Musical Worship in the New Testament Church

by Phil Sanders

Many people do not understand why anyone would discuss the use of instruments in the worship of the church. Most folks believe that churches have always used instruments of music in their worship. They are surprised to find that some churches today don't use instruments, and they think them rather peculiar. Churches, however, did not always use instruments, and some churches have never used instruments. In fact, Christians for several centuries were adamantly opposed to using any instruments of music in worship. Not until the thirteenth century AD did churches begin using the instrument widely. Some might ask why one should return to the ancient practice and not adopt the musical instruments so popular today.

In asking this question, we are not asking about personal preferences or heritages. We are not interested in opinions or feelings. What we are asking is, what does God desire? The New Testament is God's written revelation to all, a faith once for all time delivered to the saints Jude 3). The New Testament scriptures provide for us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) and fulfill Jesus' promise to guide the apostles into all truth John 16:12-13). The scriptures tell us what God desires in worship musically, but his instructions never include the use of instruments. Since we are charged to handle scripture accurately (2 Tim. 2:15), we should review the relevant passages pertaining to musical worship among Christians:

And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).

But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25).

And for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, ‘Therefore I will give praise to thee among the gentiles, and I will sing to thy name’ (Rom. 15:9).

What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit, and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit, and I shall sing with the mind also (1 Cor. 14:15).

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification (1 Cor. 14:26).

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:18-19).

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Col. 3:16).

Saying, ‘I will proclaim Thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise’ (Heb. 2:12).

Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15).

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises (James 5:13).

In every instance, the music described emphasizes verbal communication: singing, speaking, teaching, making melody in your hearts, confessing, giving thanks, and the fruit of lips.

The absence of a reference to instrumental music is startling. God desires music that is both of the mind and the spirit, not something irrational or nonverbal. God did not accidentally leave out instruments in these passages. There must have been a reason. When one considers the common use of instruments among pagans and in the Jewish temple, one is quite shocked to see Christian opposition to their use.

Instruments cannot speak, teach, admonish, give thanks, praise, proclaim, confess, or make melody on your heart. These are the things God wants us to accomplish in our singing. Instruments of music fail to do any of them. This is what makes them additions; they do something different from the instruction. They go beyond the instructions in the New Testament.

Jesus taught us in Matthew 7:21-27 that we must do what he says – obey his will- and enter heaven. The burden of proof for pianos and organs must be on the one who introduces them to show where Jesus has instructed this form of worship. There has never been any evidence from the Bible, from the language, or from history to show that instrumental music in Christian worship has won God's approval.

The Argument from Authority and the Absence of Instruments in New Testament Worship

All authority resides in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18). In any and every question of faith, Christians must ask what the Lord wills (Eph. 5:10, 17). The Lord Jesus must have first place in everything (Col. 1:18). It is only when we abide in his word that we are truly his disciples and know the truth John

8:31-32).

Jesus never taught his disciples to use machinery in worshiping God. No apostle ever gave an instruction to use them, and no church in the scriptures gives an example of their use. They were long in existence but ignored in the teaching and the practice of the entire church described in the New Testament. The New Testament contains God's complete will for our time, from Pentecost till the Second Coming. Had God wished that Christians use instruments in worship, he would have said so. Since God gave us his entire will for our lives, the fact that he intentionally left them out is quite remarkable. Surely God was aware of their presence, for they were used in the temple. We can only conclude that God left them out intentionally, because he did not want them. Men need to have authority from God for what they believe and practice. Like Jesus, we too should ask, "Is this from heaven or from men?" (Matt. 21:23-27). God requires that those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth John 4:23-24; 17:17). One must wonder how an unscriptural practice, begun centuries later by men, can be from heaven or according to the truth. Men have no right to change God's plan or his teaching on any matter. When they do so, they act on their own authority, not the authority of God.

Someone may say, "The Bible doesn't say we can't play the organ! Therefore, it must be all right." But neither does the Bible specifically condemn burning incense, praying to Mary, roast lamb with communion, sprinkling for baptism, infant baptism, or a mourner's bench. How can we justify organs and reject these? These, just like using an instrument of music in worship, come not from God but from men. The right question is not "Where does the Bible condemn an instrument in worship?" but "Where does the word of God authorize using instruments of music in Christian worship?"

If the Bible were to include everything that God did not want, it surely would be too large to carry. God has chosen to tell

us in positive terms what his will is for our lives and our worship. He has shown us the way, which rules out all other ways. “One baptism” (Eph. 4:5) means there can not be other approved baptisms, and “one church” (one body, which is the church, [Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23]) means there cannot be other approved churches. The specific instruction to sing means one should sing. There is no authority for other forms of music. When God instructs us through his word, he has authorized only that which he has identified. God does not have to exclude all other possibilities with a series of prohibitions. Laws only authorize what they authorize; they do not have to detail everything they do not authorize.

If something must be specifically condemned for it to be wrong, then God wrongly put Nadab and Abihu to death (Lev. 10:1-2), unjustly denied Moses entrance into Canaan (Num. 20:6-12), unfairly removed Saul as king (1 Sam. 10:8; 13:8-14), and irrationally put Uzzah to death (1 Chron. 13:7-13; 15:2-15; 2 Sam. 6:7). In each of these cases, men acted on their own authority rather than listen to the instructions of God. When men act on their own authority, they greatly err. These examples show that God expects men to follow his expressed will and not follow their own desires.

The Silence of the Scriptures

Since the New Testament says nothing about the use of instruments of music in worship, Christians must consider how they will understand the silence of the scriptures.

If God requires an action, we all agree that it is necessary for us to do what God commands. If God forbids any action, we all agree that it can never be acceptable to do what God prohibits. It is when God has not spoken on a matter that there is disagreement. One group holds that if God is silent, then every man is free to believe and practice his own opinion. The other group argues that it is necessary to have

scriptural authority for all we believe and practice; otherwise, it is forbidden. We hold that this second view is the biblical one. In dealing with silence, we must be careful neither to act beyond what the scriptures teach nor to make laws where God has not made them.

The scriptures throughout the Old and New Testaments teach emphatically that men should carefully follow God's teachings, lovingly, completely, and accurately. Jesus said, "So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me" John 14:31). Paul urged Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

If silence were permissive, men could easily introduce any number of corrupt ideas and practices in the church. We would enter a slippery slope leading to certain destruction. But if men maintain what has been taught in the scripture and carefully observe everything Jesus commanded, they will remain in his word as true disciples John 8:31-32). To go beyond the things that are written (1 Cor. 4:6) is to add to the word of God. Moses taught Israel, "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it" (Deut. 12:32).

John said of false teachers who were corrupting the teaching about Christ, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). What is true of this doctrine is also true of other doctrines. No one can go beyond what Christ teaches on any number of subjects and maintain favor with God. Men tread upon dangerous ground when they presume to add to the worship of the church a practice never authorized in the New Testament. Worshiping according to the teachings of men is called "will-worship" in Colossians 2:18-23 and condemned. This self-made religion is offensive to God in that it goes beyond and

outside the teaching of the New Testament to pursue its own desires.

The Bible itself uses the argument from silence in its prohibitive sense. In Hebrews 1:4-5, the Hebrew writer demonstrates the superiority of the Son to the angels by the fact that God did not say at any time that the angels were his sons, begotten by him.

In Hebrews 7:13-14, the same writer says, “For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.” God’s specific instructions to take priests from the tribe of Levi excluded every other tribe.

Divine revelation gives bounds, both positive and negative, to the worship of God. God himself condemned Israel for worshiping in a way that he had not commanded, a way that never entered his mind (Jer. 7:31). “Transgression” is “going beyond the prescribed limits.” It always denotes a breach of the law. The Hebrew writer, in pointing out the superiority of Jesus to angels and the Law, said:

For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Heb. 2:1-3).

How can we escape if we have such little respect for the teaching of our Lord Jesus that we add our own forms of worship, which he did not command? Is this not transgression, i.e., “going beyond the prescribed limits?”

Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit stayed within the bounds of what the Father told them to speak and to do. Jesus said in John 12:48-50:

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Jesus was very careful to speak only that which the Father told him to speak. He also delivered to us that message with great accuracy and fidelity. I, for one, am thankful that Jesus took such great care to tell me precisely the will of the Father, for I shall one day be judged by that message.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit never dared to speak on his own initiative. Jesus describes the work of the Spirit in John 16:12-13:

I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come.

If Jesus and the Holy Spirit were unwilling to speak or act on their own initiative, then how dare we speak or act on ours? If they never innovated, then what right have we to innovate?

To use instruments of music in the worship of the church is to go beyond what we have been instructed in the New Testament. It is to act on our own initiative rather than listening to what God wills for us.

God has spoken to us in his word. He has revealed all the truth (John 16:13), and there is no more truth. The silence of the scripture is not merely a gap, as if God had forgotten something. The silence of the scripture is an intentional hush after God had revealed all the truth. Since all the truth has been revealed, God did not need to say any more. For us to add

more information or to pursue additional practices says to God that his teaching was not sufficient for us. To speak in this kind of silence is to correct or become an editor to God. Paul said in Romans 11:33-36,

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became his counselor? Or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

God does not need an editor, and his ways are superior to our ways. It is presumptuous to think that we must change God's instructions on any matter by adding our own will. Like David, we should pray:

Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins;
Let them not rule over me;
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression
(Ps. 19:13)

If God had wished us to use the instrument, he would have told us so. The silence of the scriptures in this instance is prohibitive, because the scriptures are complete and all-sufficient. Should we go beyond what is written, we act presumptuously on our own initiative. For this reason, the use of instrumental music in worship to God is sinful.

The Argument from History

The history of the church conclusively shows that instrumental music was an innovation. For many centuries, no church used instruments of music. The use of the instrument is of human origin and not of Divine instruction.

The general introduction of instrumental music can certainly

not be assigned to a date earlier than the fifth or sixth centuries; yea, even Gregory the Great, who towards the end of the sixth century added greatly to the existing Church music, absolutely prohibited the use of instruments. Several centuries later, the introduction of the organ in sacred service gave place to instruments as accompaniments for Christian song, and from that time to this, they have been freely used with few exceptions. The first organ is believed to have been used in Church service in the 13th century. Organs were, however, in use before this in the theatre. They were never regarded with favor in the Eastern Church, and were vehemently opposed in some of the Western churches.

Everett Ferguson noted:

It is quite late before there is evidence of instrumental music, first the organ, employed in the public worship of the church. Recent studies put the introduction of instrumental music even later than the dates found in reference books. It was perhaps as late as the tenth century when the organ was played as part of the service. This makes instrumental music one of the late innovations of the medieval Catholic church. When introduced in the Middle Ages, the organ was still not part of the liturgy proper. That is, it did not initially accompany the hymn service, but was a separate item in the service. The type of chant employed left no place for instrumental accompaniment until new styles of music developed.

“Both the Jews in their temple service, and the Greeks in their idol worship, were accustomed to sing with the accompaniment of instrumental music. The converts to Christianity accordingly, must have been familiar with this mode of singing…. But it is generally admitted that primitive Christians employed no instrumental music in their religious worship,” says Lyman Coleman.

“Only singing, however, and no playing of instruments, was

permitted in the early Christian church."

"There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of vocal nature."

"Indeed, all evidence points to the chant and music of the primitive church as practically identical with the customs and traditions of the synagogue (vocal)."

James W. McKinnon, in his 1965 doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, shows that the early church music was wholly vocal, and that the opposition of the church fathers to instrumental music in worship was both monolithic and vehement.

The Early church fathers opposed instruments of music in Christian worship.

Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150) condemned any association with musical instruments as worldly.

Tertullian (A.D. 150-222) mentions only vocal music in worship.

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200) severely denounced the use of instruments among Christians even at banquets.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) displays the general attitude of the early church against instruments of music for any purpose. "Let no one's heart revert to the instruments of the theatre."

Gregory of Nazianus (A.D. 330-390) mentions instruments, but not in any way to approve them. He believed their only use was the arousement of sensuousness.

Jerome (A.D. 347-420) speaks only of vocal music and

emphasizes that the heart is the source of songs.

Theodoret (ca. A.D. 400) says the use of the instrument is a “childish” relic of the Old Testament and is excluded from the worship of the church.

Chrysostom (4′” century A.D.) says of the instruments of the Old Testament allegorically look forward to the pure worship of the lips.

What Various Men Have Said Through the Centuries

Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1250): “Our church does not use instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.”

Martin Luther: “The organ in the worship to God is an ensign of Baal.”

John Calvin: “It is no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of tapers, or revival of other shadows of the law. The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews.”

John Wesley: “I have no objection to the organ in our chapels, provided it is neither seen nor heard.”

Adam Clark: “I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship to God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of that infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and truth. “

Charles Spurgeon: “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.”

John Knox called the organ: “a kist (chest) of whistles.”

Alexander Campbell: “To the really spiritually minded, it (using instruments in worship) would be like a cowbell in a concert.”

J.W. McGarvey: “And if any man who is a preacher believes that the apostle teaches the use of instrumental music in the church, by enjoining the singing of psalms, he is one of those smatterers in Greek who can believe anything he wishes to believe. When the wish is father to the thought, correct exegesis is like water on a duck’s back.”

Our purpose is to restore the New Testament church, which never used and greatly opposed the use of instruments of music in worship.

Scripture Shows That God Condemns Innovation

In Leviticus 10:1-2, the scripture tells the sad story of the two sons of Aaron who offered up strange fire to the Lord. For eight days, Aaron and his sons had consecrated themselves and had obeyed every instruction “just as the Lord had commanded Moses.” On the eighth day, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering. When the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord (Lev.

10:1-2).

Their offering of strange fire came of their own initiative. While we are not sure exactly what they offered, we do know it was “strange,” i.e., offered in a way not prescribed by the Law. We have no doubt that Nadab and Abihu had good intentions of accompanying the shouts of the people with their offering, but their offerings were self-willed, not God-willed. Leviticus 10:3 says, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.”

Self-willed worship does not honor God, because it arises from the will of men rather than the will of God. Colossians 2:23 describes this kind of worship as “will-worship” or “self-made religion” (NASB). God has always demanded that men follow his teachings rather than innovate their own doctrines or practices John 8:31-32; 2 John 9-11).

The prophet Samuel anointed Saul as king over Israel. In 1 Samuel 10:8, Samuel told Saul, “And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”

Saul, however, became anxious before the battle with the Philistines, because the Philistines were so numerous and the Israelites were beginning to scatter (13:1-8). Consequently, Saul presumptuously offered up a burnt offering. Samuel told Saul:

You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever (1 Sam. 13:13).

Saul had gone beyond his authority and acted on his own to offer up the burnt offering. God rejected Saul as king that day and gave his kingdom to a man after his own heart. We

cannot act on our own initiative and maintain a pleasing relationship with God.

When the Pharisees bound traditions of men upon others, they acted beyond the will of God (Matt. 15:8-9).

When Judaizers corrupted the gospel by binding the Law upon Gentiles, they went beyond their authority and were accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

When the false teachers of Jesus day said that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh, John, by inspiration, said:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Men have never had the right to develop new doctrines or initiate new practices in the worship and work of the church. To perform any action without divine authority is sinful. To offer a strange offering, which is not prescribed or commanded by God, even with the best of intentions, fails to honor God as holy. We treat God as holy when we listen to his instructions and do them (Matt. 7:24-27). Only by listening to his words and by acting upon them can we please God.

Arguments used by those who favor instruments:

- **The use of psallo in Ephesians**

5:19

Over time, psallo has gradually changed in meaning. It first meant “to touch, twang, strike strings.” Next, it meant “to touch or play the strings of a harp.” Later, it meant “to sing with the harp.” At last, it meant, “to sing praises” (without any thought of any instrument of music). The only time in the LXX that psallo meant play was when the instrument was specified in the context; otherwise, it meant to sing (LXX 150 B.C.). In the New Testament psallo is used four times. It meant:

• “sing” (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; James 5:13)

• “make melody or make music” (Eph. 5:19).

The maker of the music or melody is to be the heart. No instrument is even considered here except the heart itself.

Everett Ferguson said of psallo, “If the precise meaning of certain verses may be in doubt, what is dear is that an instrument did not inhere in the word psallo in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, dating 150-250 B.C.). Psallo could translate a word meaning ‘play’ (nagan), or a general word (zamar). The meaning which would cover all occurrences is ‘make melody.’ This could include making melody on an instrument, but in the preponderance of occurrences, it clearly refers to making melody with the voice. “

F.F. Bruce said of psallo in Ephesians 5:19: “Nor should the etymological force of the terms be pressed, as though psalmos inevitably meant a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument … while such plucking of the strings is the original sense of psallo; … it is used in the NT with the meaning ‘to sing psalms. ‘”

In confirmation of this view, the Greek Orthodox Church (who

knows Greek better than anyone) has never used instruments of music in worship.

