

Truth

Magazine

*Taking His hand,
helping each other home.*



®

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OPEN ISSUE

**“You have established
all the boundaries of the
earth; You have made
summer and winter”
(Psalm 74:17).**



Truth Magazine

Taking His hand,
helping each other home.



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Open Issue

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Denominational concepts creep into our thinking, especially in discussing salvation. We are saved by grace (God's part) through faith (our part). Yet, saving faith is not merely mental assent, but must lead to full obedience.

Casual Attitudes toward Worship

by Mark Mayberry

While the casualness of modern society is reflect in people's dress and demeanor, Christians should manifest respect and reverence in times of worship.

Introduction

Jesus often referred to wedding feasts or marriage suppers in His parables (Matt. 22:2ff; 25:1ff; Luke 12:35ff; 14:7ff; etc.). Christ is the bridegroom (Matt. 9:14-15; John 3:25-30), and the church is His bride (Eph. 5:22-33). She must keep herself free from all defilement (2 Cor. 11:1-3). Heaven is portrayed as the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). In a secondary sense, the imagery of a wedding feast also has application to the assembly of the saints. The words and warnings of Jesus have both immediate and long-term relevance.

Being Inexcusably Absent

Many have a casual attitude toward forsaking the assembly. As it is an honor to be invited to a wedding, so also it is an honor for us to assemble with the saints. Jesus referred to those who callously rejected the king's invitation to attend the wedding feast of his son (Matt. 22:1-10). In like manner, many foolishly forsake the assembling of the saints, not recognizing the benefits and blessings, and also the duties and demands of such occasions (Heb. 10:19-25).

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled

clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb. 10:19-25).

Being Perpetually Late

Many have a casual attitude toward when they arrive at the assembly. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13). Five were wise (bringing

sufficient reserves) and five were foolish (lacking enough oil). When the bridegroom tarried, the foolish virgins had to depart and buy more oil for their lamps. Those who were ready entered with the bridegroom. Afterward, the door was shut. When the foolish virgins arrived late, they desired admission, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us!"

Why were the foolish bridesmaids denied admission? Obviously, they were not sufficiently prepared, nor had they anticipated unforeseen complications. Additionally, their late arrival would have been an unwelcome distraction to the celebration of the wedding feast. Just as we need to be ready for the Lord's return, so also we need to be ready to take part



in the Bible classes and the worship (Luke 12:35-40).

A basic rule of life is, “Be On Time!” In business, one hears, “If you are five minutes early, you are ten minutes late.” What does this mean? If you’re early, you’re on time; if you’re on time, you’re late; if you are late, you are a disturbance and a distraction. Edification cannot occur amid distractions (1 Cor. 14:26-33).

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Cor. 14:26-33).

Being Inappropriately Dressed

Many have a casual attitude toward how they are dressed in the assembly. Jesus taught His disciples the dangers inherent in treating a holy occasion as though it had no significance. In the aforementioned parable of the wedding feast, recorded in Matthew 22:1-14, the king looked over the dinner guests and saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes (v. 11). He asked, “Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?” The man was speechless (v. 12). As punishment, he was bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, in that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 13). While seeking to balance our comments with the teaching of James 2:1-7, which contrasts the differing attitudes men sometimes show toward the rich and the poor, the elders of the Adoue Street congregation

(where I labor) encourage the members to dress appropriately, especially those men who take an active role in leading in worship, waiting on the Lord’s table, etc. Remember, our clothing makes a statement about our assessment of self, and also reflects our view of the Christian assembly, and the associated activities of worship (cf. Ps. 45:13-15; Zech. 3:1-5).

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? (Jas. 2:1-7).

Being Offensively Irreverent

Moving beyond the marriage feast metaphor, we also note similar manifestations. Many have a casual attitude toward the worship that is offered to God during the assembly. Like cynics from the days of Malachi, they say, “The table of the Lord is to be despised,” and disdainfully sniff, “My, how tiresome it is!” Yet, all the while, they offer less than their best, i.e., the blind, the lame, the sick and the stolen (Mal. 1:6-14). Today, similar scoffers ridicule the songs, the prayers, observing the Lord’s supper, the offering, and last but not least, the preaching. Warning against this spirit, Jude spoke of those men who defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile angelic majesties and the things which they do not understand (Jude 8-13).

Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject

authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 8-13).

Being Obnoxiously Petty

Many have a casual attitude toward others during the assembly. Disciples at Corinth corrupted the Lord’s supper, changing it from a spiritual memorial to a common meal, one in which they showed penurious partiality: “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry, and another is drunk” (1 Cor. 11:17-22). The Corinthians also evidenced jealousy, strife and a party spirit (1 Cor. 3:1-9). However, such conduct is incompatible with the self-sacrificial spirit of heavenly wisdom (Jas. 3:13-18).

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do



you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you (1 Cor. 11:17-22).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building (1 Cor. 3:1-9).

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the

gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (Jas. 3:13-18).

Being Defiantly Disobedient

Many have a casual attitude toward the divine pattern that governs the assembly. Offering strange fire to the Lord, Nadab and Abihu did not distinguish between the holy and the profane, and as a result, forfeited their lives (Lev. 10:1-11). In like manner, Uzziah the king disregarded the divine restrictions on priestly service, incurring the rebuke of Azariah and the wrath of God; as a result, he was cursed with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-23). Refusing to go beyond what is written, let us abide in the doctrine of Christ, and thus respect the authority of our Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 John 8-11).

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (2 John 8-11).

Conclusion

Many take a casual approach to God, evidencing indifference to their spiritual obligations. Are you inexcusably absent from the assembly of the saints, or perpetually late to periods of Bible study and worship? When you attend, are you appropriately or inappropriately dressed? What about your attitude and actions? Are you offensively irreverent, obnoxiously petty, or defiantly disobedient? If so, make correction while there is time and opportunity. God's warning to Aaron remains relevant today:

It is what the Lord spoke, saying, "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored" (Lev. 10:3). ■



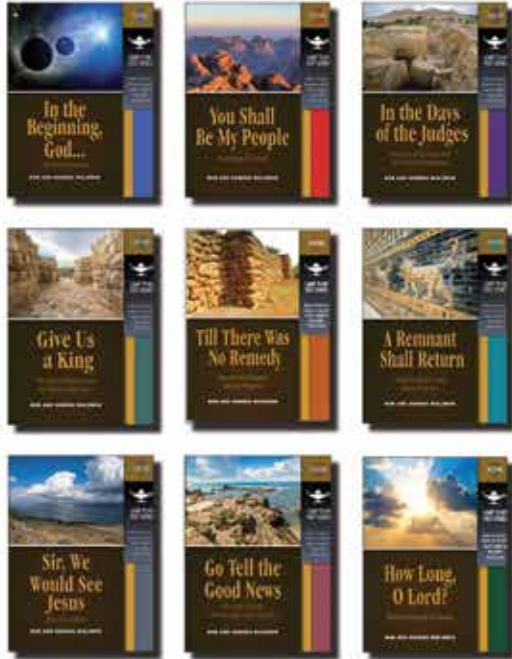
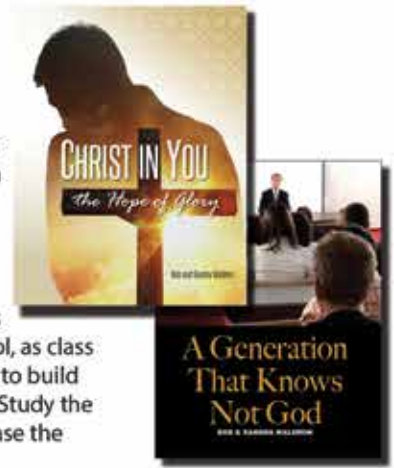
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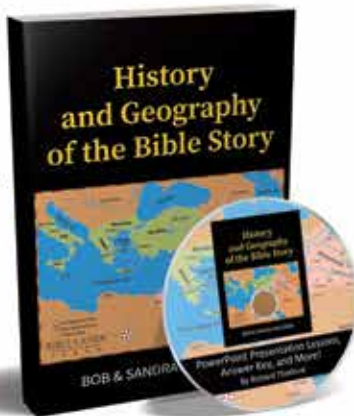
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“Do Not Let Your Left Hand Know What Your Right Hand Is Doing”

By Kyle Pope

Benevolence is both an individual and collective responsibility of Christians. By examining relevant passages, Kyle answers criticisms that are occasionally raised by those who see no difference between these two realms.

Introductions

Some who are critical of churches that oppose financial support of human charitable organizations out of the Sunday collection (because they believe it is unscriptural) often raise the charge that Christians in these congregations are “doing nothing” to help those in need. The question I would ask when we hear that accusation is, “How do you know?”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed charitable giving. He was critical of those who did their “charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them” (Matt. 6:1, NKJV). He commanded His disciples when giving not to “sound a trumpet” about it “in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men” (Matt. 6:2a). Instead, using a personified hyperbole, Jesus taught, “When you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matt. 6:3). Let’s consider what Jesus teaches here in light of the charge that some churches are “doing nothing” to help those in need.

Personification is the figure of speech that attributes personal and conscious actions to inanimate objects. Our hands are not inanimate, but they can not think and perceive on their own. The mind controls the actions of the hands. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and nerves inform the entire body as a whole. The hand cannot literally “know” anything,

and unless it is severed from the body, it cannot do something hidden from the rest of the body. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that states something outside of the realm of what is literally possible in order to emphasize a point. Jesus uses both figures of speech in this text. If one hand could act without the knowledge of the other, there could be no suggestion that one hand was seeking personal glory. It should be the same with charitable giving. To prevent any question about the motives of a person’s giving, disciples of Christ should keep it as private as if one hand could hide its actions from the other.

Christians are to be people who are charitable and compassionate. We are not to pass by “on the other side” (Luke 10:31-32) when we see those in need. We must not say “depart in peace, be warmed and filled” when we see the needy without giving “them the things which are needed for the body” (Jas. 2:16). The love of God does not abide in us if we have “this world’s goods,” yet shut up our hearts to those “in need” (1 John 3:17). Instead, the true follower of Christ must “do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith,” acting “as we have opportunity” (Gal. 6:10).

That doesn’t mean we don’t use good judgment in how we give. Can I give everything I have to the poor yet fail to provide for my own family? No! “If anyone does not provide for his own, and

especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). Can I give so much to others that I am unable to fulfill commitments that I have made? No! Jesus said, “let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:37). Can I give to the addict or alcoholic money to fuel those sins? No! Paul taught that we must not “share in other people’s sins” (1 Tim. 5:22). Can I foster someone’s unwillingness to work? No! When Christians in Thessalonica refused to work while seeking help from the church, Paul taught, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). All of these principles must regulate our giving.

The charge that congregations are “doing nothing” to help those in need usually stems from several false assumptions:

Assumption Number One: “Unless it is collective and organized, it isn’t happening.”

The Greek word translated “alms” (Matt. 6:2, KJV, ASV, NASB) or “charitable deed” (NKJV) is *eleēmosunē*, drawn from the word for “mercy” — i.e., “merciful deeds” (GLT). Nothing about the word demands that it involves an organized public collective activity. It was used of the lame man who sat at the Beautiful Gate asking “alms from



those who entered the temple” (Acts 3:2; cf. 3:3). It was used of Dorcas who was “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36). It was used of Cornelius who “gave alms generously to the people” (Acts 10:2; cf. 10:4, 31) and Paul who came to Jerusalem “to bring alms and offerings” to his nation (Acts 24:17). It involved individual acts of kindness and generosity. It is our world that imagines that only collective organized public activities can truly help those in need. This is not true and leads us to assume that Christians who do what Paul, Cornelius, and Dorcas did were “doing nothing.”

**Assumption Number Two:
“Unless it is from the Sunday
collection, it isn’t happening.”**

Acting within the authority of Scripture means that we do what we

can read about in the Bible and refrain from doing what we cannot find therein. The record of Scripture is that local churches obtained money for their works from a voluntary freewill “collection for the saints” on Sunday (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Churches in the New Testament used these funds for the support of preaching (Phil. 4:15-18), support of elders who labored in the word (1 Tim. 5:17), support of qualified widows (1 Tim. 5:3-16), and the relief of needy saints (Acts 11:28-20). It may also be inferred that if the church is commanded to do something, it is authorized to use funds that are required to obey that command (e.g., the Lord’s Supper, assembling, etc.). There is no command, example, or necessary inference that the church used funds from this collection to support any human organization. There is no command, example, or necessary inference that the church used funds from this collection to help

needy non-Christians. To support human organizations, or needy non-Christians, from the “collection for the saints” is unscriptural. Does that mean that churches who respect these biblical teachings are “doing nothing” to help those in need? No. Individual Christians can (and do) choose from their own funds to support human organizations which they consider worthy. Individual Christians can (and do) help needy non-Christians using their own resources. When they do these things as Jesus taught, the “left hand” will not know what “the right hand is doing,” but that is far from “doing nothing.”

The problem Jesus addressed in Matthew 6:1-4 was not neglect of those in need. His concern in that text was motive and approach. He warned that doing these things “before men, to be seen by them” can result in “no reward from your Father in heaven” (6:1). These public

displays “in the synagogues and in the streets” seek “glory from men,” and that is the only “reward” they will bring (6:2). In contrast, the approach Jesus teaches allows deeds done “in secret” to be observed by the God who “sees in secret” with the promise that He will “reward you openly” (6:4).

The critic tells us that man-made public organized collective charitable efforts by churches to help the needy “glorify God,” “show the world our love,” “help bring people to Christ,” and “address rather than ignore those in need.” If so, why don’t we see them taught in Scripture? Jesus said, “the poor you have with you always” (John 12:8; cf. Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7). There were far more people in poverty in biblical times than today. Why wouldn’t Jesus command all the methods and programs we see today if they truly are the best solution? Individual charitable deeds done “in secret” require a great deal of trust in God. They bring glory to God and avoid any emphasis upon the human beings engaged in them. When man-made public organized collective charitable efforts are brought into the church, the emphasis becomes “look at us,” “see what we are doing,” “look how

much we love,” “look at everything we are doing.” That may not be the motive, but that can often be the result. How is that not sounding a “trumpet” in our own “synagogues and in the streets”?

Is it a sin, then, if others ever learn about charitable giving that we have done? No. Jesus praised the giving of “a certain poor widow” whom He saw putting “two mites” into the treasury—He did not count it as sinful that He could see it (Luke 21:1-4; cf. Mark 12:41-44). Most congregations post a weekly budget number and the amount of each Sunday collection to allow members to see if a congregation is meeting its goals and commitments. This is not sounding a “trumpet” but allowing elders to exercise good stewardship. The IRS allows citizens to deduct charitable donations from their annual tax returns. Is that done “to be seen by men” and receive glory? No. It is a private matter that is no more public than the checks written for such donations that appear in our banking statements. Yes, our banker, or some unknown IRS official, may see what we have given, but there is no “glory from men”—it is simply practicing good stewardship with our God-given resources.

