

The Whole Counsel of God

MAY 2025 | VOLUME 2 | NUMBER 5

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www.thegoodnewsofgod.org

“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.”

Acts 20:26-27 NKJV

From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 MAY 2025

It is with great joy we present the fifth edition in our second volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*.

This month's edition carries a theme focused on death, but not in the physical sense. Various articles discuss different aspects of death, such as the need for faithful Christians to restore "dead" brothers and sisters in Christ (**Gal. 6:1**), the Calvinists' misinterpretations of what it means to be "*dead in sin*" (**Eph. 2:1-2**), misconceptions regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in converting those who are spiritually "dead" and bringing them to God, as



well as what Paul meant when he described New Testament Christians as being "*dead to the law*" (**Rom. 7:4**). Other topics included in this edition of the journal seek to answer questions such as, "*Only Administer the Lord's Supper at Night?*" and "*What is the Meaning of 'Equality' in 2 Cor. 8:13-14?*" We pray each of these articles, as well as all other materials included in this month's edition, will be of spiritual benefit to you.

As always, if any reader disagrees with what we print here or simply has questions, we invite all feedback (positive or negative) and are happy to discuss our differences in a loving way (**Eph. 4:15**). Such is not only encouraged but necessary for us to work toward the goal of being "*one heart and one soul*" like the early church (**Acts 4:32**) and as Jesus prayed in **John 17:20-21**.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. I pray I will be of equal support and encouragement to you as each of you are to me.

"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (**Prov. 27:17**).

(DTS)

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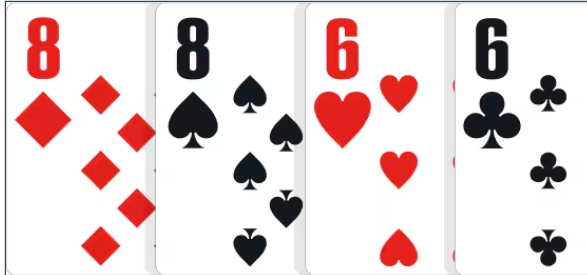
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“Two By Two”

BRYAN DOCKENS | NEW MEXICO, UNITED STATES
PUBLISHED FEB. 2025 IN THE WHOLE COUNSEL



When Jesus first dispatched the twelve to preach the gospel in Israel, He “began to send them two by two” (**Mark 6:7**). Afterward, “*He appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two*” (**Luke 10:1**). Working in pairs remained normal for preachers thereafter, as exemplified with Barnabas and Saul (**Acts 11:25-30; 13:2**), and even when that pair decided to part, each kept to the habit, with Barnabas and Mark working together and Paul and Silas working together (**Acts 15:39-40**). There is great value in laboring side by side for the cause of the gospel.

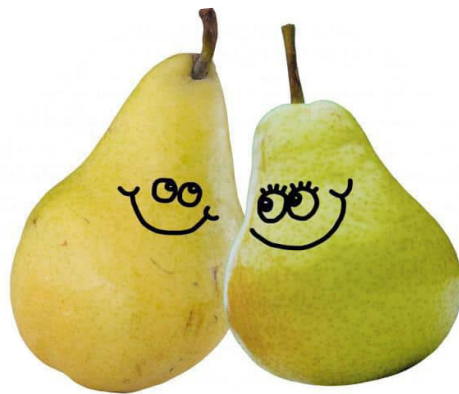
TWO ARE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ONE

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (**Ecc. 4:9-12**). When a preacher has company as he goes forth with the word of God, there is someone who can remember a verse he may have forgotten. If he is canvassing a neighborhood, there is a

companion to record which homes were visited and to gather contact information for follow-up visits, so he can focus on presenting the gospel. It can be helpful to have another set of eyes when treading into dangerous neighborhoods simply for safety’s sake.

IT IS GOOD TO HAVE WITNESSES

Inspiration is emphatic on the point that “*By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established*” (**Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1**). One who goes alone is less protected against false accusations which sometimes arise (**Matt. 26:60; Acts 6:13**). Sometimes, the issue is not dishonesty, but confusion; for instance, when a student learns that baptism really is for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**), and not merely an outward sign of an inward grace, they can attempt to apply that new knowledge retroactively to make a previous baptism somehow relevant, but having two witnesses remind them of what they said about baptism earlier in the discussion can confirm the facts of the situation. Preachers are not required to work in pairs, but whenever possible, it is prudent to do so.



