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Without Christ

Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians, "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at the time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world : But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,

having slain the enmity thereby : And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:11-22).

There are so many things said in the foregoing statement, but Paul is talking about how that in the past the Ephesians, being Gentiles in the flesh, the Jews looked upon them as being the Uncircumcision, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, and having no hope, and of course they were without Christ and God in this world.

Then he shows that through Christ and his blood that they were saved, that both Jews and Gentiles were one in Christ, that they had been reconciled unto God, and that they were members of the household of God, which was the Lord's family or church.

But how was all of this made possible ? He points to Christ and his blood, and how he had broken down the middle wall of partition or that which separated the Jew and Gentile, and that he had abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. This referred to his death on the cross to take out of the way the law of Moses.

Now after the Ephesians had been delivered from all of that, can you imagine them ever wanting to go back to their former state ? Surely not, for in that case they would have again been without Christ and without God in the world. That also means that they now would be lost.

My friends, Christ came into this world to fulfil the law and

to take it out of the way. (Matthew 5:17,18; Luke 24:44). He accomplished that task and gave to the world a new law or the new testament. (Hebrews 10:8-10; Matthew 26:28). That being the case, who would want to go back to the law, back to bondage, back to that state of being without Christ and God in this world? Unbelievably so, but there are still some who preach the law and the commandments. Someway they have missed the whole purpose of Christ coming into the world. But the law cannot save, and Christ cannot save them as long as they are holding to the law.

We have a law and commandments, but it is the law of Christ and then there are the commands of God set forth in that law. James therefore said, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25). James is referring to the law of Christ, a law of liberty in the sense that those who follow it are set free from the bondage of sin and have hope in Christ.

Who are you following? Moses or Christ? What law do you obey? The old law or the new law? But you may be wondering what difference it makes? It makes all the difference in the world. It is the difference in being lost and saved, in being without Christ and being in Christ, and having no hope and having hope.

Let me encourage you to look to Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:1,2). Again, the Hebrew writer said, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8, 9). And finally, we read, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). It is not difficult to see which law is binding and whether our saviour is Moses or Christ. We therefore commend Christ and his law to you and to the world. John wrote, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14).



The Perverse Way

In this article again we are going to see about another man of God, like we did in two previous articles. We read about this man of God in the Old Testament of the Bible, in the book of Numbers and in chapter twentytwo. His name was Balaam. Unlike the man of God about whom we read in 1 Kings chapter 13, Balaam tried to force his own will on God. In the story we read that Balaam knew what God wanted him to do. But he was not satisfied with that. Balaam, on the other hand, desired for God to change His will and tell him to do what he (Balaam) himself wanted to do. About Balaam the Bible says that he possessed the gift of prophecy. He lived and prophesied at the time when the Israelites, God's chosen and blessed people were pressing their journey toward the promised land.

At that time Israel had settled in the plains of Moab and Balak, the king of Moab, who had seen how the Israelites had defeated the Canaanites, and Amorites and others, was in great fear. In fact the record says that the whole Moab was exceedingly afraid of the blessed people of God, and so much that they said, "Now this people will lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks the grass of the field. So we read that in that most difficult time King Balak remembered Balaam, and he sent his selected messengers to him with these words: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me: Therefore, please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

Continuing the record says, "So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand and

they came to Blaam and spoke to him the words of Balak. And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out'" And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you." And the princes of Moab rose and went back to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honourable than they. And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; for I will certainly honour you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore come, curse this people for me.'" Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me." And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do." So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

But, as we read further, "Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. Then the Angel of the Lord stood in the narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the

wall; so he struck her again. Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam. "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No." Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live." And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back." Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." (Numbers 22:7-35).

