

Back To Basics

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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Johnie Edwards

With the coming of a new year comes those new year's resolutions! Many are made only soon to be broken. This time of year does serve a good purpose of considering some spiritual resolutions which would be good for all of us to make and keep.

• **NO LONGER TO LINGER.** The song, *I Am Resolved* serves as a reminder of some good resolutions. If you have not become a Christian, it is a good time to resolve to become one and quit lingering. Don't be charmed by the world's delight. Be aware there are things that are nobler. So a good question is: "What wait I for?" (Ps. 39:7).

• **TO GO TO THE SAVIOUR.** All of us would do well to go to the Lord at this time of the year as well as rest of the year. One reason for going to Him is because He "has the words of eternal life..." (Jn. 6:68). As one goes to Christ, he leaves his sins as they are remitted at baptism (Acts 2:38). As Jesus is the "saviour of the body, the church..." (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:24); you will be "added to the church" (Acts 2:47).

• **TO FOLLOW JESUS.** Since Jesus is the living way, we are instructed to follow Him. Peter declared, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us

an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

• **TO ENTER THE KINGDOM.** There is no greater resolution than that of being a citizen in the kingdom of God. The kingdom often has reference to the Lord's church (Mt. 16:18-19). We enter the kingdom by being "born of water and of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:3-5). This takes place when one is "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

• **TO BE MORE FAITHFUL.** The Lord's people are described as "stewards," and they must "be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1). A lot of church members choose not to be counted faithful. If we expect the Lord to say, "Well done," we must "be faithful" (Mt. 25:21). Do you need to make a resolution on this count?

• **TO BE THE BEST EXAMPLE.** There is a great demand for some good example setting! Fellow workers need it, our children need it, and other church members need it. After all, we must "shine as lights in the world" (Mt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15). May each of us plan to be the best example as folks "read our epistle" (2 Cor. 3:2).

Don't forget to keep your resolutions!



THE SOWER'S SEED

Basic Sermon Starters

"HE THAT GOETH FORTH AND WEEPETH, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, SHALL
DOUBTLESS COME AGAIN WITH REJOICING, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM."

SAVED LIKE NOAH

Introduction

1. 1 Peter 3:20-21
2. Noah's salvation was a type of our salvation. This lesson compares the two salvations.

Discussion

- I. **NOAH WAS SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD**
 - A. Genesis 6:8
 - B. We are saved by God's grace (Eph. 2:8).
 - C. Noah was not saved by grace alone. Neither are we!
- II. **NOAH WAS SAVED BY FAITH**
 - A. Hebrews 11:7
 - B. We are saved by faith (Jn. 3:16; 8:24; Rom. 5:1; Heb. 11:6).
 - C. Not saved by faith only (Jas. 2:24).
- III. **NOAH WAS SAVED BY OBEDIENCE**
 - A. Hebrews 11:7
 - B. Genesis 6:22; 7:5
 - C. We are saved by obedience (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; Heb. 5:9).

IV. NOAH WAS SAVED BY WATER

- A. 1 Peter 3:20
- B. Water buoyed up the ark and kept it afloat (Gen. 7:17).
- C. We are saved by baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

V. NOAH WAS SAVED IN THE ARK

- A. Salvation was placed in the ark (Gen. 7:1, 7, 9, 13, 15-16, 23; 1 Pet. 3:20).
- B. Today, salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10) and the saved are in the church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23).
- C. Baptism puts us into Christ (Gal. 3:27) and the church (1 Cor. 12:13).
- D. Just as all those outside the ark perished, all those outside Christ and His church will be forever lost.

Conclusion

1. Noah was saved by grace, faith, obedience, water, and in the ark.
2. We are saved by grace, faith, obedience, baptism, and in Christ and the church.
3. We invite you to be saved like Noah.

Back To Basics

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I'M DIVORCED—WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

John Isaac Edwards

It is not uncommon for this question to be asked as divorce is common these days—about half of marriages end in divorce, we are told. One has to set his emotions aside, let the Lord answer the question, through a careful and prayerful reading of His word, and be satisfied with His answer, whatever it is.

• **THE RULE: NO DIVORCE.** We must realize that God's rule is, No divorce! God hates divorce (Mal. 2:14). God's marriage law, in the beginning, made no provision for divorce (Gen. 2:18-24). Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6). "...from the beginning it [divorce] was not so" (Mt. 19:8).

• **ONE EXCEPTION: FORNICATION.** The Lord gave only one exception to the no-divorce rule, when He said, "saving for the cause of fornication" (Mt. 5:32) and "except it be for fornication" (Mt. 19:9).