While some have abandoned the idea that psallo requires the use of an instrument, they today suggest that it permits the use of the instrument in Ephesians 5:19. If this were so, the first readers of the epistle of Ephesians and early churches did not know it. If Paul indeed was permitting the use of instruments, we are at a loss to explain why early churches so adamantly and uniformly opposed them. Actually, no ancient writer ever made the argument that psallo and psalmos permitted the use of instruments in worship. In fact, George P. Slade in 1878 was the first ever to argue that psallo or psalmos permitted the instrument even if the instrument is not mentioned. Early Christians never understood the context of Ephesians or Colossians to demand or permit instruments.

The first rule of hermeneutics in the study of words is that a word does not and cannot mean what the author and the first readers did not understand it to mean. Whatever the words psalmos and psallo meant to them, it could not have demanded or permitted the use of instruments. The universal opposition to the use of instruments among the early church fathers makes it clear they understood the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians to teach vocal music only.

• The use of instruments in the Old Testament

Psalm 150 and 2 Chronicles 29:25-27 show that the use of instruments in Jewish worship is a command from God. However, Christians are not bound to and do not live under the Old Covenant that God made with the Jews. We are under a new covenant ratified by the blood of Christ and taught in the New Testament. For this reason, we don’t offer incense, dance, or make animal sacrifices. The New Testament is a better covenant than the Old and is a spiritual covenant (Heb. 8:6-13;

10:1-10).

The Old Testament had a temple building; in the New Testament, Christians are the temple of God. Our laws are written on our hearts, not on tablets of stone. Our worship is not outward and showy but inward and spiritual (John 4:21-23).

• There are harps in heaven (Rev. 5:8; 15:2).

Each of these passages refers to a vision John had of the throne of God in heaven, not Christian worship in the church. Each reflects Old Testament literature where the worship of the temple is considered ideal. But Christians do not worship in the Jerusalem temple; instead, they are the temple of God. Incense is burned in heaven as well; are we to burn incense? Saints in heaven wear crowns and cast them toward God? Are we to do the same? Our task is not to imitate what is done in heaven but to be obedient to Jesus and his teachings for us. If Christians should play harps, why didn't the church do it in the New Testament? Why didn't they understand they were to imitate what is done in heaven? Heaven is heaven, and earth is earth.

• The use of instruments is an aid to singing.

Some say, "Instrumental music is justified as an aid to worship in song in the same way a song book is an aid. What is the difference in having a songbook aiding in following the words of the song and a piano aiding in following the music of the song?"

Expedients or aids must first be lawful, i.e., they must aid in doing that which is instructed by God. Nothing more than singing is done when a songbook is used. The words of a book

help all the singers to sing in harmony with each other. A piano, however, involves something more than singing, speaking, teaching, or admonishing. Songbooks aid in accomplishing the purpose of singing. Pianos make a different kind of music. Expedients must truly aid. Organs and bands often hinder the singing, which must compete to be heard. Expedients must edify. Pianos produce musical sounds that are meaningless to the mind, but the songbook has words. Organs may stimulate the emotions, but they do not instruct the mind.

Expedients must not divide, but the instrument has been a source of division for many churches. Hundreds of thousands of Christians have parted ways, because men have introduced into the worship an unscriptural practice.

Playing an instrument adds a new form of worship. The instrument is not merely an aid but was itself a means of praising God in the Old Testament, but is unauthorized in the New Testament (2 Chron. 5:13; 29:25). Playing lyres and psalteries were themselves forms of worship, not merely aids. An expediency aids in the performance of an instruction, but an expediency does not change the instruction. An addition changes the instruction so that people do something different than the instructions require. Expedients are lawful, whereas additions are not lawful.

Most people understand these differences in other areas. It is one thing for Noah to use tools to build the ark; it is another matter for Noah to add floors or windows to the ark. While we do not know how many rooms the ark had, we know that it had three floors and one window. God did not specify the number of rooms but left that up to Noah to decide; but God specified the number of windows and floors. If Noah had acted beyond his authority and made a second window or a fourth floor, the Bible could never have said that Noah “according to all that God had commanded him, so he did” (Gen. 6:22).

When God gives specific instructions, he expects his people to

do precisely what he commands; but when God gives general instructions, he permits men to use their wisdom to fulfill those commands. We may use a tray or cups to serve the Lord's Supper of bread and fruit of the vine. Trays and cups aid in doing what God wills. Adding roast lamb to the Lord's Supper, however, goes beyond the instruction and is of human design. It can never please God to pursue self-made religion.

It matters not whether a person is baptized in a baptistry, pool, river, lake, sea, or bathtub. Any one of these places contains enough water to fulfill the instruction to baptize (immerse). What the command to baptize does not enjoin, however, is a different action. Immersion is not sprinkling or pouring. And when one substitutes one action for another, one violates the commandment of God. Fulfilling the commandment through an expedient is not equivalent to changing the commandment.

The singing God asks of us comes in the form of speaking, teaching, admonishing, giving thanks, confessing, and offering the fruit of our lips. A songbook or a pitch pipe can help us fulfill these instructions, doing exactly what God wills. A piano or instrument of music, however, adds a different kind of music and a different means of praise. Instruments cannot speak, teach, admonish, or give thanks. They offer their own form of worship, different from what the Lord specified for musical worship.

Instrumental music in the Old Testament was not merely an aid to worship; it was itself a form of worship (Pss. 81:2-3; 92:1-3; 150). David made arrangements with the Levites, who "shall offer praises to the Lord with instruments which I have made for praise" (1 Chron. 23:6). David "stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with harps, and with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the command was from the Lord through his prophets" (2 Chron. 29:25; cf. 28). To suggest today that it is merely an aid ignores that it was

used for a different purpose in the Old Testament.

As an aid, a pitch pipe or a tuning fork does not operate during the singing and is not designed to be heard by all. They give the pitch and then remain silent. Instruments, on the other hand, are designed to be played loudly enough to be heard by all throughout the song. Pitch pipes and tuning forks do not play tunes; their only function is to give a pitch, so that the leader may know the correct pitch on which to begin a song.

• There are no laws in the New Testament regulating corporate worship.

That God takes the worship of Christians seriously can be seen quite clearly in 1 Corinthians 11. When the Corinthians were abusing the Lord's Supper (11:17-34) by taking their meals before one another and some getting drunk, Paul called a halt to their unloving behavior. He pointed them to the original instruction to remember the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. Because they had failed to discern the body, some were weak and sick, and others asleep spiritually. The Lord's Supper was a corporate activity, a means of worship in the assembled church. Failure to worship properly led to spiritual disapproval before God. Because the Corinthian church failed to keep God's regulations of the Lord's Supper, Paul had to rebuke them. Paul both received and delivered instructions regulating the Lord's Supper. These instructions were Divine tradition and were taught widely throughout the church. This shows there are indeed laws in the New Testament regulating corporate worship.

Colossians 3:16 should not be interpreted out of the context of Colossians 4:16, where Paul said, "And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the

Laodiceans; and you, for your part, read my letter that is coming from Laodicea." While the letter was written specifically to Colossae, its teaching was also meant for other churches. It is important to know that both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 were first read to an assembled church.

• Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 do not apply to worship assemblies.

Some are saying today that there are no laws in the New Testament that apply to the corporate musical worship of the church. The argument is that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 were to be fulfilled by an individual in his daily life and did not speak to the corporate worship of the church. This is an odd argument, considering that both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are verses in cyclical epistles to be read in assembled congregations. These two verses, by their very nature, show that neither can be fulfilled by an individual but requires a group of people to fulfill.

Ephesians 5:18-21 has a series of five masculine plural participles ("speaking," "singing," "making melody," "giving thanks," and "submitting yourselves"), all of which have imperative force agreeing with the verb "be filled," which is itself imperative. This sort of Greek structure can be seen in Matthew 28:19-20, where the imperative "make disciples" is followed by participles "baptizing" and "teaching." The actions designated by such a construction are not optional. To fulfill the command, "speaking to one another," there has to be mutual communication between at least two people. I know of no way in which one can distinguish in a plural imperative between two people and a much larger group. 10 The Ephesians' letter is addressed to the saints [in Ephesus] who are also faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). The imperatives of 5:19

should be no less inclusive than the people to whom the letter is addressed.

Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” The pronoun one another used in this passage is reflexive, used reciprocally. It indicates that the subject of the action is also the object of the action of the verb. The “speaking to one another” is from each and to all the others. In this instance, the pronoun is not singular but plural. Since most versions translate the term “one another,” this reflexive pronoun is used reciprocally to indicate an exchange between two or more groups.

Speaking, teaching, and admonishing are actions that require speakers and listeners; it demands a plurality of people. These verses are not speaking about private singing but functions of groups, where pluralities of people are present. Singing was a means of mutual edification as well as praise. Everett Ferguson said:

Although Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, which provide rich sources for the discussion of early Christian singing, have as their literary context the Christian life in a larger sense, the statements are drawn from practices of the church. The practice of the assembly is to influence the entire Christian life. Other texts make dear the presence of song as a congregational activity (Matt. 26:30; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26).

Clearly, these passages include instructions to assembled congregations as clearly as to other situations in life.

• Christians worshiped with instruments when they went into the

Temple.

Some are suggesting that since Jewish Christians in the first century worshiped in the temple (Acts 2-3,21), and since instruments were used in temple worship, then Christians participated in musical worship with instruments.

What Jews did in the temple is not a model for what Christians are to do in the church. While some eagerly wish to employ instruments of music in the worship of the church, they ignore that in the temple, Jews also offered animal sacrifices and burned incense. Are they suggesting that we also practice these things?

It is clear that some participation took place, but there was a progression of change also taking place in the book of Acts. Until the conversion of Cornelius, all Christians were Jews or proselytes and participated in temple worship as Jews. Gentiles like Cornelius, however, were not required to keep the Law when they became Christians (Acts 15; Gal. 2:11-21). In fact, Paul condemned those who bound the Law on Gentile Christians (Gal. 5:1-4).

While the temple stood, Jewish Christians had the option of offering sacrifices as Paul did in Acts 21. Later. New Testament epistles, however, make it clear that Christians were not to offer such sacrifices any more (Eph. 2:13-16; Heb. 9:11-10:4). Jesus Christ is our sacrifice, once for all time. When the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, the Temple worship ceased.

Early church history confirms that churches saw no need to bring Jewish worship into their assemblies. If temple worship served as permission for Christians to use the instrument, why did the early church fathers oppose the instrument? Theodoret, in the fifth century, argued that the use of instruments is a childish relic of the Old Testament and is to be excluded from

the worship of the church.

The priests and Levites, not the congregation, carried on worship in the temple. At its center, temple worship was not a congregational assembly, although people customarily did gather in the courts at the time of sacrifice. The Levites did the singing.

The church seems to have kept more to the practices of the synagogue for its worship. Carl Kraeling and Lucetta Mowry said:

Both at home and abroad, the music of the early Synagogue was exclusively vocal, whether because of opposition to pagan custom or as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple.

• Instrumental music is not a "salvation issue"; it is a non-issue.

Some suggest that whether or not one uses instrumental music in worship really doesn't matter. Since we all are imperfect and stand in the need of the grace of God, whether we use instruments is a moot question. They believe they can continue using the instrument without losing favor with God.

Any issue that involves sin is a "salvation issue." When people persist in sin and do not repent, they put their souls in peril {Heb. 10:26; 2 Pet. 3:9; Luke 13:3, 5). The question here, then, is whether the use of instrumental music in worship is sinful. Based upon the scriptural evidence we have examined, we believe it is sinful to go beyond the authority of the New Testament and use musical instruments to worship. Some might use it for a time and then repent; surely God's grace will forgive them in response to their repentance. What will happen to those who will not repent?

Today, some believe they may persist in doctrinal error without repentance. Paul said to the Romans, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” {Rom. 6:1-2) We ought to be grateful for the grace of God. Presuming upon that grace is dangerous; it is building upon sand. Those who use the instrument must do so on their own initiative, for there is no command, approved example, or inference in scripture that the church ever worshiped that way.

Conclusion

We can only conclude based on the evidence that to play instruments of music in the worship of the church is to act beyond the authority of the New Testament. Self-made religion has in all times, found disfavor with God. God has told us what he desires from us musically. If we love him, we will please him and glorify in the way he instructs us. If we do otherwise, we are building our houses upon sand. We can give no assurance to those who practice self-made religion that their way will find the approval of God.

It is so much better to listen to the teaching of scripture and simply follow it. We know that singing is approved of God, but we cannot find any evidence that playing is approved. Is it not wiser to do that which we know God approves? Loving the Lord means that we will follow his teaching and obey his will John 14:15). We urge all men everywhere to follow the New Testament pattern of singing and to avoid adding an instrument to their musical worship.

Unity

I pray … they should be one" (Jesus). The fact that the Lord prayed for unity among his disciples has been used to generate a hateful judgmental rejection of those who "having heard the word, hold it fast."

Irresistible Grace?

By John Hobbs, PhD.
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The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the fourth cardinal point in the Calvinistic theology. It is the "I" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Irresistible Grace is also referred to as Special Grace or Efficacious Grace.

How the Calvinists Understand Irresistible Grace

Calvinists deny that Irresistible Grace is God forcing someone to come against his own will. Rather, say the Calvinists, Irresistible Grace makes the individual willing to come. Berkhof defined it thus: "By changing the heart it makes man perfectly willing to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation and to yield obedience to the will of God."

The Canons of Dort state that when God chooses an individual to be saved, He "powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit; …. He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart; … He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable;

actuates and strengthens it … this is regeneration … which God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."

John Calvin wrote about "the secret energy of the Spirit" and "the pure prompting of the Spirit." Calvin meant that the Holy Spirit would have to be sent to an individual to call him to salvation and once called he could not refuse. Calvin wrote, "As I have already said, it is certain that the mind of man is not changed for the better except by God's prevenient grace." Prevenient Grace is defined as "Divine grace that is said to operate on the human will antecedent to its turning to God." In other words man's will is totally subservient to the irresistible call from God.

David Steele and Curtis Thomas state:

> *This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious', 'invincible', or 'irresistible'. For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ!*

Paul Enns states:

> *In the logic of Calvinism, God, through His Spirit, draws precisely those whom God unconditionally elected from eternity past and Christ died for. Thus the purpose of God is accomplished. He elected certain ones, Christ died for those very ones, and now through the Holy Spirit, God dispenses His irresistible grace to them to make them willing to come. They do not want to resist.*

Billy Graham wrote:

> *Being born again is altogether a work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing you can do to obtain this new birth …. In other words, there is nothing you can do about it … The new birth is wholly foreign to our will. – No man can ever be saved unless the Holy Spirit in supernatural, penetrating power comes and works upon your heart. You can't come to Christ any time you want to, you can only come when the Spirit of God is drawing and pulling and wooing.*

James Boyce believes that for man it is "impossible for him to be delivered by his own acts, even if he had the will to perform them." Boyce believes that God did not choose the "elect" because He foresaw that these individuals would be good and pious people; he believes that it was because of God's unconditional selective choosing of the elect that the elect or chosen ones are led to believe. Boyce takes the position that salvation is not dependent upon "the choice of the elect" but solely upon God's choice.

Thomas Nettles denies that an individual can contribute to his own salvation. He believes that man's faith does not come from man's willingness to receive the word but "only from God's sovereign bestowal." He says, "The Holy Spirit moves in such a way as to create willingness in the form of repentance and faith." He denies that the New Testament commandments of repentance and belief imply that man has it within his own power to repent and have faith.

W. J. Seaton wrote:

> *What is meant by irresistible grace? We know that when the gospel call goes out in a church, or in the open air, or through reading God's Word, not everyone heeds that call. Not everyone becomes convinced of sin and his need of Christ. This explains the fact that there are two calls. There is not only an outward call; there is also an inward call. The*

> *outward call may be described as "words of the preacher", and this call, when it goes forth, may work a score of different ways in a score of different hearts producing a score of different results. One thing it will not do, however; it will not work a work of salvation in a sinner's soul. For a work of salvation to be wrought the outward call must be accompanied by the inward call of God's Holy Spirit, for He it is who 'convinces of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. And when the Holy Spirit calls a man, or a woman, or a young person by His grace, that call is irresistible: it cannot be frustrated; it is the manifestation of God's irresistible grace.*

Loraine Boettner defines Irresistible Grace as:

> *God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it.*

Man's Responsibility in the Salvation Process

Calvinism assumes that God has predetermined and foreordained certain ones to be saved, and that they cannot come to salvation until the Holy Spirit in a supernatural way works on the hearts of the elect. When the Holy Spirit calls the elect individual, he cannot resist. He has to respond, but he has to wait until the Holy Spirit calls him in some mysterious way. Also, if one is not one of the "elect," it will be impossible for him to be saved. Therefore, it is all the Holy Spirit's working. Man is a totally passive respondent in the salvation process, according to Calvinism, which denies that an

individual can contribute to his own salvation.