Balaam wanted God to stamp His approval on what he himself desired to do. He already knew of God's will in the matter. He knew that God told him, not to go with those men. That must have been sufficient for him. And his attitude toward's Balak's men should have been that enen if you come a hundred time or more to get me to go with you, I will not go because God has told me already that I should not go with you. But instead of doing that, he went on to enquire from God if He was really serious when he told him not to go the first time. He thought God might change His mind. Balaam's attitude is obvious. He wanted to go. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament, in 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12 wrote, "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be

condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Balaam did not believe the truth, but he had pleasure in unrighteousness. So he got the delusion from God. Deep down in Balaam's heart there was covetousness which was not hidden from God's penetrating eyes. Instead of staying with God's will he wanted to go for the material pleasure and honour which Balak was offering him. In going to God the second time Balaam rejected the treasures of heaven for the treasures he would get from Balak. He rejected God's honour for the honour he thought he would receive from Balak. (Mark 10:21,22). But as we read further the story of Balaam in the book of Numbers we find that he didn't even receive that. And later, seeing that he had displeased both God and king Balak, Balaam lamented, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one fourth of israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his." (Numbers 23:10). But can one die the death of a righteous if he has not lived the life of a righteous? One should live righteously to die as a righteous man: The Bible says, all God's commandments are righteousness. (Psalm 119:172). One cannot die or leave this world as a righteous person if he has failed to live by the commandments of God as he has revealed.

Jude wrote and said that many have gone and run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit. (Jude 11) For loving the praises of men more than the praise of God, (John 12:42, 43), many have gone in the way of Balaam. Ignoring God's teaching they want to be honoured and exalted by men with such names and titles which God has not authorised. (Matthew 23:9,10). Many are serving their own belly, while claiming to be serving Christ. (Romans 16:18). Then there are those who want to do what they think is right, regardless of what God's book teaches. Some are doing things in their own way and are expecting God to accept them because they have done those things in His name. (Matthew 7:21-23). Such are the people who are baptizing babies, joining churches of their own choice, and are expecting God to save them without submitting to the obedience of His commandments. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). The Apostle Peter said, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity : a dumb donkey

speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever." (2 Peter 2:15-17).

Do This In Remembrance Of Me

Francis K. Nartey

Many religious groups celebrate many feasts like Christmas, Easter, Ash-Wednesday and many others in remembrance of Christ. What does the Bible say about these celebrations? Let us find out from the scriptures.

From Genesis through Malachi, nothing is said to be done in remembrance of Christ, but in the books of the Gospel and in the Epistles a feast is instituted to be done in Christ's remembrance and that is the Lord's Supper.

God sent Christ to die and deliver us from our sins. (Romans 5:8.) Before His death, He commanded His disciples to partake of the supper in His remembrance. (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-19.) "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28.) NOTE: All the four books of the gospel give the same account, and in Luke 22:19, Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." Also, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth concerning the Lord's Supper, when he heard they were partaking of it improperly. (1 Corinthians 11:20-34.) In verse 23 it reads: "For I have received from the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus Christ the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said 'Take, eat; this is My body which was broken for you. THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

From this, we can see that Paul quoted what was already

recorded in the gospel, and is exactly what Christ told His disciples. In fact, apart from this supper, nothing else is said in the Bible to be done in Christ's remembrance. Neither Christmas nor Easter is mentioned anywhere in the Bible as a memorial of our Lord. Any one or group of people who do this is/are pleasing men and not Jesus Christ.

Now for those who do these things and claim they are doing the will of God, the question is: "Whose doctrine are they following?" Why don't we search the Scriptures and do what is authorised?

WHAT DAY SHOULD IT BE PARTAKEN?

In the Old Testament, we can see that the Levite priests ate shew-bread every Saturday in the house of God. (Leviticus 24:8-9.) And in the New Testament—all Christians being priests (1 Peter 2:9)—are to partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine which represent Christ's body and blood, instead of the shew-bread, and on Sunday instead of Saturday. In Acts 20:5-7, we can see that Paul and some of the brethren went to Troas and stayed there for six days. They waited until the 7th day (first day of the week, which is Sunday) before they met and brake the bread.

The Bible makes it clear that the early Christians met on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1,2.) Also, when they met, all of them partook of the supper. (Acts 2:42.) What about members of some religious groups who refuse to partake of the supper? Let's do it as it is authorised. It is weekly—not quarterly, monthly, annually, or when the "priest" comes.