• **IF YOU DID THE PUTTING AWAY.** If the marriage was Scriptural to start with, and you divorced your spouse for some reason other than fornication, then you have an unscriptural divorce. You need to repent of putting asunder what God joined together and "be reconciled" to your spouse (1 Cor. 7:11). If reconciliation is not possible, then you have no choice but to "remain unmarried" (1 Cor. 7:11). If you put away your spouse for the sin of fornication, then, according to Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, you have the right to either remain unmarried or marry another, provided you marry one who has a Scriptural right to marry: one never before married (1 Cor. 7:1-2), one whose spouse has died (Rom. 7:2-3), or one who put away a fornicating mate (Mt. 19:9).

• **IF YOU WERE PUT AWAY.** If you were put away by your spouse, then you cannot marry another. Jesus never gave the put away person the

right to marry. If so, where is the passage? Jesus taught, "...and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Mt. 5:32; 19:9).

Marriage is a life-long contract and we need to think very seriously before entering it. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom. 7:2-3).

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LOSE WEIGHT IN 2008

Melba Edwards

A top New Year’s Resolution for many is losing weight. This article is not about gluttony, but focuses on Hebrews 12:1-2, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us...”

• **WHY LOSE WEIGHT?** Losing weight spiritually will cause my inner being to be healthier. In the text above, weight is a burden, bulk, mass, or bulging. We are told to lay it aside, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. *Easily* is an adverb meaning with little effort. It’s easy to keep this weight. *Beset* means standing well around, or it is in every direction. Sin encompasses us. It is everywhere. This weight is in my way of being everything I can for the Lord. I must lay every weight or burden that hinders me from the Lord’s work. Excess weight causes me to lose my focus. Losing weight takes much effort. But when I see that others have laid aside every weight, as in the previous chapter, I know I can lose weight too.

• **HOW DO I LOSE WEIGHT?** First, I must have a determination to lose weight. *Lay* means to put away. I must put away this burden of sin. Second, I must run with patience. I can run because I don’t have this mass or burden slowing me down. *Patience* is endurance and continuance. Third, I must keep focused. I must keep my eyes on the goal of heaven and not let anything distract me. I can lose weight as I look unto Jesus who endured the cross. The things Christ

endured for me helps me to lay aside every weight that so easily besets me. Because Jesus is the chief leader and completer of our faith should help motivate us to lay aside every weight and sin. Fourth, I need to exercise. Hebrews 5:14 reads, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Perhaps, part of the problem in losing weight is that we haven’t trained our senses to discern both good and evil. Fifth, losing weight takes discipline and self-control. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Temperance is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) and it is to be added to our faith (2 Pet. 1:6). Sixth, I must have the proper diet. It is important to have a well-balanced diet, feeding on the milk and meat of God’s word (Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 2:2).

• **WHAT ARE THE RESULTS IF I LOSE WEIGHT?** I can have heaven as my eternal home. Losing weight is a fight. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Let’s get busy if we aren’t already and lose weight. Don’t let excess weight drag you down and keep you from going to heaven.

In Few Words

SPATIAL SEPARATION

If separation alone is divorce, then every time there is space between a husband and wife they would be divorced. The word “spatial” simply means, “involving space.” The laws of the land allow for a “legal separation as an alternative to divorce for people who can’t continue to live together but do not want to end their marriage.”

IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE

If there is more than one reason for divorce, what are the reasons and where is the passage of Scripture that so teaches?

IS IT LAWFUL?

Is it lawful to “put asunder what God joins together” (Mt. 19:6)? If so, what Scripture makes it lawful?

SMOKESCREEN

When it is pointed out that Jesus gave one reason for divorce—fornication (Mt. 5:32; 19:9), the abused woman, who is about to be tied to a chair, gasoline poured on her, and set on fire, is brought up. It would be good to have the name of the person who says such a woman cannot create some space between her and such a man. Dealing with Scripture would be better than bringing up if situations!

LEGAL SEPARATION

Legal separation is an alternative to divorce for people who can’t continue to live together, but do not want to end their marriage. Most states recognize legal documentation of separation.

WHERE IS IT TAUGHT?

Most Christians understand that the Bible teaches a thing by a direct command, apostolic example, and necessary inference. A good question for those who teach that one may divorce Scripturally for just any reason: Which one of these three ways

is such taught? Where is the command, example, or necessary inference that so indicates?

WHICH DOES IT SAY?