In 1976, Robert Hudnut wrote the book Church Growth Is Not the Point. Hudnut is Calvinistic to the core. He writes,

> *We have been saved. It is not our doing. – No you don't even have to repent. Paul didn't. He was on his way to jail when it happened. He didn't do anything. – It is then we are driven to the passive action of repentance. You do not repent your way to God.*

Notice that Hudnut says repentance is passive. His theology is corrupt. Man is told to repent in Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; and Revelation 2:16. In every verse cited, the Greek verb is in the active not the passive voice. Repentance is something man must do (Greek active voice); it is not what is done to him (Greek passive voice). There is not one case in the Bible of a person being passive while being saved. Even Paul was told what he "must do" (Acts 9:6). In Acts 2:38 repentance is tied to the remission of sins. If a man wants to be saved, then there is something he must do. Man does have a choice to make in his own salvation (Acts 2:40; Deut. 30:11-19; Joshua 24:15; Matt. 23:37; John 5:40). He must be involved. Without man's active role in the conversion process, he is lost.

The responsibility for man having an "honest and good heart" (Luke 8: 15), in order for the seed of the Kingdom to produce, lies with the person, not God. Man is told to "take heed how" he hears (Luke 8:18). The command in Luke 8:18 would be meaningless if man did not have a part in his own salvation. Why should one "take heed how" he hears if his salvation is a product of irresistible grace? Why "take heed" if the Holy Spirit is going to operate on the heart without a man's cooperation?

The Bible teaches man has a part to play in the salvation process. Notice these verses:

> *John 7:17, "If any man willeth to do his will"*
> *John 7:37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."*
> *John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me."*
> *John 12:47, If any man hear my sayings, and keep them not."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that is athirst, let him say, Come."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely."*

The point of all these verses is that an individual must "will" and "thirst" and "want to" come to the Lord. It is the responsibility of the individual to "will" – it is not God's responsibility!

God creates "will" in any person with "an honest and good heart" through the preached word of the cross (John 12:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21; 2:2). The word is to be preached to everyone (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). To hold God responsible for creating the right "will" in a person arbitrarily and unconditionally makes God a "respecter of persons." This is something he is not (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

Is Faith Totally a Gift From God?

John Calvin wrote:

> *Faith is a singular gift of God, both in that the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God and in that his heart is established therein. – This is why Paul in another place commends faith to the elect (Titus 1:1) that no one may think that he acquires faith by his own effort but that his glory rests with God, freely to illumine whom he previously had chosen. – Faith – the illumination of God – Faith which he (i.e. God) put into our hearts – Our faith which arises not from the acumen of the human intellect but from the illumination of the Spirit alone – Faith flows from*

regeneration.

Thomas Nettles wrote:

Faith is a gift of God and is bestowed gratuitously by him. – Neither justification nor faith comes from man's willingness to receive but only from God's sovereign bestowal. – Belief is still the result of the effectual call and regenerating power of God.

Millard Erickson wrote: "Faith is God's gift," which refutes this Calvinistic mistake.

He wrote:

Is this Calvinistic view that faith is totally the gift of God correct? No! Does an individual have to wait for the Holy Spirit to come in some secret way to infuse faith? No! There are several reasons:

For God to give certain people faith arbitrarily makes God a respecter of persons. The Bible is emphatic that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11, 10:12; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). Salvation depends upon man exercising his freedom of will. If salvation depends totally upon the Holy Spirit and a man is lost, that man can blame God. But, that will not happen because the Lord has done his part; man must do his.

Faith comes through the hearing of the word of God not through some secret mysterious sending by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:17; Luke 8:11-12; John 6:44-45; 20:30-31; Acts 4:4; 8:12; 15:7; 18:8; 20:32; Eph. 1:13). None of these verses indicate faith coming through a supernatural calling. Faith comes as we hear and study the evidence and then we ourselves decide to believe.

Faith is our part in the salvation process (1 John 5:4; Rev.

2:10). We have a responsibility to save ourselves (Acts 2:40) and to build our faith Jude 20; Acts 20:32). This is something we must do. Passages like Hebrews 11:6 are meaningless if the Holy Spirit is going to miraculously infuse faith. Jesus said, "Ye must be born anew" John 3:7). The word "must" is in the active voice indicating we have a part to play in our salvation. We are not totally passive in the salvation process. Our active obedient faith is necessary for us to be saved (Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8; John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; James 2:24-26).

God purifies the heart by faith (Acts 15:9). Calvinists have the heart purified before faith. Alexander Campbell said, "Why do we preach the gospel to convert men, if, before they believe the gospel, and without the gospel, men are renewed and regenerated by the direct and immediate influence of God's Spirit?" Good question!

Calvinists teach that "spiritual darkness" refers to man's depraved condition and that God has to perform supernatural secret surgery by the Holy Spirit in order to bring men into "spiritual light." But, in Acts 26:16-18, Paul was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles to "open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." A careful study of the book of Acts reveals that the early Christians depended upon the word of God to change the hearts of sinners and produce faith. Nowhere in the book of Acts do we find someone being converted by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

One is never so "spiritually dead" that he cannot hear and understand and believe the word of God in order to have faith (Eph. 5:14; John 5:25; 12:42-43). The rulers of the Jews "believed on" Jesus but would not confess him. Did they believe? Yes! Their problem was a "want to" problem not that they were so spiritually dead they could not understand. Calvinists misunderstand 1 Corinthians 2:14. The "natural man" of 1 Cor. 2:14 is the man who does not care about

> *spiritual things – not the man who cannot understand them. Calvinists say the unsaved man cannot understand spiritual truth. Wrong! The rulers of the Jews, who were unsaved, in John 12:42-43 understood the truth exactly. They just "did not want to" obey the Lord. Wayne Grudem, and Ralph Gore, and Millard Erickson, who are Calvinists, do not even discuss John 12:42-43.*
>
> *Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, a professor at Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana – a Calvinistic school – believes that Ephesians 2:8 teaches that faith is a direct gift from God and that man cannot do anything himself to get faith. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." After quoting this verse Montgomery said,*
>
> *Don't get the idea that you did it. You didn't do it. Faith is the gift of God. The word 'that' in Ephesians 2:8 refers to 'faith' because 'faith' is the closest antecedent to the word ' that.' Once a person is saved, he cannot properly accredit that to anything but the Holy Spirit.*

Faith is, in one sense, a gift of God because God has given us the Word which produces faith. Without the Word, we could not have faith. But, the entire Bible and especially Ephesians 2:8 do not teach that faith is a direct gift of God in which we have no part. The word "that" in Ephesians 2:8 refers to the salvation process. The salvation process is "the gift of God." We are saved "by grace through faith" which is the salvation process. But, this does not mean we have earned our salvation. We cannot boast of our salvation as if we have worked for it and earned it (Eph. 2:9). Jesus said even after we have done all that we are commanded to do we are to say, "We are unprofitable servants we have done that which is our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). James said, "Faith apart from works is dead" James 2:26).

Verses Misused by Calvinists to Support Irresistible Grace

John 6:37: “All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

WJ. Seaton said: “Note that it is those whom the Father has given to Christ -the elect- that shall come to Him; and when they come to Him they will not be cast out.”

Response: (1) All those with a submissive spirit will come to Christ. These are the ones whom the Father gives to Jesus and not one of these will he refuse (cf. John 10:26-29 where the verbs “hear” and “follow” are continuous action). One must come with a willing heart John 5:40; 7:17; Matt. 13:9; Rev. 22:17). (2) There is nothing here or in God’s word that teaches that God arbitrarily chooses those who come to Christ. Jesus uses truth and love to persuade men to accept him John 12:32-33, 48; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Calvinists are reading into the text an arbitrary decree that is not there! (3) The gospel is for all (Mark 16:15-16), but not all men will accept it (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Those who refuse to accept Christ do so because of their own willful rejection (Matt. 13:14-15; 23:37)- not because of some arbitrary decree. Paul Butler says, “Man’s rejection by God is caused by man’s rejection of God.” (4) Jesus said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15). Jesus did not say, “The Holy Spirit will supernaturally open your hearts so you can believe.” In Matthew 11:15 Jesus was teaching that man has a responsibility to have an “honest and good heart.” That is not the work of the Holy Spirit. If a man does not have an “honest and good heart,” he cannot and will not come to Jesus. (5) In context John 6:40 explains John 6:37 and 39. It explains who the Father has given unto Jesus: Those who “beholdeth” and “believeth” on the Son! Both of these verbs are present tense verbs indicating continuous action. Those who continue to

behold and believe on the Son are the ones whom the Father has given unto Jesus. It is our own individual free-will responsibility to continue to believe. We are not forced or coerced against our will.

John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day."

John Calvin said: "But nothing is accomplished by preaching him if the Spirit, as our inner teacher, does not show our minds the way. Only those men, therefore, who have heard and have been taught by the Father come to him. What kind of learning and hearing is this? Surely, where the Spirit by a wonderful and singular power forms our ears to hear and our minds to understand."

W.J. Seaton said: "Here our Lord is simply saying that it is impossible for men to come to Him of themselves; the Father must draw them."

Response: (1) Calvin assumes the drawing is a miraculous operation. We base truth on clear biblical teaching – not assumptions. (2) The next verse explains how God does the drawing and it is not miraculous. It is written that one must be taught (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 54:13). One must hear and one must learn! This is not miraculous! God draws men through teaching. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The book of Acts is proof positive that Christianity is a taught religion – not a caught religion in the sense that the Holy Spirit must convert a man separate and apart from the word of God. The means and the method the Father uses to draw men is the preached word (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 4:4; 8:4, 12; 11:26; 15:7; 18:8; 20:20; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; 2:1-4; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; etc.). (3) Why did our Lord invite all men to come to him if he knew that it was impossible for some of them to come (Matt. 11:28)? That does not make sense. (4) Guy N. Woods said: "Some are not drawn, because they do not will to do so; it has been

well said. that a magnet draws iron, but not all objects are drawn by magnets, because all are not iron! Similarly, one must be of the right disposition and have the proper response to the drawing power of the Father which he exercises through the gospel." (5) John 12:32-33 also teaches we are drawn to the Lord through Christ's death on the cross. Some appreciate his death, and sadly, some do not.

Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul."

John Calvin said:

> *Indeed, it does not so stand in man's own impulse, and consequently even the pious and those who fear God still have need of the especial prompting of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, yet her heart had to be opened to receive Paul's teaching (Acts 16:14) and to profit by it. This was said not of one woman only but to teach us that the advancement of every man in godliness is the secret work of the Spirit.*

Charles Hodge said:

> *The truth is compared to light, which is absolutely necessary· to vision; but if the eye be closed or blind it must be opened or restored before the light can produce its proper impression." Hodge tries to use the case of Lydia as proof of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion.*

W. 1. Seaton said:

> *One outstanding illustration of this teaching of irresistible grace, or effectual calling, is certainly the incident that we read in Acts 16. The apostle Paul preaches the gospel to a*

> *group of women by the riverside at Philippi; and as he does so, 'a certain woman named Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul.' Paul, the preacher, spoke to Lydia's ear – the outward call; but the Lord spoke to Lydia's heart – the inward call of irresistible grace.*

Response: (1) Calvin's admission that Lydia "feared" God before God "opened" her heart destroys his teaching of Total Depravity. (2) It is a complete assumption that God opened her heart by a direct secret operation of the Holy Spirit. The text does not tell us what Calvin believes. Calvin gives us a classic case of eisegesis – i.e. reading into the text what is not there. (3) The word "heart" is used figuratively. Consider: John 12:40; Matthew 9:4; 13:15; Mark 2:6; and Romans 10:10. The word "opened" is evidently used figuratively – i.e. to expand or broaden the mind. Luke 24:45 states, "Then opened he their mind." Jesus "opened" the mind of the apostles by explaining the Scriptures to them not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The word "opened" was simply a way of saying that the person came to an understanding of, and a belief in, the message under consideration. It is analogous to Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:18, "having the eyes of your heart enlightened." (4) Acts 16:14 indicates that the Lord opened her heart through the things which were spoken by Paul. The Spirit's work in conversion is not something done directly upon the heart apart from the preached Word. (5) J.W. McGarvey said, "The assumption, therefore, that her heart was opened by an abstract influence of the Spirit, is entirely gratuitous and illogical, while the real cause is patent upon the face of the narrative in the preaching done by Paul." (6) Dr. Richard Oster said, "It is significant that this opening of the heart came only after she had heard what was said by Paul. Perhaps the method of opening her heart was the preached word (cf. Luke 24:45)." (7) The word "heard" is an imperfect tense verb which means continuous action in the past. Lydia kept on

hearing Paul. The hearing occurred before the opening of the heart. Wayne Jackson states, “The implication here is the exact opposite of that demanded by Calvinism. That doctrine alleges that one cannot give honest attention to the Word of God until the Lord first opens the heart, but this passage actually demonstrates otherwise. She kept on listening and thereby her heart (understanding) was opened by God!” (8) The words “give heed” implies that Lydia had a choice in her obedience. Study: Acts 8:6-12; 20:28; Luke 8:18 and Hebrews 2:1-2. (9) There are many passages which demonstrate that God, as a general rule, works through means and not directly (2 Kings 5:1-14; Matt. 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:10).

Romans 10:16-17: “But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah with, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” John Calvin said, “To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed. – By this, he means that only when God shines in us by the light of His Spirit is there any profit from the word. Thus the inward calling, which alone is effectual and peculiar to the elect is distinguished from the outward voice of men.”

Calvin believed that the Word of God could only produce faith in a heart of one already illumined by the Spirit of God. In commenting on Romans 10:17, Calvin admits that when Paul makes “hearing the beginning of faith he is describing only the ordinary arrangement and dispensation of the Lord which he commonly uses in calling his people – not, indeed, prescribing for him an unvarying rule so that he may use no other way.”

Response: (1) Calvin assumes his doctrine of total depravity is true. He insists they did not believe because they could not believe. The text does not say what Calvin believed. (2) If one must be regenerated before he can hear, then he is regenerated before he has faith. This contradicts many Bible passages (John 8:24; Acts 11:14; 16:14; Rom. 1:17; 5:1; Gal. 3:11). (3) Personal responsibility is definitely set forth in this verse. If anyone does not believe, it is because he does

not “hearken” to the message preached – not because of inherited total depravity. Notice the parallel between “hearken” and “believed” with “glad tidings” – i.e. the gospel and “report.” To have a saving faith is to hearken – i.e. hear and obey. (4) Every case of conversion in the Bible involved a teaching situation. Christianity is a taught religion (John 6:45; Acts 4:4; 8:4; 11:26; 18:8; 20:20; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2). There is no example in the Bible where the Holy Spirit supernaturally infused faith into an individual. A saving faith comes when an honest and good heart is taught truth found in the word of God and then that truth is accepted and appreciated and appropriated.

Conclusion

There is not one passage in the entire Bible which directly or indirectly teaches Calvinism’s doctrine of Irresistible Grace. In fact, it contradicts God’s word. Calvinism would make God a “respecter of persons.” But, the Bible says He is not! It is God’s will for all men to be saved; therefore, salvation is conditioned only on man’s will. God is always willing for all men to be saved. Calvinism is false doctrine. Let us follow the truth in God’s word and reject the false doctrine of Calvinism!

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A Book of Errors Revised

(Marriage, Divorce)

By Hugo McCord
January 2000

My long time friend, John Edwards, in whose home in St. Louis I have been a guest, has a sympathetic heart toward people with marriage problems. But it is sinful to allow a sympathetic heart to alter Jesus' teaching, which he has done in his book An In Depth Study Of Marriage And Divorce. He sent me a copy, and I wrote to him to reconsider and to return to "the old paths" where he formerly walked.

Instead, in a second edition he has only revised the wording of his errors, saying that his book is intended to help those … involved in divorce to realize that God still loves them, and they do not need to live lonely, guilt-ridden lives (p. 13).

It is true that God still loves them, and will forever, but "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). It is also true that fornicators and adulterers do not need to "live lonely, guilt-ridden lives," for "the Son of man has come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). When in penitence they hate adultery and turn from it, they will be perfectly forgiven (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) and will "rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4).

Everyone can go to heaven if he wants to do so, but Jesus said that some would have to "make themselves eunuchs" (Matt. 19:12). Apparently Jesus and John Edwards differ about that matter, for in a lengthy book of 203 pages John not once cited what Jesus said about eunuchs.