Conclusion

Is it possible that some churches limit their use of funds from “the collection for the saints” to do only scriptural works of the church, but the individuals within those churches are “doing nothing” in their individual lives to help those in need around them? Certainly, but God is the only one who can truly know that. If so, the answer is teaching, repentance, and obedience to God’s word, not going beyond God’s word, acting without authority, or creating schemes to do our “charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them.” That did not please God when it was done in the first century and it will not please God today. 📖



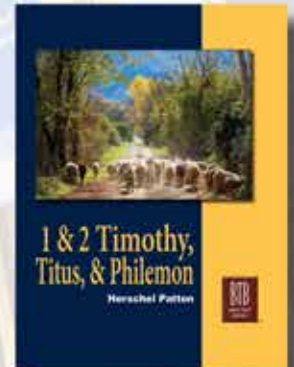
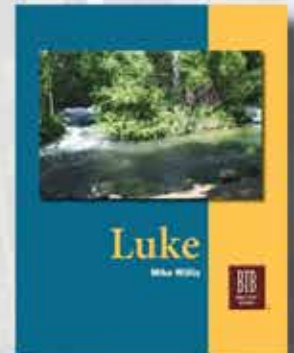
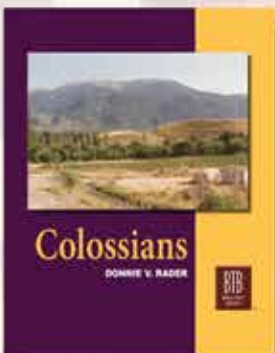
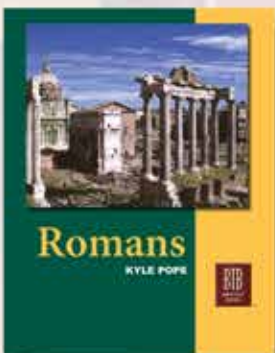
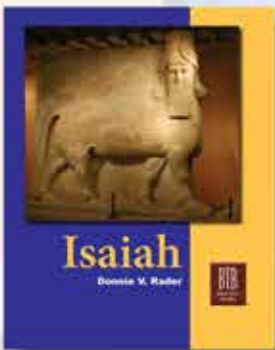
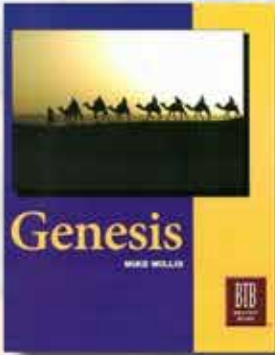
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Running the Race: Appreciating Behind-the-Scenes Work

By Lindsay Mast

While each Christian must run the race with patience, we should also help others as they press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Each year my Thanksgiving week looks much the same: My daughters and I start prepping various parts of the meal. On Monday, we bake biscuits and cornbread for dressing. On Tuesday, we thaw the turkey, make cranberry sauce and pecan pie. Wednesday is more meal prep, but also a non-food tradition: I spend a few hours volunteering for the Atlanta Track Club, organizing the medals for the half-marathon and 5 k/m races that they host on the morning of Thanksgiving.

Organizing a race takes a lot of work and preparation—far more than what most of us realize. There are permits to get from municipalities, marketing and advertising, designing and ordering shirts and medals. That's all before anyone shows up on race day! Still more work is needed to ensure that people have a place to park, a clear start and finish line, water and food along the course, medical help on standby, and a cleanup crew.

Have you ever stopped to contemplate all the behind-the-scenes work that God is performing on your behalf, too? We know from Romans 8:28 that in all things God is working “for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” Can your brain conceive of everything which that might entail? I'm not sure mine can.

Think about it: God knit your very being together while you were in the womb (Ps. 130:13-16). It takes time and precision to knit fabrics together—how



much more so flesh, blood, and an eternal soul. He took care in the piecing together of you from before your conception—or was it even before that?

Moreover, for some reason, He put you here on this earth, in whatever location(s) you have been, now (in 2022) and however many years prior to this, when He saw fit to have you start your earthly journey. Why now, and not in AD 1622 or 2422 BC? I don't know, but I believe we can find blessing and providence in being here now, however dismal your social media feeds make it seem.

He has worked out blessings on your behalf and mine, and continues to do so! Was yours a strong family that featured stalwart servants of the Lord from whom you might learn and to whom you can look up? Was there brokenness through which He taught lessons of redemption and forgiveness and overcoming? Do you have money to spare that showed

His generosity, or did you have to scrimp, pinch, and learn to rely upon Him? In the long, eternal run—it's all working together for our good, if we will allow it.

He has also been there beside us when “time and chance” (Eccl. 9:11) happened as well. Some of us get hit harder by that than others. His hand is not just in the things that seem to go our way in an earthly sense. Sometimes only time can tell if that new job, friend, spouse, or house is a blessing or a burden. Either way, we can trust that it can all work to our benefit.

When I'm running a race, I don't know who marked the course out for me. I don't know the designer who worked the race shirt given at the end. I don't know how the weather patterns from a week or more ago came together for the just-right temperature and humidity conditions that gave me a personal best. I know that I can trust a thoughtful and caring organizer to put together a race that will allow me to be tested as a runner while still coming out successfully on the other side.

I also know that the organizer of the only race that truly matters cares even more. He hears me when I need help along the way. He never wants me to despair and promises always to listen and draw near. He may not be moving my feet step by step for me, but He provides everything I need for them to continue pressing on to the mark. Even if the weather isn't perfect, even if the course gets washed out, even if the spectators



leave—He wants me, you, (actually, everyone) to cross the finish line.

At Thanksgiving, hundreds of Atlanta runners proudly eat their pie wearing a medal that I helped put around their neck. I was a small part of their running success. I'm so thankful to be reminded that, in my life, God is working to make sure my race ends in success, too—safe in the arms of Jesus. 🏃‍♀️



Lindsay Wolfgang Mast

Lindsay Mast has dozens of medals from marathons, half marathons and overnight relays, but is eager for the only prize that matters: heaven. She left a career as a broadcast journalist to raise and homeschool her three children. She and her husband, David, worship at the Intown congregation in Atlanta, GA. She can be reached at lbwolgangmast@gmail.com.

Our Assurance in Christ

by Bruce Reeves

As we battle the doctrine of “the impossibility of apostasy,” we must also correct the error of “the impossibility of assurance” that plagues so many conscientious believers, who are “trying hard, but never sure.”

Introduction

If you were asked, “Are you saved?” what would your answer be? There are extremes on both sides of the question. Some take the position that, if they are saved, they can never be lost. Yet, the Scriptures issue clear warnings to believers of the possibility of falling away from the Lord by rebelling against His will (1 Cor. 10:1-13; Gal. 5:3; Heb. 3-4; 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). The Lord’s warnings and promises are beautifully harmonized in God’s word. We must accept both as disciples of Christ. While our assurance is conditioned on faithful devotion to God’s will, Christ’s sacrifice provides us with confidence and peace in the Lord (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-10).

As we battle the doctrine of “the impossibility of apostasy,” we must also correct the error of “the impossibility of assurance” that plagues so many conscientious believers, who are “trying hard, but never sure.” This plagues disciples with doubt, worry, and despair. We should not think that the only way for us to be saved is to die in a worship service or with a prayer falling off our lips. Although we must be cautious of overconfidence (1 Cor. 10:12), it is unbiblical to say that having a healthy confidence in one’s salvation equals arrogance. The message of the cross offers us assurance as we “continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel. . .” (Col. 1:23). The apostle John wrote:

The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in

His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

Understanding the Nature of God

Misunderstandings about the character of God lead some to question their salvation. Those who have had overbearing or abusive parents, who currently battle insecurities, or wrestle with the shame of past sins of which they have repented, often struggle with their concept of the love and grace of God. Yet, Jesus is described as the “good shepherd” who “lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Christ declares, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). We read in John’s gospel that God “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” so that those who believe will enjoy eternal life (John 3:16). No matter what tribulations we experience, we can know that “in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:35-39). Christ’s incarnation and sacrifice at Calvary perfectly demonstrate the love God has for all those who would obey Him (John 1:14-18; 14:9; 1 John 4:7-12). We can have confidence in our eternal condition as we walk by faith:

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides

in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in the world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love (1 John 4:16-18).

Do we see God as a loving, heavenly Father? Confessing His steadfast mercy and eternal love does not deny His call of holiness but rather embraces it. Only those who abuse the Lord’s grace attempt to use it as a license to sin (Rom. 6:1-2; Jude 3-4). Those who stand firm in the “true grace of God” will experience the transformation of new life and participate in His divine nature (Rom. 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:4). For those who hear the Good Shepherd’s voice and follow Him, there is no external power or influence that can snatch them out of His hand (John 10:26-30). God has a perfect understanding of our background, challenges, potential, and difficulties as His children (Ps. 103:13; 139:1-24; Heb. 4:13).

Our God desires for us to be saved and has given His precious Son to bring us into His presence. He is not out to get us in a “gotcha moment,” but in His longsuffering, He earnestly desires our salvation (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). We are not forced to serve Him against our will but are persuasively drawn to His fellowship through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13-14). The Holy Spirit has revealed His eternal purpose for our glorification in His Son (Eph. 1:1-11; 3:10-11; Phil. 1:6). We can rejoice that the mercies of



YHWH's faithful love never ceases toward His followers (Lam. 3:19-26).

The Nature of God's Gift: Jesus Christ

It is amazing to consider the great sacrifice of Christ for our sins. God demonstrated His faithfulness, righteousness, and love in giving His Son as the perfect offering of Himself for the sins of the entire world (Rom. 3:23-26; 5:6-8; Eph. 2:4-7). The term for "propitiation" is related to the concept of the "mercy-seat" in Hebrews 9:5, which is descriptive of the lovingkindness and compassion of God toward His people. The nature of the gift of the Lord's grace tells us how much He loves us (2 Cor. 8:9). Most remarkably, it is a person—the Son of God, rather than an animal or object that is the manifestation and means of God's great mercy (Rom. 3:23-26; Heb. 9:13-14; 10:1-10). Jesus brings us liberation, release, and freedom (Rom. 6-8). He redeems us from the sins that

we have committed (Rom. 3:23) and sin's reign and power in our lives (Rom. 6:1-17; 8:1-2, 5-8; 12:1-2).

The high priesthood of Christ likewise enables us to come into God's presence with boldness and confidence. The writer of Hebrews declares that we have a "great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. . . for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). As a result of Christ's reign as our high priest, we are to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16; 10:12-14).

Our confidence, assurance, and boldness are not grounded in self, but in our sympathetic and compassionate high priest (Heb. 3:6; 4:16; 10:22). Christ is not some cold, uncaring tyrant, but a tender-hearted brother, Savior, and Redeemer. No matter how we are treated by a hostile

and wicked world, we must never forget that Jesus, as our merciful mediator, intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5). He is "able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). We should all consider the supreme sacrifice that Jesus made for us in leaving heaven, making Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and experiencing the distressing circumstances of suffering humanity, even to the point of death (Phil. 2:6-8). What unfathomable lengths has our God spanned that we might be saved!

The Nature of Grace and Forgiveness

The basis of our salvation is God's love (Rom. 5:6-8); the means is the sacrifice of Christ (1 John 2:1-2), and the conditions are revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). We experience the regeneration of our souls when we express faith in Jesus Christ, turn away from our sins in

godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-11; Thess. 1:8-10), confess our trust in Jesus as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10), and surrender to Christ in water baptism for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). We are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” and renewed by the working of God, when we are buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 3:24; 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-13).

Obviously, we will not be saved through sinless performance or meritorious works, because we have all sinned and have no room to boast (Rom. 4:1-2; Titus 3:3-5). When Paul contrasts faith and works in this context, he is referring to a contrast in systems of justification, i.e., the Law of Moses versus the law of Christ: “Where then is boasting? By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. . . Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom. 3:17; 4:4-5). While we “obey unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:16-17), we are saved by Jesus’s death, resurrection, and forgiveness, not our sinlessness. The apostle again describes the blessing of forgiveness on those who obey the gospel and walk in the steps of our spiritual father Abraham, “Just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven. . . blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account’” (Rom. 4:7-9, 12).

We do not receive a ritualistic, external, or ceremonial cleansing when we, by faith, are baptized into the Lord. Rather, our conscience is truly cleansed by the blood of Christ, purified by the power of the Savior’s offering (Heb. 9:13-14, 23-24; 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21). We serve a willing Savior who gave Himself for the entire world (1 John 2:2). We are to “draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience

and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22). God’s faithfulness leads us to an unwavering confession of hope and devoted endurance in doing the will of God (Heb. 10:23, 36). We do not have to be enslaved to fear, because the Lord has promised He will never forsake us (Rom. 8:15; Heb. 13:5-6). We can have assurance because God will always be true to His promises. Let us remember that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Can We Know We Are Saved?

Our assurance in Christ is conditioned on orienting and directing our lives in accordance with the will of God (Heb. 3:14). Children of God have been given the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25). Although we have not yet received our heavenly reward (2 Tim. 4:6-8), we walk in the living hope of an imperishable inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-9). Paul encourages suffering Christians to hold on faithfully to their hope in Christ:

For in hope we have been saved, but what is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it (Rom. 8:23-25).

Considering the many passages that offer us assurance of salvation, it is faithless and faulty exegesis to argue that it is impossible to know if we are saved. Paul’s sacrifice was not in dying, but in living: “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better. . .” (Phil. 1:21-23). Earlier in the same text the apostle says that he lived his life according to his “earnest expectation and hope” that he would not be “put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness” Christ would be exalted in his body whether “by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20). Warnings are accompanied by assurances from the Lord throughout Scripture:

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you, for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

There are those who feel they are saved who are yet teaching erroneous and



unbiblical concepts (Jer. 10:23; Isa. 55:8-9; Acts 23:1; Rom. 10:1-3). There are others who have hypersensitive consciences who may not feel they are right with God, but who are actually pleasing unto Him. This is why it is so important for us to grow in our confidence through fuller knowledge and deeper trust (2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 3:19-22).

While the result of our salvation involves joy, peace, and tranquility in our souls (Phil. 4:4-8), our emotions are not the foundation of our assurance (Rom. 10:17; cf. 5:1-2). The Bible does not teach that the confirmation of salvation is a mystical experience of grace which somehow promises feelings divinely induced by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. God does not promise visions, miraculous messages, or better-felt-than-told experiences. However, the Holy Spirit's word in Scripture is "spirit and life" that offers us comfort and encouragement in every trial and tribulation that comes our way (John 6:63; cf. Heb. 4:12). The Spirit bears witness (through the revelation of the gospel) with our human spirit that we are children of God when we understand that we have obeyed the gospel of Christ as revealed by the word of God (Ps. 19; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 3:3-5).