Often 1 Corinthians 7:10-13 is used to teach that one may divorce for other reasons than Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 afford. This passage is not giving permission to divorce, but rather forbids divorce! Which does it say: divorce or “Let not the wife depart from her husband” (1 Cor. 7:10); “let not the husband put away his wife” (1 Cor. 7:11); “let him not put her away” (1 Cor. 7:13)? Which does it say? This passage informs what is to be done if divorce occurs. For an example, If I were to say, “If you set my house on fire, call the fire department.” I am not telling you or giving you permission to burn my house—I am merely telling you what to do in case such happens!

DOES WATER SAVE?

God has used water to stand between man and certain blessings he stood in need of since the book of Genesis.

• **NOAH WAS SAVED BY WATER.** Peter wrote, “...wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet. 3:20). How did God use water to save Noah? The Bible is its best interpreter! Moses can give us the answer. “And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth” (Gen. 7:17). Water kept the ark afloat; thus saved Noah and his family from drowning.

• **BAPTISMAL WATERS.** God chose water as the element for man to be immersed in to be saved (Acts 8:36-39). Peter affirmed, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Pet. 3:21). Please note that we are not saved by water, but by baptism.

We are not saved by water, no more than Namaan was cleansed by water (2 Ki. 5). It is the act of obedience that saves!

Thru-the-Bible

THE PATRIARCHS: JACOB #3

JACOB AND ESAU MEET

GENESIS 32:1-33:17

CARL PETERSON

After some twenty years of service, Jacob left Laban with his family and all his possessions to return home. Heading home, however, became more than just a simple trip from point A to B.

• **JACOB'S FEAR OF ESAU.** Mankind has an obsession with the “worst-case scenario.” We have sayings testifying to this obsession (consider Murphy's Law), our government plans for the worst happening, and people get nervous when it doesn't happen. Jacob faced a “worst-case scenario.” After some twenty years of service to Laban, Jacob returned to Canaan, and sent messengers to tell Esau of his return (Gen. 32:3). When the report came that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, Jacob's mind went to the worst-case scenario: Esau was coming for revenge (Gen. 32:6-7). How did Jacob handle this situation? He prayed to God for deliverance (Gen. 32:9-12). While he did take certain precautions in preparing to meet Esau (such as dividing the people with him and his possessions and preparing a gift for Esau, Gen. 32:7, 13), he made a point to ask God, who had told him to leave Laban in the first place, to deliver him. Jacob had great faith in the Lord, but that faith led him to take precautions for his worst-case scenario, not to go into the situation expecting God to do everything for him.

• **JACOB'S GIFT.** The account records the gift Jacob sent to Esau as a “peace offering.” More than 500 animals—a sizeable amount of livestock—were sent to Esau. We don't know exactly how large Jacob's flock was. Whatever its

size, this was not just a token amount. We often put the minimum effort possible into resolving a conflict or avoiding one. Jacob didn't see how little he could send to Esau to make things work. He had a sincere desire to quell any resentment on the part of Esau. Perhaps, if we took the time and expended the effort to resolve conflicts properly, our relationships with our brethren and fellowman would be better.

• **JACOB'S STRUGGLE.** Before meeting his brother, he was met by someone described in Genesis 32:24 as a “man.” However, it is clear that this individual was from God. As a result of Jacob's wrestling with this person, he is given a new name. Instead of being “the supplanter,” he is one who has “striven with God”—Israel (Gen. 32:28). Thus, Jacob's descendants are not called the Jacobians, but *the Israelites*.

• **JACOB'S REUNION WITH ESAU.** After all Jacob's worry, even strategically arranging his wives and children, the actual meeting with Esau is anti-climatic. The reunion was tearful, with both brothers weeping. Esau inquires of the people traveling with Jacob and tries to refuse Jacob's gift, as he too has abundance. God does truly answer prayer. We do not know how much God influenced Esau in this situation, but Jacob's prayer for deliverance was answered in the affirmative by the Lord.

In Jacob, we have seen the transformation of a man who at one time used deceit and trickery to achieve his ends. He has become a true man of God, one who trusts the Lord to take care of him, but does not stand by idly and expect God to bless him without effort on His part. We would do well to heed Jacob's example.

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THE PATRIARCHS: JACOB #4
THE MEN OF SHECHEM
JACOB RETURNS TO BETHEL
GENESIS 33:18-35:29

SHANE WILLIAMS

Abraham had first come to the city of Shechem when God told him to “go forth” from his country (Gen. 12:6). In our text of study, Jacob now comes to Shechem and camps before the city (Gen. 33:19). He buys a piece of land there, builds an altar, and calls it *El-Elohe-Israel* (God, the God of Israel).