The Word of God says, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) Please, friend, follow not the blind leaders—follow, rather, the doctrines of Christ so that you might be saved. (Matthew 7:25.) There is no indication in the Bible that Christ Himself ever celebrated His birthday anywhere as he lived on earth for about 33 years. Why try to do so? Why did God not tell us in the Scriptures when Christ's birthday was? God is

wise—His life was before the foundation of the world. By celebrating Christmas as a birthday of Christ, are you not telling God that He is forgetful and that you want to remind Him of His Son's birthday? Remember, Christ's life did not begin on the earth that we should give a date for it. We must obey God by observing the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ. The warning is still in effect: "If ye love me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15).

The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

Ben F. Vick

Many in the religious world and some in the church are teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is still taking place today. Such teaching is false and has confused the minds of many.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said, "I Indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: . . ." There are three baptisms mentioned in this verse—not two. The first is John's baptism, i.e., "water unto repentance," which was preparatory to entering the kingdom. It was for the Jews at that time and is no longer in force. (Acts 19:1-5.) The second is baptism with the Holy Spirit, which was promised (as we shall note) to only a small group of men, the apostles. (Acts 1:1-5.) The third is the baptism of hell fire. (Matt. 3:12).

On this occasion, John the Baptist was speaking to a mixed audience (Pharisees, Sadducees, disciples, and others). These three baptisms cannot be applied to all, because the Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized" of John (Lk. 7:30.) The promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not for all. (Acts 1:1-5; 8:12-19.) And not all in that audience would experience the unquenchable fire of hell, because they were wheat. (Matt. 3:12).

Jesus, before his ascension into heaven, told his apostles:

“. . . that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” (Acts 1:4-5.) Remember that John the Baptist had told them that Jesus would baptize some who were in his audience with the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 3:11.) Jesus, before he departed, repeated the promise to the apostles and added that it would be “not many days hence.”

It is imperative that one see that Jesus was speaking only to his apostles in Acts 1:1-13. The antecedent of “ye” in the clause “but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” in 1:5 is “the apostles” in Acts 1:2.

The “promise of the Father,” or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, was given to the apostles for specific reasons. Jesus, to his apostles, said, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (Jno. 14:26; see also Jno. 15:26; 16:13.) The baptism of the Holy Spirit was to reveal to the apostles all truth, to remind them of what Jesus had said to them in his personal ministry, to confirm the word (Mark 16:17-20), and to impart spiritual gifts to believers. (Acts 8:12-24).

Ten days after Jesus commanded his apostles to tarry in Jerusalem in order to be endued, or clothed, with power from on high, the baptism of the Holy Spirit came. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they [the apostles— Acts 1:26] were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they [apostles] were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them [apostles]. And they [the apostles] were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them [the apostles] utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4).

There is another occurrence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit recorded in the New Testament, and that is at the household of Cornelius. (Acts 10 and 11.) Peter, in rehearsing the matter “by

order" to his brethren in Jerusalem, made this clear. He stated, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them [household of Cornelius], as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17.)

If the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been administered on a regular basis to others besides the apostles, why was Peter reminded of an event (Acts 2) which occurred 8 to 10 years prior to Acts 10? Why did he not recall a baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit which had occurred more recently? The answer is that there had been none since "the beginning." (Acts 2).

Some good brethren have denied that Cornelius and his household were recipients of Holy Spirit baptism, arguing that this outpouring was not the same thing but only like what transpired in Acts 2; i.e., in the manner in which it came. But "like" in Acts 11:17 is an adjective modifying "gift"; and it means, according to Thayer's *Greek Lexicon*, "equal in quality or in quantity, the same gift, Acts 11:17." (P. 307.) *vine's "Expository Dictionary"* says it means "equal (the same in size, quality, etc. . . ." (Vol. II, p. 342).

Those who disagree with Peter say, "Well, do you believe that Cornelius and his household could impart spiritual gifts?" My answer: There is no record that they were able to do such. I simply accept what the Bible says on the matter. Cornelius' household received the same gift, but the purpose was different than for that given to the apostles. For illustration: a father may give one son ten dollars to put into the bank and give another son ten dollars to buy groceries. Did both receive the same gift? Yes, Were the purposes the same? No. We gave the reasons for the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in a preceding paragraph. The purpose of Cornelius' household's having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given to show that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. (Acts 11:18).