The Nature of Sin

A lack of biblical teaching concerning our assurance in Christ can create a vacuum that draws people away from the truth and may jeopardize them to the influence of various false teachings concerning God's grace, the Christian's assurance of salvation, and the nature of sin. Some have fallen into the abyss of Neo-Calvinism and seem to have made it their mission to bring about unbiblical changes in the thinking of faithful brethren.

These changes range from . . .

- Automatic forgiveness/continuous cleansing of sins,
- Imputation of the perfect righteous life of Jesus to the believer,

- Human inability to resist sin and/or understand the Scriptures without a direct enlightenment of the Spirit,
- Mystical indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and
- Neo-charismatic tendencies toward emotionalism.

Sin is not vaguely defined in the Scriptures, rather it is identified as "unrighteousness" (1 John 5:17), transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), and "missing the mark" which "falls short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The Bible reveals what sin is and encourages us to resist temptation (Rom. 7:13). We are assured that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability but will with each temptation provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). The Lord would not ask us to do something beyond our ability, yet the apostle John writes: "My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1). Thankfully, when we do sin as Christians, we have full confidence that, when we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:2). The concept that sin is unavoidable is nowhere found in the teachings of Christ or the apostles. When people are made to feel guilty of sin, no matter what they do, it is no wonder that they are vulnerable to false ideas. The idea that a brother or sister cannot drive across town and come home without sinning is not the picture that is painted by the Holy Spirit for the devoted child of God (Rom. 8:5-8; 1 Thess. 5:21). Do we all sin from time to time? Yes! Can we know what sin is by reading God's word? Absolutely! When we do sin, is the Lord longsuffering as we repent, confess, and pray? Indeed!

While we are to live in the assurance of our salvation, we do so with caution and humility. Our self-appraisal can be faulty if we allow ourselves to be deceived by sin (Jas. 1:14-16). God is the ultimate judge, to be sure, but we can honestly and openly receive His instructions to enjoy the mercy and power of His grace (1 Cor. 4:1-5; 9:24-27). Our Father takes into consideration those issues that are

fundamental to our walk with Him, regardless of our stage of growth, e.g., sexual immorality or hatred is a sin for any Christian. However, there are some issues that are relative to our stage of maturity. It is not a sin for the new convert to be on the milk of the word—that is to be expected. Nevertheless, it would be a sin for someone who has been a Christian for a long time to remain in an infantile state rather than to feast on "solid food" with their "senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

Conclusion

All unrevealed matters belong to God, who will resolve them correctly based on His infinite love, justice, word, and wisdom (Deut. 29:29; John 12:47-48). May we cleave to the conditions God has revealed for us to enjoy His saving grace. May we avoid discussions of hypothetical, emotional, and extreme situations to justify unbiblical theories. Assurance of salvation depends on the Lord and His word, not the thoughts and teachings of fallible men. Let us walk in the Lord's assurance and promises by loving Him with all our hearts, rather than constructing doctrines to evade the revelation of truth. We are teachers, not the Divine Judge (1 Cor. 4:5). We can neither act as the final judge in unrevealed matters nor extend assurances beyond what the Lord has revealed. **TL**



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The Fellowship and Comfort of the Holy Spirit

by Shane Carrington

Disciples find great comfort through fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for He revealed the inspired word which nourishes God's people.

Introduction

Satan assaults our senses with unsettling images that take our eyes off Jesus. From global concerns to family crises to personal fears, the enemy possesses powerful tools of distraction and destruction.

First-century disciples also confronted serious problems: personal struggles, political unrest, and persecution. Yet, they also knew the grace of God, the love of Jesus, and the comfort of the Spirit. Their example and hope encourage and embolden our walk!

In the following two passages, conflict gives way to comfort, spiritual strength, peace, and hope.

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase (Acts 9:31).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).

The Holy Spirit's role, like that of the Father and the Son, is integral to the spiritual life of disciples.

Paul reminds us of this by beginning several of his letters in similar fashion: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2, etc.). He also exclaims the Holy Spirit's part in this: "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

To what does Scripture allude regarding "the comfort" and "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31; 2 Cor. 13:14)?

"The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit"

In "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings," nine human-like creatures stand shoulder to shoulder as they prepare to embark on a grand quest. They will work together, rely upon one another, and show loyalty to both each other and their mission. They are a "fellowship" i.e., people who have "community," share "joint participation" in a common cause, and pledge "intimacy" or closeness in their partnership as they work together (The words in quotation marks are from Joseph Henry Thayer's definitions of the word "fellowship" (Thayer, 352).

Similarly, as we submit to God's instructions for our lives, we are partners with Him in His will being accomplished "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Or, as our text says, we have "fellowship with the Holy Spirit." We have a close relationship with Him as we participate with Him in moving His will forward in this world. As a wife is to be a "suitable helper" (Gen. 2) for her husband, the church (i.e., the bride of Christ, Eph. 5:22-33) is His helper in spreading God's will to humanity. In the same context as the body of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33), we are His hands and feet to do what He entrusts to us as we serve Him here on earth.

The Father planned these actions of faith; the Son enacted the plan; the Holy Spirit revealed all the above. When we humbly submit to what the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture, we have "fellowship (i.e., partnership, closeness, participation) with the Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14). May that sink deeply into fertile hearts! God entrusts important activities to us, His people, and, when we participate with Him by doing those things, we are helping His "will [to] be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10) right now! Consequently, there is no job God entrusts to us—and partners with us in performing—that is unimportant. Whether raising our children for the Lord (Eph. 6:1-3), being faithful partners as husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33), spreading the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20), working a job to provide for our family (1 Tim. 5:8) and the needy (Eph. 4:29), worshipping God (John 4:23-24), being a member of a congregation in the manner we should (Acts 9:26-29), or shining the light through setting a godly example (Matt. 5:13-16), we are partners with God in broadening the influence of His will on earth. That is "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." May we reflect His light, illuminating the way to Jesus (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14).

"The Comfort of the Holy Spirit"

Since the death of Stephen (Acts 7), persecution of the early disciples became severe. Saul of Tarsus became their foremost foe (Acts 8-9), "ravaging the church" (Acts 8:3) and "breathing threats



and murder against the disciples” (Acts 9:1). He spearheaded efforts that led most of the disciples, except the apostles, to flee Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). Imagine having to leave your home, community, occupation, and friends due to being faithful to Jesus! What an agonizing time they faced!

This continued for an extended period. Saul even departed for Damascus to incarcerate Christians—about 135 miles away, as the crow flies (Acts 9:1-2)!

While Saul traveled, Jesus confronted him. This led to his conversion and commitment to preaching Jesus even in foreign fields (Acts 9:3ff).

With Saul’s repentance, the result was far-reaching. One of the transition statements in the book of Acts (chapter 9:31) describes the peace, comfort, edification, and growth which they experienced. This is described as “the comfort of the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit worked toward the comfort of the church in at least two ways related to Paul in this context. First, Saul’s conversion relieved much of the suffering of those disciples, because their chief persecutor was now a disciple. Since all conversions come through the word of the Spirit, He comforted the church by removing an obstacle from their path. Second, his conversion led him to preach God’s word, which both converts the lost to the Lord and edifies disciples of the

Lord. Paul became a partner with the Holy Spirit in preaching that inspired message. His fellowship with the Spirit led to the comfort of many.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would inspire them. He described the Spirit as “the Comforter” or “Helper” (John 16:7), because what He revealed would comfort/help them in the same manner the words of Jesus had during His earthly ministry. The word inspired by the Holy Spirit comforts through. . .

- Making spiritual stability possible (John 16:1),
- Helping disciples know the Father and Son (John 16:3, 12-15),
- Giving spiritual insight through convicting the world with the truth (John 16:7-13), and,
- Providing victory over sin, Satan, and the world (John 16:8-11).

The Holy Spirit comforts and helps us today through the inspired, written word (John 15:26-27; 16:12-13; 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-4) which accomplishes all the above.

Participating in the Fellowship and Comfort of the Holy Spirit

We take part in the fellowship and comfort He provides through three important practices.

Study

Read Scripture daily. To read the Bible well, read the Bible often. Explore the context rather than isolating one verse. There is comfort in knowing.

Ponder

Meditate upon what you read. Understanding what God is saying, and why He said it, requires more than a passing glance. There is comfort in taking God’s word to heart.

Practice

God calls us to holiness through His word. He gives us a mission in many facets of life, desiring that our study and meditation shape our walk in Jesus. There is comfort in fellowship with God, partnering and participating with Him in His will being done “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Conclusion

Because we live in a world troubled by so many challenges, we need the words the apostle John wrote about true fellowship with God: “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1 John 1:4). Never neglect the great joy found in the comfort and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. 📖

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By Bobby L. Graham

QUESTION.

When the Bible talks about “sweat like great drops of blood,” is it legitimate blood?

ANSWER.

The writer of the New Testament who mentioned this aspect of Jesus’s suffering was Luke. In Luke 22:44, we find this record:

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Observe that the mention of Jesus’s sweat, whatever its aspect, occurs in connection with His agony. It is not lost that Luke the Beloved Physician (Col. 4:14) was the writer who made this information available to us. His increasing agony (meaning of the verb here, “becoming) was highlighted by the doctor as evident in His sweat, which was like large clots (*thromboi*) of blood.

Having this information available to us does not resolve our difficulty of ascertaining the meaning of Luke’s statement. It is possible that Luke speaks metaphorically, meaning that Jesus “sweated blood.” It is also possible that the doctor means that Jesus actually sweated large drops which were like blood clots. Actually, biblical commentators and medical scientists can be found on the side of this explanation.



While I am not certain about this matter, it appears probable that Jesus's sweat was like blood in some respect. At least in the size of the sweat drops was this the case, for Luke said they were "great," meaning large. It is also possible that His sweat drops were tinged red with blood, for such is the condition about which medical scientists have spoken in this case. They have cited others in a list of people experiencing the condition called *hematidrosis* (also called *hematohidrosis*), a rare condition resulting from great stress of mind causing blood vessels to rupture, thereby bleeding into those glands producing the sweat and coloring it red. I know that Luke did not mention the color of those sweat drops, but he said they were like blood. Simple largeness in size would not have made them "like" blood as they oozed from His pores. There must also have been some other similarity, like color, to make the connection to blood.

Let us use this occasion to recall that Jesus took upon Himself human nature (John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:1), thereby making Himself prone to such illnesses, weariness, emotions, pains, hunger, thirst as other humans knew (Luke 22:44; John 4:6; Matt. 23:37-39; 26:37-38; Heb. 5:7-8; Matt. 4:2; John 19:28). The Holy Spirit gave such experiences as these to show Christ's qualifications to serve as our sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Only because He lived in the flesh could He suffer, bleed, and die in the flesh to atone for our sins (Isa. 53:3-6; Heb. 9:13-15, 22; 10:4). **TL**



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Judean Pillar Figurines—What Do We Not Know?

by Trent and Rebekah Dutton

After addressing what we know about Judean Pillar Figurines, now let us consider a followup question: What do we not know?

In our last two articles, we introduced Judean Pillar Figurines (JPFs), discussing characteristics we know about them, such as being made of locally sourced earthen clays, dating mostly from the eighth to sixth centuries BC, and being found mostly in Judah, with a high concentration in Jerusalem. This article considers things we do not know about JPFs.

As you dig into methodologies used by archaeologists, time, experience, and interactions with other experienced archaeologists, all help to determine what you can and cannot interpret from the items you find. Can anyone interpret archaeological finds from common sense and logic just by looking at the objects and the data about them? Sometimes, yes. For example, from data discussed in our previous articles, if 80% of JPF finds were located in buildings that contained altars, or flip that, and say 80% of the find-spots were in domestic settings, could those numbers push the direction of object interpretation? Sure. The first could indicate that the objects were mostly used in a structured system of religious practices. The second might show that the objects were primarily used in domestic settings, not in a formalized religious context.

However, our questions in this article concern things we cannot know definitively with the data at hand. Questions like, do these objects represent Asherah? Are they idols at all? Were they used in worship practices—or themselves worshiped? Did every household have one?

“Do these objects represent Asherah” is a large and overarching question. Given JPF finds so far, the data is not object-labeling type data. Meaning, no JPFs have been found that are inscribed or represented in drawings where the objects are positively identified. The name Asherah exists on jars found at a site in Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Zē'ev, 87), but JPFs are not found associated with them, or in any other way connected to them (that is known at the moment). Besides this instance, there are very few other references to Asherah inscribed on any finds within Israel.



Caption 1: Harrsch, Mary. “Ceramic Judean Pillar-Based Figurine Head Beth Shemesh Iron II 800-586 BCE Penn Museum,” October 23, 2020. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ceramic_Judean_pillar-based_figurine_head_Beth_Shemesh_Iron_II_800-586_BCE_Penn_Museum.jpg.

Are they idols at all? This question is not about assignment to a named identity, but about their general use and purpose. JPFs are obviously not a tool or utensil. Their form and appearance are humanlike, even if the ultimate intention was not human. This question trends in an area that object observational data cannot answer directly. If another question was answered, such as identity, you would then have a known representation of a deity. That would provide a solid platform to make the claim that the objects themselves were idols.

Were they used in worship practices or themselves worshiped? JPFs have been found in both domestic and non-domestic settings, the latter seeming to be religious in nature. Based upon the numbers that have been found, it appears that these objects permeated the culture. One may not be able to say that they were used in a worship practice, but their numbers, location, and the time period in which they were found certainly lean toward some kind of deity representation and following.

Did everyone, or every household, have one? This is one of those questions quickly limited (usually) by archaeological process and interpretation. It is normally difficult, and often unwise, to answer archaeological questions that begin with “every:” Everyone did this, everyone had this, everyone or every household who had this object was doing “this” with it. Can you find something such as an altar, cut animal bones around it, and the building in which it was found,



Caption 2: Cherson, Adam. "Penn Musuem Beit Shemesh Cylindrical Figurines," October 27, 2020. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Penn_Musuem_Beit_Shemesh_Cylindrical_Figurines.jpg.

and surmise that the use was for religious ceremony sacrifices. Yes. If this pattern is found at fifteen other sites in a region, and all (or most) of the known sites in a region have similar building footprints, a pattern can be built. You may be able, in that scenario, to answer a question with "every." However, with JPFs and known data, those type scenarios really do not exist.

These are questions we cannot answer, at least definitively, at this point. Are JPFs Asherah? Even if you had labels, or something like it, remember, the object may not have carried that significance to everyone in different locations over time. Were they worshipped themselves or used in worship practices? Here again, it is likely, but lacking a description or depiction, it is hard to know the exact use and function. Did everyone have one? That is an "every" type question, and very hard to answer (usually) from an archaeological perspective.