• **“SUCH A THING OUGHT NOT TO BE DONE.”** Shechem (the son of Hamor the prince) takes Dinah (Jacob and Leah’s daughter) and lies with her by force (Gen. 34:2). The text tells us that Shechem is deeply attracted to Dinah. He loves her and speaks tenderly to her. Shechem goes to his father and says, “Get me this young girl for a wife.” It seems that Shechem, like many people today, put the cart before the horse. There should have been tender speaking, love and then marriage, before he had sexual relations with Dinah. Yet, he does it all backwards. How many today repeat the same pattern? The Bible tells us that Dinah’s brothers were angry because Shechem had committed a disgraceful act. Such a thing ought not to be done! (Gen. 34:7; Eph. 5:3-5).

• **INTERMARRIAGE.** Hamor came to Jacob and his sons with a proposal to intermarry with their people, live and trade in their land, and acquire property. He told Jacob to ask whatever he wanted and he would pay it as a bridal payment for Dinah and Shechem’s wedding! Remember what Jacob’s parents had said to him? “You

shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan” (Gen. 28:1). Remember what Abraham told the servant in charge of getting Isaac his wife? “I will make you swear...that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites...” (Gen. 24:3). Those with God’s purpose in mind understand that marriage with the godless and idolatrous is not in their best interest. Esau stands in contrast to Jacob in his decision to marry among the Canaanites (Gen. 26:34-35).

• **DECEIT OF JACOB’S SONS.** The sons of Jacob tell Hamar and Shechem that their sister cannot marry someone uncircumcised. Therefore, they insist that every male in the city become circumcised. This seemed reasonable to Hamar and Shechem, but Jacob’s sons were speaking with deceit (Gen. 34:13). The men agree to be circumcised but on the 3rd day, when they were in pain, Simeon and Levi came in and killed every male in the city. They not only took back Dinah, but also looted the entire city. Jacob was upset at them for bringing trouble upon the family and was fearful of the retaliation.

• **A MOVE TO BETHEL AND GOD’S BLESSINGS.** God instructs Jacob to go to Bethel and build an altar (Gen. 35:1). Jacob tells his household to put away their idols, purify themselves, and arise to go to Bethel. Jacob comes to Bethel and builds an altar, which he calls *El-Bethel* (the God of Bethel). This was the place where Jacob had previously made a vow to God (Gen. 28:19-22). God appears to Jacob and blesses him. He tells him that Israel would now be his name. God repeats the nation and land promises to Jacob, just as He had to Abraham and Isaac.

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Thru-the-Bible

THE GENEALOGY OF ESAU JUDAH AND TAMAR GENESIS 36 & 38

JOHN GENTRY

Esau, like Ishmael, though not the son of promise, also gave rise to a large nation. His genealogy is given in Genesis 36.

• **THE DESCENDANTS OF ESAU.** Esau took Canaanite wives (Gen. 26:34; 28:9) and had children. He also acquired a substantial amount of possessions and livestock; so much so that he could no longer dwell near Jacob (Gen. 13:5-18). He settled in the area of Mt. Seir, south of the Dead Sea. Descendants of Seir the Horite also lived in this area (Gen. 36:20-30). Esau's descendants developed into the kingdom of Edom. Several of the early kings are mentioned in Genesis 36:31-39. For a similar discussion of Esau's descendants, see 1 Chronicles 1:34-54.

• **JUDAH'S FAMILY.** We now move to Genesis 38, where we are introduced to Judah's family. Judah moved to Adullamah (about 14 miles southwest of Bethel) and married a Canaanite woman (Gen. 38:1-2). She bore three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah (Gen. 38:3-5).

• **TAMAR TAKEN FOR A WIFE.** Judah took Tamar as a wife for his eldest son, Er (Gen. 38:6). The Lord killed Er because he was wicked (Gen. 38:7). According to the custom or law of Levirate marriage (Dt. 25:5-10; Ruth 3-4; Mt. 22:23-33), Onan was then told to marry Tamar in order that their firstborn son might be a son, descendant, and heir of Er (Gen. 38:8). However, Onan did not obey this law, and because of his wickedness the

Lord also killed him (Gen. 38:9-10). Though we are not given much detail concerning the wickedness of Er and Onan (there is no detail discussing Er's wickedness), these few verses provide powerful illustration and insight into how the Lord views wickedness. The Lord hates wickedness (Job 27:4; Ps. 58:2; Prov. 10:27; 11:5; Mk. 7:20-23; Rev. 2:6, 15). Judah was hesitant to have Shelah fulfill the Levirate marriage law, thinking he might wind up dead as well. He told Tamar to remain a widow until Shelah was older (Gen. 38:11).