There is but one baptism in force today and that is the bap-

tism mentioned by Jesus in the Great Commission. (Eph. 4:5; Matt. 28:18-20.) Holy Ghost baptism was a promise administered by Jesus. The Great Commission baptism is a command to be administered by men.

The Holy Spirit & The Christian

John Wadley

Few Biblical topics have received as much attention in recent years as the Holy Spirit. Sadly much of that discussion has been highly controversial. Christians need to hear in a positive, constructive way what the Holy Spirit does for them: In the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul tells us just how much the Spirit meant to him and them.

1. The Holy Spirit is the seal of our acceptance. Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 1:13. Ancient kings had their personal signets or seals by which they identified their possessions and official documents. For a document to be sealed guaranteed its validity. For an object to bear the imprint of the seal meant it belonged to the king. For us to be thus sealed means that we are God's possession. Further, Paul reasons that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. 1:14. An earnest is a down payment on a purchase that secures it for the one making it. In salvation we have nothing wherewith to pay God for a mansion in his eternal abode. Instead he gives to all his children his own earnest, the Holy Spirit. All who repent and are baptized, in the name of Jesus receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38. God's divine earnest is only given to those who become his spiritual children. Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, Gal. 4:6. In olden times the shekinah, the symbol of God's presence dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem. Today the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in him, I Cor. 6:19.

2. There are blessings which the Holy Spirit imparts to the child of God. No miraculous gifts are available to us today.

These only came two ways: baptism of the Holy Spirit or the laying on of the apostles' hands. The apostles received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them Acts 1:8. Others had to have apostolic hands laid upon them to receive supernatural gifts, Acts 8:14-17. Neither of the means for transferring miraculous gifts is with us today. They were given for the purpose of confirming the preaching of the apostolic age. Mark 16:19-20. The New Testament having long been given and adequately confirmed, additional signs are no longer needed. A simple comparison of Biblical miracles with those claimed by modern charismatics demonstrates the phoniness of the latter. Who walks on water, raises the dead and turns water into wine? Who drinks deadly poison and takes up serpents without penalty?

There are non-miraculous gifts attributed to God's Holy Spirit. God strengthens us with power through his Spirit in the inward man, Eph. 3:16. And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. When we know not how to pray as we ought, the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, according to the will of God, Rom. 8:26-27. The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us, Rom. 5:5. The reception of these divine gifts is tied to the sacred word of God which the Holy Spirit caused to be written. Without the scriptures we would be like those men of Ephesus who did not even know that the Spirit had been given, Acts 19:2. God's word is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6:17, the instrument by which he works. The implanted word which was given by the Holy Spirit is able to save our souls, James 1:21. In every case of conversion revealed in the Acts of Apostles, souls were saved only after hearing the word of God taught and obeying the Lord's instruction. Even Saul of Tarsus who saw the Christ in person, still had to wait for the word of God to be delivered unto him before he could arise and be baptized to wash away his sins, Acts 22:16. The Lord will open a sinner's heart today even as he did Lydia's through the preaching of the gospel, Acts 16:14. When you respond by submitting to baptism he will purge your sins, Acts 22:16.

3. No additional information or revelation is being made know by the Holy Spirit today. The apostles of Jesus were guided into all the truth, John 16:13. Jude tells us that the faith was once

for all delivered unto the saints, Jude 3. With the Old and New Testaments the man of God may by complete, furnished completely unto every good work, I Tim. 3:15-17. Through the knowledge of his word, we have all things that pertain unto life and godliness, II Peter 1:3. No one should look for divine illumination when interpreting scripture. Such is not promised. Experience demonstrates that those who make such claims are wholly contradictory in their claimed guidance. Would the Spirit who wants us all to speak the same thing lead one to become a Mormon and another a Baptist? I Cor. 1:10.

All latter day revelations attributed to the Holy Spirit are either contrary to the scripture of the same as scripture. If they are the former, they stand condemned; if the latter, they are unneeded. In either case they are confusing and detrimental to those that are seeking salvation.

