dies. When one makes a statement of that type, do you know what he means? Just this: “I have two courses to follow, one of which is to look after the Lord’s affairs; the other my own. I choose to look after my own.” Yet, that is what our Lord said precisely not to do in this passage.

Many of the excuses we offer these days, are reminiscent of Mark Twain’s Oriental. When somebody said to him that he wanted to borrow his axe, he said that he couldn’t loan it; he had to keep it to eat soup with! He was told, “You don’t eat soup with an axe.” He answered, “Well, when you don’t intend to do a thing anyway, one excuse is as good as another!” That, friends, is characteristic of many of the excuses we offer these days.

I conduct meetings continuously throughout the year. I preach in about forty meetings a year. I see people (and I suspect that I’m addressing some right now, of that type), in practically every meeting that I conduct who make no effort to attend any service of the meeting except Sunday morning. Suppose that all of us chose to engage in religious activity to no greater extent than that? This building would remain darkened throughout the week. Any influence for good upon our neighbors and our friends would be absolutely nil; the cause of Christ would simply fold up, were there no greater activity on the part of others than that. With all the earnestness that I possess, and with the greatest possible candor and kindness, let me address myself to you of that class right

now. Let me point out to you first of all your own obligation, the fact that your own salvation is suspended in the balances and you can't go to heaven and engage in no greater activity than that. Secondly, I emphasize the responsibility you owe to those round about you; and, thirdly, the encouragement those of us that are striving desperately to extend the borders of the kingdom need from your presence, and to appeal to you to recognize your obligation to the meeting and to the cause of Christ here. Our Lord says to you, as he says to all of us, Seek first the kingdom and his righteousness. I'd like to emphasize a principle which, if you remember no more about the service today than this, I hope will make an inefaceable impression upon you, and here is the statement: Every judgment parable in the New Testament pronounces condemnation for something somebody didn't do that was right rather than for something bad they did do that was wrong. Get that, please. Every judgment parable in the New Testament sounds out a condemnation, not for something bad that somebody did, but for something good somebody didn't do. That ought to have a sobering effect upon us all. In the parable of the talents, the Lord of the unprofitable servant, addressed him in this fashion: **"Thou wicked and unprofitable servant."** Just what is it that fellow had done that was wrong? Not a single solitary thing! Are we saying that the Lord called a man wicked when he hadn't done anything bad? That is exactly right.

As a matter of fact, friends, you may measure the one-talent man by the standard of the age and make out an excellent case for him. In the first place, he was scrupulously honest. When he brought the talent back and laid it at his master's feet he said, "Take it, there it is." And I think every penny was there, don't you? In the second place, he wasn't an embezzler; third place he didn't waste it in riotous living; fourth, he is not charged with drunkenness, or fifth, with immorality. In fact, you can't find a thing wrong with him from a positive standpoint; and yet, his Lord said to him: **"Thou wicked servant."** Well, why? What had he done? Not a single solitary thing.

In the solemn picture that is drawn in Matthew 25 of the judgment day, we are told that there will be many who will thus be classified. Jesus will say to some, **"Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you."** Why? Listen, please: **"I was hungry and you gave me no meat, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was naked, you didn't clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you didn't visit me, or minister to my necessities."** Those thus addressed will deny and will insist that they never treated the Lord in that fashion. But the Lord will answer and say to them, **"Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."** What had they done that was wrong? Not anything. Why were they condemned? Because of something they failed to do. Friends, if our souls are worth anything to us; if heaven has any claim at all upon our interest; if it is our desire when we have reached the end of

the pilgrimage here to enter into happier and better scenes, then these matters ought not to be lost upon us today. What did Jesus teach us? To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and to make all else secondary.

Then, finally, the passage contains a conditional promise, for it says if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness that all these other things (and may I say to you that the context shows that by these other things Jesus means the material needs of our existence here) shall be added. Added, mind you. The word added here has an interesting significance; it is translated from a Greek word that was used in the first century of an action which is common to this day, as in a business deal, in order to put the matter over, to make a bargain more attractive, we offer to throw in something "to boot." Actually, that word **"added"** suggests the idea of something "to boot." As Matthew Henry quaintly puts it, "He who buys goods has the paper and twine flung in." Our Lord is simply saying that if you will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness the Lord will fling in, as an added attraction, the material needs of our existence. Unfortunately, many of us go at it in reverse. We neglect the kingdom and his righteousness to get our material needs when the Lord says that he'll give us these matters if we'll seek the kingdom.

