

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16 REVISITED

Daniel Denham

In the May/June 2014 issue of *Contending for the Faith*, I presented a study of the text of 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 concerning the case of a believer married to an unbeliever. One party who is studying the subject has taken issue with one aspect of the material presented. He evidently contends that the believer has the moral obligation to leave the unbeliever, if the former feels that his or her faithfulness to Christ is endangered by abiding with the latter.

As the brother has stated that he is still studying the matter and offered his critique of the material on the basis of such study, then I have chosen not to identify him or even quote from his letter in the interest of concentrating on the central issue, as I see it. I have therefore just briefly summarized his main points. Also space and time do not allow me to deal with every aspect of his case, but I believe that what is addressed is sufficient to answer his main inquiries and concern on the subject. I do appreciate the spirit in which he has offered his own views on the matter.

I had noted in the article that Paul had taken for granted that the believer ought to desire to remain with the unbeliever and thus be disposed to abide in the marriage. I had set forth briefly the fact that the text is certainly contemplating divorce and not our modern concept of legal separation, as it was the case under Roman law—which Corinth was under—that separation constituted divorce. Paul’s use of the term *choridzomai*, which is translated “leave” or “separate,” to

describe the action accords with that fact, as this term was a technical word for divorce in the 1st century AD. This is a simple lexical fact. When used of marriage, it contemplates divorce in the New Testament. Even that process reflected the idea of separation, whether by leaving one’s spouse or sending him or, as was most common, her away from the home.

So the idea of separation is integral to the meaning and method of divorce, and has been since ancient times. In fact divorce, in its proper sense, is also known today as “permanent separation” in divorce law. Furthermore, the concept of “legal separation” short of divorce, which is often called “trial separation,” is of rather recent origin having arisen in the medieval period through Roman Catholic influence on common law. It is also called “separate maintenance,” “judicial separation,” and “divorce (or *divortium*) *a mensa et thoro*” (“separation from bed and board,” but short of severance of the legal marriage).

Catholic prelates forbade all divorce in the sense of complete and total separation, including that on the ground of fornication (Gr. *porneia*, cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9). To deal with certain situations that appeared knotty in case law, the Catholic Church devised the doctrine of nullity instead, which allowed the Church hierarchy the right to dissolve marriages in a manner that was not considered a full or complete divorce, which had been categorically banned. Various

(Continued On Page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE...

1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16 REVISITED—DANIEL DENHAM.....	1
EDITORIAL—CONVERSION OR HARDNESS OF HEART.....	2
Only Three Classes of People Are Free (In the Sight of God) to Marry—Thomas B. Warren.....	6
COMMENTS ON THE MEANING AND APPLICATION OF MATTHEW 19:9—GUY N. WOODS.....	7
“CHURCHES MINISTER TO VICTIMS OF DIVORCE”—LEE MOSES.....	8
OUR CHILDREN NEED TO HEAR...—DANNY DOUGLAS.....	9

DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH—ROELF RUFFNER.....	10
WE CANNOT TELL—DON TARBET.....	16
SPECIAL MUSIC IN THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH—BROCK HARTWIGSEN.....	17
THE MISTREATMENT OF GOSPEL PREACHERS BY UNSCRUPULOUS BROTHEREN—DUB MOWRY.....	19
DOGMATIC, NARROW-MINDED, AND LEGALLISTIC—THOMAS F. EAVES, SR.	21

Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

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Editorial...

Conversion or Hardness of Heart

In admonishing Christians concerning their responsibility to continue to speak the God-saving truth that they may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2), the apostle Peter reminded them that the Jews did not accept Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. Peter declared: **“They stumble at the Lord, being disobedient”** (1 Pet. 2:8). We learn from the Greek word translated “being disobedient” that its meaning is not to allow oneself to be persuaded (See Thayer or any reputable Greek lexicon). Implied is the fact that man has the power to reject obvious truth.

He can close his understanding to adequate evidence if he does not love the truth above everything else (2 The. 2:10-12). When the truth is offered to an honest man in error, one of two things can happen: (1) He will keep his honesty by giving up his error and embracing the truth, or (2) He will reject the truth, give up his honesty, and keep his error.

Speaking for God, Isaiah said to Israel: **“Come now, and let us reason together”** (Isa. 1:18). God created man a rational creature and He has never bypassed man’s rationality in seeking to lead and guide him. God does not force Himself upon man against man’s will (Rom. 1:28). If man will not receive the abundant and adequate evidence regarding man’s spiritual needs, God is not going to force it on him. The people in Isaiah’s day were unreasonable and would not accept God’s Word. They simply would not allow themselves to be persuaded (Isa. 6:9-13). Thus, they lost their honesty and retained their error. In the words of Peter: **“They stumble[d] at the word, being disobedient.”** Hence, Paul’s request to the Thessalonians that they pray, among other things, that we **“may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith”** (2 The. 3:2). If you want to become wicked, just stop being reasonable. In doing so, you will lose your honesty and harden your heart as you embrace the strong delusion of error.

A RECENT EXAMPLE OF THE FOREGOING

There are a number of people that I have as Facebook friends who are not members of the Lord’s church. Some of these are old high school friends and acquaintances of 50 and more years ago. I have found that I can get them to read Biblical material on Facebook that I never could get them to read in any other way. Indeed, I seriously doubt I would have come in contact with them again if it had not been for Facebook. Most of them I literally have not seen in over 50 years.

Recently I posted the following on my Facebook timeline.

According to all the information I have and freely admitted even by Baptists, a man can be saved and reach heaven and never be a Baptist at all. Being a Baptist is one of the great

non-essentials in religion” (Cled E. Wallace, *The Bible Banner*, Dec., 1940).

In a post on my Facebook timeline one of my high school friends, who is a Baptist, made reply to the foregoing posted quotation from the late bro. Wallace . She posted: “I have been in the Baptist faith all my life and was never taught this was the way to heaven. What about you? Can you say this?” Her remarks gave me the an opportunity to teach the truth to her. Thus a I wrote in my post to her:

Sandra, yes I know that is what you believe even as the quotation in my post to which you referred in your post, because you don’t think of the church except as a human invented denomination. Also, I do not doubt your sincerity and devotion to what you believe to be approved by the Lord. But a person can be sincerely wrong as well as sincerely correct. I come to you only with the Bible, for it is the only rule of faith and practice for those who would follow Jesus in truth (John 8:31, 32; 17:17; Luke 8:11; John 12: 48; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2:15).

I am not a member of any denominational church. I never have been and no one need be or ought to be. You can and must be a member of the church that Jesus built in order to be saved (Mat. 16:18; Rom. 16:16). Notice, I beg of you, that only the church that Jesus built was purchased with His own blood—Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). Denominationalism preaches division, which division is condemned by the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed for the unity of those who believe that He is the Son of God (John 17:11; Phil. 3:16). The Lord’s church is composed only of those whose sins our Lord has forgiven when they obeyed His gospel (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; Mat. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 41, 42, 47; 22:16; Rom. 6: 3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:15). The foregoing scriptures set out clearly the simple plan of salvation that all persons accountable to God for their actions must believe and obey in order for Christ to save them from their sins in His church. Remember, the gospel is where God has located His power to save men from sin (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor 15:1-4).

It is sad and terrible that people think that denomination- alism is New Testament Christianity, but denominations do not represent the church as it appears on the pages of the New Testament of the Christ we confess to be the Savior of the world. You cannot find denominationalism in the New Testament. The Lord’s church exists wherever people believe and obey the gospel—when they complete their obedience to the gospel in being baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. That is how anyone becomes a Christian--nothing more, nothing else, and nothing else. If you or anyone else desire to study more diligently about the church of our Lord, I would be more than happy to assist you in any way that is proper.

I appreciate very much your dedication to what you believe to be right. All I ask of you or anyone else is what I demand of myself—am I sure that what I believe and practice is what the New Testament of the Christ teaches? Sandra, that is the way that is right and cannot be wrong in our efforts to learn the truth of God’s Word regarding all we believe and practice in morals and religion (Col. 3:17; James 1:25).

I humbly request of you to read the passages I have offered to you in this post and think soberly about them regarding your beliefs and practices. I hope you will receive what I have written in the spirit with which it offered. If you have any other comments or questions I would be more than happy to receive and respond to them. “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

Sandra posted the following in response to me: “David, don’t have time for this now (reading). I’m saying you will not get to heaven through any denomination. Don’t think Baptist ever taught you had to be Baptist to go to Heaven.”

I answered her post with the following:

Sandra, I understand, and the Bible certainly teaches that “no denomination can get you to Heaven.” Please think about what I wrote and, again, please study the scriptures that I noted for you regarding salvation and the church. I wish you and yours the best. I don’t think any of us can go wrong in encouraging one another to study the Bible more. To that end I offer my remarks in this and all my posts regarding serving the Lord.

Some time later, Sandra’s husband, Richard also an high school acquaintance, decided to respond to me. Sandra chose to post nothing else.

Richard posted:

So, since Sandra was baptized after her acceptance of Jesus Christ as her Savior at a young age of 9 she has obeyed. Correct? She was baptized in a Baptist church. Would you accept her into your church based on that? Don’t misinterpret this, she is saved not because she is a Baptist or because she has been baptized, but because of her faith in Jesus Christ. Is this not enough for your church? In other words will you accept baptism from churches other than yours?

To Richard’s forgoing post I responded with the following post:

1) It does not make any difference what the truth is regarding salvation as to what I do or don’t do, or what you do or don’t do. It does make all the difference concerning one’s salvation when it comes to what the Bible teaches. That is the case because it was teaching what it teaches long before we were born and it will teach what it does long after we are gone, meeting us to judge us at the end of time (John 12:48). Truth does not depend on what any human does or does not do.

2) I don’t have a church and have never been a member of a church founded and directed by man. I never joined the church that Jesus built and no man can join that church. Our Lord adds those He saves to His church and Christians simply

(Continued on Page 22)

grounds were established to justify the practice of annulling certain marriages by declaring them non-marriages from the start. One of the most common was by declaring a marriage null and void by reason of failure to consummate the marriage through sexual intercourse.