On page 15 John makes an admirable statement: "We need to search God's word for His answers." But immediately John turns, away from His answers to an emotional appeal to the readers' heart to make them sympathize with the much married

who have two or more sets of children, and wants the readers to despise any preacher who would refuse to baptize them. John the immerser refused to baptize those who did not quit their sinning (Matt. 3:8), but John Edwards will baptize those married and divorced for any reason. He makes preachers who respect Jesus' words about marriage and divorce worse than murderers, saying they are sending souls to hell!" He quotes a preacher as saying a woman who had had three husbands as having too many "to even think of going to heaven." The preacher was wrong. Any one can go to heaven who wants to do so, as I have already proved. I am sorry that John leaves the impression that the woman at Jacob's well who had had five husbands was on the way to heaven.

John calls undoing "past marital mistakes" an "Evil Tree, whose fruit is corrupt." But if, according to Jesus, a marital mistake causes one to "commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9), yes, to be living in adultery (Col. 3:5-7), what will make the tree and its fruit good? Paul tells how adulterers and homosexuals at Corinth made the tree and its fruit good: they "were washed were sanctified … were justified" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Though God allowed David to keep Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:27), and though God tolerated (cf. Acts 17:30) divorce for any cause and remarriage in the Old Testament (Deut. 24:1-4), and though he tolerated polygamy (2 Sam. 5:13; 1 Kings 11:3) in the Old Testament, that Old Testament has now been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Then, the one of whom God said, "Hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5), made it clear that he repudiated polygamy (Matt. 19:4-5) and divorce (except for fornication) and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). What he said was directed to non-disciples (Matt. 19:3), but his disciples understood his "whosoever" as including everybody, and they were shocked, thinking that if marriage and divorce have such a rule, "it is not expedient to marry" (Matt. 19:10). John would have said that the number of times one divorces and remarries does not matter (on p. 16 he cites an example of a woman who had six husbands).

However, Jesus thought that even one divorce and remarriage makes a difference, and that under some circumstances one must refrain from marriage, or quit a legal marriage, and make himself a eunuch by will power (Matt. 19:12).

On p. 18 John writes that the Bible says nothing about "adulterous marriages" or "living in adultery," but Matthew 19:9 is still in the Bible, saying that a certain divorcee on remarrying commits adultery, and Colossians 3:5-7 is still in the Bible, saying that some Colossians had formerly lived in adultery (cf. also Rom. 6:2; Eph. 2:3; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:2 on living in adultery).

On p. 18 John writes that "adultery in the gospel passages" is not "the physical sex act in marriage," but only "a violation of a covenant" (p. 50, and often). However, a covenant is broken in the first part of Matthew 19:9, "whosoever shall put away his wife." At the divorce he has broken his vow and his covenant, but according to Jesus (not John Edwards) he has not yet committed adultery, and does not until he remarries. Adultery in Jesus' eyes is not covenant breaking but is something that occurs after marriage.

On p. 21 John begins a discussion of Greek words, which is an admission that he needs something besides English translations to find his manufactured meaning of adultery. If we need to know Greek to understand marriage, billions of people are helpless.

In chapter 6 (p. 49-57) John, after citing figurative (Jer. 3:6-10) and mental adultery (Matt. 5:27-28), calls attention to the passive voice of moicheuthenai in Matthew 5:31-32. It is true the wife now discarded has not committed adultery, but in Jesus' eyes she has been "adulterated." The husband's breaking his covenant with her, Jesus does not call adultery, but the husband has used her sexually and abandoned her, leaving her "adulterated."

On p. 51 it is strange that John holds that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is in the passive voice, for the verse would say, “Whosover divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, is adulterized.” Also he asserts that the same word in Mark 10:11 is in the passive voice, which would make the verse read, “Whosover divorces his wife and marries another is adulterized against her.” Those senseless renditions do not appear if one says that moichatai is in the middle voice, calling for an active meaning, “he commits adultery,” and “he commits adultery against her.” The parallel in Luke 16:18 uses the active voice, moicheuei, “he commits adultery.” If one wants the whole truth, and is not simply trying to prove what he believes, he will by all means check the parallel readings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is a way, by looking to ambiguous Greek grammar, and by checking only Matthew and Mark, to assert Matthew and Mark meant for moichatai to be taken as passive (though the resultant English translation is senseless) but the Greek grammar is not ambiguous in the word Luke wrote, moicheuei, and even John would say it could not be passive.

Further, to say that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is point action (do you know of a commentator who says so?) would make adultery two legal steps (divorce and remarriage), and would declare that sex acts with the new spouse are not adultery. It is strange that Jesus used a word that commonly refers to a violation of the marriage bed and makes it refer only to two legal ceremonies. If the disciples listening to Jesus had understood that adultery is legal ceremonies, would they have said, “It is not expedient to marry”? According to John, it would be expedient to marry, with no risks involved: marriage would be easy to get into and out of. Some have seen a difficulty in giving moichatai a linear or durative meaning, because the physical act in adultery is not continuous. However, the present tense in Greek not only can refer to point action (punctiliar) as in Matthew 13:14; 27:38, and to linear action (durative) as in Matthew 25:8; John 5:7, but

also to iterative action (repetitive) as in Matthew 9:11, 14; 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:31. Obviously if one is living in adultery the word iterative or repetitive is the correct description.

In John's search to find some proof of his thesis that adultery is covenant breaking, not sexual activity, he refers to Luke 16:18, "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery." However, if only the divorcing and remarrying ceremonies are the adultery, then if an innocent spouse divorces a spouse for fornication and remarries, that innocent person has committed adultery, for he or she has gone through the legal ceremonies that constitute adultery.

On p. 67f John quotes Greek scholars as saying that sometimes the present tense is point or punctiliar action, but it is noticeable that he quotes no Greek scholar who says that such is true of moichatai and moicheuei in Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18. Incidentally, John uses denominational terminology in saying that "Church of Christ teachers and leaders" take his position. One whom he quotes, Raymond Kelcy, says, "There's not a great deal to be had on the tense of that verb, Matthew 19:9," but John bases his whole thesis on the possibility that that verb might be punctiliar. Further, surprisingly, John quotes Kelcy, "A person who enters an illegal marriage, an unscriptural marriage, does continue to commit adultery," but according to John only the divorcing and remarrying constitute adultery, and that no one ever continues to commit adultery after marriage. Kelcy and John do not agree.

John quotes Carroll Osburn, but Osburn fails to say that Matthew 19:9 must be considered as punctiliar, yet John's thesis depends wholly on what Osburn does not say. Osburn holds that Matthew 19:9 is a "gnomic present," in which Osburn says "continuity may or may not be involved." A "gnomic present," according to Ernest De Witt Burton, Moods And Tenses, p. 8, expresses "customary actions and general

truths.” So, Matthew 19:9 expresses the customary action and general truth that a remarrying divorcee (except for fornication) commits adultery. Osburn fails to help John.

John also quotes from Jack McKinney, and got some help, for McKinney said that Matthew 19:9 expresses “point action” (p. 70). However, McKinney contradicted himself, for he also said (as had Osburn) that Matthew 19:9 is a “gnomic present.” He cannot be right both ways. If Matthew 19:9 speaks of “point action” it does not use the “gnomic present.” McKinney also misused the word aoristic, apparently thinking it means point action. But the word aorist says that an act is unspecified as to the kind of action (whether punctiliar, repetitive, or durative). A gnomic present can be aoristic (no specification of the kind of action), but it cannot be punctiliar.

John pleads his case that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar, for he says that “the best Greek scholars” are with him, but none that he quoted says that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar. Then John (p. 73) quotes a Greek grammar that “simultaneous action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the present,” but in the case of Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18 the action of the main verb is not ordinary: the action of the main verb is not simultaneous with the divorcing and the remarrying, for those actions are only legal ceremonies, and no lexicon or dictionary defines adultery as a legal ceremony. Adultery, a violation of the marriage bed, is not committed by divorcing and remarrying, but later. To interpret the gospel verses as point action is to eliminate adultery, for it is not committed in two legal ceremonies.

How refreshing in John’s book to come to chapter nine, “Homosexual Marriages” (p. 75-79). He is clear how sinful they are. But he is inconsistent. Homosexuals and lesbian marriage partners can appeal to John in exactly the same way he pleads with his readers to approve those divorced and remarried unscripturally. I can hear homosexuals and lesbians turning John’s words against himself: “Are we condemning people whom

God wants to forgive? … let love and compassion rule over legalistic rules and judgments". (p. 18). They would say the same thing that John says, "Far worse than taking someone's life is sending their souls to hell! Christians, are you prepared to answer for the fruits of your teaching (against homosexuality) that drives people to hell?" (p. 16-17).

John is certain (p. 83) that God wants monogamy, and that Jesus pointed back to monogamy, but John on the mission field today would not teach polygamists to go back to monogamy.

John (p. 89) asks does divorce break the marriage? Legally of course it does, but it does not nullify the vow one made at his marriage to his spouse "until death doth us part." John's words on p. 93 have relevance here: "Our oral words mean just as much to God as our written documents." Jesus, not John, taught that a divorced person is not as free as a single person, for if a divorced (not for fornication) person marries, he commits fornication. Single people and divorced people are equal legally, but not in Jesus' eyes. John and Jesus disagree.

John (p. 95) says that "God recognizes the marriage dissolved when the spouse deserts the marriage," but Paul did not say that. In Paul's inspired words a deserted spouse does not any longer have a sexual obligation (a voluntary bondage, cf. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, 15) to the former mate, but to interpret a deserted spouse (no fornication involved) as free to marry again is to contradict the Lord Jesus. Jesus did not give two reasons for divorce and remarriage, namely, fornication and/or desertion. Paul gave a release from marital obligation but he did not give a remarrying privilege.

It is refreshing to come to John's chapter fifteen, as he exposes the sins of pornography. But in the rest of his book (p. 123-203) he is even more determined to prove a non-dictionary, arbitrary, self-made meaning of adultery, a meaning that will give comfort and peace to people that Jesus

said are living in adultery. I would not want to be in John's shoes in the Day of Judgment. To destroy a weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is no light matter (1 Cor. 8:11). The first part of Romans 16:18 is not true of John and Olan Hicks, but the second part is true: "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent."

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The Influences of Sin

CLAUDE B. HOLCOMB
March 10, 1970

Since we are living in a time when the reality of sin is being denied, it might be well for Christians to give more thought to its impact on past generations, and be reminded that the prevailing attitude toward sin today is the result of the influences of sin itself. Total disregard for God's revelation to man has led many to say that nothing is wrong except as a person's own thinking makes it wrong. They tell us there Is no such thing as absolute truth, and no definite standard of morals. The idea Is that every man is his own god, and what is right or wrong is determined in his own mind. This is anarchy in Its boldest posture.

Peter was constrained to write "to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." Since sin is so subtle Christians should ever be reminded of its deceitfulness. We need to contemplate the lessons of the past lest we let them slip away from us. The impact of sin in man's history is seen in the Bible accounts of Adam's posterity, and "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written

for our admonition.”

Cain called God’s way in question, and his presumption led him finally to murder his brother. As the sons and daughters of Adam multiplied on earth, man became so engrossed In the re-enactment of Eden’s tragedy that “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” Repentance on the part of God doesn’t mean that there was any vacillation or variation in his nature. It is merely an expression of pain felt in the great heart of the Creator because of the sin of his creature, and emphasizes the infinite love that God has for man. But justice must be upheld, so man paid the penalty for his perversity, and was destroyed from the earth, excepting the small remnant of Noah’s family. God’s wrath revealed in the flood was legal wrath rather than emotional. Had it been emotional, it would have been executed without mercy, and that would have been the end of human history. God’s mercy is demonstrated in the fact that he gave the antediluvians ample opportunity to escape the consequences of their sin through the preaching of Noah, but they would not repent.

The preservation of the race after the flood was made possible through the small remnant of righteous souls found in Noah’s family. But the posterity of Noah was also subject to sin, and in his sons are found again the human proclivities to doubt and question the ways of the Lord. Ham, not completely purged from the vices of the old world, forgets the honor due to a father, and in sinning against his father he sins against God and brings a curse upon himself. He was the progenitor of those who later became the adversaries of God’s people, and the sinful influences of Ham are seen in the deeds of his posterity.

It was the influence of sin that led those men to undertake the building of a tower whose top would reach unto heaven. The real motive behind this act was a desire for renown – the

pride of life. Their object was to stay together, and thus they would fail to carry out God's purpose to replenish the earth according to his commandment to "bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply therein" (Gen. 9:7). Their fear of dispersion could well have been that the in ward bond of unity and fellowship had already been broken by sin, and they were thus seeking to maintain a false sort of unity by this outward means. How presumptuous they were! God sent a confusion of tongues and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth.

As men are multiplied, sin abounds. The great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became so violently wicked that the Lord could no longer bear with them, and because not ten righteous souls could be found In Sodom they were destroyed. This does not mean ten souls who were sinlessly perfect, but ten who through fear of God kept themselves from the prevailing wickedness of the city. So God rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven, executing his legal wrath against transgression of his law. This catastrophe is a permanent memorial of the punitive righteousness of God, and serves lo keep the fate of the ungodly before the minds of all subsequent gene rations.

The fate of Lot's wife also becomes a warning to all ages against the evil of disobeying God, and the danger of "looking back" after having charted a course that leads away from death and destruction. Jesus exhorted the people of his day to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). Peter makes reference to Sodom and Gomorrah and says that God "made them an example unto those that should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6).

Time would fail to tell or the multitude or individuals whose sins are recorded in divine history, and of the tremendous effects their conduct had on the lives and destinies of men. We could speak of Esau, who despised his birthright and sold it for a morsel of food; of Nadab and Abihu, who presumptuously offered strange fire in the place of that commanded; of the son of Shelomith who blasphemed the God of

heaven; of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who rebelled against the authority God had vested in Moses and Aaron; and of all the cases in subsequent History which so graphically inscribe upon our minds the stupendous impact of sin upon the human family.

The whole story of sin may be summed up in the failure of man to get rid of the lusts within himself. We cannot quite get away from selfishness. To gratify selfish desires we yield to covetousness and sacrifice our souls upon idol altars! Idolatry in our day consists largely in the form of worshipping self. We need to learn the lessons that all these examples in Israel's history teach us. We need to learn that sin on our part begins with the lusts in our own hearts. It is true that the devil is the originator of sin, and ushered sin into the world through the first couple on earth, but we are not compelled to serve Satan, and we do so only because we are drawn away by our "own lusts, and enticed" (James 1:14). That is why Peter said, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). That is why God gave us all these examples to warn us against the subtlety of sin.

No intelligent person can contemplate the influences of sin upon the human race from the beginning until now, and then with any degree or honesty deny the reality of sin. The idea that sin is only the figment of an imaginative mind, or that any impurity can be washed clean by one's own thinking, is just another one of the crafty contrivances of Satan to lead souls captive.

Let us therefore exhort one another daily, "lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3 :13).

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Showing Respect for the Truth

JOHNNY RAMSEY
February 3, 1970

Every faithful child of God knows of the all-sufficiency and power of the Holy Scriptures. We would, without reservation, admit that only the Truth of the Word can make us free (John 8:32; 17:17). Christians often pray that the gospel truth will cover the world as the waters cover the sea. Devotees of the Master are deeply concerned with "a lost and dying world" that is decadent because of running roughshod over "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Disdain fills our hearts when error seems to be winning in the battle for men's souls or when Satan gains the slightest advantage over us or anyone we strive to lead "out of darkness and into light" (Acts 26:18). There are various ways that men can show respect for the Bible or disrespect. Sometimes we may be guilty of veiling the will of Heaven through faulty concepts or poor attitudes. Since no one really desires to aid and thus encourage the Devil in his fiendish work we need to take careful inventory lest we be in that sad number that hinders the work of the Lord.

One glaring way that many show disrespect for the Bible's message is the apparent desire to spare their relatives and friends from plain gospel teachings. Some folk shop around for a soft preacher like they look for bargains at the Supermarket! If only the Truth can free men's imprisoned souls then the sooner my loved ones hear it the better. Rather than apologize for straight teaching we ought to earnestly thank God for those few preachers still willing to uncompromisingly proclaim it. When we start looking for an Evangelist with a dull point on the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) we have forgotten the value of soul-stirring rebuke of sin. We need more men to stand in the middle of the battle with swords unshackled and spirits undaunted and determination on fire for the lost souls of humanity. We do not need watered-down

pronouncements but fired-up proclaimers! And, yes, we also need honest souls to receive the message and fearless brethren who shout “AMEN!”