• **JUDAH AND TAMAR.** Judah's wife died (Gen. 38:12). After mourning, Judah went up to check on his sheep while they were being sheared. Tamar heard he was travelling and being upset that he had not kept his promise regarding Shelah, she decided to teach him a lesson. She disguised herself as a prostitute and went ahead of Judah. He saw her and, not knowing it was Tamar, asked to fornicate with her. She asked him what he would pay. He said a goat. Until he could send the goat, she asked for a pledge of his signet, cord, and staff. He agreed and they fornicated. Tamar conceived. It was later made known to Judah that Tamar was pregnant. Not knowing he was the father, he commanded that she be burned. She brought forth the signet, cord, and staff and said these items belonged to the father. Judah immediately recognized his sin (Gen. 38:12-26).

• **PEREZ AND CHRIST.** Tamar gave birth to twins, Zerah and Perez (Gen. 38:27-30). It was through Perez that the bloodline of Christ was continued (Mt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33).

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THE PATRIARCHS: JOSEPH #1 JOSEPH DREAMS, HE IS SOLD, AND BECOMES A SLAVE

GENESIS 37 & 39

KEITH WELCH

Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob, at age seventeen was seen favorably in his father's eyes. Joseph's brothers despised his good fortune and "they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him" (Gen. 37:1-4).

• **JOSEPH DREAMS.** Joseph dreams of greatness and reveals two dreams unto his family. To his brothers Joseph reveals, "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf" (Gen. 37:7). Then, to his father and brothers, Joseph spoke another dream, "behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me" (Gen. 37:9). Joseph's brothers envied him because of his good fortune and the possibility of him rising up over them. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote concerning the "works of the flesh." Envy is included in that list of evil works. Of those things Paul said, "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

• **JOSEPH IS SOLD.** In Dothan, Joseph finds his brothers feeding their flocks. He was sent by his father to see if all things were well with them and the flocks. Upon seeing Joseph, his brothers conspired to kill him. However, Reuben convinced them not to kill Joseph, but rather cast him into a pit (Gen. 37:21-22). Reuben had planned to come back later and return Joseph to their father. That plan was halted in that Judah

convinced his brothers to sell Joseph to "a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead...on their way...down to Egypt" (Gen. 37:25). Prior to casting Joseph in the pit and selling him, his brothers stripped Joseph of his coat of many colors. In order to cover up their sin, Joseph's brothers took the tunic, dipped it in goat blood, and returned it to their father. Jacob was led to believe his son, Joseph, was devoured by a wild beast and Jacob wept (Gen. 37:31-33).

• **JOSEPH BECOMES A SLAVE.** "Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites" (Gen. 39:1). Joseph's situation seems so unfair, for what has he done to deserve such treatment? However, Joseph's attitude is one to be considered in finding triumph in trials. While enslaved to Potiphar, Joseph found favor in his sight because "the Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2). Potiphar quickly recognized "that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (Gen. 39:3). As a result, Joseph became overseer of Potiphar's house and all that he had. Joseph faced sexual temptation when Potiphar's wife asked Joseph to lie with her (Gen. 39:7). Men and women alike would do well to follow Joseph's actions when faced with sexual temptation. Joseph first recognized that it was wrong for him to lie with her (Gen. 39:9). Second, he fled and ran outside (Gen. 39:12). Joseph is an example of the instructions found in James 4:7. Despite taking the right actions, Joseph was placed in prison because Potiphar's wife lied about him. "But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen. 39:21).

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MAY SECULAR INSTITUTIONS FURNISH OCCASION FOR BIBLE TEACHING?

John Isaac Edwards

The right of a secular institution to furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible was disputed among brethren in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It has risen again with a new generation.

• **THE ISSUE IS NOT.** Whether the church is the pillar and ground of the truth—it is (1 Tim. 3:15); whether the church is sufficient to do the work God assigned her to do—it is (Eph. 4:11-16). The issue is: May institutions, separate and apart from the church, furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, or may only the church provide such?

• **ALL, SOME, OR NONE.** I know of only three answers that can be given to the question before us: Either (1) all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible; (2) some secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible; or (3) no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible.

• **IF SOME.** If some secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, the question is: *why may some, but not others?* Why is it wrong for some, but right for others? What is the criteria for determining which secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible and which may not? The same principles that make it right for one would make it right for all, and what makes it wrong for one would make it wrong for all. They either stand or fall together! To be consistent, one must either say that all secular institutions may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible or no secular institution may furnish such an occasion.