But other situations also bedeviled the Romanist system, leading ultimately to the development of the practice of permitting a divorce *a mensa at thoro* but not a divorce *a vinculo matrimonii* (a divorce “from the bond of matrimony”). The latter was used of complete dissolution of marriage. As Catholicism presumed to have authority in itself over the civil state, this distinction eventually was codified in most European nations, including England, and through their influence came into use in American law. Thereby there passed into modern practice the idea of legal separation where each party maintains itself but where the parties are still legally considered bound to one another in marriage.

It seems to me that our brother, as many have done contrary to ancient history, assumed the position that Paul is writing about is legal separation. Such a practice simply did not exist under ancient law. Even in Judaism there was never such a marital state as legal separation short of divorce.

The position of the brother above, which holds that the Christian is authorized by Paul to initiate separation from the unbeliever on the ground of spiritual endangerment, would then logically entail the proposition that there is another ground for divorce authorized in the text beyond that authorized in the exceptive clause of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 by the Lord, which would in turn imply that the exceptive clause would then not be a truly Greek exceptive clause. Such clauses have the force of “if—and only if” such and such is the case. Thus, it could not be the case that the only Divinely authorized ground for divorce is fornication. But as that directly contradicts the grammatical force of the exceptive clause then the position that 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 authorizes a married Christian to divorce his or her spouse for a reason other than fornication simply cannot be true. One is not authorized to divorce his spouse in the eyes of God for any reason other than fornication.

Again, it is not the case that 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 contemplates the modern concept of legal separation short of divorce. Thus, the idea of even leaving a spouse in such a manner is not discussed here by Paul. Any authority for such would have to arise from another text and yet in such a way so as not to contravene Paul’s forbidding divorce by the saint of his or her unbelieving spouse.

Our brother’s central argument holds that the two great commandments of love for God and for our neighbors override any other command from God. He spends most of his letter arguing that if one’s faithfulness to Christ is threatened by an unbelieving spouse that the saint is authorized to leave the unbeliever.

First, the brother creates a false hierarchy relative to the commandments of the Lord. Yes, there are two great commandments, but these in fact comprehend all of the other commands that God has given in the New Testament. It is a false view that holds that Christians may violate some (or even one) of the commandments of the Lord in order to obey some commandments of the Lord. The two great commandments, to which our brother refers, actually are carried out when we seek to obey all that God has bidden us to do (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Jam. 2:8-13; Gal. 5:14; etc.). Love is indeed the fulfilling of God’s law, because it is the motivation involved in complying with it. It manifests itself in action—specifically, the doing of God’s will in obeying His Word.

The brother makes several attempts to justify his false dichotomy of God’s commands by appealing to such things as pertain to “**the weightier matters of the law.**” However, he presupposes in his argumentation that the weightier matters cancel out obedience to the less weighty matters. Yet, the very texts that he cites (Mat. 23:23; Luke 11:42) concerning these “weightier matters,” dealt with the practice of tithing under the Law of Moses. Jesus had pointed out that the Pharisees and the scribes scrupulously gave tithes even of the tin spices that they owned. The problem with these people was that they mistreated others, cheated them out of their inheritances, and robbed them of their property. They ignored therefore the principles of “**justice and mercy and faith.**” However, Jesus did not teach that if they had practiced the latter things, then they could ignore the law on tithing. Rather, He said quite explicitly, “**These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**” They were obligated to practice the weightier matters, but they were also to give their tithes and not leave them “**undone.**”

I categorically deny that one must sometimes disobey one commandment in order to obey another. Each has its rightful place and relationship in respect to all other commandments, including the two great commandments of loving God and our neighbors. There is a misunderstanding on our brother’s part as to how the principles involved apply and also a misunderstanding of both the scope and nature of the commandments that supposedly could be set aside by obedience to the two great commandments.

Contrary to our brother’s assertions, while the text of 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (as well as verses 12-16) hangs on these two great commandments, it is never the case that obedience to 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 stands in contradiction with obedience to love for God and for one’s neighbor. In fact, obedience to 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, as with any other command binding upon us today, is essential to have and demonstrate the kind of love enjoined in the two great commandments.

In order for one to really love God, he must obey God’s Word (1 John 5:3; John 14:15,21,23; 15:14). There is no really loving God wherein there is no compliance with His Word. One cannot profess faith in Christ as Lord and yet

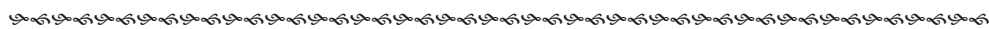
refuse to do what He commands (Luke 6:46; Mat. 7:21-27; Heb. 5:8-9). Neither can there be the right kind of love that does not demonstrate itself in obedience (Gal. 5:6).

In order for one to truly love his neighbor, then he has to treat that neighbor with such regard as is involved in living a pure and upright life, including that which pertains to marriage and his sexual relations with those in the world. Sex is limited to marriage (Heb. 13:4). God's intent has always been one woman for one man for life (Mat. 19:4-6). The only exception to that rule is divorce wherein one of the parties to a marriage is guilty of fornication (Mat. 5:32; 19:9). Otherwise, there is to be no divorce, even as the Lord Himself taught (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). These last two passages simply give the basic rule concerning divorce, while Matthew's account gives the lone exception to that rule.

In his statement in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul is restating the basic rule laid out in Mark 10:11-12 in particular. While he uses the words *choridzomai* and *aphieemi* instead of *apoluo*, the two preceding terms were synonymous in ancient Greek relative to marriage. All three are part of the nomenclature of divorce in ancient Greek.

The wife is specifically forbidden (note the negation of the infinitive verb) to divorce her husband, while the husband is also told not to divorce his wife. If she does divorce him, then she is to remain unmarried, i.e. she is not to contract another marriage, or else be reconciled to her husband. The Greek text employs two different imperatives here. The first is a present imperative, while the second is an aorist imperative which stresses urgency with the force "Do it now!" The idea of the two together is that if she has separated (divorced herself) from him, she is to remain unmarried in order that she can seek reconciliation with him (cf. David E. Garland, 1 Corinthians, p. 283). That is the desired end. The original marriage has not really been severed as far as God is concerned.

Relative to 1 Corinthians 7:15, Paul places the matter for dissolution squarely on the shoulders of the unbeliever. If the unbeliever seeks to compel the believer to give up Christ or else threatens to leave, then Paul implicitly tells the believer not to try to stop him. The third person imperative here actually has the force, "He leave"! It has an emphatic force. While awkward in English, it makes perfect sense in ancient Greek.



The strength of the churches of Christ has been in the fact that all error to us has looked alike, from infidelity to every false way. Owen, the infidel; Purcell, the Catholic; Rice, the Denominationalist, all looked alike to Alexander Campbell. And he took them all in their turn. Do we unchristianize people? We cannot if they be Christians nor can we make Christians of those who are not by merely recognizing them. To recognize as Christians those who have not obeyed the gospel is but to break down the very barrier that exists between the church and the world. The church is undenominational, because it is not a denomination; it is non-denominational, because it is not of them; and it is anti-denominational

The believer is not to initiate the dissolution of the relationship, but she is not to give up Christ to hold to the unbeliever either. She is not the unbeliever's slave, but must serve the Lord faithfully. There are limits placed on even the submissiveness of the wife to the husband, whether he be a believer or not (Acts 5:29).

Our brother appeals to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 for authority for a believer to sever marriage ties with an unbeliever. But that too would directly contradict the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:9 and elsewhere. If Matthew 19:9 teaches that there is one—and only one—ground for divorce sanctioned by God that severs a Matthew 19:4-6, one flesh relationship, then it must be the case that any interpretation of any other text that contradicts that teaching must be a false interpretation.

I personally have never been of the view that 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 even contemplates the marriage relationship, which is peculiar and distinct to itself. Marriage is described in the Scriptures as a relationship involving a "joining together" or "yoking together" (Gr. *sudzeugnuo*) with a special emphasis on the togetherness of the joining that is highlighted by a key phrase. The Lord defines a God-approved marriage as a "one flesh" relationship. The Greek literally says in Matthew 19:4-6 that the two in becoming one enter "into one flesh" (Gr. *eis sarka mian*). The scope of that phrase is stunning. God-approved marriage is relatively indissoluble. It is not like a business arrangement that one can simply choose to walk away from at whim. It is a distinctly unique relationship that a man and a woman hold to one another and to no other person or persons, not even their parents.

This relative indissolubility of a Matthew 19:4-6 marriage makes the severance of that relationship by any other means than that pertaining to the nature of the bond itself impossible. Death and fornication are the two things that do so affect the nature of the marriage bond. To put it another way: as only death (Rom. 7:1-4) and divorce on the ground of fornication (Mat. 5:32; 19:9) can sever that relationship, then logically the yoking cannot otherwise be separated or severed. This precludes it then from being contemplated in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

—4134 Banbury Circle
Parrish, FL 34219

because it is against them. The idea of Christian unity implies that those united are Christians. Imagine one becoming a Christian and entering a denomination at the same time by the same act—and it will be no more than a mere imagination! It requires the same thing to become a Christian now that it required in the New Testament era—the same faith, the same confession, the same baptism, by which one is added to the same church. Denominations are not back doors nor side entrances into the church of Christ. Shall the church go gadding about so much as to change her ways in doctrine? —Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Bible Banner*, May, 1941

Only Three Classes Of People Are Free (In The Sight Of God) To Marry

Thomas B. Warren

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Mat. 19:9). With this statement, Jesus set forth the sole circumstance (fornication) under which one with a living former companion can marry without sin. This statement was made during a conversation with some Pharisees who, in hoping to trap Jesus into making a statement which they could use against him, had posed a question concerning the circumstances under which a man could put away his wife. In answer, Jesus first referred them to a verse of scripture which set forth the original design of marriage. The Pharisees, seeing that they had not yet accomplished their purpose, then asked, “**Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?**” Likely they sought to put Jesus in the position of contradicting the law of Moses. But this Jesus never did. Rather, he showed that Moses suffered (allowed) this because of the hardness of heart of the people. But in the New Covenant, the strictness of the original law would be restored.