Restoring the Erring

MIKE JOHNSON | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

PUBLISHED AUG. 2022 IN SEEKING THINGS ABOVE



The book of **Galatians** can be divided into three sections. **Chapters 1-2** are autobiographical as Paul defends his apostleship, which is a foundation for what follows. **Chapters 3-4** are doctrinal. Here, Paul defends his message about salvation through Christ without the works of the Old Law. Finally, **chapters 5-6** are practical, especially **5:16-6:10**. These verses pertain to daily Christian living and emphasize how we are to live and walk in the Spirit (**5:16, 25**).

As we learn from **Gal. 5:13-14, 22**, love for others is a part of walking in the Spirit. One way we show this love is found in **Gal. 6:1**, which says, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*” Our study comes from this verse, which gives us answers to six questions on the subject of restoring those who go astray. After discussing these questions, we will address other issues connected to restoring the erring.

WHO IS HE ADDRESSING?

Paul is addressing the “*brethren*.” This word had various meanings in Paul’s

day just as it does today. However, in this verse, along with over 100 other times in the New Testament, he uses it to refer to fellow Christians. Thayer defines the Greek word as “fellow-believer, united to another by the bond of affection; so most frequently of Christians, constituting as it were but a single family” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). In **Galatians**, he uses this term 11 times; in other places, he even uses the phrase “*beloved brethren*” (**1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:58**). Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ and children of God — a part of the same spiritual household or family (**Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19**).

Previously, Paul called the Galatians “*foolish Galatians*” and also asked, “*Are you so foolish?*” (**3:1, 3**) He was also amazed that they were “*turning away so soon*” from the gospel of Christ (**1:6**). However, his use of this the term “*brethren*” depicts a more conciliatory tone. Earlier, he even referred to them as “*my little children*” (**4:19**), so, in the letter, he mixes strong rebuke with affectionate exhortation.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION?

Paul speaks of a person overtaken in any trespass or sin. The Greek word translated “*overtaken*” (**NKJV**) is also commonly rendered as “*caught*.” Scholars tell us that the verb correctly translates either way. It can mean “overtake” or “detect.” Because of this, two possible interpretations exist for this part of the verse.

The first approach pertains to the element of surprise, which a temptation often involves. A person may be caught off guard

and then yield. As it might be put, “It is not so much the brother overtaking the trespass but the trespass overtaking the brother.” The other interpretation may involve a brother simply determining that another is engaged in sin; perhaps the sin is intentional and premeditated. Regardless, a particular response is required.

WHO SHOULD ACT?

The spiritual person takes action. Interestingly, the writer is not just addressing preachers, elders, and deacons but all who are spiritual. A spiritual person is one who “walks in the Spirit” (5:16) and is “led by the Spirit” (5:18). It involves people who produce the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23), not the “works of the flesh” (5:19-21), in their lives. However, a spiritual person is not a perfect person. If perfection is required, no one would be able to obey this commandment. People who fit this qualification earnestly try to obey God’s Word and walk in the Spirit. If we are not spiritual, we will probably be unsuccessful in restoring the erring (note Matt. 7:1-6).

WHAT IS THE MISSION?

The spiritual person is trying to restore the erring. The definition of the Greek word translated as restore means “to put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend” (The Complete Word Study Dictionary). The word was also used to refer to repairing a fish net. Paul states the goal in 2 Tim. 2:26, which says, “*And that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*” So, we are trying to free someone from the “snare of the devil.” Thus, the mission is not to aggravate, scold, or tell the person off. Instead, it is to get the erring Christian to re-

pent, straighten out a problem, and turn away from sin.

WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD EXIST?

The person who goes to restore the erring should do so with gentleness. This disposition should always characterize Christians. Earlier (5:23), Paul identified gentleness as a “fruit of the Spirit.” Elsewhere, Paul told a young evangelist (Timothy) the same basic message: “*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition*” (2 Tim. 2:24-25a). So even in our attempt to correct someone, we must have a gentle disposition. Yet, in this book and elsewhere, Paul often used straightforward language in dealing with those who taught false doctrine and engaged in immorality. Is Paul inconsistent? No, Paul does not violate his own teaching. The conclusion to be drawn is this: we are to have an attitude of love and approach people with gentleness, but this does not preclude being forthright when needed as we try and get people to do right.