We also greatly hinder Truth when we want “our pet sins” or weaknesses tip-toed around or soft-pedaled. One lady, who is supposed to be a Christian, actually stated: “We are all allowed to have one or two weaknesses.” That language of Ashdod is a perfect reflection of catering to our shortcomings instead of correcting them. In every congregation, of any size, one can find members who had rather the preacher “hush up” on social drinking, dancing, immodesty , attendance, denominationalism and perhaps even baptism (lest a neighbor get offended). Oh yes, I forgot to mention giving and spreading the gospel. Just any subject is taboo when we are unwilling to let the Lord have “full speed ahead” in our lives.

We manifest a very poor altitude toward Truth when we allow our sympathy for those in error to overwhelm our love for the exclusiveness of Christ’s church. All of us desire that all men everywhere be saved. But we cannot extend the borders of God’s kingdom to include accountable beings who refuse to be born again (John 3:5; Acts 8:12). God keeps the roll book; the Lord adds men to the church. We dare not even try to exercise the prerogatives that belong to Heaven alone. If we sincerely love the truth we will get busy and teach it plainly to our loved ones. That is far more practical than trying to have them saved while they are still lost. It is also more honest than blaming a preacher for “running people away” when he is only proclaiming the GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

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Questions & Bible Answers — Drinking of Intoxicants

By Roy Deaver

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QUESTION

"Our preacher mentioned recently that with regard to the drinking of intoxicants the Bible does not demand total abstinence. In an effort to prove this position he cited Ephesians 5:18, and stressed the word 'excess.' Does Ephesians 5:18 teach that it is all right for one to drink intoxicants, so long as he does not do so to 'excess'?"

ANSWER

1. As is recorded in Ephesians 5:18, in the *King James* reading, Paul says: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;…"

It is alarming, frustrating, disappointing, and disgusting that some people who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ persist in efforts to try to justify the drinking of intoxicants. These often stress the words "moderation" and "temperance," and we hasten to emphasize that such usage of these words is a MISUSE of these words. "Moderation" and "temperance" apply to that which is right within itself—not to that which is by its very nature sinful. Does anyone really believe that it is all right to practice sin in moderation? Suppose the thief should say to himself: "I would like to steal three automobiles tonight. But, I believe in temperance and moderation, and so—I will just steal one." One can be

“temperate” and “moderate” in eating, because eating is right. One can be “temperate” and “moderate” in sleeping, because sleeping is right.

2. Another word often misused in this connection is the word “social.” Reference is often made to “social” drinking. If the word “social” is intended to indicate a proper concern for society, then I can think of no words more paradoxical than the words “social drinking.” This is similar to talking about a “civil” war, or an “honest” thief, or a “white” blackbird, or a “sincere” hypocrite.

Further, what about the word “disease”? It is commonly claimed that alcoholism is a “disease.” As Peter L. Reamm recently pointed out: “If so, it is the only disease that is contracted by an act of the will. It is the only disease that requires a license to propagate it. It is the only disease that is bottled and sold. It is the only disease that promotes crime. It is the only disease that is habit-forming. It is the only disease that is spread by advertising. It is the only disease that is given for a Christmas present.”

3. In *The Spiritual Sword* of July, 1971, page 22, brother Guy N. Woods writes as follows: “In the light of these facts, it is indeed remarkable that there are those who attempt to justify ‘moderate drinking,’ and excuse ‘social’ drinkers. Anything which corrupts that which it touches must be, and is, always wrong; and Christians ought to avoid all participation therein. Actually, it is through so-called moderate drinking that most people become alcoholics.” Brother Woods also stresses that “Moreover, indulgence to any extent is wrong because drunkenness is a matter of degree, and begins with the first drop of the fiery liquid.” He quotes Dr. Ralph Overman as correctly emphasizing: “When you have drunk one drink, you are one drink drunk!” Brother Woods says: “It follows—therefore— as a simple matter of common sense that one should never, under any circumstances, and for any reason, swallow one drop of alcohol for beverage purposes.”

4. The problem now under consideration arises at least in part from a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:18, and—behind this misunderstanding—lies a translation problem. Many words in our King James Versions do not mean in 1986 exactly what they meant in 1611. Please note that this statement is not a criticism of the King James Version, but is simply a statement of fact, and which points up the constant need for careful study. The English word "excess" as used in 1611 was an accurate rendering of the original. But, as the word "excess" is used in our day, its use in Ephesians 5:18 contributes to a misunderstanding of what Paul actually said.

According to the King James reading, Paul says: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." The American Standard Version has: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the spirit." Paul, in this statement, is not discussing what drunkenness LEADS TO, but, rather, what is already, inherently, IN IT! And, what is inherently IN IT is given us in the word "excess" in the King James reading and in the word "riot" in the American Standard reading. But, the English word "excess" in 1611, following its Latin derivation, meant "loss of self-possession." In drunkenness (and in drinking) there is loss of self-possession. So, the Record says: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is loss of self-possession."

5. Upon this background, we turn now to look at the lexicons, translations, and other passages. The key word, so far as concerns the present study, is the Greek word *asotia.*

According to the lexicons, *asotia* means: (1) reckless debauchery (Green), (2) profligacy, incorrigibility (Arndt-Gingrich), (3) riotous living (Thayer), (4) an abandoned course (Berry). Barns refers to "that which is abandoned to sensuality and lust."

What about the translations? (1) We have referred to the King James reading and to the American Standard reading. (2) *The*

Living Bible Oracles has "And be not drunk with wine, by which comes dissoluteness " (3) The *Revised Standard Version* has: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery…." (4) *The New English Version* has: "Do not give way to drunkenness and the dissipation which goes with *it."(5) Montgomery* has: "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is riotous living…." (6) *Williams* has: "Stop getting drunk on wine, for that means profligacy." (7) *The Pulpit Commentary* says: "And be not intoxicated with wine, wherein is dissoluteness." We keep in mind that Paul is not talking about what drunkenness leads to (though that is certainly involved). He is talking about what is IN it. And, what is IN it is identified and described by the Greek word *asotia.* About this word, Lenski says: "It describes the condition when the mind and body are dragged down so as to be incapable of spiritual functions."

How could anybody be in the condition (to any extent or to any degree) described by the Greek word *asotia,* and claim (with any degree of justification) to be pleasing to God? The etymological significance of this word, is—in fact—"without salvation."

As indicated earlier, we want to look at this word as it occurs in other passages. (1) We look at Titus 1:6. About an elder, Paul says: "…having children that believe, who are not accused of RIOT or unruly." (2) It is used in 1 Peter 4:4. Peter says: "…wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess (flood) of RIOT, speaking evil of you:…" (3) Then, in Luke 15:13, *asotia* is used in adverbial form. The prodigal son "…took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living" (literally, living riotously).

6. The notion that Ephesians 5:18 teaches that it is all right in the sight of God for one to drink intoxicants so long as he or she does not do so to an "excess" is unscriptural, antiscriptural, ridiculous, preposterous, and absurd!

We close this document with the following argument:

MAJOR PREMISE: All things which war against the soul are things from which men are commanded to abstain. Proof, 1 Peter 2:11.

MINOR PREMISE: The drinking of intoxicants is a thing which wars against the soul. Proof, consider Hosea 4:11; Proverbs 20:1.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, the drinking of intoxicants is a thing from which men are commanded to abstain.

And, we note, that "abstain" does not mean to practice it in moderation. All persons are commanded to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29; 1 Thess. 4:3), and this does not mean to practice it in moderation or with temperance!

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Original Sin

By T. Pierce Brown
Vol. 109, No. 07

The dictionary defines *original sin* as "the sin by which the human race, rebellious against God because of Adam's disobedience, was deprived of grace, and made subject to ignorance, evil, death, and all other miseries." The doctrine of "original sin" has probably given rise to more additional false doctrines than any other single teaching. In its simplest terms it means that as a result of the fall of Adam every person is born depraved, and this perverted state is the cause of all his evil acts.

Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397) taught that through the sin of Adam all men come into the world tainted by sin. When he baptized Augustine in 385, it was easy for Augustine to use that doctrine to excuse his life of debauchery. Although Augustine gave the framework of the doctrine, which Roman Catholics came to accept, Calvin made it more popular and acceptable to Protestants in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion.*

The "tulip theory" is a summary of Calvin's theology. The *T* stands for *total hereditary depravity.* The *U* is for *universal condemnation.* Since some will be saved, Calvin followed Augustine's assumption that God elected all men and angels to salvation or condemnation and the number is so certain that it can neither be increased nor diminished. The *L* is for *limited salvation.* The natural consequence is that of *irresistible grace,* which takes care of the *I.* if a sovereign God saved a depraved person, he would not be able to resist God's gracious effort to save him. God then makes it impossible for that person to be lost, so the *P* is for the *perseverance of the saints*.

The teaching is false at every point. In *The Banner Of Truth,* June 1993, Fred Blakely said:

> *Man was not merely damaged by the fall of Eden; he was completely ruined. Adam's nature was defiled, and so separated from God – made spiritually dead – and this state has been transmitted by the natural birth to all his posterity.*

My questions to Blakely are: If a person is born completely ruined and spiritually dead, does God need to operate on him in a special way to get him into a position where he will receive the gospel? What causes a child to sin that is any different from that which caused Adam to sin?

Every false doctrine has enough truth about it to make it

appealing but usually leads to many other doctrinal errors. For example, it is true that man has no power to move himself from a sinful state to a saved state by his own power. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). Consequently, salvation is by grace.

Calvinistic theologians pervert those truths and assume that since “no man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him,” the Father must draw by “irresistible grace” because man is by nature incapable of coming to God, which makes God the sole actor in the salvation process.

Jesus said, “Every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me” (John 6:45). It is true that man has no power to save himself, but since “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), Peter could properly say, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40). They had power to accept or reject God’s offer of mercy and salvation.

The theory of inborn depravity is false from start to finish. It is assumed that Adam’s sin so corrupted his nature he could not choose to do right. Then it is assumed that the nature of his corrupted spirit was transmitted to his descendants. The Bible does not teach either of these views.

Adam had the same freedom of choice after his sin to obey or disobey that he did before. God made him with the ability to obey or disobey. He decided to disobey. If one takes the position that a person who sins today does so because of his “fallen nature,” he should be able to answer the question: If my fallen nature causes me to sin, what caused Adam to sin?

The Bible presents humans as having freedom to choose, and being blessed or cursed as a result of those decisions.

It is speculated that since man was made in the image of God, when he sinned, he broke that image. All his descendants are born after the image of an earthly father, who is totally

depraved. It is assumed that when Genesis 5:3 says that Adam became the father of a son "in his own likeness, and after his image," it means that Seth and all his descendants were no longer in the image of God.

Contrary to that, 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, "For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God." James 3:9 expresses the same idea when it says, "Men … are made after the similarity of God." There is not one verse in the Bible that teaches that mankind ceased to be born in God's image because Adam sinned. God is "the Father of our spirits" (Heb. 12:9). Man does not inherit his spiritual qualities from his physical father.

No one, from Augustine down, can answer these simple questions:

- If it is possible for a sinful person to transmit a depraved nature to his offspring, why is it not possible for a redeemed and pure person to transmit his holy nature to his offspring?
- We may become "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Why is that not transmitted?
- What is there in man's present nature that causes him to sin that was not in Adam's nature that caused him to sin?

Some answer, "We have a greater tendency to sin than Adam did." We then ask, "Where do you get that information?" Apparently the first time they were tempted, Eve and Adam succumbed. Whatever tendency they had, it was before the fall. Adam's tendency before the fall appears to be as great as ours after the fall.

Here are some Bible truths showing the falsity of the doctrine of original sin: Ezekiel 18:20 says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the

son.” Children are not born hereditarily, totally depraved.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, “Except ye become converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Can any sensible person imagine him saying, “Except ye become converted and become unable to do a good thing or think a good thought (totally depraved), you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven?”

In Mark 10:14 he says, “Of such are the kingdom of heaven.” Does the kingdom of heaven consist of corrupt and totally depraved sinners?

Genesis 3:5-7 says:

> *God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*

Instead of their sin causing moral blindness which was transmitted to their children, as all who theorize about their “fallen nature” teach, they now could recognize good and evil.

Adam and Eve, before the fall, knew what was good and evil. They had intellectual awareness that it is right to obey God and wrong to disobey him. If they had not known it was wrong, they would not have been condemned for eating forbidden fruit. Then when they sinned, they knew by experience.

It is impossible for us to live without sin. Paul says, “All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). And 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

If we rephrase the question, we can better understand the answer. “Is my nature such that I have to sin all the time?” The simple answer is that the statements of Paul and John, indicating the universality of sin, are general truths that do not apply to specific situations. Suppose you were standing by Paul after he was told, “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins,” and you asked Paul as he arose from the water, “Do you now say you have no sin?” Paul’s answer, “My sins are washed away and I have no sin.” If a person can live without sin for one minute, then he does not have a sinful nature that makes him sin all the time. That does not deny the general truth that all have sinned.

The idea that a person is created so that he has to sin, and then God condemns him for doing it, places God in a bad light. It makes God a respecter of persons. What sort of God would it be who would say, “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden” (Matt. 11:28), and make man where he could not do it, nor even want to do it?

No wonder those who concocted that idea had to come up with another false doctrine like “irresistible grace” to help solve the problem! The other false doctrine only made the problem worse, for then God would have to arbitrarily elect some to salvation and others to damnation by sovereign grace. You would have no right to question him!

No civilized society could function properly founded on the premise that man is born naturally evil and unable to make any moral choices. We admit that a pregnant mother who is a drug addict may pass on to her child a physical body that craves dope. But to pass on a physical characteristic is far removed from having an evil spirit.

The easiest and proper way out of all those problems is to recognize the Bible answer: All men are born with the same nature Adam had when he was created – with the ability to choose right or wrong. When man chooses wrong, he sins, but

does not transmit that nature to his children any more than Adam did. Even though every mature person sins, it does not follow that he is required to do so by divine decree. It is true that “there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:11-12). Still, this is the choice of the created and not the ruling of the Creator.

Judging

By Darrell Conley
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There is one passage of scripture that is known by every reprobate and enemy of Christianity. They may know nothing else of the Bible, but be assured they know this one: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). It is used as a weapon by the worldly, the lukewarm, trouble-makers, unbelievers, and false teachers in an attempt to disarm faithful children of God. We are told that condemning sin is judging. Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is judging. Preaching and practicing the Bible doctrine of separation from the world is judging. Refusal to bid God- speed to false teachers is judging. Attempts to obey Bible teaching on church discipline is branded as the most shameful judgment of all. What does the Bible teach about judging?

The primary meanings of the words commonly translated judge, *krino, anakrino,* and *diakrino* are respectively “separate, select, choose; examine, investigate, question; separate throughout, discriminate, discern.” Sometimes *judge* denotes

“sinful action,” but sometimes it means “permitted or even required action.” As always, the context will enable us to determine how the word is being used.

In the first few verses of Matthew 7, it is clear that the Lord is not condemning all judging, rather a particular kind of judging. Verses 3-5 show the Lord is condemning hypocritical or self-righteous judging.

> *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye (Matt. 7:3-5).*

What right do we have to condemn another when we are guilty of the same sin, perhaps to a greater degree? Paul makes it clear what our attitude should be in attempting to restore another: “Brethten, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Self-righteous and hypocritical judging is also condemned in Romans 2:1-3, 17-23.

The context of Matthew 7:1-5 proves that coming to a negative conclusion about someone is not necessarily unrighteous judging. In verse six Jesus warns against casting pearls before swine and giving that which is holy to the dogs. Since it is obvious he is talking about two-legged swine and dogs, it is necessary for us to come to a conclusion about who are swinish and who are doggish. This constitutes a necessary and righteous judgment. We are also forbidden to judge things we cannot know such as the motives and secret thoughts of others. “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall

each man have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). No one has the right to draw conclusions without sufficient evidence. To do so is to violate what Paul commanded. But he did not forbid all manner of judging. In the next chapter Paul says that he had judged the fornicator in the church at Corinth and commanded the Corinthians to do the same. Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians what Christ said in John 7:24: "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

The Bible also forbids judging a man a lawbreaker when there is no law to be broken. When we make laws where God made none, we are guilty of sinful judging. This is the kind of judging Paul condemned in Romans 14:3 ASV: "Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." The same kind of judging is mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day; which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body *is* Christ."

The word *judge* is sometimes used to mean "to pronounce and execute sentence; to condemn." It is used in this sense in John 12:47: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." We as Christians certainly have no right to pronounce eternal judgment on anyone. We do have the right and the obligation to withdraw our fellowship from ungodly church members. Such is called "delivering them to Satan" (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 9-13).