A VERY IMPORTANT STUDY

The importance of this study could hardly be overestimated. Upon the correct solution, and application of that solution, depends man’s happiness for this life and especially for the life to come. Whether one spends eternity in heaven or in hell may very well be determined by what is true of his relationship in this matter.

It seems that within just the past few years this problem has become more acute. One direction of this growth seems to be toward the idea that men out of the church are not amenable to the law of Christ and so may divorce and remarry any number of times in violation of the law of Christ and, so long as they obey the civil law under which they live, continue to live with the partner they had at the time of being baptized into Christ. How [can one] account for growth in this particular direction? Perhaps we cannot. I know that I am not going to impugn anyone’s motive in the matter. But I do know, from actual experience with myself, that it is sometimes easy to have our spiritual vision dimmed by previous conditioning. We can “see” what we want to “see”—if we are not very careful! Divorce and remarriage is a problem which involves the deepest, most tender, and intimate emotions which man may have so far as human relationships are concerned. Many times children are involved. All of these things stir our hearts. We must carefully “**examine ourselves**” (2 Cor. 13:5) lest we be guided by our heart and not

by the scriptures!

Since the question may have so many and varied aspects, the problem of approach seems important. This [article] will deal with an affirmation of those who can marry with an accompanying negation to serve as a further clarification.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO MARRY?

Put in simple terms, this affirmation is a statement setting forth those who can marry without sinning in so doing. Or, it might be stated as follows: those who do not sin when they marry. This, of necessity, demands that they themselves marry a person who belongs in one of these classes.

1. *Those who have never been married previously may, without sin, marry as long as they themselves marry an eligible (in the sight of God) person. “But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned ...”* (1 Cor. 7:28; cf. 1 Cor. 7:9).

2. *Those who have been previously married but whose former companion is dead.* Paul stated the matter in this fashion:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law: so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Rom. 7:2-3).

3. *Those who have been previously married but whose former companion was guilty of fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage vow).* Here, our text (Mat. 19:9), shows plainly that Jesus gave to the innocent party the right to seek another marriage partner. If Jesus had given no exception, his language would have taught that every person who puts away his companion and marries another is guilty of adultery. But Jesus did not do that—he did give an exception making it clear that those whose companions have been guilty of sexual unfaithfulness may put them away and marry another, not being guilty of adultery in so doing. This means physical unfaithfulness—the act of [fornication]—not merely lusting in one’s heart (Mat. 5:28).

The negation, put in simple terms, is a setting forth of those who cannot marry without sinning in so doing. Or, it might be stated as follows: those who do sin when they marry. Just who are these?

1. Those who have a living former companion who was not put away because of fornication In Matthew 19:9, Jesus said, “**...and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth**

commit adultery” (compare Mat. 5:32).

2. Those who marry anyone who has a former companion (still living) who was not put away because of fornication. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus said, **“Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery”** (compare Mat. 5:32).

3. Those who were put away because of their unfaithfulness (Mat. 5:32). The verses to which I have referred so clearly teach the positions set forth as to permit no doubt in the matter.

—Deceased



GUY N. WOODS’ COMMENTS ON THE MEANING AND APPLICATION OF MATTHEW 19:9

In the *Gospel Advocate*, this question was raised: “If a man divorced his wife without cause and married another, would the wife, being an innocent party, be free to marry if her former husband and not she obtained the divorce?” I answered “Yes.”

A brother wrote: “I disagree with your answer as Matthew 19:9 says, **“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery: and he that married her when she is put away committeth adultery.”**”

He has grossly misapprehended the teaching of our Lord in this passage. (1) He has ignored the exception that the Lord put into the verse. He strikes out the words, **“except for fornication,”** in order to deny what the Lord, by implication, affirmed. It should read, in his view, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, **EVEN IN THE CASE OF FORNICATION,** and marries another, commits adultery and he who marries her thus put away commits adultery.” (2) He disregards the grammar of the passage which makes the exception clause, **“EXCEPT FOR FORNICATION,”** modify the entire statement including the final clause, **“He that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”** (3) He rules out any occasion when an innocent party may properly and scripturally remarry. He is therefore in grave error in the conclusion drawn.

To put the matter in proper perspective, let us assume the following instance: Jane and John, both single, neither have been previously wedded, marry. John, of weak character, soon tires of Jane and abandons her though she is a good wife, and a faithful Christian woman. As soon as he can conveniently do so, he contracts another marriage. Not free to remarry, his relationship with the second woman, though legal, is adulterous. Jane, meantime, has remained free of marital relationship, and would have received John back at any time prior to the adulterous marriage into which he entered. Being a Christian woman, she does not recognize the state’s legal grounds for divorce, willing only to accept

the Lord’s ground—fornication. By unscripturally contracting marriage with the second woman John is now guilty of the act constituting the exception clause of Matthew 19:9. Jane meets Bill, a fine Christian man never before married. May she scripturally marry him? Of course she may. To deny her this is presumptuously to pass judgment on the validity of the Lord’s edict and take from her what the Lord granted.

Jesus said, **“Whosoever shall put away his wife, EXCEPT FOR FORNICATION, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”** If the objection is raised that Jane did not divorce John but John (the guilty party) divorced Jane, it should be remembered that divorce is a civil, legal action having nothing whatsoever to do with determining the moral and religious principles involved. It is the Lord’s edict, not man’s, that governs. “But,” it may further be objected, “Jane and John were not living together at the time when the fornication occurred.” Who said they had to be? To inject this condition into the exception clause, to speak where the Lord has not spoken, is to legislate for him! Suppose, for example, that Jane, while married to John, had suffered mental illness and required residence and treatment in a mental hospital for five years. During the interval John cohabited with another woman. Would Jane, because she was not living under the same roof as John, be denied the right to put him away for fornication? He who so affirms has abandoned reason, revelation and good sense!

The implications of scripture touching marriage and divorce are crystal clear. The New Testament teaches that when one of the parties of the marriage bond becomes guilty of fornication, the other (the innocent one, not the guilty) may scripturally put away the offending party and remarry. Luke 16:18 does not countermand Matthew 19:9; it simply supplements it. (Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers*, Vol. II, pp.45-46).

—Deceased

“CHURCHES MINISTER TO VICTIMS OF DIVORCE”

Lee Moses

The newspaper, *The Christian Chronicle*, calls itself “An international newspaper for Churches [sic] of Christ;” but it often appears that it exists primarily to advance the agenda of the liberal wing of what still calls itself “the Church of Christ.” One issue of the *Chronicle* adorns its front page with the headline “Churches minister to victims of divorce.” Such a statement in and of itself sounds good. Unfortunately, in many places the article conveys a false impression regarding the Lord’s doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage; and regarding the church’s responsibility toward those who have experienced divorce.

“VICTIMS OF DIVORCE”

The *Chronicle*’s use of the word “victim” in the headline tacitly suggests that anyone who has experienced a divorce did nothing to cause the divorce. Some of the statements in the article apparently seek to undergird this notion. Undoubtedly, both parties suffer tremendously when a divorce takes place, but it is wholly impossible that in any divorce both parties could be innocent victims. Jesus said,

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Mat. 5:32).

Note two teachings in Jesus’ statement which refute the notion that all who experience divorce are innocent victims:

(1) Jesus allows one to put away his or her spouse for the cause of fornication. The spouse has done something which leaves reasonable cause to be put away, a cause brought about by his or her own actions.

(2) Whoever puts away his or her spouse (save for the aforementioned exception) causes the spouse to commit adultery; putting that spouse in a position where the temptation to commit sexual immorality (fornication—*Editor*] will be strong.

Jesus’ statement also shows that some who experience divorce are innocent victims. There are those whose spouses put them away unjustly. There are those who are compelled to put away their spouses because of their spouses’ fornication.

Although modern laws may speak of “no-fault divorce,” at least one party is at fault when a divorce occurs—perhaps more often than not, both parties are at fault.

Again, divorce is a terrible tragedy for people to suffer through. When a Divinely-sanctioned marriage is severed, Satan has had his way. However, wittingly or unwittingly,

someone has been Satan’s accomplice in destroying that marriage.

“CHURCHES MINISTER”

Christians and churches have the need to minister; to serve:

Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mat. 20:26-28).

The church must minister to itself and to the world, and that includes ministering to the divorced. One *Chronicle* interviewee correctly observed, “I think the church needs to be more intentional about strengthening marriages. But when marriages fail, we ought to wrap our loving arms around the people who are suffering.”

Unfortunately, several quoted in the article apparently believe that the only way to do this is to revise the doctrine of Christ. Beth Wade, who serves as “counselor and family life educator” of the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston, Texas, said, “Once God’s perfect plan is forsaken, part of successful adjustment is establishing realistic expectations.” While I cannot know for certain what Mrs. Wade meant by “establishing realistic expectations,” I do know what others have meant by similar statements in the same context. They have meant that one cannot expect the unscripturally divorced to remain unmarried, although the Holy Spirit teaches that they must (1 Cor. 7:11).

Bruce Wadzeck, “a minister and elder at the Princeton, N.J. church,” said, “Many congregations are in no place to minister to the divorced because their theology offers no hope, only judgment for the divorced.” Although he does not say what “their theology” is, I am confident that he means the doctrine clearly taught in the New Testament (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; et al.). I would have Mr. Wadzeck to know that the doctrine taught in the New Testament most certainly offers hope for all, including the divorced (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; Col. 1:5). But to have that hope, one must repent of sin and remove himself from any sinful situation into which he may have entered (Rom. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 7:11). The New Testament teaches us how we can be forgiven, live righteously, and avoid sin in the future regardless of what we may have done in the past (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

The way for churches to minister to those who have experienced divorce is to show them the true hope that is in the Gospel, not by providing a false hope founded upon

remaining unrepentant of past sin and upon continuing in present and future sin. Churches minister by preaching the same hope Christ commanded Paul to preach, with the same noble purpose:

To open [the Gentiles'] eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

May true churches of Christ minister to the divorced, and to all the world, through the living hope found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

—621 South Central High Road
Rives, TN 38253



Our Children Need to Hear of the True and Living God

Danny Douglas

The one thing that our children need to hear is the message of the true and living God. This is the greatest message that tells them of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ, how to live, and how to treat other people. The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, who had turned from false gods to serve the true and living God:

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 The. 1:9-10).