WHAT DANGER EXISTS?

According to the last part of the verse, a danger exists. The peril is that the person doing the restoring might “*also be tempted.*” He might approach the erring one with an arrogant attitude, like the Pharisee who went to the temple to pray. He said, “*God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector*” (Luke 18:11). A person could sin while trying to bring back the wayward. Therefore, the person doing the restoring should not have a prideful attitude, full of conceit (5:26), and must recognize that he could be in the same position later. If so, how would he want to be treated?

OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES

Restoring the erring is extremely important. First, it is crucial because God tells us to do it. As Christians, we want to obey God's commands (**Heb. 5:8-9**). Further, it is also essential because the soul of someone is at stake. **James 5:19-20** says, "*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*" To have our sins "covered" means they have been forgiven (**Psalm 32:1, 85:2-3**). The "death" under consideration is spiritual death (We will all die from a physical standpoint regardless of whether we repent). Sin causes spiritual death, and when we turn back from our sins, we are saved from eternal punishment.

Trying to restore an erring person might not be pleasant. A wayward person may resent the visit. Someone might say, "What about you?" They may say bad things about us to other people despite the love and gentle attitude we have shown. This work can be discouraging, but it is still our responsibility to try and help them.

What if they do not repent? Ideally, we visit them and, like David, they say, "*I have sinned*" (**2 Sam. 12:13**). But, sometimes, they might resist our efforts to get them to repent and do right. If this happens, we must continue patiently working with them (**2 Tim. 2:24-26, 4:1-2**). Others might also try and help in the effort (**Matt. 18:15-17**). There is a point when church discipline is necessary (**1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6-10**). We must keep in mind that some may have a hardened heart and may never repent (**Heb. 6:4-6**). Regardless, we must not get discouraged in our efforts to do what this passage tells us. Remember, the souls of people are at stake.

MYTH BUSTERS

"They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths"

(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

Most so-called Christians are opposed to public religious debating. The question is why? Is it because they know their position really can't be defended, and so they only want to preach their theories when no one is there to respond and present the other side (**John 3:19-21**)? Below are reasons we should participate in and support public debates on religious topics.

- God teaches we should (**Jude 3; Acts 15:2,7, 17:17, 19:8-9; Matt 22:15-46**).
- To listen to the other side with an open mind (**Matt. 13:15**).
- To preach the truth as we presently understand it (**2 Tim. 4:2**).
- To allow our position to be tested (**John 3:19-21**).
- To seek religious unity (**Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:20-23**).
- To reach the lost (**Mark 16:15-16, 2 Cor. 5:10-11**).
- To get an audience with those who we believe need to be warned (**Ezek. 3:18**).
- To encourage study of the word of God (**2 Tim. 2:15**).
- To defend the gospel (**Phil 1:17**).

The Scripturalness of Religious Debate *Abbreviated* (Pat Donahue | Alabama, United States, Mar. 2010)

Only Administer the Lord's Supper at Night?

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

WWW.THEGOODNEWSOFGOD.ORG

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Recently, we received a question asking if the Lord's Supper should only be administered at night. This article seeks to answer that question.*

In **Acts 20:7**, we read, “*Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*” This text shows that the Lord's Supper must be partaken of on “*the first day of the week.*” Since God specifically identified the first day of the week as the occasion in which the disciples gathered to break bread, no other day of the week is permitted for this activity. The Lord's Supper should only be administered when a local church is together “*in one place*” (**1 Cor. 11:20**) with the unified purpose of commemorating the Lord's death (**1 Cor. 11:33a**) together at the same time (**1 Cor. 11:33b**) on the first day of the week. However, to argue for or against a specific time (morning, afternoon, evening) within the first day is to argue from the silence of the scriptures.

It is true Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at night (**Matt. 26:31**), and it is also true it was likely evening when the Lord's Supper was administered in **Acts 20:7** since **v.8** states, “*There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.*” However, this information about time of day is incidental and not an essential part of the example we must replicate. How do we know this? Because neither are we expected to replicate the disciples gathering together in an “*upper room*” in Troas to partake of the Lord's Supper (**Acts 20:6, 8**). Either both facets (it likely being evening and the Lord's Supper being administered in that upper room) must be replicated, or neither must be replicated.