These, then, are the kinds of judging that are condemned in the Bible:

1. Hypocritical or self-righteous judging
2. Judging without sufficient evidence
3. Making a law where God made none
4. Pronouncing eternal condemnation on another

As was pointed out above, some of the meanings of the words

translated *judge* are "select, choose, examine, and discern." Judging is examining evidence and drawing conclusions or making choices. It is possible to do this in unfair or ungodly ways. Such judging is wrong. However, certain kinds of judging are commanded. "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Since righteous judgment is judging according to reality, we have no right to prejudge, but we do have the right and obligation to draw conclusions about people or doctrine that are warranted by the evidence. If it is always wrong to draw conclusions about people, how could we obey the following commands?

> *Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine (Matt. 7:6).*
>
> *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).*

In the same context Christ said:

> *By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:20).*
>
> *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).*
>
> *Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear (1 Tim. 5:20).*
>
> *For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).*
>
> *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).*

We are commanded to preach the gospel, to contend for the faith, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort (Mark 16:15-16; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). To obey these commands in an uncompromising, but kind way is not to be guilty of unrighteous judging. To

teach truths from the Bible that imply that some will be lost is not ungodly judging. It is not sinful to arrive at conclusions based on what the Bible teaches and to hold fast to those conclusions. The Bible says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

We are commanded to judge those church members who are ungodly and will not repent. Such judging is not only not sin but is positively required of us. Paul said he had already judged the fornicator in the Corinthian church and urged the church at Corinth to do the same (1 Cor. 5:3-5). The word *judge* as used by Paul here means “not only to reach a conclusion, but to act upon that conclusion” by withdrawing from an ungodly brother. “For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked men from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

Let us be careful that we are not guilty of prejudging, self-righteous judging, or hypocritical judging, but do not let false teachers and ungodly brethren intimidate us from boldly preaching the gospel and steadfastly standing for the truth. Let us “judge righteous judgment.”

Measures of the Spirit John 3:34

By Frazier Conley
Vol. 115, No. 11

In biblical language, especially in the OT and in the Gospels

and Acts, often when the Spirit is said to come upon someone, the meaning is that the Spirit comes upon that one to bestow a gift of power. The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). This is typical phraseology in Holy Scripture (Num. 11:29; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6; 15:14; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; 1 Chron. 12:18, etc.). It is hardly correct to say that the Spirit himself is not present when he comes to bestow a measure of power. It is more accurate to seek to determine what role or office the Spirit chooses to take when he comes upon someone.

Further, it is entirely correct to speak of “measures” of the Spirit.

In Numbers 11 the text tells how God took “some of the Spirit” which he had given to Moses and put it on the seventy elders. Since the text (Num. 11:17, 25) speaks of taking “some of” the Spirit it is implied that they received a lesser measure of the Spirit than that possessed by Moses. The text says, “And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more” (Num. 11:25). Again it seems to be indicating that their gift of the Spirit was limited when compared to that of Moses.

It is related in Numbers 27:18ff that Joshua became vested with “some” of the authority of Moses, a measure of it. In the same way that Joshua was vested with some of his authority (Num. 27:18-20), so he was possessed of a measure of the Spirit: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him [presumably in the events of Num. 11]; so the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Deut. 34:9). The text is careful to say however that though Israel followed the Spirit-endowed Joshua, yet there had not at any time, “arisen a prophet … in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and

to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel" (Deut. 34:10-12). Certainly it is implied that Moses had a greater measure of the Spirit than Joshua or any other prophet of the Old Testament.

In 2 Kings 2:9-15, the text gives an account of the passing from Elijah to Elisha of a double portion of his spirit. Although the translators use a lower case "s" for spirit, there should be little doubt that the reference is to the prophetic Spirit of God as it, or he, resided in Elijah to empower prophetic gifts. Elisha received a "double portion," implying again that greater or lesser measures of the Spirit dwelt in the prophets of the Old Testament.

In 1 Samuel 10:6 a promise was given to Saul, "the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man." It would appear that in saying "mightily" the conception is that the Spirit sometimes came less, and sometimes more powerfully upon recipients. It might again be noted that the text does not say that Saul received the prophetic gift of the Spirit, but that he received the Spirit himself for the purpose of being endowed with the gift of prophecy.

For the preparation of the tabernacle, the Lord bestowed the Spirit upon certain ones. The Lord said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Un, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze" (Ex. 31:1-4). It should be noted that Bezalel did not receive the Spirit so that he might have unlimited powers. The gifts were limited and measured and specific.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon some to bestow

gifts for conducting war (Judges 3:10) and on some to bestow physical strength (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14).

The ancient Jewish rabbis also noted the existence of measures of the Spirit in the OT prophets. Rabbi Acha said, “The Holy Spirit, who rests on the prophets, rests [on them] only by weight … [by measure].”

The early Christians also were limited in the gifts of the Spirit, “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph. 4:7). As the context shows, the gifts were not all equal and certainly not without measure, but by measure. This merely confirms what is said of the gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 12:4ff. and Romans 12:3ff.

Again in Hebrews 2:4 the gospel affirms, “God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.” There is no indication here that the Spirit came on the early Christians in fullness of power, but that the role he played in them was limited and varied.

An interesting expression occurs in Acts 2:18. Peter quotes Joel 2, “On my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:18). When the text says “out of” it implies that the Spirit was not coming upon the recipients in its entirety, but in measure.

As Moses had laid his hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9; and presumably in this way he had also conferred a measure of the Spirit to the seventy elders) so at Samaria Peter and John bestow (with prayer as well as hands) the Spirit in a measure upon the Samaritan converts (Acts 8:14-17). Although Simon was also surely a recipient of the same Holy Spirit empowerment as the other Samaritan believers, he perceived that the apostles had a greater measure, the power to confer the Spirit, and he

coveted it, “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me also this power [taking *houtos* as emphatic], that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:18-19).

The Holy Spirit had also come upon Paul for this same office, and he too could confer the Holy Spirit so that early Christians could be empowered in a measure (Acts 19:1-7).

This brings us to the case of our Lord, Jesus. The author of Hebrews implies that while the Spirit-inspired prophets of the Old Testament did speak God’s Word in various ways, their gifts could not compare to the revelatory gifts of the Son of God (Heb. 1:1-3).

The famous prophecy of Christ in Isaiah 11:1-3 implies a great fullness of the Spirit, not a limited measure: “There shall come forth a shoot’ from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

In John 3:32-35, the text speaks of Jesus, “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (KJV). Or, as Goodspeed renders: “For he whom God has sent speak God’s words, for God gives him his Spirit without measure.”

It is true that a number of translators have taken a text and an interpretation which leaves ambiguous who gives the Spirit to whom, rendering the passage: “for he giveth not the Spirit by measure” (ASV, NKJV; NASB, NIV, RSV). Some will say that

the passage is affirming that Jesus (not God) gives the Spirit. And it is also affirmed that in any case the Spirit as a general rule is never given in a measure, that is, always in fullness to believers. But a number of translators remain in agreement with the KJV that it is grammatically sound to supply “to him” that is, to the Son, (see Goodspeed, the New Living Translation, Today’s English Version, Williams, Phillips, NIV, Beck, Moffatt, the Jerusalem Bible, the Jewish New Testament, Contemporary English Version, Amplified, and Barclay’s translation. Further many of the most erudite commentators on John also affirm this rendering: Bengel, Olshausen, Godet, Alford, McGarvey, Lipscomb, Barclay, Morris, Pack, Deissner in Kittel’s TDNT, iv, 634, etc. Of course, luminaries are also to be found taking the opposing view: Meyer; Westcott, Brown, etc.). No simplistic interpretation holds the day unquestioned.

At any rate, in the context of the passage, the argument is that Jesus is able to bear witness to God in truth. Jesus has seen and heard, having been with the Father (John 1:18). Further, he is able to speak the exact words of God because God gave the Spirit to him. John 1:32 says that John “saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him.” This was no temporary or limited office. Jesus possessed all the fullness, John 1:16, “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.” Verse 3:35 continues the thought, “the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.”

Who is it that is receiving from the Father? The Son (see also John 3:27). Whose words are being validated? Jesus’ words. From whence does Jesus get his words? From God through the Spirit.

Also it seems reasonable, given their proximity, to correlate the word give in verse 34 to the word give in verse 35. In both cases God is giving to the Son.

Therefore, regardless of the variant textual readings, and the ellipsis to be supplied ("to him," that is, to Jesus), the context indicates that the force of the passage is that God is giving the Spirit without measure to the Son.

As we saw above, all the rest of God's revelation indicates that in the Spirit's role in empowering those on earth, no one had the fullness of the Spirit in the limitless measure of our Lord. Believers then received from his bounty: "But each one of us has been given his gift, his due portion of Christ's bounty" (Eph. 4:7 NEB)

Limited Atonement?

By Dr. John Hobbs

The third cardinal doctrine in Calvinistic Theology is the doctrine of "Limited Atonement." It is the "L" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Most Calvinists prefer the term "Particular Atonement" or "Definite Atonement."

What Calvinists Believe About Limited Atonement

> *The Canons of Dort, article 8, states, 'It was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.'*
>
> *Henry Fish, a Baptist wrote in 1850, 'Did the atonement, in its saving design, embrace more then the elect? The elect only; for whatever he designed he will accomplish, and he*

saves only his people from their sins.'

David Steele and Curtis Thomas wrote, 'But He came into the world to represent and save only those given Him by the Father. Thus Christ's work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others.'

WJ. Seaton said, 'Christ died to save a particular number of sinners.'

Lorraine Boettner said, 'The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite … The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God's plan.'

Ralph Gore wrote, "Christ died for the elect. The extent of the atonement is identical with the intent of divine election."

Paul Enns wrote, 'If God is sovereign (Eph. 1:11) then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved then God's plan is frustrated.'

R. B. Kuiper said, 'God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, will be saved.'

The question may be put this way: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved? Calvinists would answer the latter group.

Wayne Grudem wrote: The term that is usually preferred is particular redemption, since this view holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph. 1:3-5) and had them individually

in mind in his atoning work.

The Foundational Basis for Limited Atonement

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is based on the concept of double jeopardy (trying a person twice for the same crime). The argument goes like this: If Jesus died for the sins of all men, then the sins of all men are paid for and one has already been judged for those sins. On the Day of Judgment, if God would bring a man into judgment and commit him to hell even though Jesus had already paid for his sins, God would be putting that person in double jeopardy. God would be unjust – something he is not (Deut. 32:4).

The argument is: Since we do not permit double jeopardy in our own legal system, surely we would not expect God to do something we would not do.

Calvinists argue therefore – Jesus actually died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, the saved.

However, just because there is an analogy from a human viewpoint, this does not prove that it coincides with the truth of God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." We are warned: "Lean not upon thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

We do not formulate doctrine by analogies or examples. They

may illustrate doctrine, but they do not prove doctrine. We must determine truth from the Word of God and not human reasoning. There are some great truths of scripture which are beyond our comprehension and we accept because the Bible teaches them (such as, the Trinity, God's love, nature of sin, and such like), and therefore are not proved by reason, but are known by revelation.

Scriptures Used by Calvinists to Support Limited Atonement

Matthew 1:21 states, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

Jesus "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Romans 4:25 reads, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses."

Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:10 reveals, "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."

Romans 8:32 declares, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

Acts 20:28 states, "To feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."

In John 10:15 Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be [a] sin [offering] on our behalf."

Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins."

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have our redemption through

his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Titus 2:14 states, "Who gave himself for us."

Calvinists use the above Scriptures as proof texts that Christ died "only" for the elect.

Christ died for his people. That is the main point of these verses! However the Bible does not teach Limited Atonement – that Christ died "only" for the elect, "only" for a limited class.

Calvinists "twist" and "pervert" other plain Scriptures that clearly teach that Christ died for all men. They do so unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). When we come to the Bible, we must take all of it to arrive at total-saving truth. Psalms 119:160 states, "The sum of all thy word is truth." Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It takes all of Scripture for the man of God to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Christ died for all men. Christians appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. The verses used by Calvinists emphasize that point. Unbelievers do not appreciate that fact and therefore do nothing about it.

A True Story Concerning Hebrews 2:9

In 1980, I took second year New Testament Greek through Wheaton College at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. My professor was Dr. John Werner, an outstanding world-recognized Greek scholar. But, he was a Calvinist through and through. One day we were reading the book of Hebrews in class. When it came my time to read, I was to translate Hebrews 2:9. I translated the verse, "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels,

even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death *only for the elect."*

My professor and the class laughed. After the laughter subsided, I added, "Excuse me – that should be – for *every* man."

Brethren, if the grammar makes sense, anything else is nonsense. To deny that Jesus tasted of death "for every man" is to deny the plain and clear teaching of Scripture! Dr. Werner agreed that the verse should be translated "for every man." But, he denied that is what it meant. He believed that it meant "every redeemed man" even though that is not what the text says!

We should not base biblical doctrine on "feeling" or "thinking." Biblical doctrine is based on God's Word!

If the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Christ died only for the elect, he could have easily done so. But, he did not do so. There is no "specific" passage in the entire Bible that teaches Limited Atonement.

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, says, "Hebrews 2:9 is best understood to refer to every one of Christ's people, every one who is redeemed."

Grudem is reading the Bible with his rose colored glasses on and sees what he wants to see instead of what is really there! The text does not say that Christ tasted of death for every "redeemed" man. Grudem is reading into the text something that is not there. This is something that God's Word explicitly forbids (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:15; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

The words *every man* in Hebrews 2:9 are translated from the Greek word *pantos* (in form it is a genitive masculine or neuter singular word from the adjective *pas, pasa, pan* meaning

“all” or “every”).

Bruce says:

> *So far as the form goes, pantos might be masculine (“everyone”) or neuter (“everything”); but since our author’s concern is with Christ’s work for humanity, and not with cosmic implications of His work, it is more probable to be taken as masculine.*

Alford says, “The singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ’s death to each individual man.” Jesus died for each individual person (which equals all mankind). The singular *pantos* emphasizes his care and love and concern for every human being!

This fact is a strong factor for each individual person to give his life back to him and live a holy God-fearing life (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This same Greek word, *pantos,* is found in Matthew 13:19 and is translated “when any one.” It is obvious in Matthew 13:19 that the Greek word refers only to lost human beings.

It is interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word *pantos* at least once specifically to refer “only” to condemned human beings. Calvinists say that the word *pantos* in Hebrews 2:9 refers “only” to saved “redeemed” people. If the word *pantos* in Matthew 13:19 refers only to lost people who will spend eternity in hell, does that mean that in Hebrews 2:9 that the same group is being considered? No!

Can the word *pantos* refer to all mankind including those who appreciate Christ’s death for them? Of course! Christ “tasted of death for every man.” It is important to understand that the meaning of *pantos* will have to be determined by the context. Therefore, we can conclude that in Hebrews 2:9, the Greek word *pantos* refers to all humans period – not just the

saved, not just God's special people. Jesus died for all humans – those who are lost and those who are going to heaven. Calvinists deny the plain teaching of God's Word and add to it when they say Jesus tasted of death for every "redeemed" man.

An Examination of God's Word and Limited Atonement

The Bible is very clear that Jesus died for the sins of "all men" and not just for "the elect."

Consider these passages as to who Jesus died for:

1. John 1:29: "the one that taketh away the sin of the world" – i.e. all mankind
2. John 3:16: "the world" – i.e. all mankind
3. John 4:42: "This is indeed the Saviour of the world" – i.e. all mankind
4. John 12:47: "I came … to save the world" – i.e. all mankind
5. Romans 5:6: "Christ died for the ungodly"
6. Romans 5:8: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "he died for all"
8. 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" – i.e. all mankind. Those who believe in Limited Atonement say this refers to "the world of the elect." Again, they are adding to the Word of God.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"
10. Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all"
11. 1 Timothy 4:10: "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe"
12. Titus 2:11: "bringing salvation to all men"
13. Hebrews 2:9: "He should taste of death for every man."

14. 2 Peter 2:1: “Denying the Master that bought them” – Christ provided redemption for the false prophets but they refused to accept it.
15. 1 John 2:2: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” – i.e. all mankind
16. 1 John 4:14 “The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” – i.e. all mankind

A Study of 1 John 2:2

One passage that must be the focus of our attention is 1 John 2:2. Here John wrote, “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

Vine defines “propitiation” as “a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.” The text is very clear that sin covering has been provided “for our sins” – that is, Christians’ and “for the whole world,” or all humanity. If there was ever a verse in the Bible that taught the possibility of unlimited salvation – this is it!

Brown says that the word “world” is the “sphere of human beings and of human experience.” The apostle John uses the word “world” several times to refer to all humanity (John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:46-47; 1 John 4:14).