In seeking to remove every semblance of God, the Bible and Jesus Christ, from schools and public life, many evil things have rushed in to fill the void. A good example of this is the teaching of the religion of Islam, as part of the public school curriculum. It is a sad day in America, when teachers are forbidden to utter the words of Jesus Christ, words that promote love, salvation, and goodwill toward men, but are encouraged and even commanded to declare the principles of Islam, a religion that engenders violence, the degradation of women, and the loss of innocent lives.

By rejecting the principles of the Holy Bible, our land has seen a steady decline in academics, healthy marriages, respect for one another, reverence for God, and obedience to Him. In the wake of rejecting God our Saviour, there has also been an epidemic increase of broken homes, drug abuse, adultery, fornication, murder, hate, violence, drunkenness, corruption, immorality, mental illness, misery, and many other evil things. The refusal and rejection of Biblical principles, is nothing less than the refusal and rejection of what made America great, and that which if embraced and practiced again, has the power to bring many blessings upon our children and families, our land, and especially the blessing of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:16; 6:23).

When the people of Israel had rejected the true and living God in exchange for idols, they had embraced a way that could **"hold no water,"** as the Lord said:

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2:11-13).

As a result, the people were trusting in lies and committing many evils, as the prophet said:

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not (Jer. 7:8-9).

By rejecting Jesus Christ and the Bible, and accepting false ways, such as secular humanism, Islam, evolution, and hedonism, people in our land are trusting in lying words that cannot profit. Let us not trust in false gods and false ways, but let us follow the true and living God, Who is able to bless us beyond our ability to comprehend! *[The foregoing is the basis for a letter sent to the editor of The Nashville Tennessean. —Editor]*

—704 Azalea Dr.
Mt. Pleasant, TN 38474
ddouglas111611@gmail.com

Four Reasons Modesty Empowers Women While Porn Does the Opposite

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2. Modesty promotes female dignity (porn makes her an object).
3. Modesty demands respect (porn does the opposite).
4. Modesty draws attention to the face (porn feasts on the body).

http://www.covenanteyes.com/2015/09/29/4-reasons-modesty-empowers-women-and-porn-does-not/#.Vgq0cSKO_9Q.twitter

DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH

Roelf L. Ruffner

WHAT THE PREACHING EXPERTS SAY

Abilene Christian University (ACU) recently announced the speaker for their June 22nd “Lunch and Learn” event on campus. It will be Dr. Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology. He will speak on the topic, **Preaching in More Than One Voice: Addressing the Multiple Needs of Congregations Today**. The announcement of the event was quite revealing.

Noting that congregations increasingly contain people with multiple needs, varying faith relationships and many different listening patterns, Long poses the question, “How can preachers, without losing the integrity of their own ministry, speak in differing voices to these hearers, and what are the voices most urgently needed today?”

Knowing ACU’s College of the Bible, it did not surprise me that they would search out an “expert” on preaching from a Methodist seminary (a cemetery of faith) to lecture them on preaching. But at least they did not import a woman preacher (a walking abomination - 1 Tim. 2:11-12) like Lipscomb University did recently to lecture on preaching.

I consulted the inspired textbook of preaching, the Holy Bible, how one MUST approach preaching to an audience “with multiple needs, varying faith relationships and many different listening patterns.” Its experts are all inspired of the Holy Spirit.

The rough hewn John the Baptizer, to warm up a professionally religious audience (Pharisees and Sadducees), said, **“Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Mat. 3:2) and, **“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”** (Mat. 3:7). I doubt if ACU’s College of the Bible would pay John’s bus ticket back to the wilderness of Judea if he delivered this sermon to them.

The fisher of men Peter told an audience of thousands of intensely religious folk in Jerusalem, at least some of whom had helped murder the Messiah fifty days before, **“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”** (Acts 2:38). That reads to me like he “offered the invitation.” Three thousand did repent that Pentecost day in A.D. 30 and were baptized. I wonder how many preachers at that ACU luncheon even offer an invitation anymore. Do they plead with their audience to repent of their sins and be baptized (immersed in water) for remission of sins? But that would offend someone and they might stop contributing money to the building fund!

The bold deacon Stephen, filled with righteousness concluded his sermon before a kangaroo court of the Jewish Sanhedrin with these stirring words, **“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers”** (Acts 7:52). I imagine even those with “different listening patterns” understood what he was saying. Their response was not polite applause or even scattered “amens” but gnashing of teeth and screams of a mob. For Stephen’s proclamation of the Truth, he was not given a hefty speaking fee but a public lynching.

One of those who lynched Stephen, Saul of Tarsus, later became a preacher and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was given the opportunity of a lifetime by being invited to speak before an audience of idolaters at the Areopagus in Athens, the center of Greek philosophy. What “voice” did Paul use? It was the voice of loving concern for these educated pagans. He pointed out to them the futility and illogic of idolatry and the need for faith in the living God. He also implored his listeners to repent of their sins because the Judgment Day was coming. **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where 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”** (Acts 17:30, 31).

I believe now more than at any other time in recent history the doctrine of repentance needs to be proclaimed to all men.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

It must be done with love and urgency. Preaching “experts” and the professional pulpiteering class says this will just turn off the audience. They say the “millennials” don’t like it. But they forget the power of the gospel to touch the human heart (Rom. 1:16). It is not the exhorter’s eloquence which should bring others to the Truth, but the innate thirst of us all for God’s word and the realization of the eternal consequence of not being forgiven of their sins. The greatest preacher who ever lived once said, **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3).

[<http://www.acu.edu/news/2015/150615-emory-university-preaching-expert-speak.html> as of June 17, 3015]

TO MY METHODIST FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Through the years I have known many fine folks who were members of the United Methodist Church (UMC). Methodists are known as a people who are active in community affairs and helping the helpless. But with love in my heart I must warn you that the denomination you are a member of is not the church of Christ of the New Testament. Recent actions and proposed actions by this denomination show this to be true.

On May 18, 2015, the Connectional Table (a panel) of the United Methodist Church meeting in Nashville voted 26 to 10 to present to the 2016 General Conference a proposal to remove the prohibition in the church's laws against homosexual behavior and to allow the clergy to officiate same-sex or unnatural marriage ceremonies. They even had the audacity to say that if the UMC did this, it would not contradict Christian doctrines. There is a very good chance this proposal will be accepted by the UMC's General Conference. By so doing they will join the ranks of the Presbyterian Church USA and the Disciples of Christ.

I know most Methodists profess a faith in Christ and a respect for His word. If you are one of that number, you know that the Bible prohibits homosexual activity in both Old and New Testaments. For example,

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (NKJ – 1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

Jesus Himself limited marriage to a covenant between a man and a woman and God (cf. Mat. 19:4-6); which excludes the unnatural union of a man to a man or a woman to a woman. Since God recognizes no other marital union, why would those who claim to be Christians do otherwise? It is an abomination!

All denominations are contrary to the unity demanded of the church of Christ by the Master (John 17:21; 1 Cor. 1:10). They are man-made religious organizations which operate outside the authority of the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17; Rev. 22:18, 19). Where are there any conventions of the early church of Christ mentioned in the New Testament? None! Yes, we do read about a meeting in Jerusalem of the Apostles of Jesus Christ and the elders of

the Jerusalem church recorded in Acts Chapter 15 It is never called a "convention" or even a "council!" These brethren met specifically to counter false doctrine. No vote was taken and no new laws or rules ordained, just a reaffirmation of the Gospel. Please notice that these men in Acts 15 were all inspired of the Holy Spirit. What they uttered was divine revelation. No man or woman is inspired by the Holy Spirit today. We have the inspired, inerrant, completed word of God given by the Holy Spirit to guide us (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17) The Bible is all sufficient. It wasn't the Holy Spirit which influenced the UMC panel to make this proposal which is contrary to the Holy Bible. IF the General Conference votes in favor of this proposal it will not be the Holy Spirit which will have influenced the delegates to do so, but another "spirit" (cf. Eph. 2:2; 1 John 4:1-6).

My friends, you have a decision to make. Will you follow the dictates of fallible men and women or the word of the living God? Will you be in fellowship with those who by their actions show they are not in fellowship with God? "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

Please take your New Testament and compare it with the organizational structure, doctrine, discipline, practices, worship, and laws of the United Methodist Church. The church one reads about in its pages does not match up with it. The UMC is a man-made organization which is governed by a vote and the whim of man, not by the Bible.

I plead with you with love in my heart to flee this religious organization as Joseph fled from Potipher's wife. Go back to the Bible and be a Christian only.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17,18).

[<http://www.christiannewsweek.com/cbn/28011-united-methodists-propose-to-change-church-law-to-allow-homosexual-behavior.html> as of May 27, 2015.]

Sincerely,

Roelf L. Ruffner

TO MY SOUTHERN BAPTIST FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

I know all of you in this second largest denomination in the United States profess a love for the Lord and a respect for

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His word. Most of you have a deep evangelistic zeal which cannot be denied. As a New Testament Christian, a member of the church of Christ, I must confess it is often **“a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”** (Rom. 10:2).

A case in point is the recent announcement by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that they will now accept candidates for missionaries who practice tongue-speaking or “a private prayer language.” I was amazed when I read this. I recall distinctly the old neo-Pentecostal/charismatic tongue-speaking movement, of the 1960’s & ‘70’s which infiltrated many religious bodies in the United States causing mayhem and confusion. Like some sort of underground political movement they stealthily tried to take over. Eventually they were banished by most churches and joined up with their spiritual brethren in the older Pentecostal denominations who hold to this false doctrine.

You Baptists know that the “tongue-speaking” of modern times is not the speaking in an **“unknown tongue”** (1 Cor. 14:2) or *glossa* of the New Testament. The Bible is clear that the miraculous gift of tongues was the ability to speak in a language the user had not learned (i.e., **“unknown”**). In Acts Chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 30) when the church of Christ was established the twelve apostles spoke in **“other tongues”** (Verse 4). It was obvious to the audience present that the Apostles were speaking in other languages, not the emotion-driven gibberish of today’s religious phenomenon (Verses 7-11). The Apostle Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 14:21 when he quotes Isaiah 28:11,12 in rebuking the abuse of *glossa* in the Corinthian church of Christ, **“In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.”** In the context of this verse the prophet Isaiah uses **“other tongues”** referring to the Assyrian language which was foreign to the Israelites.