4. Without God's Holy Spirit in your life, you cannot be saved. If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. 8:9. It is impossible to have the Spirit prior to or without Christian baptism. Believers should repent and be baptized to receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38. God in mercy saves us through the washing of regeneration (baptism) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he pours out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Titus 3:5-6. What a rich blessing it is to be God's child, to be partakers of the divine nature, II Peter 1:4. May we ever live so as never to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom we were sealed unto the day of redemption. Eph. 4:30.

Sound Speech

Gary McDade

Paul was addressing his inspired attention to old and young alike urging, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works . . ." (Titus 2:7.) One item he mentions which should be a part of every Christian's character is "sound speech." "Sound

speech that cannot be condemned." Not only is it the wise course but the effects of "sound speech" are powerful. Through its usage "he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." (Titus 2:8.) Many versions have the word "sound" in reference to speech. [See the KJV, ASV, NASV, TEV and NIV.] The NEB has "wholesome speech to which none can take exception." In addition to "sound" the Greek dictionary defines the original word "healthy." Another translation of the original might be "healthy speech that is above criticism." This teaching is augmented by what Paul taught in Colossians when he wrote, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Col 4:6.) Questionable language from the mouth of a Christian brings his entire character into a state of disrepute.

A word once spoken can return on more;
A wise man sets a watch before the door.
The bird in hand, we may at will restrain.
But being flown, we call her back in vain.

Solomon put it this way, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him." (29:20.) In Ecclesiastes he wrote, ". . . A fool's voice is known by multitude of words." (Eccles. 5:3.) These cautions regarding one's speech emerge out of an awareness of the power words possess. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," observed Solomon. (Prov. 18:21.) Even soft words have potential. Proverbs 25:15 reads, ". . . A soft tongue breaketh the bone." And again, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." (15:1.) The timely utterance of appropriate words can be a great blessing. As the wise king said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Prov. 25:11.) So, the writings of Solomon set forth a contrast between wise and foolish speech, and he reminds his readers that God is listening. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright : but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The wholesome tongue is a tree of life but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." (Prov. 15:2-4.)

A well known gospel preacher of a by gone generation whose

name was the same as that great statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin once wrote some comments that every Christian would do well to think about in reference to his speech, "The opponents of the truth will catch every unkind or unpleasant word; every unlovely expression or harsh sentence, and comment on it, in the absence of argument, and even divert attention from the main matter. We should, then, simply study how to present the truth, in the clearest, most agreeable and acceptable manner; how to show, people the truth, convince them and enlist their souls in it. This is the great matter to study, and not how to avoid differences and not discuss them at all. We are studying how to practice this, and we desire all the friends of the Lord to study it and give the adversary no advantage."

Is The Church Of Christ Essential To One's Salvation ?

W.A. Holley

Is the church of Christ so important as to be indispensable? What does the word "essential" mean? That is essential, in the strictest sense of the word, which belongs to the very nature or essence of a thing and which therefore cannot be removed without destroying the thing itself or its distinguishing character, efficacy, or the like.

Many honest and sincere people have the mistaken idea that the church is a sort of a detour off the way to heaven; these often argue that one can go around by the church if he so desires, but, if he so chooses, he can go straight on the heaven, thus by passing the New Testament church altogether.

It is further argued by some misguided souls that since there are good people in a certain church, that church is as good as any church. But, let it be noted, that there are many good people who are in no church at all; would it not follow, according to such reasoning (?), that no church is as good as any church?? Verily,

such blabbering is fallacious and destructive in the extreme!!

Since, according to the Scriptures, the church has existed in God's divine Purpose from all eternity (Ephesians 3:9-11), in Promise (Daniel 2:44-45), in Prophecy (Isaiah 2:1-5), in Preparation (Matthew 3:2; Luke 3:3-6; Matthew 16:18-19), and in Perfection, when it was established on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 36-38, 41, 47; 11:15), how could the church which Jesus purchased with his own blood be a non-essential institution ??

The church of Christ must be essential because Jesus is its builder. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18-19). It is incompatible with the station and work of Jesus for one to think that he would be so foolish as to build a non-essential church.

The church which Jesus rules over as its head must be essential. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Again, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). Who can conceive of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, stooping to be the head of a non-essential church?? It is a shame to demote Jesus Christ, assigning him to a position of lower grade or rank!