• **IF NONE.** If you answer that no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then you must accept the consequences and admit all the following are wrong or give up your position. In presenting this argument, I follow the example of Paul who showed the implications and consequences of certain positions (Rom. 2:17-23; 1 Cor. 15:12-23).

1) *Newspapers.* In the *Salem Democrat* (Salem, IN) and the *Ellettsville Journal* (Ellettsville, IN), I have written weekly columns under the heading, *What Saith the Scripture?* These are secular institutions providing occasions for the Bible to be taught. Am I sinning by so doing?

2) *Radio.* I've preached the gospel through radio ever since I began gospel work. These radio stations are secular institutions providing occasions for Bible teaching. Is this right or wrong, and what makes it so?

3) *Television.* Because of controversy over Bible teaching in the local newspaper, I was invited to appear on local television to be interviewed and occasion was given for me to point out what the Bible teaches. Was I wrong in accepting the invitation? If no secular institution may furnish occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, I was.

4) *Magazines and journals.* I have had religious articles to appear in magazines and journals published by secular institutions which provided occasion for the Bible to be taught. Should this be stopped?

5) *Internet.* Some internet sites allowing space for Bible teaching, owned and maintained by secular institutions, have given occasion for me to put forth Bible teaching. Am I wrong to submit such?

6) *Prisons.* I have had opportunity to talk with inmates about the Bible and preach the gospel

in prisons as correctional facilities have provided occasion for Bible teaching. Since the church is not providing the occasion, should I not go?

7) *Hospitals*. Many hospitals have a chapel and provide occasion for the Bible to be taught. Is it permissible to speak there?

8) *Nursing homes*. I have taught the Bible in numerous nursing homes as they have provided an occasion for their residents to hear Bible teaching. A nursing home is a secular institution. Should we discontinue our nursing home service?

9) *Funeral homes*. How many preachers have taught the Bible at a funeral home and even received payment from the funeral home for such? A funeral home furnishes occasions for folks to be taught in the Bible. Is it wrong for a preacher to teach the Bible at a funeral home service, since the church is not providing the occasion? Is it wrong for a member of the church to attend such a funeral and hear the Bible taught? Some brethren will say it is acceptable with God to purchase space in a newspaper or on a radio; it would be wrong, however, for the radio station or newspaper to donate space to you. They must have a sharper razor than I do as I can't split hairs that thin! I wonder if those who so argue pay to speak at the funeral home?

10) *Schools and universities*. Many schools include the Bible in their curriculum. If no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then no Christian could attend such a school, right? Are homeschoolers in error by enrolling their students in institutions that include the Bible in their curriculum?

11) *Businesses*. If it is true that no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then you could not invite me to speak at your place of business about the Bible for a secular institution would be providing occasion for Bible teaching.

12) *The military*. The military provides occasion for the Bible to be taught. The armed forces are not the church. Would it be wrong for a Christian to teach the Bible at such services since the church is not providing the occasion?

13) *Camps*. Some camps operated by secular institutions furnish occasion for Bible teaching. If no secular institution may provide occasion for Bible teaching, then it would be wrong to accept an invitation to speak at such, or to attend or participate in such a camp, wouldn't it?

Such examples may be multiplied many times over. These are real situations and demand real answers. The fact remains: if no secular institution may furnish an occasion for Bible teaching, then all secular institutions that furnish such are in error and no Christian may have any affiliation or association with any of them.

- **IF ONLY THE CHURCH.** If the church alone may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then no other collective, entity, institution or organization of any kind may provide occasion for Bible teaching. This would mean the home, which is a divine institution separate and apart from the church, could not rightfully furnish occasion for Bible teaching. If you believe the home can provide occasion for Bible teaching, then you must give up the position that the church is the only institution that may provide occasion for Bible teaching. You can't have it both ways! Teaching the gospel is not the work of the church exclusively. Individuals too are charged with the responsibility of gospel teaching (Mk. 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12). When individuals teach the gospel, whether singly or jointly, they are not infringing on the work of the church or minimizing the sufficiency of the church to do its work.

- **WHAT ABOUT SINGING?** God put singing in the church (Heb. 2:12). Singing is a means of teaching (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). If one opposes secular institutions furnishing an occasion for Bible teaching, he must also oppose secular institutions providing occasion for singing since singing is a means of teaching. Funeral homes furnish occasion for singing. Would it be lawful for a Christian to sing spiritual songs at a funeral home? Not if secular institutions may not furnish occasion for spiritual teaching.