It is sad that some people “twist” the scriptures from their true meaning (2 Pet. 3:15-17). The same basis for forgiving one man’s sins is also the same basis for forgiving the sins of all men – the death of Christ.

It is not implied or taught that sins are forgiven unconditionally. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Universalism, i.e. all men will be saved. The Bible does teach that only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:10;

7:14).

> *Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, writes, "The preposition 'for' [in 1 John 2:2] is ambiguous with respect to the specific sense in which Christ is the propitiation "for" the sins of the world.*
>
> *The Greek word translated "for" in this verse is peri, and means 'concerning' or 'with respect to." It does not define the way in which Christ is the sacrifice with respect to the sins of the world.*
>
> *It is consistent with the language of the verse to say that John is simply saying that Christ is the sacrifice available to pay for the sins of anyone and everyone in the world."*

There are several problems with Grudem's twisting of Scripture:

(1) Grudem does not deal with the word *world* in his defense of Calvinism. It is obvious that John uses the word "world" in the verse and in the other verses cited to refer to all humanity. Jesus died for all mankind.

(2) It is true that the word *for* in the phrase *for the whole world* is the Greek word *peri*. I agree that it means "concerning" or "with respect to."

Robertson says that *pen* has a sense similar to *hyper* in the verse. The word *hyper* means "in behalf of." It must be pointed out that the word *for* in the phrases *for our sins* and *not for ours only* in 1 John 2:2 is translated from the Greek word *peri*.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek word *peri* three times in 1 John 2:2. This word is sufficient to define the way Christ is the sacrifice "for our sins" but not "for the sins of the whole world."

Grudem says that the preposition *peri* "is ambiguous." He is straining the gnat and swallowing the camel in order to avoid accepting the clear truth. Grudem would say that its third use in the verse is ambiguous but not its first and second uses.

The emphasis in the verse is on Christ's "propitiation" – not the preposition "for."

John says Christ's propitiation is "for our sins" and "not for ours only" but also "for the sins of the whole world."

A Study of 1 Timothy 4:10

Paul wrote, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe."

This verse is important to the discussion. Here the apostle clearly states the salvation of all men. He does not teach Universalism. But, he does teach that salvation has been provided for all men, i.e. all humanity. However, that salvation is appropriated and appreciated by those who believe. All men are potentially saved by Christ's death, but only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved.

Grudem says:

> *He [Jesus] is referring to God the Father, not to Christ, and probably uses the word 'Savior' in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather then the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved.*

Grudem misses it again.

(1) No, Paul is not teaching that every single person will be saved. No New Testament writer ever taught that.

(2) There is no problem with taking the word *Savior* as referring to God the Father. He is the Savior of all men in that He sent Jesus to die for all men (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10). The Father and the Son are one in purpose, aim, plan, and design (John 10:30).

(3) For Grudem to say that the word *Savior* does not refer to "sins" shows his theological bias. In Matthew 1:21, the child is to be called Jesus. Why? Because he will save his people from their "sins." The word "Jesus" means "Savior." Grudem does not want 1 Timothy 4:10 to refer to "sins," so he denies it.

(4) God desires "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Salvation for "all men" has been provided (1 Tim. 4:10). However, this salvation is "specially" for those who "believe." This word does not imply that all will be saved. The Greek word *malista* translated "specially" is also translated "particularly" or "especially" in 1 Timothy 5:17 and "above all" or "especially" in 2 Timothy 4:13. Paul is saying that God is potentially the Savior of all men. For the individuals who "will" to come to the Lord, these individuals "will in no wise be cast out" (John 5:40; 6:37).

J.W. Roberts wrote, "He is the savior (potentially) of all men, but especially (or actually) of believers."

Dr. J. C. Davis states, "God is the potential Savior of all men (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is the actual Savior of believers" (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 2:10).

J. N. D. Kelly wrote, "Paul is no doubt giving expression to his conviction that the certainty of salvation belongs in an especial degree to those who have accepted Christ." True!

1 Timothy 4:10 is like Galatians 6:10. Christians are to "work that which is good toward all men and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." We have an obligation

to do “good toward all men” (even the ones who have not named the name of Christ). But, we have a special obligation to help those who are Christians. Christ died for all men but especially for those who believe.

An Invitation Is Given to All Men

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The church, the bride as it is called, and the Holy Spirit perpetuate that invitation as shown by John in Revelation 22:17:

> *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The invitation is given to all men. Why offer salvation to all if that is not possible? The text says “whosoever” will.

God Desires All Men to Be Saved

In (2 Peter 3:9) we read:

> *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

God wants “all” to come to repentance! Boettner, a Calvinist, denies that it is God’s plan for all to be saved. Seaton, a Calvinist, asks, “The over-riding question must always be the Divine intention; did God intend to save all men, or did He not?”

The fact that God desires that “all” should come to repentance implies that God has provided provisions for “all.” Christ died for all men. This verse teaches that if a man is lost, it is against God’s will because he wants “all” to come to

repentance and be saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul wrote, “Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here again God’s Word is clear. God desires that all men be saved.

In (Ezekiel 33:11) we read:

> *As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

God desires that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. God does not want or wish that any person be lost.

Paul Enns, a Calvinist, wrote, “If God is sovereign then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved, then God’s plan is frustrated.”

God is sovereign, but his plan involves the free will of man. His plan is that those who by their free will elect to believe and become obedient will be saved.

God is “frustrated” or “grieved” when men do not respond to his saving grace (Gen. 6:5-6; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41; Eph. 4:30).

God’s desire and will is frustrated when men are lost. God wants “all” to come to repentance and “all men” to be saved. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). “God is not willing that any should perish” (2 Pet. 3:9).

But, some will perish – not because Jesus did not die for them. He died for each individual person to show his intense love. If an individual is lost, it is because he has rejected God’s intense love. God does not desire it that way. But, he respects the right of a person to make his own decision.

Pardon for Sins Can Be Rejected

It is possible for pardon and salvation to be offered and rejected. In 1829 two men, Wilson and Porter, were apprehended in the state of Pennsylvania for robbing the United States mail. They were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the scheduled execution, President Andrew Jackson pardoned one of the men, George Wilson. This was followed by a strange decision. George Wilson refused the pardon! He was hung because he rejected the pardon.

Today, God has provided eternal salvation and pardon for all men. He has accomplished this by sending his one-of-a-kind Son to die for the sins of each and every individual person. However, this salvation can be refused.

If one chooses not to appropriate the blood of Christ over his sins initially and continually, he is refusing and rejecting the salvation which has been provided for him by God Almighty. While we can recognize the foolishness of such a decision, we must be aware of the fact that the majority of mankind will refuse their pardon (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). How sad!

Why Did God Create Man?

A lady asked me, “Why did God create man if he knew so many would be lost?”

This is a thought-provoking question. I answer this with two thoughts:

(1) Whatever God does is right and just. We may not understand what he does but that is because we are human and finite while he is divine and infinite (Isa. 55:8-9). Deuteronomy 32:4 states, “For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he.” God himself asked Job, “Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?” Job attacked

and condemned the present righteousness of God. Job sinned by doing this. Job later repented Job 40:35; 42:1-6).

(2) I think the answer to this tough question is that God respects our free moral agency. If a man is lost, it will be his fault – not God's! God has done everything possible for the salvation of each person. God will not overtake one's will and force him to obey. Life is what we make it! We can avail ourselves of God's love or we can spurn it and reject it. The choice is ours (Deut. 30:11-15; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:37, 40).

Seaton, a Calvinist, said, "If it was God's intention to save the entire world, then the atonement of Christ has been a great failure, for vast numbers of mankind have not been saved."

Seaton misses it. Christ's death was not a failure. The failure is man's free moral will. Man by his own free will chooses not to obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

On the Day of Judgment if a person is cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity, it will be his own failure – not God's! The failure lies with man not with God.

Calvinists say they focus on God's sovereignty while we focus on man's free will. I say it is not an either/or situation; it is a both/and situation. Both of the these concepts are respected in the scriptures. We must accept both.

Conclusion

To deny the Bible teaching that Christ died for all is to make God a respecter of persons – unjust and unmerciful. The doctrine of limited atonement is false. All men are potentially saved. If a person refuses pardon, death is not the fault of the one who offered mercy, but of the one who

refused to accept it.

> *(Editor's Note: The word atonement means to cover or conceal. It is an Old Testament word and is not found in the New Testament. The sins of people before the cross could be atoned, but after the cross the sins of the obedient believer were forgiven. There is a dramatic difference. Under Moses there was a remembrance made of atoned sins year by year [Heb. 10:3 – the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins]. The blood of animals could cause God to overlook sins while remembering them year by year, but could not remove the sins. This was atonement. The blood of the Lamb of God is able not to merely cover or bypass sins, but to remove every transgression and disobedience. To receive the forgiveness available in the blood of the cross, one must obey [Heb. 5:7-8].)*

The Indwelling of the Spirit – a Figure of Speech

By Jerry Moffitt
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For many years our brotherhood has disagreed on the mode of the indwelling of the Spirit. We have never divided over the issue because there have not only been good, sound men on both sides, but we have wise men on both sides of the issue.

As with many others, I have never felt that acceptance of the personal indwelling was a step toward the dangerous error of a special leading of the Spirit. And some of the best warriors against the charismatic movement and against a direct

operation of the Spirit have been those who believe in the personal indwelling of the Spirit.

For more than 26 years I have puzzled over the mode of the indwelling and have felt that there was insufficient scriptural evidence to settle the issue. God doesn't answer every question (Deut. 29:29). Still, in teaching on sanctification, from time to time, I felt I was being led by Scripture in a natural way toward what might be called an indwelling of the Spirit through the Word. Finally, I decided to put the Scriptures and such thoughts into a simple monograph.

Following are those Scriptures and thoughts.

Transformation

Paul told the Roman Christians to "be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye *transformed by the renewing of your mind,* that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Truly a transformation is to take place; other passages which seem to indicate the same thing in various figures are presented for your contemplation:

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him? *But we have the* mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, *but Christ liveth in me*" (Gal. 2:20).

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until *Christ be formed* in *you*" (Gal. 4:19).

"To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ in you,* the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, *are* transformed into the same image *from glory to glory,* even as from the Lord the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, *and the day-star arise* in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

As we have seen, some of the verses (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27) talk of Christ dwelling in us. Others talk of God dwelling in us or his Word dwelling in us.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16).

“And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, *which also worketh in you that believe*” (1 Thess. 2:13).

“For *it is God who worketh in you* both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because *my word hath not free course in you*” (John 8:37).

“In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*” (John 14:23).

Now, I believe all this is talking basically about sanctification. Paul said, “Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Cor. 7:1).

I believe all these things happen much this way. A person hears the Word of God and of his free will and by obedience puts away bad traits and takes on good traits and holy characteristics. In doing so he resembles Christ more.

It can be said, figuratively, that Christ dwells in him. Christ is formed in him (Gal. 4:19). God has his abode with him (John 14:23).

The Word has free course in him (John 8:37).

It could be said he is full of the Spirit (Acts 6:3). It comes through obedience to the Word so the Bible attributes sanctification to the Word (John 17:17).

Now notice another passage. Paul said, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin” (Rom. 8:9-10).

Would not the concept of the Spirit dwelling in us fit well with all the passages above? Is it another way, by a figure of speech, of describing the transformation called sanctification which occurs in our lives by obedience to God’s Word? Why would the dwelling of the Spirit be literal and all the other indwellings be figurative? And if the “indwelling of the Spirit” is a figure which describes the reality of sanctification, like all the rest, what figure is it?

Metonymy

There is what is called the “metonymy of the cause” where the “cause” is put for the “effect.” Sometimes a person is put for an activity of that person. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 Paul says, “Quench not the Spirit,” when he seems to have in mind the gifts of the Spirit, especially in context “prophesyings” (Gal. 5:20). Acts 7:51 says, “Ye do always

resist the Holy Spirit." Bullinger says:

> *The testimony of the Holy Spirit as given by the prophets. Their fathers resisted the prophets and would not hear the Spirit's voice in them and now they, like their fathers, were resisting the same testimony at Pentecost, and since then culminating in Stephen (see pp. 542-543 in Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, by E.W. Bullinger, published by Baker Book House in Grand Rapids, Mich.).*

Under "metonymy of the cause" and under "the person acting for the thing done" Bullinger has several whole categories involving the Holy Spirit. One is called the "Spirit for the gifts and operations of the Spirit" (p. 540). All examples he gives are worth considering. Could not the Holy Spirit (the Person) stand in the place of the thing he does (sanctification which comes through obedience to the truth [John 17:17])?

Could not the indwelling Spirit by "metonymy of the subject" stand for the fruit he bears in our life when we obey his Word? Metonymy of the Subject is where the subject is put for something pertaining to it, so it seems so to me. For example, notice 2 Corinthians 3:6: "Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but *of the spirit*." Bullinger says *spirit* stands for "the ministration of the Spirit, verse 8: the New Covenant as contained in the Gospel" (p. 543).

It seems clear there is a "metonymy of the cause" where sometimes the person acting is put for the thing done.

Again, I do not find the doctrine of the personal, literal indwelling of the Spirit distasteful, in and of itself, as long as one does not teach he does something to us separate and apart from the Word. That notion can contradict truth regarding free will and lead to the error of Calvinism. Too, so far I cannot prove the two concepts on the mode of the

indwelling are mutually exclusive.

Some Scriptures might speak of one mode of indwelling while other Scriptures speak of another mode of indwelling. Yet, I still have not seen a personal indwelling proved, though I desire to continue to study it with an open mind.

A Personal Opinion

All good sound brethren I have spoken to agree that the mode of the indwelling does not affect salvation and must never divide us. We have good and sound brethren on both sides of this issue. Our dispute must be with those who suppose the Spirit in you works on you or does something to you separate and apart from the power of God's Word. To save us, God chose the persuasive power of his Word. That leaves our free will intact. The error of a mysterious working on us apart from the Word of God cripples personal choice, weakens human responsibility, and violates the Word of God.

In an age when the denominational world says, "Christ paid it all," and "God does it all," and "You can't save yourself," those who teach direct leading of the Spirit without the Word are enemies of truth and in our battle with them we cannot take prisoners. Some of our best fighters in the fray, however, are those who differ with my indwelling and who believe in a direct personal indwelling. It is an honor to fight alongside them.

The Seal and Earnest of the

Spirit (J. C. Brewer)

By Jerry C. Brewer
Vol. 114, No. 09

The application of the terms *earnest* and *seal* to the Holy Spirit's work belong to the apostolic period when the gospel was being revealed in parts and portions and define two necessary aspects of the gospel scheme of redemption – revelation and confirmation. Purposed from eternity and hidden beneath the types and shadows of the old covenant, the scheme of redemption was a mystery that is now revealed.

> *…how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Eph. 3:3-4).*

The word mystery in the above passage does not mean "mysterious" or "mystical." It means unknowable through human reasoning and wisdom.

> *The word mystery in Revelation comports with the same meaning of the word as used elsewhere in the New Testament – that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of secret doctrine, hence prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was brought within human intelligence and understanding. …The word mystery did not mean mysterious. It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is, in this sense, called a mystery. (Foy E. Wallace Jr., The Book of Revelation, Sec. II, Part IV, p. 82).*

Undiscoverable by human wisdom, God's plan could be known only by revelation, which requires inspiration. Inspiration requires confirmation. The scheme of redemption was revealed in words, (1 Cor. 2:10-13), and confirmed by signs and wonders (Heb. 2:1-4). Inspiration was the means God used to reveal his plan. Miraculous gifts of the Spirit confirmed that those through whom it was spoke the word of God. This was the function of the Holy Spirit whose work of revelation and confirmation is expressed in the terms "seal" and "earnest."

The earnest of the Spirit relates to those gifts of partial revelation of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 13 and is used only in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14. From the Greek word *arrhabon,* defined as, "a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest: – earnest." (James Strong, Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible, "Greek Dictionary of The New Testament," p. 16).

That which was given as an "earnest" was not the Holy Spirit, but that which the Spirit gave – partial knowledge of God's word, which blossomed into the perfect (complete) revelation of His will. The earnest of the Spirit constituted a partial revelation until the "redemption of the purchased possession" which was the completion of divine revelation.

> *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor. 13:8-10).*

The partial revelation of the gospel, imparted to Christians in the first century, was an earnest or pledge of the full revelation to come. That partial knowledge would cease when those parts were gathered into the whole, which Paul styled "that which is perfect." The revelation we now possess in the

New Testament is the sum of the parts extant in the apostolic age. (The word *perfect* in 1 Corinthians 13:10 means "completeness" and when the parts of the mystery were gathered into the whole, the full price was paid of which the earnest was a pledge.)