I have observed that many people will sacrifice time and leisure and spiritual opportunity in the acquisition of material gain; and, in so doing, lose their health then turn right around and try to swap those dollars back for the health that is gone and has been expended in their acquisition. If there is any supreme folly in life, it is in following a course the result of which will land us in eternal perdition and torment. May we, while we are still on time's side of eternity, still within that period of probation where we are privileged to choose for ourselves, elect to follow a course, making all else secondary to the interest of the kingdom of God. Let us put first things first that we may not minor in major matters and major in minor matters, that we may not take the secondary to the neglect of the primary and while we are taking the good, we do not neglect the best.

May I today admonish you seriously to consider our Lord's admonition here to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Are there those present who are not Christians? To be a Christian you must believe the gospel, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized into him. More than that you need not do to become a Christian; less than that you can't do and become a Christian. When you have so done, you must then add to your faith the graces that adorn the character of a Christian and live as his word directs. If you have obeyed him in the past, but have been negligent, careless, indifferent, and unconcerned, let us plead with you to have the courage of conviction, the strength of character to come back to the fold today, wipe the slate clean and start anew.

—Deceased

BAPTIST PREACHER DENIES THE TRUTH OF MARK 16:16

Danny Douglas

A few years ago, I had a discussion with a Baptist preacher, in which he declared that baptism comes “after salvation.” When I replied with the words of Jesus, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”** (Mark 16:16a), he accused me of intentionally omitting the last part of the verse, **“but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16a). I countered that he did not understand the true meaning of “believing,” and then, he accused me of distorting the meaning of the word, “believe.” This Baptist preacher and others of his kind only place importance on the latter part of the verse and completely ignore the first statement in Mark chapter sixteen and verse sixteen. Even then, they do not understand the meaning of the last part of the verse. Believing is the starting point before baptism takes place, and without belief one cannot truly be baptized for salvation. Yet, he completely misunderstands the true nature of Biblical belief anyway as we shall proceed to show.

In several passages of the New Testament, believing and obeying go hand in hand, because true Biblical belief is connected with obedience! One of those is in Mark 16:16, but there are many others. For example, the apostle Peter makes a direct contrast between two opposite kinds of people: the believing and the disobedient. In reference to Christ, Peter states:

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Peter 2:7-8).

Here, the apostle contrasts those who believe with those who are disobedient. In so doing, he teaches that the opposite of true belief (faith) is disobedience, and hence, implies that those who believe are obedient.

There is another example of this principle in John chapter three: **“He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him”** (John 3:36; *ASV*, 1901). The late brother Guy N. Woods makes the following observation on the verse.

The phrases **“believeth on the Son,”** and **“obeyeth not the Son,”** are put in contrast and stand as exact opposites. That is, to believe on the Son is to obey the Son, **“believeth”** here signifying a faith that acts. Mental assent is not true biblical faith and is nowhere reckoned as such. Belief blesses only when it leads its possessor to obedience. Faith, apart from works, is dead. **“Works”** as used by James, are the command-

ments of the Lord. (Jam. 2:14; 3:13.)

Here **“believeth”** is set in distinction with **“obeyeth not”** [*apeitheo*, Greek], which implies that believing is the opposite of disobedience, and vice versa. If people could grasp this principle, then they would realize that the saving belief of John 3:16 is not faith only, as many teach, but obedient faith. This has to be the case due to the promise involved, which is **“everlasting life.”** **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). Only those who obey Christ can have eternal life, as the inspired writer of Hebrews asserted: **“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”** (Heb. 5:8-9). The logical conclusion is therefore, that the **“believeth”** in John 3:16 is of necessity connected to obedience and cannot be saving faith otherwise! In the Book of Acts, Scriptural belief is presented as an obedient faith. Luke records in Acts 5:14, **“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”** By implication, we know that true **“believers”** were obedient to the gospel, because there is no other way that one may be added to the Lord! This can be proven by Acts the second chapter:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

Who were added to the church and therefore to the Lord (Eph. 5:23)? Those who were being saved. Who were being saved? Those who obeyed the command given by Peter (Acts 2:38). Who added them to the church? The Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). It is just as Jesus said: **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16). It is a contradiction for one, such as this Baptist preacher, to claim faith in Christ, and then turn around and deny His teaching as if they were not in the Bible at all! False teachers often treat Mark 16:16a, as if it did not exist!