Some who claim to speak in tongues say that their gift is a “private prayer language” reserved for themselves and God. They base this on the phrase **“the tongues of men and angels”** (1 Cor. 13:1) used by Paul as a hyperbole or an exaggeration for effect. Besides, angels are spiritual beings,

they do not have tongues. Whenever they communicated with people in the Bible, it could always be understood by the listener. The miraculous New Testament gift of tongues was to be understood by the audience through an interpretation or the speaker was to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:9,13-16, 27, 28). Nowhere in the New Testament is *glossa* referred to as a prayer language.

You Baptists who know the Bible know this. You know that tongue speaking is a false doctrine. It passed away in the First Century A.D. along with all the other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8) because **“that which is perfect is come”** (1 Cor. 13:10) or the completion of the inspired, inerrant, changeless word of God - the Holy Bible (cf. James 1:25; Jude 3). The church does not need tongue speaking today because it has the confirmed word of God (cf. Mark 16:20).

With respect and love I would point out to you that if the denomination you hold dear is wrong in this area it may be wrong in many other areas. Consider the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Where is this found in the New Testament? Salvation is by faith (Yes!), but not by **“faith only”** (James 2:24). What about repentance of sin? It is also necessary for salvation (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30,31). The SBC fails to emphasize it. And why does the SBC have a schizophrenic view of baptism? They rightly stress the importance of adult immersion but AFTER one is supposedly “saved,” not in order to be saved or “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is not some quaint ritual ones does to “join the church.” It is a command of Christ one obeys out of faith in order to come in contact with the saving blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-10; Col. 2:12). No amount of feigned love for the Lord can remove this command. **“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:15,16).

My Baptist friends, I could mention many more things about the SBC that are unscriptural. But instead I plead with you to leave this man-made religious organization and go back to the Bible. There you will find the words of life. **“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”** (John 6:63).

Sincerely,

Roelf L. Ruffner

[<http://www.charismanews.com/us/49661-southern-baptists-change-policy-on-speaking-in-tongues> as of May 20, 2015.]

GOD WANTS US TO REALIZE HIS GOAL FOR US

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

The Christian life should be a “transformed” life. In

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context the apostle Paul wrote this command to Christians who lived in a thoroughly pagan society: idolatry and concurrent sexual immorality were rampant; life was cheap; and ethics were bought and sold to the highest bidder. For most Gentile Christians life changed radically when they were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”** (Rom. 6:6). But the transformed life of the Christian is not merely “putting lipstick on a pig.” Too many today claim to be transformed and feign an undying “love of the Lord” but their untransformed lives confess otherwise.

The Christian’s body is to be a **“living sacrifice”** (Rom. 12:1) for the whole world to see. Our offering of this sacrifice upon the altar of daily living is to **“prove”** (Rom. 12:2) what God wants out of restored human beings: **“that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”** In essence, our bodies should show an unbelieving world that we are new people outwardly as well as inwardly.

That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24 *ASV*—1901).

That “new man” should be a walking billboard for the gospel, especially for sinners who never crack the pages of the Holy Bible yet see us day by day.

The reason for this required physical sacrifice is Christ’s sacrifice for my sins. As my Savior He was the first to sacrifice His body so I might be free to follow His example. **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Tit. 2:11,12).

Dear Christian, is this your goal? How is your sacrifice? Is it pleasing to God/ in harmony with His word? If not, repent this very hour and leave all those things that hinder you at the foot of the cross. The obvious come to mind: immodest clothing, drug abuse, the beer can, the cigarette, snuff, etc. What about uncontrolled weight, slovenliness in appearance and personal grooming? **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”** (1 Cor. 6:19). The whole world is watching our sacrifice and so is the Lord (cf. Mal. 1:6-8; Mark 12:41-44).

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

(“Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind” by Frederick C. Maker)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dear_Lord_and_Father_of_Mankind as of June 24, 2015.]

“WHO WILL HAVE ALL MEN TO BE SAVED...”

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn” (Pro. 29:2).

I know of no other President in American history who has done more damage to this country than our current President, Barack Obama. (And that is saying a lot!) Our economy is severely weakened and is now in its seventh year of “recovery” from the Recession of ’08-09. His ineptness at foreign policy makes our enemies laugh at us and our allies distrust us. He has lied repeatedly to the American people. He picks and chooses which laws he will enforce and which he will ignore. And my list of grievances could go on and on!

The President’s greatest infamy has been in the area of morality. Some have called him our first “homosexual” President, not because of his sexual preference but because of his unabashed promotion of the homosexual agenda (cf. Rom. 1:32). He pursues this agenda with the passion of a crusader. When the U.S. Supreme Court recently made law (rather than interpreting it) by legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide, he had the outside of the White House lit up that night in the colors of the rainbow; the so-called “flag” of the homosexual rights movement. **“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord”** (Pro. 17:15). As a Christian and a citizen, I fear for the future of our country. **“For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord”** (2 Chr. 28:19). God did not destroy Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain because of their inhospitality, but because of their support of unrighteousness (Jude 7). Our President has proven himself to be the enemy of righteousness.

Yet what would you say to President Obama if you had a moment with him? My conversation would begin by saying, “Mr. President, I want you to know I am praying for you every day.” I would then express my many concerns from the Scriptures before I would probably be thrown out. Yes, my friends, we must pray fervently and daily for Barack

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Obama. Consider this command of the apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Who were the “kings” Paul asked the church to pray for in their worship? There were various “kings” (client kings) in Paul’s day but he was speaking primarily of the Emperor of the Roman Empire. The Emperor when Paul wrote this epistle was a vile and heinous creature, Caesar Nero. This was the probably the Emperor that Paul was tried before (cf. Acts 25:11; 2 Tim. 4:16,17). In A.D. 64 Nero sought to blame Christians for the burning of Rome and had many thrown to the dogs, executed, and crucified. Legend says of Nero that he had Paul executed not long afterwards.

Why were the early Christians to pray for Nero? Why pray for Barack Obama?

“...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

The Christian should want a stable world so that all men, including the President, might have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and obey it.

My friends God is at work in the rulers of this world, such as the President, whether we agree with them or not (Daniel 2:21). Even the most vile ruler has authority given him or her by God (Rom. 13:1-7; John 19:10, 11). They will have to answer someday to the Almighty for their misdeeds and abuse of that authority.

And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work (Ecc. 3:16, 17).

Let us pray for the nation and the President. Let us also pray that he will be defeated in his efforts to transform this nation into something neither God nor its founders ever intended for it to be. Let us pray that our rulers and our people will repent and follow God rather than the devil. That hearts will be turned from destruction and to the gospel (cf. Acts 4:23-31; 26:18).

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the

unjust” (Mat. 5:43-45).

[[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero_as_of_July_9, 2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero_as_of_July_9,_2015)]

ROADBLOCKS TO FAITH

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43).

Who were these “chief rulers” who believed on Jesus but did not want to confess it publicly? They may have been members of the Jewish religious council, the Sanhedrin, composed of seventy prominent citizens of ancient Israel. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were among their number. John indicates that “many” “believed on” Jesus. They had heard His teachings for over three years and may have witnessed some of His miracles, yet they refused to confess Him as the Christ. They knew the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament but failed to acknowledge them regarding Jesus. “Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:9,10).

Why did they not confess the obvious—that Jesus was the Christ? What was the roadblock to obedient faith? John indicates that one reason was fear of disgrace. The Jewish officials had determined that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Christ they would be cast out of the synagogue. “**These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue**” (John 9:22). The synagogue was the center of Jewish life and to be expelled was a disgrace. What about our fear of disgrace? Many Christians have undergone persecution by society, friends and family because of their decision not just to believe on Christ but to obey Him.

And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:40,41).

Another reason lay in the opinion that many of the Jewish officials had of Jesus. They saw Him as a backwoods preacher who threatened their positions (John 7:41, 52). Those who wondered if Jesus was the Christ had great regard for these men. How many today fail to obey the Gospel because of the regard they have for men who are in essence false teachers? They teach and preach a gospel that is not the old Jerusalem gospel and which will not save anyone in eternity. They may hold some position of authority in a denomination or a religious institution, but they teach a false gospel and are accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9).

John indicates that these wannabe believers valued the

“praise of men.” They liked being called “Master” or “Rabbi” in the market place (Mat. 23:1-12). They would probably have lost that title if they confess that Jesus was the Christ. But following the Lord often requires going to the back of the bus. And we all secretly long to be praised by others. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

This brings us to the root of all roadblocks to faith—a lack of self-denial and a lack of love for God. These rulers could not humble themselves and confess that Jesus was who the evidence says He was – the Son of God. They would have had to dethrone themselves in their hearts and enthrone the Lord. “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 18:3). For most folks to believe in Christ they must first disobey self to obey

the Lord, in other words to love Him more than they love themselves. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

The sad point of this event in John 12 is that some of these same rulers a few days later sided with the high priest Caiaphas and demanded Jesus be crucified by the Gentiles on the false charge of blasphemy. Their belief in Jesus was shown to be only an inch deep.

Dear reader, what about us? Are we so wrapped up in ourselves and what others think that we fail to show obedient faith? “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

—2530 Moore Court Dr.
Columbia, TN 38401

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WE CANNOT TELL

Don Tarbet

There are many types of questions that can be asked in the religious world. The enemies of Jesus often asked questions to trick Him into an answer they could use against Him. Sometimes Jesus asked probing questions that could put to silence His opposition. In Matthew 21, we read about the chief priests and elders who came to Jesus as He was teaching in the temple. They asked Him **“By what authority doest thou these things?”** Jesus turned the tables on them and asked them a question, with the statement that if they would answer His question, then He would answer theirs. This seems fair enough, as He had nothing to hide, and by making this arrangement, He would be able to ask them a question that would be thought provoking, and put them to silence. As a result, He never even had to answer their question, for His question put an end to their treachery. He asked them if the baptism of John (which they rejected) was **“from heaven, or of men.”** Before they answered, they **“reasoned with themselves,”** to attempt to find a way out of their predicament. They knew that if they said it was from **“heaven,”** that He would want to know why they had not believe it, but if they said **“from men,”** they would arouse the anger of the people. So, they said, **“We cannot tell”** (*KJV*), or **“We know not”** (*ASV*). They were either lying, or trying to evade giving either answer by simply refusing to answer. They knew they were in a predicament and would be in trouble with either answer they gave, so their “answer” was simply a refusal to answer the Lord.