• **WHAT ABOUT BENEVOLENCE?** Wouldn't the same hold true for the work of relieving needy saints? If not, why not? The church is given the responsibility of caring for its own (Acts 2; 4; 6). Would it be permissible for a needy saint to receive support from a secular institution or would that infringe on the work of the church? If secular institutions furnishing an occasion for Bible teaching infringes on the work of the church in evangelism, then does a secular institution infringe on the work of the church in benevolence when it provides aid and assistance to a Christian? Must a Christian depend on the church alone for aid or may he receive assistance from other sources? What is true in one area must also be true in another; same principle. If not, why not? Just as evangelism is not the work of the church exclusively, neither is benevolence (1 Tim. 5:16).

• **A PLEA FOR UNITY.** We do not need three different churches: one teaching all secular institutions may furnish occasion for Bible teaching; another teaching some may furnish the occasion (and divided

even further over which may and which may not provide it); and the third teaching no secular institution may furnish occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible. Brethren are maligning each other, meetings are being cancelled, and support is being cut off by brethren over this issue. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Let us respect each others convictions in this matter. If you believe no secular institution may furnish an occasion for folks to be taught in the Bible, then do not subscribe to any religious journal, attend any school, or go to any funeral home that furnishes an occasion for Bible teaching. Yet do not bind and press your opinion to the disruption, disturbance, or division of the brethren! To do so is to be contentious or factious and is grounds for rejection (Ti. 3:10). "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19). Let us pledge that no speculative matters should ever be debated or discussed to the disturbance of the peace and harmony of the church and mutually resolve to preach the gospel rather than to propagate opinions.

A UNION OF GOD'S PEOPLE ON THAT ONE BOOK

"Raccoon" John Smith, "Dead Yet Speaketh"

God has but one people on the earth. He has given to them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commands them to be one family. A union such as we plead for—a union of God's people on that one Book—must then be practicable. Every Christian desires to stand complete in the whole will of God. The prayer of the Savior, and the whole tenor of His teaching, clearly show that it is God's will that His children should be united. To the Christian, then, such a union must be desirable. But an amalgamation of sects is not such a union as Christ prayed for and God enjoys. To agree to be one upon any system of human invention would be contrary to His will, and could never be a blessing to the church or the world: therefore the only union practicable or desirable

must be based on the Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. There are certain abstruse and speculative matters—such as the mode of the divine existence and the ground and nature of the atonement—that have for centuries, been themes of discussion among Christians. These questions are as far from being settled now as they were in the beginning of the controversy. By a needless and intemperate discussion of them much feeling has been provoked, and divisions have been produced. For several years past I have tried to speak on such subjects only in the language of inspiration, for it can offend no one to say about those things just what the Lord Himself has said. In this Scriptural style of speech all Christians should be agreed. It can not be wrong. It can not do harm. If I come

to the passage, "My Father is greater than I," I will quote it, but will not stop to speculate upon the consubstantial nature of the Father and the Son. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped," I will not stop to speculate upon the consubstantial nature of the Fahter and the Son. I will not linger to build a theory on such texts, and thus encourage a speculative and wrangling spirit among my brethren. I will present these subjects only in the words which the Lord has given me. I know He will not be displeased if we say just what He has said. Whatever opinions about these and similar subjects I may have reached in the course of my investigation, if I never distract the church of God with them or seek to impose them on my brethren, they will never do the world any harm.

I have the more cheerfully resolved on this course, because the gospel is a system of facts, commands, and promises; and no deductions or inferences from them, however logical or true, forms any part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No heaven is promised to those who hold them, and no hell is threatened to those who deny them. They do not constitute, singly or together, any items of the ancient and apostolic gospel. While there is but one faith, there may be ten thousand opinions; and

hence if Christians are ever to be one, they must be one in faith, and not in opinion. When certain subjects arise, and even in conversation or social discussion, about which there is a contrariety of opinion and sensitiveness of feeling, speak of them in the words of Scriptures, and no offense will be given, and no pride of doctrine will be encouraged. We may even come, in the end, by thus speaking the same things, to think the same things.

For several years past I have stood pledged to meet the religious world, or any part of it, on the ancient gospel and order of things as presented in the words of the Book. This is the foundation on which Christians once stood, and on it they can, and ought to, stand again. From this I can not depart to meet any man, or set of men, in the world. While, for the sake of peace and Christian union, I have long since waived the public maintainance of any speculation I may hold, yet not one gospel fact, commandment, or promise will I surrender for the world. Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights; but let us all come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need.