The church of Christ must be essential to the salvation of men because Jesus would not consent to be the foundation of a non-essential church. Isaiah, the prophet, wrote seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16). In the New Testament Jesus is declared to be that foundation upon which the church is built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:9-11). It is not in character to think that Jesus could be the foundation of any church originated by men.

The church of Christ must be essential to the salvation of men

because Jesus Christ gave himself for it. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25; Cf. Acts 20:28). Who can believe that Jesus gave himself for a non-essential church? A church of little or no importance??

The church of Christ must be essential to man's salvation because Jesus purchased it with his own blood. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28; I Peter 1:18-19). If one pays one hundred dollars for a suit of clothes, the only way to receive the benefits of said hundred dollars, is for him to wear the clothes. Hence, the only way one can share in the benefits of Christ's blood is to be in that church which he purchased with his blood. It is ridiculous to talk of being washed in the blood of the Lamb, and yet refuse and reject the church purchased by Jesus' blood!!

The church of Christ must be essential to man's salvation because the church is the body of Christ. Can the body of Christ be non-essential? Is your body essential to you? "And he is the head of the body, the church . . . for his body's sake, which is the church," is how Paul stated the matter (Colossians 1:18,24). Jesus' precious cleansing blood is in his body, the church. Jesus' precious blood is not outside of his body. If you wish to contact the cleansing blood of Jesus, you must be baptized into Christ—into his death—into his body—into his name—where the blood of Christ is. We suggest that you read the following references: John 19:33-34; Romans 6:3-4; I Corinthians 12:13,20,27; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; I Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 7:13-14. It is laughable, ludicrous, for one to contend, in the light of the Scriptures, that the church of Christ is a non-essential. If the church of Christ is indeed a non-essential, where is the book, chapter, and verse which so teaches??

The church of Christ must be essential because it is the bride of Christ. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Jesus Christ is the bridegroom; we are married

to him; the church is his bride (John 3:29; Romans 7:4; II Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9). If we are not married to Christ, if not a part of his bride, we cannot be saved.

The church of Christ must be essential because it embraces the saved. "Hearken unto me," wrote Isaiah the prophet, "ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isaiah 26:12-13). But Zion is the church of Christ which Jesus Christ established, in the city of Jerusalem, in A.D. 33, according to Acts 2:1-47. To set this matter clearly before the eyes of the reader, we shall quote: "But ye are come unto mount Sion [Zion, WAH], and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Thus, salvation has been placed in Zion; but Zion is the church which Jesus established; therefore, salvation is in the church!! Those, on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, who heard, believed and obeyed the truth of the gospel, were added to the church (Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47). Dear readers, your last best opportunity to enter heaven is to take advantage of God's wonderful promises.

Repentance

W. Edwin Kearley

Without faith in the righteousness of God one cannot repent. If there is no respect for authority, there will be no respect for the law by the law giver. In the years gone by, there has been an eroding of respect in our society for God and his word. A failure to read and study the Bible is the cause. Ignorance has always been the factor for the downfall of man. Hosea long ago stated the principle, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"

(Hosea 4:6a). "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"
(Rom. 2:4).

WHAT IS REPENTANCE ? There are two Greek words in the New Testament translated repent. One means to change one's mind or purpose. The other means regret. One can regret the necessity a thing had to be done. Regret does not indicate a change of mind.

In the following passages the word translated repent expresses regret :

"A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not but afterwards he REPENTED, and went" (Matt. 21:28-29). "Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, REPENTED himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders" (Matt. 27:3).

"The Lord swore and will not repent" (Heb. 7:21).

In the passages that ensue the word translated repent means to change the mind.

"REPENT ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). "REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). "REPENT therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

The classic example of repentance is found in the actions of the prodigal son (Luke 15). He gathered his inheritance and went to a far country. There he wasted his substance in riotous living. He began to be in want and acquired a job caring for Gentile's hogs.

Under such pressure "he came to himself." He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." With a penitent heart,

the prodigal returned to the outstretched and loving arms of his forgiving father.