There is a philosophy of men that the Greek term *monogenes* in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9, which is translated **“only begotten”** with reference to Jesus, should actually and properly be translated “unique” or “one of a kind” instead of **“only begotten”** as found in the *KJV*, *NKJ*, *ASV*, and *NASV*. It is clear from Matthew 1 and Luke 1 that indeed Jesus was begotten by God by means of the Spirit, so that He would be born of a virgin, as Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 7:14). There could be no birth without a begetting, and the begetting of Jesus was the “only” time that anyone would be “begotten” in this manner in the history of the world, and it was by “God”(or the Father). So, it makes good sense to think or to say that Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God”, or “of the Father”, as these good translations render the meaning of the original Greek. Those who maintain that it should be “unique” are not willing to tell us why Jesus was “unique” as God’s Son as a gift to the world. He is unique because of the way He came into the world, through a miraculous conception and birth through a woman that had not “known” man. Why are so many afraid to say or believe this?

I heard one young preacher refer to Jesus as “God’s one and only Son.” After his sermon I asked him why he said that, and he said that he was doing so to try to destroy the concept that Jesus was **“the only begotten Son.”** He had just come out of one of our brotherhood preaching schools. In studying and communicating with some who maintain that *monogenes* should be, or can be translated “unique”, I have pressed them to say one way or another, that (1) Jesus was the only begotten Son, or (2) Jesus was not the only begotten Son. I wanted them to put into print either one of these two statements. If they would actually say Jesus was not **“the only begotten Son of God,”** they know that the tables would be turned on them. They would know that not only were they discrediting the four finest English translations we have in the world, but would be going against the context of Jesus’ conception and birth as plainly revealed in the New Testament. Then, if they would actually say (or admit) that Jesus was indeed **“the only begotten Son of God,”** they would be in disagreement with their preaching brothers who deny this truth. They realize their quandary, so, they “cannot tell”, or they “do not know”. Either answer they give (other than saying they cannot tell, or do not know), would get them in trouble with other preachers, or with the one asking the question. I would like to point this out to the “unique” or “one and only” crowd in our brotherhood. I have, in correspondence, asked some to answer either way, and I am still waiting for their answer. Why cannot they answer, except to say, “I am convinced that ‘unique’ is the correct translation”?

Jesus was not the **“one and only son of God,”** for Adam is said to be His son, in Luke 3:38. Adam was “unique” because he was the only man God ever created miraculously as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus was not merely “unique”, but He was the only One who became the Son of God by means of the Spirit causing a virgin to conceive and give birth to One who would be “called” the Son of God (Luke 1:30-35). Why is this something to refuse to believe? In view of the context of Jesus’ birth, the Greek word *monogenes* correctly describes that Father-Son relationship. The Greek word *monon* means “only”, and *gennaō* (changed to *genes* when combined with *monon*) is related to “beget” (to become the father of). The translators of the *KJV*, *NKJ*, *ASV* and *NASV* were correct in their work.

The deity of Jesus begins with His miraculous conception, and did not begin at the actual birth of Jesus. To deny the miraculous conception is a strike against the virgin birth and the deity of the Lord. What modernist would say he denied the virgin birth, but believed in the miraculous conception? They go together as Siamese twins. What believer is

consistent when he denies the miraculous conception, but believes in the virgin birth? I suspect that there are preachers who would say they believe in the miraculous conception, who at the same time refuse to say “Jesus was the only begotten Son of God.” I am not one of those. Brethren ought to wake up, and get out of the bed of the chief priests and elders

who say, “We cannot tell”, or “We do not know.”

— 215 W. Sears
Denison, Texas 75020
donwtarbet@cableone.net



SPECIAL MUSIC IN THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH

Brock Hartwigsen

Some congregations of the church have started using what they call “Special Music.” “Special Music” would be choirs, solos, quartets, etc. that sing to the congregation [assembled for worship—*Editor*] as opposed to common or ordinary congregational singing.

For those who believe that “Special Music” is scriptural, all they need to do is cite but one verse that condones “Special Music.” [Its New Testament authorization can be ascertained by a direct statement, of which a command is one kind of a direct statement, or an approved example, or implication—*Editor*]. Thus, in this article we want to examine the question, “Is ‘Special Music’ acceptable to God or is congregational singing the only one approved by God?”

Congregational Singing Is Authorized

Congregational singing is not only authorized, but it is also the only singing authorized. It is the only singing that can do what we are told should be done when we sing.

Ephesians 5:19—“**Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.**”

Note that Paul wrote “**speaking to yourselves**” not “listening to some others.” With “Special Music” some speak while others listen. This is not what this verse teaches.

“**Yourselves**” is a third person “reflexive pronoun.”¹ “The reflexive pronoun is used when the action indicated by the verb [in this case “speaking”] reflex back to the subject.”² Please consider the following comments about Ephesians 5:19³

... a “reflexive” pronoun of the third person ... shows that the person who acts and the person who receives the action is the same. In other words, while one is speaking to others in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, others are also speaking to him in the same way.

This passage authorizes everyone simultaneously singing to each other. It does not authorize some of the congregation singing and others just listening, anymore than it authorizes mechanical instruments of music.

Ephesians 5:18 tells Christians to “**be filled with the**

spirit.” Verse 19 says that such is done by “**speaking to yourselves ...**” When choirs, soloists, quartets, etc. sing they are “filled with the spirit,” but the rest of the congregation is not. Choirs, soloists, quartets, etc. are not only not authorized, but they deny the nonparticipants the joy of being “**filled with the spirit.**”

Colossians 3:16—“**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**”

Note that Paul wrote “teaching and admonishing one another” not “listening to one another teaching and admonishing.” With “Special Music” some teach and admonish while others listen. This is not what this verse teaches.

“**One another**” is also a third person “reflexive pronoun.”⁴ In this verse it is the “**teaching and admonishing**” that reflexes back to the subject. This passage authorizes everyone simultaneously “**teaching and admonishing**” each other in song. It does not authorize some of the congregation teaching and admonishing and others just listening, anymore than it authorizes mechanical instruments of music.

We are told in this verse to “**let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ...**” This is done when we teach and admonish “**one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.**” Choirs, soloists, quartets, etc. are not only not authorized, but they deny the nonparticipants the joy of letting “**the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly ...**”

Congregational singing is not only authorized in the Bible, but it is the only type of singing that enables everyone to be “**filled with the spirit**” and to “**let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly.**” “Special Music” denies some, if not most of the congregation, of these wonderful things.

Attempts To Present Biblical Arguments For “Special Music”

Reflexive Pronoun: Some argue that the reflexive pronoun does not always require everyone doing the same thing at the same time. They cite Matthew 16:7-8 where we are told that the apostles “**reasoned among themselves.**” “**Themselves**” is a reflexive pronoun. They argue that they

were not all speaking at the same time, but first one would speak and then another.

They are right; **“themselves”** is a reflexive pronoun. But, they are wrong because the action referred to by the pronoun is not **“speaking”** and thus does not imply that they were all speaking at the same time. The action it refers to is **“reasoned.”** The action in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 is singing and just like the reasoning of Matthew 16 the singing of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 must be done by all at the same time.

Four Part Harmony: Some point out that when we sing together we do not always all sing at the same time. Sometimes the men sing and the women do not and visa versa.

They are right, in four part harmony the singers often have different musical scores and parts in the song. But, they are all still singing together. Singing together does not necessarily require everyone to be singing the same words at the same time. It just requires them to all be singing the song together. **“Special Music”** only allows some to join in singing a song, whereas four part harmony singing allows everyone to join in singing a song.

Praying and Preaching: Some argue that everything we do in worship does not involve everyone actively doing the same thing at the same time. When it comes to preaching and teaching the preacher or teacher teaches and admonishes and the congregation listens and learns. When it comes to praying one person prays to God on the behalf of the congregation and the congregation listens.

It is true that we do have New Testament authorization of one person preaching or teaching or praying while everyone else in the worship assembly listens. But, there is not a direct statement, example, or implication when it comes to singing in the worship assemblies of the saints.

1 Corinthians 14:26: Some argue that Paul tells us that when the church in Corinth came together some of them had **“a psalm.”** Paul does not say that such a thing is wrong; he just admonishes them to be careful that **“all things be done unto edifying.”** Therefore, they argue **“Special Music”** is biblical.

This verse deals with a member of the congregation who gets a miraculous revelation from God that is in the form of **“a psalm, ... a doctrine, ... a tongue, ... a revelation, ... an interpretation.”** The days of miraculous gifts has ended (1 Cor. 13:8-13). [The church could not have an assembly like this today if it tried—*Editor*] But, members do learn new songs and some even write new songs.

A song leader might want the congregation to learn a new song. [We would like to see and hear a congregation sing a song that they do not know how to sing. Surely we can understand that people must learn new songs before they can properly worship God with them—*Editor*] Maybe he and only a few members of the congregation know the song. He

leads the song. Only a few sing while the rest look at the musical score and listen to the words. In a typical congregation some more brethren will join in singing the second verses and most will be singing some of it by the third verse. The song leader and the few who sang with him initially were not singing as a choir to entertain or to emotionally impact anyone. No, they were singing in order to teach the congregation a new song. That is not the purpose of **“Special Music.”** Its purpose is to entertain and/or to have an emotional impact and neither one of those are the biblical purposes of singing in worship. [Also to draw attention to those performing the **“special music.”**—*Editor*]

Further Proofs That “Special Music” Is Wrong

It requires most of the congregation to sin: Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 require every Christian present to sing. When a choir, a soloist, a quartet, etc. sings, other Christians are required to not sing, which means they must disobey Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

Women: Women cannot take a teaching role in the public assemblies (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Unless choirs, soloist, quartets are all male, they violate God’s restriction of women not teaching [over] men [or exercising dominion over men—*Editor*].