It also important to understand that one is added to Christ and also added to the body of Christ in the same way and at the same time. When one is baptized for the remission of

sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), having first heard and believed the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 18:8), then repented (Acts 2:38), and confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), one is baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27). Also, at the same time, he is baptized into the body of Christ, which is the church, the kingdom of God: **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...”** (1 Cor. 12:13a; cf. Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23; Col. 1:18). **“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 3:5). It is too bad that Baptist preachers and many others do not accept the truth of God’s word.

I further pointed out Acts 22:16 to this preacher, where Ananias said to Saul, **“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”** (Acts 22:16). When asked if one could be saved and still be in sin, he did not have an answer. Salvation from sin is what we are talking about. So, their doctrine, by logical implication, teaches that salvation is something other than salvation from sin, although they would deny this. Jesus came to save man from sin: **“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”** (Mat. 1:21). However, we must understand how Jesus saves, and that is when we comply with the terms of His plan for our salvation. According to Baptist doctrine, one’s sins are forgiven at the point of faith only. This is a blatant rejection of Christ’s word, which states: **“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”** (Jam. 2:24). Their teaching is a high-handed rejection of Christ, since they reject His word. Jesus said: **“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). Their doctrine is also a rejection of the blood of Christ, since His blood takes effect to remove sin in the act of baptism, and one reaches the death of Christ and the effects thereof in baptism for the remission of sins (Rev. 1:5—Acts 22:16; Mat. 26:28—Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-12).

Moreover, I asked this preacher if one can be saved outside of Christ? He refused to give me a “Yes” or “No”

answer, but started this long sentence about needing Jesus Christ to be saved. Well, we know that, but he obviously hedged my question. I came back at him pointing out that he refused to say “Yes” or “No”! Then like a pre-recorded tape, he went on this long sentence again. This was not being straightforward and open. One is either saved in Christ or out of Christ, and there is no in-between. Obviously, one cannot be saved from sin and go to heaven outside of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I cited to him Paul’s statement in the Book of Galatians: **“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”** (Gal. 3:27). The **“one baptism”** (Eph. 4:5), which is baptism in water for the remission of sins in the name of the Lord, is what puts one into Christ (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:38-39; 10:47-48; Mat. 28:18-20). All spiritual blessings, including salvation from sin, are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3, 7). Obviously, this Baptist preacher denies the plan whereby precious souls may be cleansed by the **“precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”** (1 Pet. 1:19; cf. John 1:29; Acts 2:38; Mat. 26:28; Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). I would not want that on my soul in the Judgment! I concluded our conversation by asking him in love and concern to read Galatians 3:27.

Gospel preachers should be bold and forthright in our teaching, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). We should not be devious and evasive, as some are, but deal honestly with the Scriptures, like Paul and the other apostles. He said:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

All we can do is present the truth to our fellow man, and then we can say with the beloved apostle: **“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:27).

—704 Azalia Dr.
Mt. Pleasant, TX

Preach the truth
in
love
knowing that people will
hate you regardless
because
the truth
sounds like hate, to
those who hate the truth

Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female',
Matthew 19:4

2 OPTIONS
Anything else is an unnatural mutation

"Should it concern us that the Bible never calls us to ask Jesus into our hearts? Should it concern us that the Bible never mentions a superstitious sinner's prayer and yet that is exactly what we have sold to so many as salvation."
David Platt, president of the Southern Baptist's Convention's International Mission Board

Contending For The Faith
P. O. Box 2357
Spring, Texas 77383-2357

CFTF RADIO

[www/contending4thefaitth.org](http://www.contending4thefaitth.org)

☞ 24 HOURS A DAY ☞ 7 DAYS A WEEK ☞ BIBLE LESSONS WITH DIFFERENT SPEAKERS, PROGRAMS AND TOPICS, ☞ ONLINE 27 LESSON BIBLE STUDY COURSE (READ LESSONS ONLINE, SUBMIT ANSWERS ONLINE, AND SEEK ASSISTANCE WHEN NEEDED).

◆ COMPATIBLE WITH MOBILE DEVICES WITH INSTRUCTIONS ON WEBSITE ◆

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK

TV Program presented by Spring Church of Christ

on *Houston Media Source*

View on:

AT & T U-verse Channel 99 ♦ Comcast Channel 17 ♦ TV Max Channel 95

Suddenlink Channel 99 ♦ Phonoscope Channel 75

or online at: HMSTV.org

Times will vary each week ♦ Check station listing for schedule