He had to regret leaving home before he could bring himself to repent. Paul states the principle of how repentance comes "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor 7:10).

REPENTANCE IMPLIES : (1) A free will Repentance cannot be coerced. (2) The knowledge of the malignity and destructiveness of sin. This knowledge is necessary to enable the sinner to know he is lost and come to repentance.

OF WHAT MUST ONE REPENT ? The answer is sin. John wrote, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). John also states, "All unrighteousness is sin" (I John 5:17). James says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17). The law of God today is the New Testament or covenant.

ALL NEED TO REPENT because "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). There was a time when God overlooked ignorance but he does not now. Hear Paul : "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Peter informs us : "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9).

The sinner is not brought to spirituality by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner. He is brought to spiritual life by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:13-17). The faith produced from hearing causes one to repent or change his mind and change his life. (Acts 3:19).

Will you allow the word of God to develop faith in God, Christ and the Holy Spirit and cause you to obey Christ's will ? There is no time for delay.

God Hates Putting Away

W. Douglass Harris

"Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away"(Mal. 2:15,16).

Someone recently described the break-up of marriages in our society as the "divorce explosion." It has certainly reached alarming proportions. In some areas of our country the number of divorces has equalled the number of marriages. This "divorce explosion" could jeopardize the future of our society. According to the famous historian Gibbon, the rapid increase in the divorce rate was one of the major causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. We should take warning!

Divorce was not in God's original plan for marriage. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus regarding the causes of divorce and why it was allowed for any cause under the law of Moses, Jesus replied by referring to God's original intention for marriage and said. "From the beginning it [divorce for any cause] has not been so" (Matt. 19:3-6). So divorce is an intruder into God's plan for marriage, which was allowed under the law of Moses because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:7,8). This was for the purpose undoubtedly to prevent greater evils and as a protection to the wife. "In a culture where the odds were stacked against the wife, this was no doubt to favor her as much as possible—to protect her against impulsive and unceremonious expulsion from her home and her children, and to provide her with legal proof of freedom to remarry should she be put away" (Cecil N. Wright). But God's original plan was one man, for one woman, for one lifetime. Whenever a divorce occurs today, it means that a marriage has been a tragic failure, with all the tragic consequences that accompany such. Death severs the marriage relationship, but it was not God's original intention that it be broken otherwise.

Although allowed by Moses for any cause, under Christ's law there can be no scriptural divorce without sin. Jesus said,

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, EXCEPT IT BE FOR FORNICATION, and shall marry another, commiteth adultery” (Matt. 19:9). And Mark makes this apply equally to the wife who puts away her husband (Mk. 10:12). How could language be plainer than this used by our Lord? It doesn’t need to be explained: it only needs to be believed and enforced by leaders in the church. Since the laws of human government are in direct conflict with the laws of God, every Christian should seek to know God’s will in this matter and follow it. The eternal destiny of at least two souls (the contracting parties) is at stake. A husband or wife is bound to his/her companion by God’s law as long as his or her companion lives, except where fornication has occurred (Rom. 7:2; I Cor. 7:10-12; Matt. 19:9). To divorce one’s companion without scriptural grounds is SIN—a defiance of God’s law respecting the permanence of marriage. Even in cases where one party has been guilty of fornication, forgiveness on the part of the innocent party, if the guilty party repents, is better than divorce and a broken home. The causes of the prevalence of divorce in our society are many: lack of respect for the sacredness of the marriage bond, change of attitude toward it, modern working and living conditions, selfishness, lax divorce laws, etc.

WHAT ABOUT CAUSES OF DESERTION? Some have attempted from I Cor. 7:15 to justify divorce and remarriage on the grounds of desertion. This is based, we believed, on a gross misunderstanding of what Paul said in this passage. The marriage contemplated is that of two unbelievers and one of them becomes a believer, thus resulting in a marriage of a believer and an unbeliever where no immorality has been committed, but the unbeliever refuses to live with the believer unless the believer renounces his faith in Christ. Paul says the believer is not enslaved to the unbeliever to this extent—that he must renounce his faith to get the unbeliever to continue to live with him. Such leaves the believer only two options: (1) Renounce his faith in Christ, or (2) Let the unbeliever depart. Paul says let the unbeliever depart, but does not say the believer is free to remarry. In fact, Paul indicates in the context that the believer should remain unmarried (Vs. 10,11) until such time when the unbeliever becomes guilty of adultery giving the deserted companion the right to remarry under the terms of Matt. 19:9. There are no grounds for putting away

and for remarriage in God's right until immorality has occurred.