We return to a concept mentioned in articles before. These types of questions, and their answers, have great potential to help us know and understand the culture of a people, or peoples, operating on the ground in Scriptures. Alternatively, they help in knowing what we cannot yet answer. However, when it comes to God's view and perspective on a topic such as idols and idol worship, there are no questions concerning God's view of it. From Genesis to Revelation, idols are mentioned hundreds of times, and *never* in a positive light! 📖

Sources

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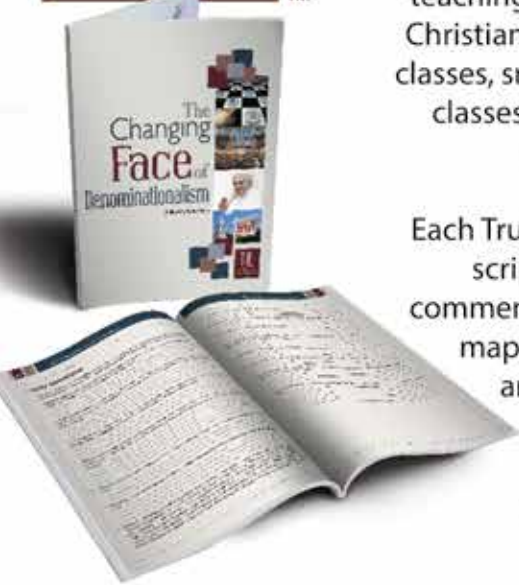
Trent & Rebekah Dutton

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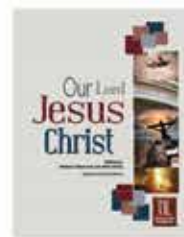
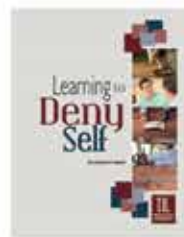
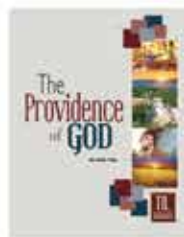
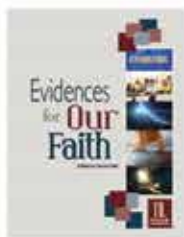


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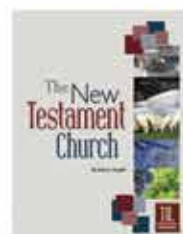
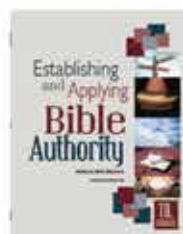
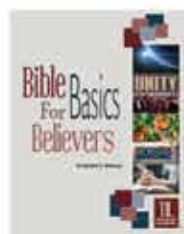
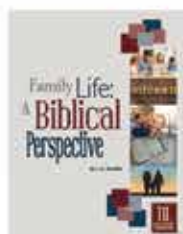


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Mentoring Marriages

by Chris Reeves

All marriages usually go through “seasons,” and it is important to keep growing in maturity in all those “seasons” so that couples can be pleasing to God and be happy in their lives together.

A few months back, my wife and I, by God’s grace, celebrated our thirty-fourth wedding anniversary. If someone today were to ask us, “What is the one word that describes your marriage?” We would have to answer, “growth.” What comes to mind is the growth and maturity that we have experienced in our marriage for over three decades now. When we speak of growth, we mean maturing as time goes on to really be what God would have us to be as a husband or wife.

When we first got married, our “heads” understood all the proper things about marriage. We had a theoretical knowledge of marriage because we had been taught that from God’s word. Now, after thirty-four years, our “hearts” truly know about marriage and we have a practical, real-life experience and understanding of it.

Some people have compared the “seasons” of marriage to the four seasons in a year, and I believe this has some merit. The beginning of marriage is like springtime. This is the time when all things are new. They are blossoming and beginning to grow. Your relationship together as a couple is new and having children is new. Being married for several years is comparable to summertime. Your marriage and children are growing well. All things are very busy and active—like work, parenting, school, hobbies, sports,

taking care of the house and car, paying the bills, etc.

Being married even longer can now be like the fall season. The things of marriage can still have an air of beauty, but some might feel as if they are starting to die. The kids are gone, and the couple is left alone, and there is not as much growth happening. The good things of marriage are holding on a



little longer, but some have a sense that the love is growing colder. Then comes the point in marriage when things are not growing at all, and the relationship may wither or die. This period of marriage is like wintertime. Unless change is forthcoming, the couple stays together, albeit unhappily, or ends their relationship in divorce. So, what “season” are you in with your spouse?

If I had a chance to mentor married couples of any age, I would say: Keep working to grow your marriage no matter in what stage of life you find yourself. There has to be marriage growth from the beginning of your life together to the end, during the good times and the bad times. There has to be growth through the new experiences, the busy times, the mid-life years, and the time of old age together. Marriage should always be a work in

progress. Married couples should always have the “Under Construction” sign hanging in the window of their home.

Marriage takes work, especially as the years go by. It takes work to grow from selfishness to selflessness and from the “old man” that harms a marriage to the “new man” that loves within a marriage. It takes work to grow and forgive the mistakes in a marriage and to stop the immoral behavior that one gets from the world. It takes

work to grow and serve rather than be served all the time. It takes work to grow and persevere through the hard times rather than just quit.

I want to offer some encouragement for how we can grow. Let me encourage our married couples to grow by making time for yourself when the children are in the house and when they are grown and gone. You have to spend time together doing things that you both like to do or

the world (the devil) will tear you apart. Pick something each day (or at least a few times a week) that is fun and enjoyable to do together. It can be something in or out of the house. Solomon's advice is important here: "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life. . ." (Eccl. 9:9). Note the words "all the days of thy life." This advice is not just for young married couples, but for those of us who are older as well.

Let me encourage our married couples to grow in their appreciation of each other. The woman was first made to "help" her husband (Gen. 2:18). He is to love her in a sacrificial way, showing her understanding; in like manner, she is to show him respect (Eph. 5:33; 1 Pet. 3:5-7). Married couples should say things to each other and do things toward each other that actually carry out these biblical commands. One good thing that married couples can do is to ask, "What can I do to help you today?" Or, "Do you need anything from me today?" We certainly need to get our own work done throughout the day, but we can also ask these questions which show our appreciation for the other.

Let me encourage our married couples to grow in their sexual relationship. As long as one's health permits, of course, couples can work to be sexually fulfilled in their marriage. When this does not happen, one or both will often seek that fulfillment elsewhere. One key to growing in this area of your marriage is communication. Speak often to each other about what you really want. Be open and honest and give yourself completely to your mate in this area of your life. I am not speaking of forcing yourself upon the other, obviously, but it is important that both work to be completely satisfied and fulfilled sexually. We are actually taught this in the books of Song of Solomon and Proverbs. In Song of Solomon, the husband will "come into," "climb up," and "take hold" of what is his sexually (Song of Sol. 4:16; 7:7). In Proverbs, we read:

Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
and running waters out of thine own

well. Should thy springs be dispersed abroad, and streams of water in the streets? Let them be for thyself alone, and not for strangers with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice in the wife of thy youth. As a loving hind and a pleasant doe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love (Prov. 5:15-19).

The apostle Paul wrote something similar:

Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife (1 Cor. 7:3-4).

Finally, I encourage our married couples to grow in making time for God. Marriages often grow cold and die when one spouse or both stops serving God properly. You have to make time for God together, and I don't just mean "going to church together." I've known of couples who "go to church together" and still drift apart. May I suggest that you regularly pray together (1 Pet. 3:7; even at times other than meals), read your Bible together or do your Bible class lesson together, go to a gospel meeting or singing together, and do the Lord's work together—by teaching others, visiting the shut-ins, the sick, etc. (cf. Acts 18:26).

To our married couples, I say, "Grow, grow, grow!" We all want the warm sunshine of growth to blow through our marriages, not the cold air of death. **T**



Chris Reeves

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Using Our Talents for Christ

by Sarah Paschall

God gives us unique talents; how can we use them for His work?

Introduction

Have you ever wondered how our bodies function? How does each distinct part work together to survive, accomplish tasks, and thrive?

God gave us eyes to see the infinitely vast and beautiful world He created for us. Our ears can hear the call of the birds or listen to the voices of our loved ones. We can taste and smell the comforts of a home-cooked meal. A hard day's work with our hands leaves us feeling tired and fulfilled when we go to bed at night. Each part of our bodies, while entirely different, still works together with the rest, allowing us to experience the wonders of life.

Just as each part of our body is unique, so too is every person. We live in a world full of diversity, and each of us is incredibly different. There are things that only I can do, and there are things that only you can do. This fact of life shapes the way we think and live. From infancy, we learn that we are different from each other, and as we continue to mature, these differences become more evident in our individual personalities, interests, and skills.

Through Jesus's ministry, the gospel was shared with thousands of people. In Acts 2, we find that on the day of Pentecost alone, "there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). As time went on, the converts multiplied (Acts 4:4; 5:14).

Christ's church spans time, geography, cultures, languages, and traditions. Every person who has obeyed the gospel differs

from every other before and after them. So how is it even possible that so many people with unique talents and abilities can work together and thrive? In this study, let us answer this question by looking at 1 Corinthians 12.

Spiritual Gifts

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant (1 Cor. 12:1).

Beginning in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul seeks to explain to the group in Corinth how they ought to use their talents and abilities to serve their congregation. He references several miraculous gifts in verses 8-10, and later in verse 28, he mentions teachers, apostles, and service. These "gifts" that he mentions include both miraculous and non-miraculous abilities. So, for the sake of this study, we will use the term "talents" in reference to spiritual gifts.

Merriam-Webster defines talent as a characteristic feature, aptitude, or disposition of a person. Our talents are what we do best and most enjoy. They are the unique abilities that we possess that only we can do, or that we do best, and each one comes from God.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Not Part of the Body?

In my personal life, I have struggled to accept that I am different from everyone else. It is incredibly easy to say, "Because I don't have *that* talent, I can't help." This habit of comparing my talents with others is incredibly destructive because it handicaps my ability to see what I do well, and hyper-focuses on what I do *not* do so well. Thankfully, this challenge is directly addressed by Paul.

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? (1 Cor. 12:15-19).

It turns out that God gave us each unique talents for a reason. If I am continually telling myself "I can't!" because I don't have someone else's gifts, I miss the point entirely. God made me the way he did because I have a task to fulfill and a service to offer that no one else can do.

Using Our Talents for Christ

So not only do I have talents that can be used in service to the kingdom, but I also have a responsibility to use them for the kingdom.



A fantastic example of this is in Matthew 25:14-30. In the parable of the talents, a master goes on a long journey and provides three of his servants with different amounts of money. Over the course of his trip, two servants use their money to earn more, while the third buries his money in the ground. When the master returns, he condemns the servant who buried the money and rewards those who used it in service to him. Interestingly, the word for the type of money used was “talent,” which carries a not-so-subtle message for me when considering how I ought to use my talents.

Christ gave me talents that He intends for me to use until His return. If I hide them, I am not only keeping my talents from growing, but I am also robbing Christ of my full devotion, and the church of the services only I can provide. So, the message of 1 Corinthians 12:7 becomes abundantly clear when we take into consideration the parable of the talents.

Paul said, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” God gave me my talents so I can use them to serve those around me. God made me exactly as He intended, and I have a responsibility to use my unique gifts for the benefit of the body as a whole!

Interdependence

At the beginning of this study, we observed how incredibly complex the body is. Each part is unique and has different purposes, but still works together to perform the function of the body as a whole. We asked, “How can so many different people be able to work together and thrive?” We now have the answer. It is called interdependence.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all* (1 Cor. 12:7).

Interdependence is the mutual act of serving each other for the benefit of the group. When every one of us is actively using our unique abilities to serve the church as a whole, something remarkable happens. Those differences that make us weak, or inefficient on our own, are filled by the strengths of those around us. My strengths compensate for the weaknesses of others, and their strengths compensate for my weaknesses.

It’s like a zipper. A jacket does not work efficiently when it is not zipped up. Yet, when you zip it up, each piece of the zipper interlocks, creating a unified whole.

Finding my Talent

So, what are my talents? What am I good at?

For me, it’s computers. I love problem-solving with technology, and I love designing websites. God has blessed me with the opportunity of being able to assist with the live stream for our services, and I have also been able to design a website for our congregation and a neighboring group as well.

For you, it may be something different. There are fantastic teachers in our group. There are also listeners, singers, encouragers, leaders, and so many more. God needs everybody’s talents.

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. *And if they were all one member, where would the body be?* (1 Cor. 12:18-19).

It doesn’t matter what my talents are, God can use me for His kingdom! **T**



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“Take Heed to Yourself and to the Doctrine”

by Sean Cavender

To be effective in preaching the gospel, a preacher must consider how he lives and what he is teaching.

Introduction

Paul admonished Timothy to stay away from arguments that would cause division by generating mere speculation (1 Tim. 1:3-4). Instead, Paul encouraged Timothy to be “constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6, NASB). While any Christian should follow this advice, this is particularly important for preachers of the gospel if they wish to be a “good servant of Christ Jesus.”

So, Paul tells Timothy that he must discipline himself for godliness (1 Tim. 4:7-8) while remaining committed to his example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Tim. 4:11-12). The apostle also encouraged Timothy to continue in his reading of the Scripture, exhorting the brethren in faithfulness and teaching the words of sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). Paul said, “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all” (1 Tim. 4:15). Effective reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching do not happen by accident. They are purposed and planned, sometimes with eagerness and other times through great pain.

Then, Paul concludes with, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you (1 Tim. 4:16, NASB).

The Preacher’s Life

In this final admonition, Paul emphasizes two critical aspects of any preacher’s ministry and service to the Lord and His people. First, an evangelist must pay attention to himself, his character, his attitude, and his life. It is easy to be caught up in the excitement of teaching and sharing what you have learned from God’s word. When brethren are thankful for your work and diligence, they express their thanksgiving in kindness and humility. They are glad that you have shared what you have learned and helped them learn more about God. Yet, their humility and kindness ought to be reciprocated. Their thanksgiving is not an excuse for puffing out our chests and thinking more of ourselves than we should. Just as our brethren humbly thank us for teaching them, we should humbly accept their thanksgiving. Let us, therefore, pay attention to our attitude and motivation. We must also take great care to examine our life and our character. Sadly, many preachers have destroyed their reputation and effectiveness in God’s kingdom because of inconsistency and hypocrisy in their lives. While preachers will not be perfect and will face the same struggles and temptations as everyone else, preachers must be diligent and keenly aware of those temptations. When and if they sin, they need to make things right quickly and not try to hide those sins.