Proxy Worship: Proxy Worship is when somebody is authorized to worship for another person. By definition when choirs, soloist, quartets, etc. are authorized to sing for the rest of the congregation, that is Proxy Worship. One member of the church can no more sing for another than he can take the Lord’s Supper for another.

Wrong Reason: Supporters of **“Special Music”** might deny it, but the objective of **“Special Music”** in worship is not to please God. It is to please man. Its purpose is to entertain and/or to have an emotional impact on the audience, i.e. ,the congregation.

Wrong Church: The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, literally means a called-out group of people. A choir or quartet called out of the general assembly to sing to the ones not called out is in essence **“a church within a church.”** Jesus built His one church and we have no authority to build little churches within it!

Historical Evidence: We profess to be the 1st Century church in the 21st Century. The use of **“Special Music”** will put an end to that claim because the 1st century church used congregational singing only.

Lyman Coleman, a church historian, wrote: **“The prevailing mode of singing during the first three centuries was congregational.”**⁵

Ignatius (110 A.D.): **“Now all of you together become a choir so that being harmoniously in concord and receiving the key note from God in unison you may sing with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father.”**⁶

Professor Donald Hustad, who was formerly Director of the Sacred Music Department at the Moody Bible Institute, wrote: “The early worship music of the Christian church was completely congregational, so far as we can tell.”⁷

If we are going to be the 1st Century church in the 21st Century as we claim, then we will use congregational singing only.

CONCLUSION

“Special Music” in [the public corporate worship of the Lord’s church—*Editor*] is not acceptable to God because it is not scriptural. It is not scriptural because:

- There is [no New Testament authority—direct statement, example, or implication] for its use.
- It does not allow everyone to be “**filled with the spirit**” and to “**let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly,**” which the worshipers are commanded to do.
- It authorizes women to teach [or exercise dominion over] men..

- It is proxy worship.
- It has the wrong objectives.
- It creates a church within the church.
- It is not how the 1st century Church worshiped.

END NOTES

- 1 Zodhiates, Spiros; *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (AMG Pub., Chattanooga, TN, 1992), p. 641.
- 2 Ibid., p. 870
- 3 Powers, Larry; *Are Church Choirs And Solos Scriptural?*
- 4 Op Cit., Zodhiates, Spiros, p. 665
- 5 Coleman, Lyman; *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, pages 329-330
- 6 (Ignatius, ca. 110 A.D., *Early Christians Speak*, p. 149.
- 7 Professor Donald Hustad who was formerly Director of the Sacred Music Department at the Moody Bible Institute, p. 46.

— 189 Brookside Drive
Stanton, KY. 40380

THE MISTREATING OF GOSPEL PREACHERS BY UNSCRUPULOUS BRETHREN

Dub Mowery

I consider myself richly blessed in having obeyed the gospel of Christ and devoting most of my life to proclaiming it. Thus far, this has covered a period of more than sixty years. If material things of this life had been my priority, then my life would not have been devoted to preaching “**the unsearchable riches of Christ**” (Eph. 3:8).

I began “filling-in” preaching in 1955 when the opportunity came my way. After my “better half” Charlotte and I were married in 1960 the opportunity for me to preach full time for a church of Christ came a little over a year afterwards. It was necessary for me to take a cut in salary in order to do so, but a house and utilities were included. My weekly pay check for our first year was fifty dollars a week. When we were there a year they raised my salary an additional five dollars a week. We had one child, our son Paul, who was about a year old. After being there about eighteen months it was necessary for me to seek another congregation that would provide more pay in order to adequately make “ends-meet.”

Before I found another congregation we moved in temporarily with Charlotte’s grandmother who had raised her and her brother after both of their parents died before she was a year old. This was at Idabel, Oklahoma, our hometown. An elder of a church of Christ in a town north of Durant, Oklahoma had visited with me at my first fulltime work. I had

explained to him we would have to find another church of Christ for me to preach that would pay us more money to live on. He later called me to come up and preach for them on a Wednesday night.

My money was running out and we were down to four tires. I bought a vulcanized tire that had good looking tread on it. With the last dollars in my pocket I bought gas for our car for the trip of about 140 miles. We left our son Paul with his great grandmother. In making the trip we approached the town in which I would be preaching that evening. A large rubber plug came out of the vulcanized tire and so I had to change tires. Now we were back down to four tires. That evening I preached as scheduled and the two elders talked with me afterwards. They wanted to know how much I would need in salary. I said, “At least seven-five dollars!” Well, they thought that was too much.

That night Charlotte and I stayed in the home of the elder I first met. I guess we were a couple of timid youngsters. I said to my wife, “Charlotte, they didn’t pay me anything! Do you think I ought to say something about it?” She responded, “Well, I don’t know!” The next morning as the elder’s wife was cooking us breakfast, I said to the elder, “Ya’ll didn’t pay me anything last night, were you going to pay me anything?” He responded, “Well, if you wanted something you should

have asked for it last night!” I said, “Well, that’s alright, forget it!” Our trip back to Idabel was uncertain without a spare tire and when we got there the gas tank gauge was setting on empty.

Through the years I have had opportunity to be considered as the preacher for a number of churches of Christ. Usually they provided us some compensation, but often it did not adequately cover our expenses. There have been a few of them which did not provide us any money. One church near Tulsa with a membership of about 200, to which I made a special trip to see about the work, driving around two hundred miles (one way), scheduled me to speak on a Wednesday evening. Making two trips there from Texas was probably over eight hundred miles. Those brethren did not pay me a “red cent.” There have been other churches of Christ which did not provide us any money. It seems that some of them do not think they are obligated to pay a preacher if he speaks on a Wednesday evening. When I began full time preaching my wardrobe was usually one “dress suit.” I managed to get by with it until a hole wore in the seat of its breeches. I still love to preach the inspired Word! Even though salary was not and is not my first priority I still want to provide adequately for my wife and myself.

It has been my experience that when most congregations decide to change preachers, it is for one of the following reasons: (1) probably the number one reason is they want a “new entertainer” in the sense of hearing a different preacher; (2) a close second reason is they do not like to hear specific Biblical teachings. It is my conviction that these are the two primary reasons the average congregation decides to make a change. There are certainly other reasons or excuses for getting rid of a preacher and hiring another. Certainly if the preacher is teaching error or failing to perform his duties in other areas then unless he ceases to promote false teaching, or to carry out his responsibilities in other areas of his work, there would certainly be justification for dismissing him as their preacher. Of the churches of Christ I have left to preach for another congregation, I did so strictly on my own. Yet there were a few in which they wanted to make a change. I honestly do not recall any of them asking me to leave because of me teaching religious error. Oh there may have been some brethren who did not want to hear specific Biblical truths. I have strived to preach the whole counsel of God during my tenure with a congregation, as the Apostle Paul did (Acts 20:26-27). This is not to say I have never been wrong about anything I’ve believed or taught. There have been sound faithful brethren who have helped me to see the false concept I had held in the past on specific doctrines. Also, I have many times given careful consideration of what I have said in the pulpit or Bible class and realized I failed to explain clearly what I was trying to present. There has been at least a few times in which someone completely misunderstood a thought I was attempting to get across.

Many brethren do not conduct themselves in a Christian

manner when they want to make a change of preachers in their congregation. Sometimes a segment of a church wants to get a “new preacher.” They commence to conduct themselves in an unchristian manner by hardly speaking unto their present preacher or shaking his hand. Also, they may say some “cutting remarks” and belittle him. If some brethren want to get a different preacher for their local congregation for which I am preaching, then the men of the church should have a business meeting and say, “Brother Mowery, some of us think it is time for us to change preachers. There are some of the brethren who are satisfied and would like for you to continue as our preacher. Those of us who want a change appreciate the work you have done here, but for some time it seems we are not moving forward as a congregation.” I would probably respond, “Brethren I appreciate having had the opportunity to serve as your preacher. Please provide me adequate time to obtain a new work.” I have never attempted to split a congregation over such a matter. Usually I go about seeking another church of Christ to be their preacher. Most fair-minded brethren will give a preacher time to find another congregation to preach for. There have been those unscrupulous brethren who have almost pushed the preacher and his family out the door. I have never heard of this, but when it was taking me more time to find a new work, one brother insisted they charge me rent for my family and me remaining in the house for an additional month. Even so, I do not regret devoting my life to preaching the gospel of Christ. We preachers may feel that some of our brethren do not always treat us right.

Surely none of us have been mistreated as the Apostle Paul was. There were those both in the church and out of it that hindered him in his effort to teach and preach the inspired Word. Here is what he wrote concerning how he had been treated:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities (2 Cor. 11:23-30).

The Apostle Paul wrote those words because there were some in the church at Corinth who were attempting to discredit him. He was pointing out he had to endure things those who were working against him were not experiencing.

I am now eighty years old, but still preaching for a con-

gregation, the church of Christ at Clarksville, Texas. As a gospel preacher I strive to adhere unto the inspired Words of the Apostle Paul unto Timothy as a preacher concerning both doctrine and my own life and conduct. Here is what Paul said unto him: **“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”** (1 Tim. 4:16).

It is my prayer brethren will be more mature in their relation with gospel preachers. The world is turning more evil and all brethren in the church need to have love for one another and work together in reaching out unto our fellowman with the **“unsearchable riches of Christ”** (Eph. 3:8).

— nativeheritage1@gmail.com.



DOGMATIC, NARROW-MINDED, AND LEGALISTIC

Thomas F. Eaves, Sr.

There are, in the church today, those who attempt to neutralize God’s revelation to man with intimidation. These compromisers do not want to oppose error in any way, and are influencing souls to turn from God’s word to follow the path of least resistance, i.e., the path of worldly acceptance and religious union.

Compromising Christian—I suppose you have the old foggy idea that some people are going to roast in an eternal Hell.

Christian—The Bible teaches that each will reap what is sown (Gal. 6:7-8), and there are some activities which will result in man’s condemnation (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). God himself teaches that some of his rebellious creatures will be lost (Mat. 25:46).