But someone may ask, "What is the meaning of 'not under bondage' "? It means that the believer is not so enslaved (dedoulotai) to the unbeliever that he is expected or permitted to renounce his Christianity to get the unbeliever to live with him. It is our sincere judgment that those who make desertion grounds for divorce and remarriage are rendering a great disservice to Bible teaching on this question. They fail completely to take the context into consideration, and the meaning of the Greek word for bondage. Paul is not referring to the marriage bond in I Cor. 7:15, but to enslavement. The believer is still under the marriage bond after the unbeliever departs, but is not so enslaved to the unbeliever that he is required to renounce his or her Christianity to keep the unbeliever from departing.

GOD STILL HATES PUTTING AWAY. Even under the law of Moses when he allowed divorce for any cause (because of the hardness of their hearts), it is said that God hated divorce. And God hates it no less now, in spite of the respectability it has gained in society. As long as God's teaching in the New Testament is disregarded, divorces will continue to be sought and granted. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). This is a warning for man not to temper with the binding nature of God's sacred bond of marriage. Yes, God still hates putting away!

This Is The Love Of God

Henry Harris

We are commanded to love God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matthew 22:37.) To love God is to keep his commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3). Therefore, we are commanded to keep his commandments.

If we love the Lord, we will keep his commandments. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) We are his friends if we keep his commandments. "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things I command you." (John 15:14.) Therefore, if we do not keep his commandments, we are neither his friends nor do we love him.

If we love the Lord, we love that which is his. (This is axiomatic). The church, (composed of Christians) is his. (Acts 20:28-30.) Therefore, we love the church. I know it is the truth that if we do not love the church we do not love the Lord. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." "We love because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." (1 John 4:11,19,20).

If we love the Lord, our hearts are on him and he is our treasure. "For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21.) We must keep our hearts and our minds on him.

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Colossians 3:1-4).

"Therefore; let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

What Do You Do When Angry?

Edsel Burleson

There is a story about a woman who told a preacher she had

a bad temper, but that it was over in a minute. "So is a shotgun blast, but it blows everything to pieces", was his reply.

A little boy, who had been punished for an angry outburst, said his prayers, "Dear God, please take away my temper and while you are at it, take away my mother's temper, too."

One of a Christian's weapons against Satan is self-control. It is proof that Christ is being allowed to control our lives when we are constantly losing our temper—saying and doing things in anger which we later regret.

Listen to Solomon! "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Proverbs 16:31.) "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." (Proverbs 15:1.) "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." (Proverbs 19:11.) "Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath." (Proverbs 29:8.)

The one who acts out of anger is the loser. There is a fable about a young lion and a mountain goat that went to the same water hole to quench their thirst. Arriving at the same time they fell into a heated argument about who would drink first. Soon they became so enraged both were determined to resist each other to the death. Ceasing their strife to catch their breath for a moment, they looked up and noticed a flock of vultures hovering overhead waiting for the loser to fall. Their quarrel was quickly resolved.

What do you do when angry? Someone has said, "Everytime we get angry we drive a nail into our own coffin." Well did Paul say, "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26).

It is said that a rattlesnake, if cornered, will sometimes become so angry that it will bite itself. So it is with us, we think we are harming others when, in reality, we suffer most. Solomon gave this advice: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Edna Ferguson summed it up beautifully in these words :

‘It’s the things you say when angry,
Or the things you do that’s sin;
‘Tho your temper is in turmoil
If you keep your thoughts locked in,
Then the flame of fury smolders;
When unfanned it soon will die,
And methinks a star is added
To your crown that waits on high.
The tempter waits and watches
And I read when you are weak;
You must fight to overcome him
If eternal life you seek,
Every time your wrath is conquered
Without sin then you will be.
A braver, stronger soldier.
In your march to victory.



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