The Preacher’s Teaching

Secondly, the preacher must pay close attention to what he is teaching. As a gospel preacher, I am obligated to preach sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6)—the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). I must preach Christ. I am not permitted to preach my opinions, nor should I be afraid to take a stand for the truth in the face of error. Preaching is not a time to test new ideas; rather, it is an opportunity to explain accurately what the Scriptures mean (Neh. 8:8). When people have misunderstandings and misconceptions of biblical teaching, it is my job to correct that error in love and with truth from God’s word (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Upholding truth might mean fewer likes on my Facebook page or fewer views on my YouTube sermons. However, I do not answer to social media platforms; I answer to God concerning what I am teaching. “Pay close attention. . . to your teaching” is what Paul wrote to Timothy. “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2) is the charge and obligation given to all gospel preachers.

Preachers must be careful with their words. While no one is perfect in what they say, and may misspeak, words express thoughts and concepts, so preachers must be extremely careful with their words (Jas. 3:1-2). Preachers must appreciate the responsibility of getting behind the pulpit and sharing a message from God’s word. When preachers continually misspeak in their teaching, saying things unfounded in



God's word, unwise, or sensational, they have underlying misunderstandings and mistaken concepts.

When preachers pay attention to their teaching, scrutinizing their words and concepts, and find that they misspoke or expressed ideas that generated confusion, then they should apologize and offer clarification. Anyone who has ever stood at a podium to teach or preach God's word has had to do this at some point. However, when preachers express something unwise or sensational and have been asked for clarification, and they do not apologize or even get angry for needing to offer clarification, it shows a genuine misconception on their part and often reflects their acceptance of concepts that are contrary to the word of God.

Conclusion

Preachers must take heed to themselves and their teaching because we are in the soul-saving business. We want to ensure our salvation and the salvation of those who are listening. When people listen to us, we need to remain humble, and be thankful that there are people genuinely interested in learning more about God's word. When people scrutinize our teaching and ask questions for clarification's sake, be happy to offer the necessary clarification. We must do so to help them (1 Tim. 4:16; Acts 17:11)!

Our listeners will examine public preaching and teaching. They will scrutinize our words. They will have questions. The apostle Paul acknowledged that some in Corinth would examine his teaching. Some of the Corinthians probably were angry with his teaching, but he did not chastise them for close

examination of what he was saying; Paul stood accountable to God because he took heed to the doctrine (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

When we are questioned, answer the questions, and offer clarification because your responsibility is ultimately not to the questioner but to yourself and God. That is why Paul said that the goal of our instruction was fostering love, developing a pure heart, maintaining a good conscience, and keeping a sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5). Preachers should live their lives and teach sound doctrine with love, a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. **T**



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Two Covenants in an Allegory

by Ron Halbrook

Eternal truth is communicated in Scripture in a variety of linguistic styles, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively. Paul's allegory taken from the life of Abraham reminds us of several profoundly important concepts.

Introduction

When the gospel of Christ was revealed in the first century AD, many Jews rejected it outright and many others who accepted it tried to make it simply an extension of the Law of Moses. They required Gentiles to become proselytes to the Jewish religion as a prerequisite to becoming a Christian. Since they were obsessed with maintaining the old Jewish system, Paul introduced an allegory of the two covenants taken from Jewish history by asking, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" An allegory uses actual events from history or human experience to illustrate a lesson. Galatians 4:21-31 illustrates vital differences between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ.

Allegory of Two Covenants in Galatians 4:21-31

The key point of the allegory is the difference between being a slave and being free. Hagar and Ismael illustrate the state of slavery, whereas Sarah and Isaac illustrate the state of freedom as the allegory is presented in Galatians 4:21-31.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and

answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Since Ishmael was born from a slave named Hagar, he was also a slave. The Law of Moses is like Hagar the slave and the followers of the Law are also slaves. They are slaves to sin because the Law of

Moses had only animal sacrifices which cannot take away our sins. Sarah was a free woman and therefore her child was born free. The gospel produces followers who are free from sin—we have a perfect sacrifice in Christ to take away all of our sins.

Ishmael was born when Abraham made a plan, not by God's plan. People trying to be saved in the Gospel Age by following the Law of Moses are also following a human plan, not God's plan. When man substitutes his plan for God's plan, it always fails.

Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Christians were persecuted by the Judaizing teachers who were binding the Law of Moses. Even today, such teachers vigorously and adamantly oppose Christians who follow Christ alone without the terms and conditions of the Old Testament.



Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's home and did not receive the inheritance. Isaac was the heir of God's promise to send a Savior, and Christians are the heirs of eternal life through the Savior.

The Allegory of Slaves and Free Men

SLAVES	FREE
1. Hagar: Law of Moses, Old Jerusalem	1. Sarah: Gospel of Christ, New Jerusalem
2. Ishmael: Followers of Law, Bondage to Sin	2. Isaac: Followers of Christ, Forgiven of Sin
3. Born of Human Wisdom	3. Born of Divine Promise
4. Persecuted Free Son	4. Persecuted by Slave
5. Cast Out	5. Heir of God's Blessings

The Importance of Clarifying the Two Covenants

A myriad of religious concepts and practices today reflect man's failure to differentiate the two covenants. Let us consider just a few.

The Jewish religion wants to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem to offer animal sacrifices, as provided in the book of Leviticus. Proclaimers of premillennialism assert the temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem with all of its rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices. Such events and practices would be a mockery of the perfect sacrifice of Christ expounded in the book of Hebrews:

But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:12-14).

Observant Jews and many religious bodies attempt to follow the dietary laws found in such passages as Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 (Jews refer to "kosher" food, meaning fit or proper). Yet, Colossians 2:14-17 explicitly affirms such laws were nullified by Christ's death on the cross. Jews, Seventh Day

Adventists, the Worldwide Church of God and its offshoots, Catholics, and many Protestant churches conduct observances of the feast days outlined in Leviticus 23 such as the Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and Trumpets—likewise terminated according to Colossians 2.

Catholic churches, Episcopal churches, and many other churches try to perpetuate or echo the instructions in passages such as Numbers 3 by ordaining a special priesthood, whereas all Christians constitute the priesthood of the New Covenant (1 Pet. 2:5). These same bodies prepare special robes for their priests reflecting Old Testament instructions, but we are clothed in Christ according to the New Testament (Exod. 28; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27).

Another example of confusion includes the practice of polygamy by some Mormons and other cults based on passages such as Exodus 21:10, whereas Christ teaches that the sacred bonds of marriage are reserved for one man united to one woman (Matt. 19:3-9; 1 Cor. 7:1-5).

Jews inherited their citizenship in Israel by birth and males were circumcised on the eighth day, and people embracing Judaism today follow this same concept (Gen. 17:9-14; Josh. 5:2-5). Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other groups appeal to this history in arguing for infant baptism and infant membership in the church today. Yet, the New Testament clearly teaches that when people capable of believing in Christ and repenting of their sins are baptized, God

spiritually circumcises them by casting away their sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11-13). Infants are not sinners and have no sins for God to cut away and cast away.

Many religious bodies appeal to the Old Testament as justification for such practices as burning incense and using instrumental music in worship (Exod. 30:1-10; 2 Chron. 29:25). Tithing is widely legislated based on God's instruction to the Jews to give ten percent of all fruits and flocks (Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22-29). Likewise, Jews, Seventh Day Adventists, the Worldwide Church of God and its offshoots, and other Protestant denominations attempt to observe the Sabbath Day in some way based on Exodus 20:8 (some claim Sunday is "the Christian Sabbath").

Christ came to teach the new and true way of worship and the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (John 4:23-24; Matt. 17:5). He taught none of these practices and we must submit to Him in "all things" that He commanded (Matt. 28:18-20).

Conclusion

People attempting to serve God under the terms and conditions of the Old Testament Law will find they are, like Ishmael—cast out from the inheritance promised by God. Only by following Jesus Christ can we become heirs of all the spiritual blessings prepared and promised by God, as the allegory of the two covenants makes crystal clear in Galatians 4. **TT**



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The Cancer of Pornography

by David Weaks

Pornography is rotting the hearts and minds of men, women, and children. It is destroying homes and helping to disintegrate society. How much do you know about this cancerous evil?

Introduction

Pornography used to be thought of as ugly and dirty—something reserved for reprobates who sought to hide their identity under trench-coats. In the twenty-first century, it has been mainstreamed. At one time, people could only view “porn” in seedy movie houses in the bad part of town, or men had to buy dirty magazines from smut shops. Nowadays, pornography is so much a part of modern culture that teens regularly view it on their telephones.

Pornography Is Ancient.

Pornography did not arise from the dark alleys of New York City or Los Angeles in the 1970s. History shows that it has nearly always been around. Ancient cities had brothels, and pornographic imagery was commonplace in sculptures. Pompeii and Herculaneum, destroyed in the AD 79 eruption of Mount Vesuvius, featured “red-light districts” complete with sexual images carved into buildings indicating that sex was for sale there (see: *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization, DVD*). Pornographic carvings have been found in ancient Sumerian cities dating as far back as 2,000 BC (Black and Green, 150-152).

Defining Pornography

Pornography comes from a combination of the words “porneia” (fornication) and “graphie” (what is written). Pornography’s only purpose is to foster fornication through images and written words.

The forms of pornography are seemingly endless, and there are deep, dark recesses of the internet which cater to unbelievably grotesque sexual perversions. Joshua Duggar, TV personality, professed family advocate, and father of seven children, was recently convicted and sentenced to twelve years in prison. One piece of damning evidence found on his computer was a film entitled “Daisy’s Destruction,” which depicts the rape of an eighteen-month-old toddler!

Pornography Is Big Business.

Pornography generates billions of dollars annually for its producers. The industry chews up and spits out young women by the thousands. Females are paid more than

males to perform in porn movies. These women are euphemistically called “models” or “actors.” The shelf-life for such models is usually only two or three years before they are burned out and used up. For their “work,” the best paid girls only make a few hundred dollars per job. Producers reap the lion’s share of the lucrative sales.

The Porn Problem

The porn industry is a giant life-destroying machine. Performers not only receive low pay, they are asked to participate in demeaning and abusive “scenes,” often involving real physical violence. These intense scenes are where the real money (such as it is) is earned, so most girls consent. Girls must also



cover all of their own expenses (clothes, travel, makeup, etc). On top of this, there is the ever-present danger of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It is no surprise that performers burn out quickly. Once turned out of the “industry” in their early 20s, they are usually unemployable in mainstream work, because of the stigma of their porn past. Drugs and suicide hang as a pall over the porn industry.

Think about this: those who perform in pornography are often dying a slow death in public view. I believe it was Dr. Phil who once said: “When you watch a pornographic video, you are watching a young woman’s life being torn apart.” I have to believe this is absolutely the case.

Everything About Pornography Is Evil.

Jesus said that a man must not look at a woman to lust after her (Matt. 5:28). He also said that the lamp of the body is the eye. What a man allows into his mind through his eyes will determine whether his body is full of light or darkness (Matt. 6:22-23). Solomon warned young men to not gaze upon immoral women dressed in the attire of a harlot (Prov. 7:10). Job said that he made a covenant with his eyes to not look upon a young maiden (Job 31:1).

Folks, the only purpose for pornography is to produce lust and fornication. There is nothing remotely redeeming about it. It is not art, nor is it beautiful. Neither is it an industry which supplies a good living to unskilled people. Porn is a brand of filth which sears itself into the minds and hearts of users, and it can be as addictive as any drug. Jesus said, “Don’t look!” We must not. No man can take fire into his bosom and not be burned (Prov. 6:27).

I can attest firsthand to these facts. My first experience with pornography was when I was ten years old. My cousin had confiscated a pile of dirty magazines from his dad’s stash, and hid them in his tree house. I can tell you that those rotten images, viewed so long ago, never go away. They produce a scar which does not heal.

Witness King David’s downfall. David watched a beautiful woman named Bathsheba bathing one Spring evening. He spied her across the way from the roof of his palace. He did not discretely look away, but in his lust, he called her to his bed and committed adultery with her. Later, David had the woman’s husband murdered in order to cover up his sin (2 Sam. 11:1ff). No, Bathsheba wasn’t an ancient porn star, but the effect of seeing her naked body had the same effect on the lust-filled king. The sight of bare flesh excites lusts. This case from biblical history proves that.

Pornography Destroys Everyone It Touches.

Like cancer, it rots the moral fiber of people; it destroys their pure thoughts once it lodges itself in a person’s brain. It is highly addictive, and it ultimately kills the spiritual appetite of people. Finally, it destroys the user’s eternal soul.

Experts say that viewing pornography releases the same chemicals in the brain which produce the “rush” and sense of euphoria that comes from taking drugs. Like all addictive things, users feel compelled to seek stronger and more intense versions of it in order to continue feeling the “high.”

Serial murderer Ted Bundy famously confessed on the eve of his execution that he had been fed on a diet of pornography in his youth. He blamed his crimes on compulsions that sprang from seeing pornography. One of his most chilling lines was this: “There are many more Ted Bundy’s out there.” There is certainly reason to question Bundy’s sincerity considering all of his horrific crimes, but he was still right in his assertion: there are indeed many more “Ted Bundy’s” out there. News items are many which tell of sexual relationships between teachers and their teen students. Rape and murder are as common as ever. Police usually find piles of pornography in the houses and computers of such offenders.

Do you remember the affable pitchman for Subway sandwich shops, Jared Fogle? This seemingly harmless,

lovable guy was a child pornography fiend who was arrested when a woman taped a phone conversation in which Fogle tried to bargain with her to purchase her pre-school aged daughter so that he could abuse the child sexually.

Pornography Is a Sin...

There can be no reasonable argument made in defense of pornography. It is neither art nor is it free speech. It is nothing less than the most vile kind of filth. Shockingly, many in the world are at best ambivalent toward porn. At worst, they think of it as merely “naughty.” Let us hear the teachings of God and judge pornography in the light of Sacred Scripture.

Because It Excites Lust.

James teaches us that sin results from the enticement of desires, which are then fed and gratified contrary to the law of God (Jas. 1:13-15). Peter said Christians must “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). John warned that there are three lusts from which sin springs: (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, (3) and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). Christians are supposed to reject sin and not let it reign in their mortal bodies. We are supposed to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-14). Pornography stirs up the very thing which God said is the foundation of sin in the life of people.

Because It Glorifies Fornication.

Christians are supposed to “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18). Fornication was the downfall of the Gentiles whom God gave up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts, to defile their bodies among themselves (Rom. 1:24). They satiated vile passions, exchanging the natural use of the woman for what is against nature and committed what was shameful (Rom. 1:26-27). Pornography portrays strangers indulging in all of these vile passions.

Because It Is a Violation of the "Marriage Bed."