Compromising Christian—Why that is the most dogmatic, narrow-minded, legalistic thing I have ever heard!

Christian—It is the teaching of God’s word!

Compromising Christian—You’re probably an old moss back who believes that shorts and other immodest clothing, mixed swimming, dancing and social drinking are sin.

Christian—Yes, it is a sin, but not because I think it is a sin but because God condemns these acts as works of the flesh (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:19-21; i.e., revelling, drunkenness, lasciviousness).

Compromising Christian — Why that’s the most dogmatic, narrow-minded, legalistic thing I have ever heard!

Christian—But it is God’s message!

Compromising Christian—I imagine you have the same narrow views concerning divorce and remarriage.

Christian—God’s word is very plain concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage. God’s plan for marriage is one woman for one man for one lifetime (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:5-6; Rom. 7:1-4). If divorce takes place it must be for fornication (Mat.

19:9; Mark 10:12). To put away a mate for any other cause and to remarry is to be guilty of adultery (Mat. 19:9).

Compromising Christian —Well, I have never...that’s the most dogmatic, narrow-minded, legalistic thing I have ever heard.

Christian —It is taught by inspiration!

Compromising Christian —Do you honestly, actually, truly believe that using instrumental music in worship is a sin, and that people will be lost in Hell because they use it in their worship?

Christian—It isn’t what I believe that is important, what is important is what God has commanded. Each time music is mentioned in the New Testament (in the worship of Christians) it specifies vocal music (Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; 13:15; Jam. 5:13). The transgression of God’s standard is sin (1 John 3:4). It is God’s word which will be the standard of judgment (John 12:48-49).

Compromising Christian—That is the absolute end. That’s the most dogmatic, narrow-minded, legalistic thing I have heard in my whole life!

But all the ranting, raving, intimidation and disparaging remarks do not change one iota of God’s revelation to man. It still stands, and will continue to stand (1 Pet. 1:25), till judgment when it will be God’s standard for judging the works of men (John 12:48-49).

The characters referred to in this article are not fictitious; they are real and exist in many congregations in the brotherhood today. May the compromising Christian see the error of his/her way and repent so that salvation might be theirs in the hereafter.

—Deceased



(Continued From Page 3)

continue in fellowship with one another under the authority of Jesus as it is revealed on the pages of the New Testament. I pointed this out in the New Testament citations given in my post this morning.

3) Baptist doctrine, as well as most denominational churches, teach that people are saved the moment they believe in Christ. Baptist teach that such believers are saved and are baptized to get into the Baptist Church, but not in order to be saved from their sins. Without realizing it you are teaching that it is more difficult to get into the Baptist church than it is to be saved by Jesus. Thus, since the Baptist Church and no other denomination has a thing to do with one's salvation, why be a member of any of them? Such is the implication of your doctrine. If a person is saved, as you believe and teach, by belief in Christ without doing anything else, then why can't those saved people be a member of the Baptist Church without being baptized?

4) The New Testament teaches that believers are saved when they are baptized for or unto (the Greek word *eis* means "in order to a given end), and is thus translated "for" or "unto," meaning in order to salvation. It is belief plus baptism that equals salvation (Mark 16:16). Thus, the believing and repentant Saul of Tarsus was commanded to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Therefore, the apostle Peter could write to Christians saying that "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21).

The only doorway for believers into Christ is to be baptized into Christ wherein God has located all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—forgiveness of sins being one of those spiritual blessings (Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 1:3). Nowhere does the New Testament teach that one believes *into* Christ. Explain to me

why anyone would accept a baptism that is contrary to that baptism taught by the New Testament of Jesus Christ. By what authority would I accept such a baptism?

5) What you teach would have the apostles of Christ classified as: James (a Baptist); Peter (Roman Catholic); John (a Methodist); Andrew (a Presbyterian), Philip (a Lutheran), Thomas (thought that one church was as good as another), etc. That is the way denominationalism views the church, but it is not the way the church is set out and defined on the pages of the New Testament. Indeed, the first protestant denomination did not appear on the earth until 1500 years after the Lord's church was established on the first Pentecost Day in Jerusalem following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the inspired Luke records in Acts chapter 2.

Richard responded to me with the following post.

All I will say in conclusion is this. I had a roommate in college who was Church of Christ and we had many discussions. He never converted me and I never converted him. We just bantered ideas about, similar to what we are doing here. As I said to him: don't try to read too much into the salvation doctrine (it's really as simple as accepting it by faith), don't try to intellectualize the scriptures (don't think God intended for us to do that) and don't just try and pull certain scriptures to prove your point. Read them in the full context.

I posted the following in answer to Richard's foregoing post.

Thank you for your response, such as it is. Richard, with all due respect, you would never make that kind of response to those who study medicine or law or any other discipline. Moreover, in my academic studies from the bachelors all the way through



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the PhD, I never heard from any secularist that I should not study my discipline too much or too deeply. And, it is also true of studying in religious higher education. There is only one way to know something and that is to know it by study, study, study, and never stop studying (2 Tim. 2:15; John 12:48). If one follows your advice concerning preparing one's doctoral dissertation or getting prepared for the defense of one's dissertation, that person had just as well never started such an intense study. But, I certainly respect your decision to cease the discussion. I wish everyone the best. Take care.

Richard posted the following in reply to my previous post: "The Pharisees discussed such things and Jesus tried his best to make them see that salvation was not an intellectual thing but simply a trusting by faith thing. The best to you as well."

Knowing that such a mindset as Richard revealed in his last two posts made it clear to me that he was not open to further discussion, I posted the scripture reference, "John 8:31, 32" as my last reply to him directly and at that particular time and place. The explicit and implicit teaching of our Lord in John 8:31, 32 makes it clear that becoming a Christian and living the Christian life involves the right use of one's intellect and rational powers in learning and applying the truth of the gospel to our lives.

Clearly, Richard has no idea of why the Pharisees were rebuked and condemned by our Lord. During Jesus' earthly ministry He never condemned a Pharisee or any other Jew for being very careful to keep all the commandments of the Law of Moses. He rebuked and condemned them for binding their traditions on the people. For in so doing they set aside much of the Law of Moses. He also exposed their arrogant apostasy and dishonesty that was characteristic of them and blinded them to the truth our Lord taught.

One other person who knows Sandra and Richard sought to defend Sandra's comments recorded earlier. Danny posted in defense of Sandra:

I think Sandra is clearly attempting to make the point that she is a Christian based on her non-meritorious expression of faith in accepting Jesus Christ as her personal Savior—not on the basis of her "Baptist" faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). She did not say that specifically in those words, but I know her and I am positive that was the point she was making.

It took me several readings to catch your main point, but you have a conditional clause for one to experience true salvation (and be in the true Church of Christ), and that is, you must be "baptized" to complete your salvation.

I probably agree with you in a lot of areas and in a lot of points. I appreciate your zeal for God. But, baptism as a requirement for salvation is definitely not one of them.

If baptism is required for salvation, then Christ lied to the thief on the cross when He said, "Today, you shall be with me in paradise." It was an impossible for the thief to come down from the cross to be baptized.

If I misunderstood you, my deepest apologies, but on Sandra's point, I am in total agreement.

Of course, Danny is a Baptist. He thus teaches Baptist doctrine, because Baptist doctrine believed and practiced is the only thing that can make a Baptist. Danny does not understand that the New Testament teaches that salvation is conditional. Danny views all acts of obedience to be meritorious acts. He is so tied to that view that he cannot understand that obedience to the truth is by no means an effort for anyone to earn their salvation through meritorious acts or works. Thus, when Danny, Sandra, and Richard come to any passage that plainly teaches conditional salvation they see all conditions one must meet in order to be saved as meritorious acts or works obligating God to pay one with salvation. Thus, they run to such passages as that of the thief on the cross in their attempts to prove that one does not have to be baptized to be saved, but they will demand that one must be baptized to get in the Baptist Church—according to their doctrine a very useless religious organization. As to the uselessness of that false religious organization when it comes to offering salvation to anyone, gospel truth and Baptist doctrine both agree.

I posted the following in answer to Danny and he chose not to respond to my post.

When Christ was alive on the earth He could forgive sins in any way He chose to do so. But the only way that we today know what Christ would have us to do in order to be saved is by His last will and testament (Heb. 9:17). Just before our Lord ascended to Heaven He plainly said that belief plus baptism equals salvation. Moreover, every conversion account in the book of Acts places baptism before salvation. As Peter wrote "**baptism doth also now save us**" (1 Peter 3:21). And, that is the reason the believing Saul of Tarsus was told to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16), and the reason Peter commanded the believers, Cornelius and his household, to be baptized (Acts 10:48). The baptism commanded by the apostle Peter is no more a meritorious act than is one's belief in Christ; they are both works of God (John 6:29; 8:24; Heb. 11:6). "**Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?**" (Jam. 2:17:20).

Much more could have been said to Sandra, Richard, and Danny, but they did not desire to continue to study. Why is that the case? It is with these three Baptists as it is with all who are content in their denominational dogmas and the same is true with many unfaithful members of the church—for whatever reason (none of them scriptural) they do not intend to change their beliefs and practices to conform to gospel truth. Thus, as we pointed out in the beginning of this editorial, "**They stumble at the Lord, being disobedient**" (1 Pet. 2:8).

—David P. Brown, Editor

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Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 535-5807.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk. Keith Sisman, Gospel Preacher. Contacts: Keith Sisman [By phone inside USA (281) 475-8247; Inside the U.K.: Cambridge (England): 01223-911243]; Alternative Cambridge contacts: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Postal/mailing Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Sauffley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

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Helena—Mountain View Church of Christ, 1400 Joslyn Street, Helena, Mt. 59601, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Matt Bidmead (406) 461-9199.

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-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (8-3) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803)279-8663

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 4224 N. I-35 (Greenway Plaza, just north of Cracker Barrel). Mailing address: 4224 N. I-35, Denton, TX 76207. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Website: www.northpointcoc.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 387-1429; dubmcclish@gmail.com.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring *Contending for the Faith* Lectures, and the internet school, Truth Bible Institute. www.churchesofchrist.com.

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