The Holy Spirit was not the earnest in the hearts of men in the first century, except in a metonymical sense where the cause was put for the effect. When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," he referred to that which the Spirit revealed, not the Spirit himself. Neither is the Holy Spirit an earnest in the hearts of Christians today. Many who so teach contend that the Spirit constitutes a "down payment" or "pledge" from God of eternal salvation. But the full purchase price of anything is paid in the same currency as the down payment. If the Holy Spirit is the pledge or earnest of salvation, then God is making his down payment with a currency other than that which he will issue as the balance of the purchase. Besides, to say that God must make a "down-payment" on salvation is tantamount to saying we cannot trust him to fulfill his pledge to us!

When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," (2 Cor. 1:21-22), he distinguished between himself and the Corinthians. The pronoun "you" in this passage refers to the Corinthians and the pronouns "us" and "our" refer to Paul and the other apostles. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was Holy Spirit baptism, which the apostles received. He made the same distinction in the Ephesians' epistle.

> *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption*

> *of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-14).*

The Ephesians were sealed with the gift of tongues and given the earnest of prophecy when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized (Acts 19:1-6). Paul explains the purpose of the earnest and seal of the Spirit in the Ephesians in the following statement:

> *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (Eph. 1:15-18).*

The earnest of the Spirit was revelation, which came through Holy Spirit baptism, and the seal of the Spirit was the confirmation of that revelation. When gifts of revelation were imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands, they were accompanied by miraculous powers for confirmation.

The genuineness of the earnest of the Spirit, or the gospel that resided in inspired men, was attested by the Spirit's seal of "signs and wonders and divers miracles" upon them. From the Greek *sphragizo,* the word *seal* is defined as, "to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation …to keep secret, to attest. … The stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy or genuineness), lit, or fig. seal." (Strong, p. 70). This seal or sign of genuineness was a visible attestation of the authority by which inspired men spoke.

Those who claim this seal for Christians today cannot produce any visible sign of such seal. Their argument is the same one made for the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit – "I know it

because the Bible says I have it.” But what is the purpose of a seal of authority? The great seal of a state attests to and confirms the genuineness of documents issued by the state’s authority and is visible to all who read them. The seal of the Spirit was composed of the signs worked by inspired men of the first century and visibly attested to their authority from God. The seal of the Spirit wasn’t some invisible thing placed upon them for God’s benefit. Why would God have to attest ownership of Christians to himself? Does he not know them that are his without having some sort of mark placed upon them? The visible seal of the earnest of the Spirit was what Paul called “the signs of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12). That was the sign or seal of his apostleship and of all who had the earnest of the Spirit in the first century.

Apostasy

By C. R. Nichols
Vol. 114, No. 09

> *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, be is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned John 15:1-6).*

In this passage Jesus represented himself as the “true vine” and declared that his disciples were “branches.” All the “branches” (disciples) are said to be in the “vine” – that is, “in Christ.” Some of the “branches” in him are said to “bear fruit,” and some of the “branches” in him are said to be fruitless. The Lord said: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. …If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” To me it seems the lesson to be learned from the foregoing passage is too clear to be lost on the honest reader.

Those who teach that it is not possible for a child of God to so conduct himself as to be lost, in their effort to break the force of the passage we now study, declare that the non-fruit-bearing branches are not, in fact, in the “vine” (Christ); that they are no more than “water sprouts”; that they are only nominally in the vine, not in the vine in fact; that they have no vital connection with the vine. Is it not strange to you that the Lord did not have at his command language sufficient to express his thought? True, the Lord says the non-fruit-bearing branches are “in” him – in Christ; and to save a theory, here comes some teacher and declares they were not “in” the vine – that is, they had no vital connection with the vine. Indeed, if they had no vital connection with the vine, what is the necessity of taking them away? Would they not have withered and died without the necessity of being taken away?

The Lord says the branches that bore fruit were “in” the vine; and, too, he declared the branches that did not bear fruit were “in” the vine.

In Christ

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). “Salvation” is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). The non-fruit-bearing branches are said to be in Christ; and that being true, they

were saved, for salvation is in Christ. They enjoyed the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). But because some of these branches did not bear fruit, it is said they were taken away and cast into the fire and burned. The destiny of such branches will be the opposite of that which the righteous enjoy. In the face of this plain lesson in the word of God, some insist that when one time a man becomes a Christian, there is no possibility of his failure to enter heaven.

Become a Castaway

"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" (1 Cor. 9:27). The American Standard Version reads, "I buffet my body," instead of, "I keep under my body." The Greek word from which "keep under" is rendered is from a word which means to "strike one upon the part beneath the eye; to beat black and blue; hence, to discipline by hardships" (Bagster). "To beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots. …Like a boxer, I buffet my body, handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships 1 Cor. 9:27." (Thayer.) The word is derived from the practice of athletes training by subjecting the body to severe discipline to make it strong and able to stand great strain. It then came to have the meaning of treating harshly. Paul buffeted his body he brought it into subjection, he beat it down. Why? "Lest … when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What is the import of the "castaway"? Among the ancients, as well as in our day, metals are tested; and if a piece of metal does not meet the necessary standard for a certain work, it is cast away – that is, it is rejected. The word is found in the following passages and rendered "castaway," "reprobate," "rejected":

- Romans 1:28: Gave them over to "reprobate mind."
- 1 Corinthians 9:27: "I myself should be a castaway."
- 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Christ is in you, except ye be

reprobates."

- 2 Timothy 3:8: "Reprobate concerning the faith."
- Titus 1:16: "Unto every good work reprobate."

In the chapter from which the verse we are studying is taken Paul is discussing games in which people in his day engaged, especially contests in which physical supremacy was tested, and became the decisive feature, other things being equal. The prize awarded to the successful one in the contest was a crown of leaves – a crown or wreath made of pine straw, olive, or laurel leaves. Those who would contest for the prize were required to undergo a course of training for several weeks; they were required to make oath that they had trained the required length of time; that they were not guilty of crime; that they were freemen and upright in character. Each one who would compete in the arena was paraded before the crowd, and it was challenged to lodge against any of the prospective contestants any charge that would disqualify him from the games. If one of the participants did not "strive lawfully," he was disqualified, and at times such a one was chased from the arena in disgrace. Judges were chosen for the different divisions of the games, and for some time before the contests the ones who were to contend for the prize were required to train before the ones who would judge them. To these games Paul makes reference, saying: "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" – lest I be declared a "reprobate" and rejected at the final day of rewards.

I was thoroughly disgusted at the only serious attempt I have heard by those who declare one cannot fall from grace and be lost. My opponent said:

> *Paul entertained grave fears that the opposition which was hurled against him, even from false brethren, would result in a wave of protest against him; that he would allow his body to fall into sin and bring about his rejection as a preacher;*

> *that his brethren would cast him out of the ministry, silence him as a preacher. He had no fears of his final acceptance with God; he was certain of his entrance finally into heaven; but he was fearful that some of those in the church who had questioned his authority as an apostle would bring to bear the weight of their influence and cause the churches to reject him – cast him away.*

Paul was not discussing the possibility of being misunderstood, nor of being misrepresented, and, as a result of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, being rejected by his brethren; but he was careful to conduct himself in such a way that he would not be rejected at the last day. He was alive to the necessity of buffeting his body, bringing it into subjection and keeping it into subjection.

In the Christian race, which Paul and all other Christians are running, it is necessary that we strive lawfully. One is not to allow the body full swing and meet its every demand, but to bring it into subjection, beat it down, lest the Judge, the Judge who awards the crown, finds fault and rejects you. But the Judge who is to reward the man striving in the Christian race makes no mistakes. Under him you are to train for the continued contest, and by him you will be rewarded at the last day. Paul declares he was making the effort to keep his body in subjection, lest be become a reprobate, lest he be rejected at the last day. Surely if one who saw the Lord, one who served as an apostle, preached so extensively, could become a "castaway," it is necessary for you also to take care.

On 1 John 1:7 (Forgiveness)

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs
Vol. 106, No. 11

There is considerable misunderstanding about automatic forgiveness of sin. Some seem to have the mistaken idea that Jehovah God, by the sheer exercise of his unqualified grace, will wipe out "secret sins."

The notion that the Creator ignores innocent-looking wickedness by the operation of his unlimited mercy takes various twists. A few say that all men walk under the protection of boundless grace and therefore no one will be lost—not even Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson.

Others claim that it is impossible for any man to know and do all that God requires of him. Hairsplitting arguments attempt to show that if a person does not fully understand niceties of divine injunctions, his ignorance or transgression or omission will be spontaneously dismissed.

Advocates of the idea of grace dispensing with some law are unwilling or unable to name specific sins that God "winks at" in our age. Still, they cannot bring themselves to believe that God will enforce his laws absolutely. They fear lest some tender soul might be tortured with nameless guilt and beset with nightmares and look for some basis to say to the transgressor that God will impulsively forgive, and grant the sinner peace and rest.

The one verse to which all advocates of automatic forgiveness appeal is this:

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Though we had a lengthy discussion on this around the first of this year, I will again consider the question because a few dear brothers are still having trouble grasping John's teaching—they don't seem to catch his drift, as the dudes say. Certain nervous-nelly types wring their hands and clutch their chests and bemoan the poor soul that violates some obscure and petty rule in the divine lawbook.

Shall such a one go down to eternal perdition simply because he/she was caught on some technicality? Thinking about someone floundering forever in flames of fire because of being entrapped on the hook of some minor point of doctrine is more than they can bear. Surely, they think, we can stretch the strait gate just a little—just enough to take care of insignificant violations.

There are several things amiss in this wrong-headed thinking. In the first place, it casts doubt on God's love and goodness and suggests that the Lord makes loopholes in his law and plays games with us (it does seem God is wise enough to speak to us in our language so we can understand him). The laws of God are not all that complicated. Any person who wants to do the will of God can understand his will (John 7:17).

In the second place, it denies God's holiness and purity and suggests that, after all, God ought to tolerate some sins —*teeny-weeny ones* —(mortal sins deserve hell, but venial sins should be purged in some temporary confinement, or entirely overlooked, according to this view).

In the third place, it does not take into account the justice of God. God is love, but he is also just. His mercy tempers judgment, but according to rule and not by whim. "Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off' (Rom. 11:22).

In the fourth place, it assumes superior knowledge about what is minor and unimportant and about what is major and necessary. If you keep the whole law but offend in one point—even if you think it is a tacky point—you have violated the whole law (James 2:10). The essence of sin—even so-called small sins—is rebellion. If we rebel in one point, we will rebel in another because we have an indisposition to respect the law. There may be large and small consequences of law-breaking, but all infractions are equally serious. Otherwise God is a respecter of persons. We must understand what it means to walk in the light. The condition upon which the blood of the lamb is cleansing us from all sin is walking in the light, according to 1 John 1:7. Please don't forget the condition—the passage begins with an "if'—"if' we walk in the light, then—and only then—does the blood of Jesus keep us clean from all sin. If we do not walk in the light, then the cleansing does not follow.

Walking in darkness is the opposite of walking in light. Either we walk in darkness or we walk in light, and we cannot do both simultaneously.

Note: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6).

Note: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3).

He who walks in darkness and says he knows God lies (1 John 1:6).

He who keeps not God's commandments and says he knows God lies (1 John 2:4).

Therefore walking in darkness is the same as not keeping God's commandments.

If the negative is true, the positive is also true. Walking in

darkness is not to keep his commandments. Walking in light is keeping his commandments. Therefore, John is saying if we keep the commandments of God the blood of Jesus keeps us clean from all sin.

Question: How can a person sin who is walking in the light—keeping God's commandments? *Answer:* One who attempts to hear and do the words of Jesus can fail—he may omit to do something the Lord requires of him or do something the Lord forbids. If he should sin, he repents and confesses; that constitutes walking in the light—keeping God's commands—and the blood of the lamb is cleansing him from all sin. If a blood-bought child of God sins but excuses his wrong and will not confess and repent, he is not walking in the light and the blood will not cleanse his transgressions. The key is walking in the light. Walking in the light is a continuous action. Cleansing therefore is a continuous action because walking in the light involves keeping the commands of God, which involves confessing sin and repenting of sin. All of this—walking in the light, confessing, repenting, and cleansing—is continuous action.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This passage, by the way, is in the immediate context of 1 John 1:7.

Yet some would have us believe in spite of this that somehow, someway, sometime, God will forgive his child of a slight infraction of sacred precepts, that walking in the light magically forgives casual sins—whatever that is!

That won't wash! The verse under study says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We are continuously cleansed not from some sin, nor from haphazard sin, nor from unknown sin, but from all sin—all sin!

If walking in the light is something other than keeping all the commands of God, if it is approximate obedience and just getting close, then all sin—all sin!—adultery, murder, stealing, lying, idolatry—all sin—is automatically forgiven. The verse says "all sin," just as verse 9 says "all unrighteousness."

If the liberalizing view that grace dispenses with complete obedience to every requirement of heaven is true, then "all sin" is washed away in the blood of the cross unconditionally and all will be saved—Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson included. Simply put— Calvary was a mistake.

Some say "the light" is God, because verse *5* says, "God is light." So, the passage would read, under this understanding, "if we walk in God, as Jesus walked in God. . .." The question comes: How did Jesus walk in God—in the light?

Question: Did Jesus obey his heavenly Father incompletely and only when it was handy, or did he obey Jehovah always and in all things? The passage requires us to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, if his blood is to keep on cleansing us from all sin. Jesus claimed sinless perfection and challenged his contemporaries to convict him of wrong (John 8:46-47). None did! He always pleased Jehovah (John 8:29). Keeping divine law gladdens the heart of God (1 John 3:22). Therefore Jesus always kept the commands of Jehovah, and that pleased his holy, heavenly Father. "Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) To do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). The unbending rule of the life of Jesus is "not my will, but thine be done."

Jesus walked in the light, and so must we if his precious blood is to keep us clean from all sin. He never failed. We may fail, but provision is made for forgiveness, if we walk in the light as he is in the light.

It is tragic for a professing teacher of righteousness to

encourage people to think that any rule of God can be disregarded with impunity. Instead of trying to comfort the guilty by offering false hope, let us console them by rebuking sin and calling for repentance. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

Now, that gives some real help and lasting relief! “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

If Any Man Speak

By J. Shannon (Shan) Jackson
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One of life’s grandest blessings is our ability to discuss with others. Speech, when correctly used, is of essential benefit. Used incorrectly, talk can do much harm. The difference between the two is often in the speaker’s attitude and motive. The tongue is a “little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” (James 3:5). Jesus asked the Pharisees, “How can ye, being evil, speak good things?” (Matt. 12:34). Christians must consider attitude in their speech and guard their words.

We all should be impressed with the awesome power of the tongue. Improperly used, James says, the tongue can defile the whole body (James 3:6). Properly used speech can do much good. “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). Consider the proper use of language.

In teaching truth, we must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Here is the caveat. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Jesus tells his disciples to “go and teach all nations” but their teaching is to be the things he “commanded them” (Matthew 28:19).

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul tells Timothy to “preach the word.” He warns, “for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A proper use for human speech is “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). There is also occasion for sealed lips and answering not a word (See John 19:9). In worship of God, acceptable worship must be “in spirit and in truth” – correct in attitude and correct in action. The Bible names five acts of worship – singing, praying, teaching, communion, and giving. Singing, praying, and teaching require speech. “Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Bringing our feelings into sweet harmony with the words of a song, a public prayer, or the presentation of God’s word shows our love for a loving God.

In confession of Jesus, there are also five steps that bring salvation. The New Testament tells us to hear God’s truth,

believe it, repent of our unholy life, confess Jesus as Lord, and submit to water baptism. It is the acceptance and obedience of these steps that puts us “in Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Confession of Jesus as the resurrected son of God is to be verbal. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

In defense of truth: Many problems facing the church today stem from our unwillingness to defend God’s truth. A Christian is to be ready always to teach the truth and protect it. We fear and studiously avoid controversy to the disgrace of the gospel and our own shame. Argument for the sake of argument is infamy, but argument in defense of truth is honorable and necessary. We forget Jesus was a brilliant debater.

Paul said that “in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” we are “partakers of grace” (Phil. 1:7). Our knowledge enables us to approve the things that are excellent (and therefore disapprove things that are contrary to truth) that we may be “void of offence unto the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10). We must be “bold to speak the word of God without fear… set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:14, 16).

“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4). Yes, our speech is very serious business. Jesus said, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt.

12:37). Watch your mouth and pay attention to your words. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven…a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:1, 7). What you say can condemn you! What you ought to say, but fail to speak, also can condemn you! Happy is silence in the face of slander and injustice.