Viewers of pornography reject the Hebrew writer's instruction to hold marriage and the marriage bed in honor (Heb. 13:4). A consumer of pornography is not actually in bed with the actors, but in his mind, he may as well be! He has surrendered the restraint of his marriage vows and he is well on his way to committing fornication himself. All he needs is the opportunity. Jesus Christ, our Lord, taught that a man who looks at a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28). Like all movies, the filthy ones aim to draw viewers into the hedonistic action. How can it be anything but sin for a husband or a wife to seek sexual excitement and gratification through pornography?

Sometimes people defend pornography as a kind of "therapy," but this is sheer stupidity! Husbands and wives who watch other people engaged in graphic sex will lose interest in one another. It is absolutely foolish, unreasonable, and a damnable lie, for a man to say that watching an eighteen-year-old, perfectly sculpted girl being ravaged sexually makes him more attracted to his older, *less-than-perfectly* sculpted wife!

God created sexual appetites within us, so they are good (cf. Gen. 1:31). However, He also dictated that these desires can only be satisfied within marriage, with God's approval (1 Cor. 7:1-5). Solomon told his son to "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well" (Prov. 5:15). Later Solomon said, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love" (vv. 18-19). The viewing of pornography in any of its forms ruins the simple, satisfying, physical relationship that God designed only for marriage.

Because It Is a Lie.

People who appear in pornographic movies often publicly say they are there by choice, but this is rarely true. Certainly, no child is there by his choice. Children in porn are most often forced into it by criminal neighbors or family members looking to make fast money. Among adults in pornography, they are often there out of desperation, being lured there by the false promise of fame and fortune.

Thousands of girls move to Hollywood every year, hoping to become movie stars. After many months of failure, scores of these girls are lured into a whole other kind of film industry, one that will rape their souls and bodies with the promise of money and glamour. The voices of many former performers, now broken, drug addicted wisps of their youthful selves, admit it was porn that ruined them. The devil, the father of lies, rejoices in the deception of pornography (John 8:44).

Because It Is Sexual Abuse.

Pornography overwhelmingly focuses on abuse. Some of it is violent, much of it involves the fantasy of older people abusing teens. The abuse is part of the thrill for the people who consume pornography. Please do not be misled. Pornography is not for suburban mothers who want to see a romantic film to spice up their drab lives. Pornography is designed to turn people into reprobate sex fiends. Some films portray rape; in others, virgins are supposedly deflowered; and ever popular are films showing a girl being abused by multiple men at once. Of course, any child in a pornographic film is always being abused.

Homosexuality is a popular theme in porn. Films depict men being "abusers of them-selves with men" (1 Cor. 6:9), and women exchanging their natural use for what is "against nature" (Rom. 1:26-27). Porn's performers surrender all of their natural defenses and boundaries of self-preservation along with any shred of decency and morality, all to make a quick buck with the faint hope of fame.

Because It Destroys Purity and Innocence.

Jesus warned about destroying the innocence of children (Matt. 18:6). Please let the following statistics sink in. They are utterly shocking. Recent studies have shown that 90% of boys under eighteen have viewed pornography at least once, while 60% of girls in the same age group have seen pornography at least once. It is also reported that many children as young as 8-11 have viewed pornography on their smart phones. This is an absolutely horrifying statistic when you consider the following fact: 60% of eleven-year-olds own their own smart phone, and 92% of teenagers go online on their smart phones every day. 24% of these teenagers report that they are online "almost constantly." The study also reports that today's young people spend an average of nine hours a day consuming media (i.e., watching TV, surfing the internet, social media, etc.). Most of this viewing of online content is happening in the relative safety of the home. 71% of young people keep their online activity hidden from their parents. These statistics mean that American children are some of the most prolific consumers of pornography. (Note: This information is available at *The Novus Project*.)

Pornography was once a product which sinful people consumed only under the cloak of darkness (cf. 2 Pet. 2:13). Now, a savvy child can view the most depraved material on the cell phone that his parents gave him as a birthday present.

The Bible teaches that Christians must work to keep their hearts and minds pure. Peter said: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul..." (1 Pet. 2:11). We are to be blameless and harmless children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15). David, the adulterer and murderer, repented by asking God to "create in me a clean heart" (Ps. 51:10). Solomon said a wise man keeps his heart with all diligence (Prov. 4:23-27).

In order to be pure in heart, I must focus my attention (i.e., meditate) on things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praise-worthy (Phil. 4:8). This advice is so simple and self-evidently right. How can anyone expect to have a pure heart if he fills his head with corrupt imagery?

Because It Violates the Law of Love.

“Making love” is a euphemism for sex, but the only time that two people can genuinely “make love” is when they are married to one another. Every other time it is fornication. Whether it involves teenagers in the back seat of a car, or pornographic “actors” in a filthy movie, there is no love involved in any sex outside of marriage. People who engage in fornication are only interested in their own selfish desires. Jesus said a disciple must love his neighbor as himself (Matt. 19:19). Paul says that I must put others ahead of myself (Phil. 2:4). Pornographers do not care about other people. They are looking to make a quick buck and to gratify their unlawful sexual desires with as many people as possible.

Because It Destroys Human Worth.

Young girls and women who agree to appear in nude modeling and video forms of pornography do so because someone has lied to them and told them how beautiful and special they are. While it might be true that these women are beautiful and special, those who make porn only see them as a commodity. Men who enter porn are no more valued but serve as sexual props, required to fornicate on cue. Once they can no longer do this, they are discarded as trash.

In the porn industry, even “stars” who command top dollar are paid a mere pittance compared to salaries paid in other industries. It is certainly a form of enslavement. The industry owns the performers, producers make millions but pay a mere few hundred dollars per

film to performers. Agents then take huge slices of each performer’s pay, and each performer is left to supply his own health care, clothing, supplies, etc. In desperation, performers have to be in front of the camera as often as possible, just to make ends meet. Performers willingly take nearly any job, even the most hardcore and abusive, exposing themselves constantly to injury, disease, rape, and humiliation. The porn industry claims it follows guidelines and rules requiring regular STD checkups for performers, but no testing is perfect, and diseases still are spread. That men and women keep coming back week after week for more abuse is evidence of the enslavement that porn is.

The Bible says that men and women are indeed important to God. Jesus died for the souls of men and women (John 3:16). Moreover, Solomon extolls the glory of a mother and wife (Prov. 31:10-31). “Her worth is far above rubies” (v. 10). “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. . .” (v. 28). Pornography wrings all of that beauty and praiseworthiness out of the women that it seduces, and leaves them as lifeless shells of themselves, after their usefulness to the “industry” is over. Many former porn actors and actresses spend the remainder of their lives addicted to drugs and alcohol. Many simply resort to suicide. An Australian news magazine reported in 2018 that five porn actors had committed suicide in a three-month span of time (news.com.au). This should be shocking in any setting, but in an industry that preys on men and women, it is sadly commonplace.

Conclusion

Pornography seems to be here to stay. Once upon a time, movies that were “rated-X” were shunned. In today’s world, pornography has become a mainstream and acceptable form of entertainment. People from every strata of society, including preachers, school teachers, business people, etc., are addicted to porn. Google reports that its most popular daily searches are

those looking for some kind of porn. One last statistic: Every day, there are over 68 million internet searches for porn related material. Of that number 116,000 are related to child pornography. More sobering than anything else is the statement made by many young people: “Everyone looks at it.”

One Last Thought. . . Parents, do you know what your kids are doing online? Wake up! Find out! You might be shocked to your core to find what your children (raised in a Christian home) have seen already. Society needs a good swift jolt of reality. It is high time that God’s word replaced human philosophy and universal tolerance. Hang “wokeness!” Stop worrying about who is offended by the truth and preach it (2 Tim. 4:2). Condemn the sins that God condemns (1 Pet. 4:11). Inform yourself and stand with the Lord, rejecting filth and perversion. 📖

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The Dangers of Wordliness

by Tim Matheny

Down through the years, individuals have adopted erroneous concepts by defining and applying biblical words in either too narrow or too loose a fashion.

Introduction

Upon seeing the title of this article, you may have wondered how such an august periodical as this would fail to catch a straightforward spelling mistake in the title of an article. I would hope to restore your confidence, however, by revealing that this is a deliberate play on words on my part. When I was in elementary school, we had vocabulary books titled “Wordly Wise.” At the time, I was not worldly wise enough to get the pun, but I’m sure my parents did. I believe it fitting to use such a grammatical invention again to describe a type of mistake in interpreting God’s word, which leads Christians to behavior which is inconsistent New Testament revelation.

The error I am describing is the overreliance upon a single definition of a biblical word or phrase, without respect to its context in the passage in which it is found. Such approaches have historically been used, as they are today, to justify radical innovations—which, of course, are hailed as “progress.”

Present Problems

Take, for example, much of the current discourse about worship. It has come into vogue to take the sense of the word as it occurs in Romans 12:1 regarding using our bodies as a living sacrifice being our “spiritual service of worship” and boil it down to the catchphrase, “Our whole lives are worship.” Then such claims are used to suggest that our worship services are too formal, or too rigid. Furthermore,

these self-appointed experts tell us that we will fail to reach any visitors with the truth because they will “feel like they don’t belong here.” We are told that we fail to recognize that our collective worship is simply “practice” for the worshipful life.

It is declared that anyone who dresses nicely for worship must be attempting to be ostentatious; why should one dress that differently from any other time in their worship-filled life? Pressed to the extreme, this single-definition approach is used to ask why actions that are normally part of worship on the first day of the week can’t happen anytime during the week.

Like so many other errors, this one begins with a misapplication of a true statement. Of course, it is true that our whole lives are a “service of worship.” The problem comes with the assumption that all worship is the same thing, yet both careful reading and common sense tell us this is not so. Is collective giving, for instance, an act of worship? We are told to do so on the first day of the week in 1 Corinthians 16:2. Is taking care of widows and orphans worship? I would argue that given James’ statement in James 1:27 and the aforementioned Romans 12:1, it absolutely is. Do we only give to take care of the needs of the helpless on Sunday, then, or simply choose to ignore what Paul commanded and take up congregational collection on any day of the week? I have never known a fellowship of Christians who would take such a stand. How about Bible classes? Are they acts of worship? Yes, to such a point that I am slightly troubled by our

accommodative distinction between “Bible classes” and “worship services.” Yet, if one presses the idea that worship in the Bible class is of the same nature as our collective services, one would be led to conclude that women could not sing in our worship because that is, by the Spirit’s command, teaching. (This erroneous conclusion, by the way, has been reached from time to time throughout the church’s history.)

On first blush it might seem that a position judging the hearts of those who dress a certain way for worship is on the Pharisaical side of conservatism (and it is), and that an “any day of the week for the acts of worship” position is on the heretical side of progressivism (and it is), and that those two positions could not be held within the same Christian’s heart. Yet for those who would express such ideas, they are simply logical outcomes, conclusions which must be reached from the nature of worship, and their position on ends of a scale which involves a philosophical approach to understanding Scripture in general is incidental and pointless.

Past Problems

Such apparent but explainable “pendulum swings” are not without historical precedent. In the 1950s, two brethren, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, first declared that churches should not have a regularly paid evangelist who stuck around and filled a pulpit, which seemed at the time to be a hyper-conservative declaration; yet within a decade they were both

advocating that churches should not refuse fellowship to anyone who believed in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and soon began to advocate that churches have an ecumenical bond with "Christian" denominations. Once again, these two claims would seem to involve far ends of the philosophical spectrum, yet they are easily understood when we realize that they are really both results of another "wordly" stretching of the truth. They came about because the two preachers were taking the position that there is a firm and irreconcilable

to study about doctrine. The pressing of each word into a single mode generated logical outcomes irrespective of where they might fall on some other scale, describing the position of an outcome in a belief system. My intent here is not to address those specific issues—brother Bill Humble did so in fine fashion in debate with Garrett all the way back in 1954—but simply to point out that what we from the outside might see as inconsistency can, in fact, be conclusions based on the "over-consistency" of pressing words into single definitions.

to tell us that the product of "plucking the heartstrings" is singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that teach and admonish (Eph. 5:18–19; Col. 3:16–17).

Conclusion

The antidotes to "wordliness," happily, are quite simple.

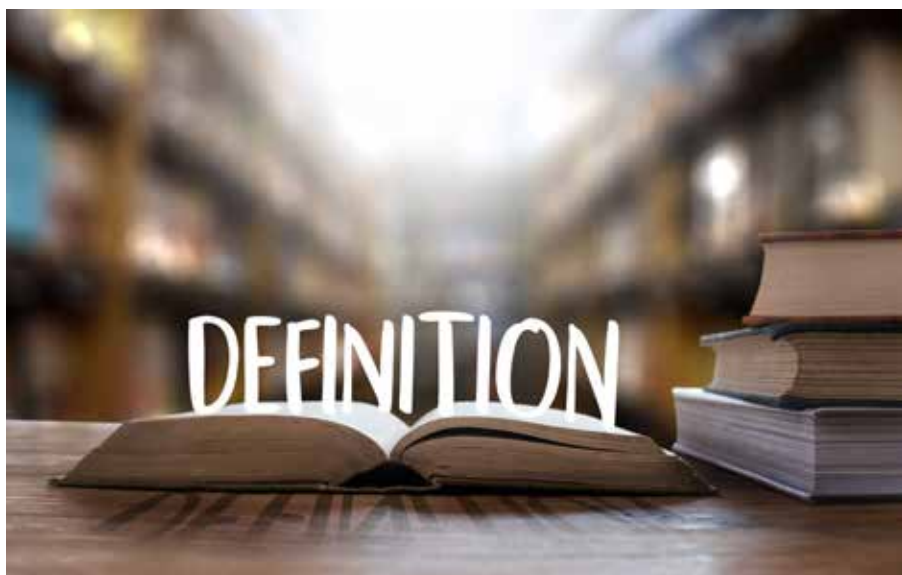
First, we must allow for the simple fact that in virtually every language, a single word can have multiple, and sometimes even contradictory, meanings. Using the Victorian language of the King James Version, one can cleave to a spouse (meaning to be stuck like glue), but an animal can have a cloven hoof (split apart into two or more pieces). These two meanings are nearly perfect opposites, yet the word is the same, and those opposite meanings continue to live on in that way in English to this day.

A corollary to this recognition is that, as we attempt to understand any word in Scripture, we must strive to understand how that word fits in contexts ranging from the sentence, to the overall story or argument of which it is a part, to its use within its book or epistle.

Finally, we must shed our pride when we read the Scriptures. There is a certain feeling of superiority to believe that you understand words better than either those who surround you or those who have gone before. This is, however, sinful folly, as Paul points out in 1 Timothy 6:3–4 and 2 Timothy 2:14.

May we all reject the wranglings of "wordliness" for the comfort of godliness.

T



difference between the terms "gospel" and "doctrine;" that neither of the two can be used either to represent the other or even a mixture of the two.