Lexington, Kentucky, January 1, 1832

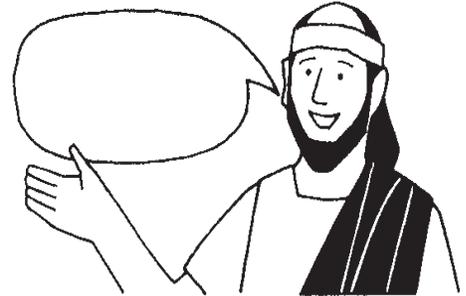
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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

Who Said It?

(New Testament)



"...she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus..." (Mt. 1:21).

"...he that cometh after me is mightier than I..." (Mt. 3:11).

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17).

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mt. 28:18).

"I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Lk. 22:33).

"Why, what evil hath he done?" (Lk. 23:22).

"How can a man be born when he is old?" (Jn. 3:4).

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19).

"Come, see a man" (Jn. 4:29).

"Blessed art thou among women" (Lk. 1:42).

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Mt. 4:3).

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

WHAT FAITH IS

Donnie V. Rader

If a child were to ask you to explain faith, what would you say? The concept of “faith,” like that of “love” is not easily expressed in a few words. Just what is faith and what does it mean to us?

• **WHAT FAITH IS NOT.** (1) *Faith is not a blind leap into the dark.* Some may think that faith is an unsubstantiated opinion. This makes faith a conclusion reached without any evidence. To the contrary, faith is not opposed to knowledge, but sight (Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:7). Faith is a form of knowledge. What other texts would call faith, Acts 2:36 refers to as knowledge.

(2) *Faith is not a mere belief that one exists or lived.* “Frequently one says, ‘I believe in that man, because I know him.’ Here faith contains an element of trust, or confidence in him, and you show your confidence in him by committing your case into his hands and doing what he says. To believe in God is to commit ourselves, our ways, into His hands and to diligently follow his directions” (C.R. Nichol and R.L. Whiteside, *Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 2, p. 120).

• **WHAT FAITH IS.** To understand what faith is, let’s look at four different things.

(1) *Hebrews 11:1.* The text says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (NKJV). This text shows faith in relationship to two principles: things hoped for and things not seen. Edward Robinson’s translation of this text (which J. W. McGarvey said was the “clearest and best translation I have met of this verse”) says, “Faith is confidence as to things hoped for; conviction as to things not seen” (McGarvey’s *Sermons*, pp. 84-85).

One who has faith is convinced in regard to things that are not seen. He is “certain” of what

he does not see (NIV). One who has faith has confidence in the objects of hope and the promises of God. Anderson translates our text, “Faith is a sure confidence with respect to things hoped for, a firm persuasion with respect to things not seen” (T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 211).

(2) *Words that are used for faith.* The word translated faith in Hebrews 11:1 is translated “assurance” (Acts 17:31) and “fidelity” (Ti. 2:10). The term “faith” is used interchangeably with “believe” or “belief” (Mt. 8:10, 13; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 4:3, 9).

(3) *Faith is the result of testimony and evidence.* We can better understand faith when we realize how faith comes. Faith comes after seeing the evidence presented from the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Jesus prayed for those who believe through the word (Jn. 17:20). John wrote his record of the miracles to induce faith (Jn. 20:30-31). So faith is based upon FACT and TESTIMONY of that fact. “Faith, then may be defined as a firm, unshaken confidence, conviction, or belief in the truth of a proposition, based upon testimony concerning it” (T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 211).

(4) *Vine’s.* W. E. Vine says faith is “primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing (akin to *peitho*, to persuade), is used in the N.T. always of faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual” (Vol. 2, p. 71).

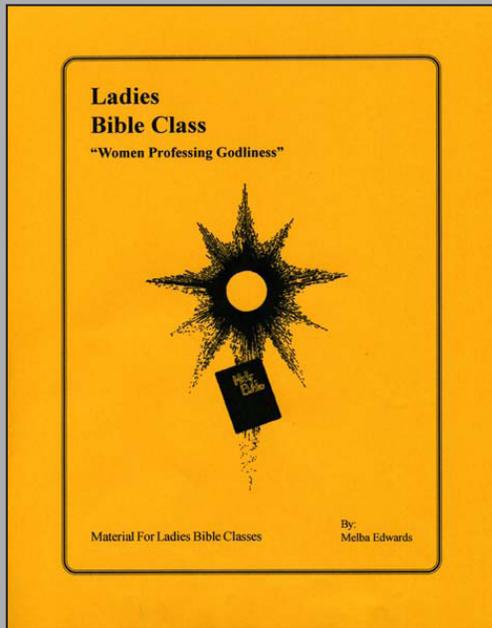
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