The result: A preacher who was "located" was not evangelizing, but rather teaching when he talked about things other than the gospel, which they defined as always meaning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This, they said, could not be. Later they would reuse the same distinction and say that anyone who believed in the gospel—again, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—should be in fellowship with others who believed the same way and accept them as Christians, and that those Christians in fellowship could differ and continue

Sometimes these singular definitions do not even come from the Bible at all. Such has been the problem with the Greek word translated "sing." It is asserted that the word meant "to pluck" and thus authorized the use of any instrument. Even if we do not address the inherent question of why everyone commanded to do such doesn't play an instrument to accompany or replace singing for every single song we sing in worship, this pressing of a single definition ignores the fact that this word is, as my old English teachers would say, transitive—that is, it has to have an object. In this case, that object is "your heart," and the term therefore is a metaphor for creating music within the heart, and the text goes on



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In Word or in Power?

by Howard Whittlesey

When sinners respond to the gospel message, they embrace the most powerful message the world has ever known.

Introduction

The question that must be answerable by scriptural proofs is this: “What, in your conversion, makes the difference?” That’s an ice-cold question without the groundwork, so we shall seek to lay that groundwork as effectively as we can derive from verses of Scripture.

Remember the Five Steps?

How long has it been since you have even heard of the five steps of conversion? It seems that few Bible study sessions or sermons ever consider such, at least not collectively. When did you last discuss them? It seems that few if anyone knows or remembers? There is a lot about which to preach and teach in God’s word, isn’t there? Yet, if the word is not presented—even touched upon—to do with conversion, how can we expect our numbers to grow? Are we going to have to wait till baby Sammy and Susie grow up and do as their parents did? Is that our next hope of using the baptistry? Anyway. . .

Hear

Seldom did this feature get mentioned without hearing Romans 10:17, and rightfully so. It shows that hearing is where the groundwork begins. Without hearing, faith will probably never take its place in the soul of man. Yet, there are other passages that might be considered as well to substantiate this groundwork. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). Perhaps one should be

There’s nothing in all of creation like the capital “G” God of the Bible. When one sows the word, the hearer should biblically “understand it” (Matt. 13:23), “receive or accept it” (Mark 4:20), “keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). When did *you* hear on *this* wise?

Believe

Why not start again with Romans 10:17 in which Paul said that “Faith *cometh* by hearing”? This is obviously the work of the Holy Spirit. Man hears an awful lot of things by which no faith whatsoever comes. Yet, upon understanding, receiving, and keeping that which one hears, faith *cometh*. This hearer might be like those of Acts 2:37. Now wait a minute: Don’t just say they heard and believed. Luke said that they were pricked in their heart. These listeners understood, received, and were ready to keep it. Right?



apprised of Deuteronomy 32:39, which says, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” It would seem that the pronouns should be greatly emphasized in this passage.

Repent

Here’s the “kicker!” Why did Jesus say, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5)? Sounds easy, huh? *Hold on!* Time and time again, God called upon Israel to “*turn from*” sin and “*turn to*” Him—obviously with the intention of

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doing His will forever. Is that the way it works in our day? The true repenter has removed his “immoral” garments and has put on spiritual clothes. *He is different! He is committed!** If that isn’t true, then he hasn’t repented. So, will he not perish—with or without confession and/or baptism? Isn’t that what Jesus meant?

Confess

The classic biblical confession which no one ever hears these days is found in Acts 8:37. Be honest: Have you ever heard this confession to precede a baptism? Usually the preacher or person performing the baptism asks the potential convert a question that is answered with a “Yes.” Right? Do we really speak where the Bible speaks? Hm-m-m. This is a matter for another discussion. Mark tells us that the subjects of the baptism of John confessed their sins (Mark 1:5). When was the last time you saw *that* done? Peter, on two separate occasions, said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), also, “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69). Baptism did not follow, for that came not until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Be Baptized

The book of Acts has many references to this very necessary event. Jesus, in His great commission, told the apostles to baptize those whom they taught (Matt.

28:19). Mark quotes His having said, “Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16). Oh, what that word”but” doesn’t teach! Right? That, too, is a matter for another discussion.

Rehearse your own experience: Did you, in fact, faithfully execute the action of all the above?

Hold on! We’re not through. We titled this article, “In Word, Or In Power?” We’ve only completed the “in-word” part. Now let’s look at the “in-power” part.

It centers on the promise of God expressed through the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost: “And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Does anyone not know for certain that the power comes *only* from God? John quoted Jesus in John 14:16-17. “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

Yes, we know that the apostles were the only recipients of this promise, but eliminate the miracles and the inspired guidance they received in revealing the truth, and we still have the gift of the Holy Ghost that is conferred upon the saints. So, does the gift of the Holy Ghost not comprise His presence, His dwelling, and His empowering of saints unto the good

life and works that are to substantiate the conversion that took place in their souls? Is this not required so as to evidence a true *change* “from” sin “to” God? If not, then what else could Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20? Who would dare state that the consecrated saint is not guided into all the truth, a la John 16:13?

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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor. 6:19–20, KJV).

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13, KJV).

Conclusion

James and Peter put it simply. So shall we. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jas. 1:22). “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). So, your conversion “in word” *and* “in power”—makes *all* the difference. **■**



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Obeying the Gospel

by David Dann

Denominational concepts creep into our thinking, especially in discussing salvation. We are saved by grace (God's part) through faith (our part). Yet, saving faith is not merely mental assent, but must lead to full obedience.

Introduction

Regarding those who had heard the gospel, but rejected it, the apostle Paul writes,

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:16-17).

To obey the gospel is to respond to the message in faith by complying with the terms set forth by the Lord in order to receive the salvation He offers. Even though the Bible clearly speaks of heeding or obeying the gospel message, the concept seems to be foreign to the majority of those who claim to be Christians today. Instead of being urged to obey the gospel, listeners are instructed by religious leaders to "accept Jesus into

your heart," or to "just believe," or to be saved "by faith alone." Consider what the Bible says about the importance of obeying the gospel.

1. Sinners Will Be Punished Unless They Obey the Gospel.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica concerning the coming of Christ in judgment, making reference to the time "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Notice that those who have not complied with the Lord's terms for forgiveness, by obeying the gospel, will face the "vengeance" of the Lord and will be "punished with everlasting destruction" (vv. 8, 9).

2. Sinners Must Obey the Gospel in Order to Be Set Free From Sin.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, saying, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18).

FEAR
GOD
&
KEEP
HIS
COMMANDMENTS
ECCLESIASTES 12:13

The change in the spiritual state of the Romans took place, not by accepting Jesus into their hearts, but when they “obeyed from the heart” (v. 17). The only way a sinner can be set free from the condemnation of sin is by believing and obeying the gospel message.

3. Sinners Must Obey the Gospel in Order to Receive Eternal Salvation.

Of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews says, “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’” (Heb. 5:9-10). Jesus is not the author of eternal salvation to all who come to Him by faith alone. Instead, He is the author of eternal salvation “to all who obey Him” (v. 9). One must obey the gospel message in order to receive eternal salvation in Christ.

4. Sinners Must Obey the Gospel in Order to Have Their Souls Purified.

The apostle Peter wrote to those who had already become Christians, saying, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:22-23). The purification of the souls of these individuals did not take place by faith only. As the apostle points out, their souls were purified “in obeying the truth” at which time they were “born again” (vv. 22, 23). The only sinners who will have their souls purified are those who obey the gospel.

Conclusion

Though faith in Christ is absolutely necessary in the matter of receiving salvation, it is not all that is necessary. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Peter presented the terms of the gospel to those who had come to believe in Jesus, saying, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Have you obeyed the gospel? **IT**



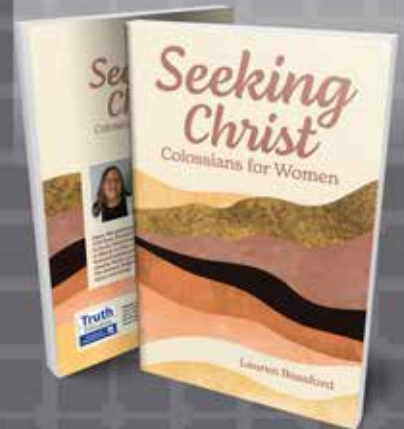
David Dann

After having worked with churches in IN, Canada, FL, TX, and KY, David moved to the Athens, GA area in August 2021 to work with the recently formed University church of Christ. He and his wife, Cynthia, have been blessed with six children. The church website is uccathens.com. He may be reached at ddann1@hotmail.com.

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Evangelist: Kenny Moorer | 256-766-0403

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JP Flores | 562-420-2363 or Mark Reeves | 562-377-1674 | justchristians.org

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909-788-9978 | sandimaschurchofchrist.com

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126 West Harvard St. | Suite 6

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Evangelist: Richie Thetford | poudrevalleychurchofchrist.org

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Sun. Worship 11:00 pm | Bible Study 2 pm & 1:30 pm

970-249-8116 | sanjuanchurchofchrist.org

FLORIDA**DESTIN***South Walton Church of Christ*

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6 Ln. Dr.

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ORLANDO*Church of Christ at S. Bumby*

3940 S. Bumby Ave.

Sun. Communion: 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:00 am | Praise & Preaching: 10:55 am (No pm Service) | Wed 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Ken Chapman

Office: 407-851-8031 | bumby.org | Note: Please call for current worship and Bible study times.

PANAMA CITY BEACH*Beach Church of Christ*

8910 Front Beach Rd.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

850-234-2521

SEFFNER*Church of Christ*

621 E. Wheeler Rd.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:50 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm

Evangelist: Bobby Witherington | 813-684-1297 | seffnercoc.org

GEORGIA**PINE MTN. VALLEY***Church of Christ*

Route 116 (near Callaway Gardens)

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm

Evangelist: Tommy W. Thomas | 706-628-5117 or 628-5229 | pmvchurch.com

IDAHO**BLACKFOOT***Church of Christ*

370 N. Shilling | P.O. Box 158-83221

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
208-785-6168 or 681-1552**IOWA****DES MOINES***Church of Christ*

1310 N.E. 54th Ave.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:40 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
515-262-6799**ILLINOIS****DOWNERS GROVE***Church of Christ*

1236 63rd St. (Dir: 1.5 miles E of I355)

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:55 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm

Evangelist: Steve Wolfgang | 630-968-0760 | dgcoc.org

GLEN ELLYN

Glen Ellyn Church of Christ

796 Prairie Ave.
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm
Evangelist: Keith E. Brown | 630-858-2290 & 630-377-3990

MATTOON

Southside Church of Christ

1100 S. 17th St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
217-234-3702

SOUTH HOLLAND

Southeast Church of Christ

16224 S Vincennes Ave.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 4 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Donald Hawkins | 708-339-1008 | southeastchurchofchrist.com

WASHINGTON

Tazewell County Church of Christ

Meeting @ Sleep Inn Suites and Motel | 1101 North Cummings Lane, Washington, IL 61571
Sun. Worship: 11:30 am | Bible Study: 12:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:30 pm @ home of Tim Sundlie, call for address
Evangelist: Tim Sundlie | 608-796-9028 | sunbeads1@gmail.com | tazewellcoc.org

INDIANA

CLARKSVILLE

Clarksville Church of Christ

407 W. Lewis & Clark Parkway, 47129
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Brian Anderson | 812-944-2305 or 812-948-9917 | clarkvillechurchofchrist.org

JAMESTOWN

Church of Christ

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am | Wed. 7:00 pm
765-676-6404 | jamestowncoc.com

NOBLESVILLE

Stony Creek Church of Christ

15530 Herriman Blvd, 46060
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: John Smith | preacherjohn54@att.net | 317-501-8035 or 317-501-0249 or 317-701-1204

OOLITIC

Church of Christ

400 Lafayette Ave. | P.O. Box 34
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. 7:00 pm
812-279-4332

PEKIN

Church of Christ

(First St. & Karnes Ct.)
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jeremy Goen | 812-967-3437 or 967-3520 | pekinchurchofchrist.com

KANSAS

TOPEKA

17th Street Church of Christ

5600 SW 17th St, Topeka, KS 66604
Sun. Bible Study 9:15 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
785-235-8687 or 785-273-7977 | 17thstreetchurchofchrist.org

KENTUCKY

BEAVER DAM

Church of Christ

1235 Williams St.
Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Bible Study After am Worship & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jerid Gunter | 270-274-4451

BENTON

Fairdealing Church of Christ

8081 US Hwy 68-East, Benton, KY 42025
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
270-354-9451 | fairdealingmarc@gmail.com | churchofchristatfairdealing.com
| Conveniently located near Kenlake State Resort Park on the western shore of Kentucky Lake.

BRANDENBURG

Brandenburg Church of Christ

612 Broadway
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:30 pm
Evangelist: Charles J. White | 270-422-3878

CAMPBELLSVILLE

Sunny Hill Dr. Church of Christ

107 Sunny Hill Dr.
Worship 9:30 am & 11:30 am | Bible Study 10:30 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Steve Lee | 270-789-1651 | sunnyhillcoc.com

CANEYVILLE

Caneyville Church of Christ

103 N. Main St. | P.O. Box 233
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jarrod Jacobs | 270-589-4167 or 270-274-3065

DANVILLE*Church of Christ*

385 E. Lexington Ave.
Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Bible Study 11:15 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
Evangelist: B.J. Sipe | 859-236-4204

FLORENCE*Northern Kentucky Church of Christ*

18 Scott Drive, Florence, KY 41042
Sun. Worship 9:30 am & 5:30 pm | Sun. Bible Study 10:30 am | Wed. Bible
Study 7:00 pm
859-371-2095 | nkcofc.com

FRANKLIN*31-W North Church of Christ*

1733 Bowling Green Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
Evangelist: Steve Monts | 270-776-9393 | 31wchurchofchrist.com

LEITCHFIELD*Mill St. Church of Christ*

733 Mill St. Hwy 62 E.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:55 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
Evangelist: Dan McMahan | 270-971-1492 | millstreetchurchofchrist.org

LOUISVILLE*Valley Station Church of Christ*

1803 Dixie Garden Dr.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
Evangelist: Michael Hardin | michaelhardin1123@att.net | 502-937 2822

SHEPHERDSVILLE*Hebron Lane Church of Christ*

3221 East Hebron Lane
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30
pm
Evangelist: Ron Halbrook & Connie W. Adams | 502-957-5115 or 502-955-1748
| hebronlanechurchofchrist.com

LOUISIANA**GONZALES***Southside Church of Christ*

405 Orice Roth Rd. | 70737 (Baton Rouge area)
Sun. Bible Class 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00
pm
Evangelist: R.J. Evans | rjevans@eatel.net | 225-622-4587

MANY*Lakeside Church of Christ*

12095 Texas Hwy. (Hwy. 6 W.)
12 miles west of Many
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
318-256-9396

MAINE**PORTLAND***Church of Christ*

856 Brighton Ave. (Breakwater School) | Leave Maine Turnpike at Exit 48
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm w/ second service immediately
following am worship | Mid-week Bible Study (please call for times & places)
207-839-3075 or 839-8409

MICHIGAN**KENTWOOD***W. Michigan Church of Christ*

3084 Creek Drive SE, #1-C, Kentwood, MI 49512 | P.O. Box 8446, Kentwood,
Mich. 49508 (Grand Rapids area)
Sun. Worship 11:00 am | Sun. Bible Study 12:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Joseph Gladwell | cedarsprings98@gmail.com

ROSCOMMON*N. Michigan Church of Christ*

414 South Main Street
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
Evangelist: Ryan Thomas | 810-837-1302 or 989-389-3226 | northernmichi-
ganchurchofchrist.com

MISSISSIPPI**CLINTON***McRaven Rd. Church of Christ*

301 McRaven Rd. (I20, exit 36)
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study
7:00 pm
Evangelist: Leonard White | 601-925-9757 or 924-2645

MERIDIAN*7th St. Church of Christ*

2914 7th St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am

Grandview Church of Christ

2820 Grandview Ave.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. 6:30 pm
Ron Cooper: 601-934-3675 | roncooper@bellsouth.net
Ricky Ethridge: 601-737-5778 | rickymarsha@bellsouth.net

SOUTH HAVEN*Church of Christ*

2110 E State Line Rd. (Exit I-55) (Memphis area)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: James A. Brown | Bldg: 662-342-1132

MARYLAND**SEVERN***Southwest Church of Christ*

805 Meadow Rd, Severn, MD 21144
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible
Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Brandon Trout | 410-969-1420 or 410-551-6549 | swcofchrist.com

MISSOURI

BLODGETT

Blodgett Church of Christ

422 N Linton St., Blodgett, MO 63824

Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Russell Rice | 573-475-0417

BLUE SPRINGS

Southside Church of Christ

4000 SW Christiansen

Sun. Worship 9:00 pm | Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Brett Hogland | 816-228-9262

BRANSON

Eagle Rock Rd. Church of Christ

432 Eagle Rock Rd.

Sun. Worship 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:30 am | Sun. Evening Worship 2 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm

Evangelist: Philip North | 417-239-1036 | primrosenor@suddenink.net | eaglerockroadchurchofchrist.org

CAPE GIRARDEAU

Cape County Church of Christ

2912 Bloomfield Rd

Sun. Bible Study 9:15 am | Worship 10:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Seth McDonald & Jerry Lee Westbrook | 573-837-1001 | capecountycoc@gmail.com | capecountycoc.com

FAIR GROVE

Church of Christ

217 N. Orchard Blvd.

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am & 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Walter Myers | 417-830-8972 or 417-736-2663

KENNETT

Church of Christ

703 Harrison St.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Nolan Glover | 573-888-6778 or 870-650-1648 | westsidechurchofchrist.us

SAINT JAMES

Church of Christ

685 Sidney St.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:15 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Lynn Huggins | 573-265-8628

SAINT JOSEPH

County Line Church of Christ

2727 County Line Rd.

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:50 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

816-279-4737 | countylinechurchofchrist.com

NEBRASKA

BEATRICE

Church of Christ at 7th & Bell

Bell St & S 7th St. Beatrice, NE 68310

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 6:30 pm

402-233-4102 or 402-228-3827 | churchofchrist7bell.org

NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Church of Christ

5327 S. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC 28217

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm

704-525-5655 | charlottechurchofchrist.org

LINCOLNTON

Lincoln Church of Christ

3781 East Highway 27, Iron Station, NC 28080

Sun. Bible Study: 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Stan Adams | 704-748-9777 (Bldg) & 704-748-3747 (Jerry) | lincolnncchurch@gmail.com | lincolncoc.com

OHIO

BEAVERCREEK

Knollwood Church of Christ

1031 Welford Dr, Beavercreek, OH 45434 (located a few miles E of Dayton)

Sun. Short Worship: 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:05 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 am |

Wed. Bible Study Adults: 1:00 pm & All ages: 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Heath Rogers | 937-426-1422 | knollwoodchurch.org

DAYTON

West Carrollton Church of Christ

28 W. Main St., Dayton, OH 45449

Sun. Worship 9:00 pm | Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:25 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelists: Michael Grushon 937-866-5162 or Alan Beck 937-469-3311 | wc-coc.org

FRANKLIN

Franklin Church of Christ

6417 Franklin-Lebanon Rd. Franklin, OH 45005

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am | Tues. Bible Study 6:30 pm

Evangelist: Josh Lee | 937-789-8055 or 937-746-1249 | franklin-church.org

MANSFIELD

Southside Church of Christ

687 Mansfield-Lucas Rd. Mansfield, OH 44907

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am | Wed. Bible Study 4:30 pm

James Bond: 419-564-3878 | Mr. Kim Walton: 419-651-3488 | Bldg: 419-522-8982 | northsidecofc.us

NEW LEBANON

New Lebanon Church of Christ

1973 W Main St. New Lebanon, OH 45345
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am, & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Bruce Hastings | 937-687-7150 or 937-478-0367

MARIETTA-RENO

Marietta-Reno Church of Christ

80 Sandhill Rd. Reno, OH 45773
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Mark Childers | 304-615-1091 | 740-374-9827 | mariettarenochurchofchrist.org

NORTHWOOD

Frey Rd. Church of Christ

4110 Frey Rd., Northwood, OH 43619 (Toledo Area)
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Donald Jarabek | 419-893-3566 & 567-694-5062

POMEROY

Westside Church of Christ

33226 Children's Home Rd., Pomeroy, OH 45769
 Sun Worship 10:00 am & 5 pm | Bible Study 11:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
 Jack Hunt | wmhunt55@gmail.com | 740-645-4612 | Find us on Facebook!

OKLAHOMA

MCALESTER

North A St. Church of Christ

2120 No. A St.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:45 am & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Rob Lungstrum | 918-931-1362 or 918-423-3445

OREGON

PORTLAND

Liberty NW Church of Christ

4110 NE 122nd Ave #101, Portland, OR 97230
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 am | Thur. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Samuel A. Matthews | 971-331-2838 | Bldg: 503-432-8697 | samatm@comcast.net | libertynwchurchofchrist.org

SWEET HOME

Church of Christ

3702 E. Long St.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 7:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Bldg: 541-367-1599

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA

Mt. Airy Church of Christ

7222 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19119
 Sun. Bible Study 10:15 am | Sun. Worship: 11:15 am | Tues. Bible Study: 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: James H. Baker, Jr. | 215-248-2026 | mtairychurchofchrist.org

SOUTH CAROLINA

SUMTER

Woodland Church of Christ

3370 Broad St. Extension
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: A.A. Granke, Jr. | 803-499-6023

WEST COLUMBIA

Airport Church of Christ

4013 Edmund Hwy. (Hwy. 302)
 Note: See our web site for current assembly schedule.
 Evangelist: Terry W. Benton | 803-834-6978 | airport-church-of-christ.com

TENNESSEE

COLUMBIA

Mooresville Pike Church of Christ

417 Mooresville Pike | (Located .8 mi. N. of Hwy. 50/Jas. Campbell)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 3:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 931-388-5828 or 931-381-7898 | mooresvillepikecoc.com

COSBY

Cosby Church of Christ

4894 Hooper Hwy. | 37722 | (Located 15 mi. E. of Gatlinburg on Hwy. 321)
 Sun. Bible Study 10am | Worship 11:00 pm & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
 Evangelist: Olie Williamson | 423-487-5540 or 423-748-0844

KINGSTON SPRINGS

Kingston Springs Church of Christ

350 North Main St.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Steve Walker | kscoc.com

MOUNT PLEASANT

Locust St. Church of Christ

108 Locust St.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Daniel H. King, Sr. | 931-379-3704 or 931-964-3924 | Iscoc.com

MURFREESBORO

Cason Ln. Church of Christ

1110 Cason Lane
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Bldg: 615-896-0090 | casonlanechurch.org

Northfield Blvd. Church of Christ

2091 Pitts Ln, Murfreesboro, TN 37130 (located at the corner of Northfield Blvd and Pitts Lane)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: David Bunting | 615-893-1200 | GodsRedeemed.org

NASHVILLE

Hillview Church of Christ

7471 Charlotte Pike
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Lee Wildman | 615-952-5458 or 615-356-7318

Perry Heights Church of Christ

423 Donelson Pike
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:55 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Johnny Felker | 615-883-3118 | perryheights.faithweb.com

TEXAS

ALLEN

Twin Creeks Church of Christ

1414 W. Exchange Pkwy
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jerry King 214-504-0443 or 972-727-5355 | twincreekscoc.com

ALVARADO

I-35 Church of Christ

E. Service Rd. off I-35, N. of Alvarado
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
817-295-7277 or 790-7253

ALVIN

Adoue St. Church of Christ

605 E. Adoue St., Alvin, TX 77511
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Mark Mayberry | mark@ascoc.org | ascoc.org

BAYTOWN

Church of Christ at Pruett & Lobit

701 North Pruett St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:40 am & 6:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Bldg: 281-422-5926 | Weldon: 713-818-1321 | biblework.com

BEAUMONT

Dowlen Rd. Church of Christ

3060 Dowlen Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Max Dawson | 409-866-1996 | dowlenroad.com

DICKINSON

Dickinson Church of Christ

2919 Main St/FM 517 E., Dickinson, TX 77539
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sunday Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
713-298-6673

EDNA

Church of Christ

301 Robison St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Phillip Stuckey | 361-782-5506 or 361-782-2844 | ednachurchofchrist.org

EL PASO

Eastridge Church of Christ

3277 Pendleton Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
915-855-1524

GALVESTON (BACLIFF)

Bacliff Church of Christ

4303 18th St, Bacliff, TX 77518
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Sun. Worship 10:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Richard Lay | bacliffchurchofchrist.org

FORT WORTH

West Side Church of Christ

6110 White Settlement Rd. 76114
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
817-738-7269

GRANBURY

Old Granbury Rd Church of Christ
4313 Old Granbury Rd, Granbury, TX 76049
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Chip Foster | 817-913-4209 or 817-279-3351 | oldgranburyrd-church.org

HOUSTON

Fry Rd. Church of Christ

2510 Fry Rd, Houston, TX 77084
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: David Flatt | fryroad.org | church@fryroad.org

IRVING

Westside Church of Christ

2320 Imperial Dr. (Located close to DFW Airport)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:50 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Mark Roberts | 972-986-9131 | justchristians.com

LUBBOCK

Indiana Avenue Church of Christ

6111 Indiana Ave, Lubbock, TX 79413
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 9:00 am & 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 806-795-3377 | lubbockchurch.com

MANSFIELD

Northside Church of Christ

1820 Mansfield Webb Rd, Mansfield, TX 76063
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship: 10:20 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 5:30 pm.
 Evangelist: Tom Roberts | 817-996-3926 | northsidecofc.us

NACOGDOCHES

Shawnee Church of Christ

612 S Shawnee St, Nacogdoches, TX 75961
 Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
 Minister: Van Dennis | 936-615-2950

Stallings Dr. Church of Christ

3831 N.E. Stallings Dr.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:20 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelists: Randy Harshbarger & Jay Taylor

SAN ANTONIO

Pecan Valley Church of Christ

268 Utopia Ave. (Dir: I-37 S.E. Exit Pecan Valley)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Jesse Garcia | 210-660 0409 | pecanvalleychurchofchrist.org

SHERMAN

Westwood Village Church of Christ

314 N. Tolbert
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Ronald Stringer

TEMPLE

Leon Valley Church of Christ

4404 Twin City Blvd.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Jason Garcia (yourfriendjgar@gmail.com) or (leonvalleychurch@gmail.com) | 254-939-0682 | leonvalleychurch.org

TEXARKANA

Franklin Dr. Church of Christ

2301 Franklin Dr.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:15 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Bryan Garlock | 870-772-0746 | txkchurch.com

WACO

Sun Valley Church of Christ

340 E Warren St. (in Hewitt, a suburb of Waco)
 Sun. Bible Class 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Marc Smith | 254-292-2482 or 652-7698

VERMONT

MONTPELIER

Montpelier Church of Christ

Meeting in the Capital City Grange Hall, 6612 Route 12 Berlin, VT 05602
 Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10 am | Tues. Evening in Homes
 Evangelist: Open | montpelierchurchofchrist.com | P.O. Box 70, Williamstown, VT 05679 | For questions or directions: Wade Holt 802-485-4311

VIRGINIA

CHESAPEAKE

Tidewater Church of Christ

217 Taxus St.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Steven Matthews | 757-436-6900 | tidewaterchurchofchrist.com

RICHMOND

Courthouse Church of Christ

8330 Doublecreek Court, Chesterfield, VA 23832 (Located in teh Metro Area; Courthouse Rd. at Double Creek Ct. 2.2 miles S of Rt. 288)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Nathan L. Morrison | 804-778-4717 | courthousechurchofchrist.com

Forest Hill Church of Christ

1208 W. 41st St.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Jack Bise, Jr. | 804-233-5959

RIDGWAY

Church of Christ

2970 Old Leaksville Rd.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 276-956-6049 | churchofchristatridgeway.com

ROANOKE

Blue Ridge Church of Christ

929 Indiana Ave. N.E. (5 min. from Roanoke Convention Center)
 Sun. 1st Lesson 9:15 am | Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Brent Paschall | 540-344-2755 | blueridgecoc.org

VIRGINIA BEACH

Southside Church of Christ

5652 Haden Rd.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm

Robert Mallard | 757-464-4574

WASHINGTON

BELLINGHAM

Mt. Baker Church of Christ

1860 Mt. Baker Hwy.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study

7:00 pm

Evangelist: Joe Price | 360-752-2692 or 360-920-6965 | bibleanswer.com/
mtbaker

TACOMA

Manitou Park Church of Christ

Meeting at Gray Middle School, 6229 S. Tyler St., Tacoma, WA 98409

Note: Please see webpage for updated meeting location and times.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

(Online)

253-242-3098 | tacomachurch@gmail.com | tacomachurch.com

WEST VIRGINIA

CLARKSBURG

Westside Church of Christ

7 Old Davisson Run Rd

Sun. Worship 9:30 am

304-622-5433 | westsidechurchofchristwv.net

FAIRMONT

Eastside Church of Christ

1929 Morgantown Ave.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study

7:00 pm

304-363-8696 or 304-844-2437

MOUNDSVILLE

Moundsville Church of Christ

210 Cedar Ave, Moundsville, WV 26041

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible

Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Tony Huntsman | 304-845-4940 | cedarsower.com

CANADA

CALGARY, AB

Northside Church of Christ

803 20A Ave NE, Calgary AB T2E 1S1

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible

Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Eric Castillo | +1-403-619-1249 | churchofchristcalgary.com

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