Consider a scriptural parallel. The Holy Spirit chose to reveal that the Philippian jailer and his believing family members were baptized at some point after midnight: “*At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God ... and the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep ... called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ ... So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized*” (**Acts 16:25-34**). Does the Philippian jailer's example of being baptized after midnight necessitate that baptisms today can only take place late into the night, or is that part of the passage just incidental and not essential to his example? Obviously, this information is incidental and not required for us to replicate today. Baptisms can take place at any point in during the day. The same applies to the Lord's Supper.

God never specified a time for the Lord's Supper other than the first day of the week. The concept of time only applies to the Lord's Supper in the sense that a certain day has been specified for its administration (the first day of the week) and everyone in attendance should partake together and not at separate times: “*Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another*” (**1 Cor. 11:33**).

Politics As Usual

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PUBLISHED JAN. 2025 IN THINK ON THESE THINGS (VOL. 56, NO. 1)



At its root, politics is simply the involvement of citizens in matters that impact their communities. The concept of “*seeking the peace of the city*” where one lives (**Jer 29:7**) aligns well with the overarching principle of loving one’s neighbor as oneself (**Lev. 19:18**). However, this does not imply that our concerns as followers of Jesus will align with those of the local citizens in the places where we find ourselves living. Similarly, the methods that saints use to promote the welfare of their communities will differ significantly from those of typical citizens.

The motives of the citizens of this world are generally carnal. Unsurprisingly, the worldly often use carnal means to achieve what they perceive as most advantageous for themselves and their party. In contrast, Christians understand that neither their own welfare nor that of their neighbors is best served through such self-serving methods. Saints do not resort to what has come to be called “politics as usual.”

Disappointingly, God’s words to Judah through Jeremiah have become a justification for embracing worldly politics while neglecting their original context. Jeremiah’s

charge to his fellow Israelites was to seek the peace of the city to which they had been exiled as captives. Although they were not citizens of Babylon, they were still called to seek its peace. Was this a call to political action in the manner of the Babylonians? It was not. The prescribed method for seeking peace was through prayer to God on behalf of the city. Interestingly, this same exhortation was given to the earliest Christians (**1 Tim. 2:1-4**) who are similarly described as exiles (**1 Pet. 2:11**).

I am not saying that prayer is the only authorized means of political action for the saint. Peter urged honorable conduct “*among the Gentiles*” (**v.12**) and submission to authorities (**v.13-14**) and wrote “*that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*” (**v.15**). However, “politics as usual” is not “doing good.” The freedoms we have are to be used “*as servants of God*” (**v.16**). Our actions must be substantively different from the partisan and populist rhetoric and hyperbole that characterize the political processes of the nation in which we dwell.

Some contend that “everything is politics.” What people mean by this aphorism varies widely. However, if we take politics in its most basic definition, then this saying can be understood as an acknowledgment that our beliefs, values, and actions are all connected to moving those within our sphere of influence in a particular direction. In this sense, Christians engage in politics because, in word and deed, we are trying to encourage our neighbors to follow Jesus as their Lord and King.

Certainly, all that Jesus taught and did was intended to influence and guide people toward what would be in their best interest. However, Jesus' methods were not carnal even though His opponents resorted to "politics as usual." As Jesus' followers, we must remember that *"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Thus "politics as usual" is not in our arsenal of weapons to accomplish change.



Many say that "politics and religion don't mix." Yet, if "everything is politics," then religion—regardless of how one defines it—must also be political. Again, what people mean by this statement depends on how they define the words politics and religion.

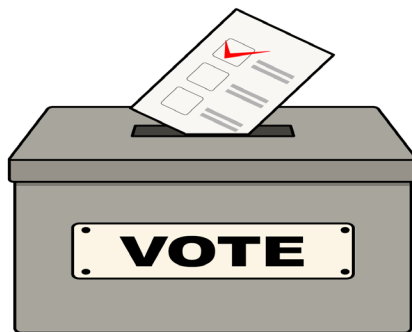
For many, religion is a negative term with connotations of state churches or denominational hierarchies and other complex belief systems characterized by dominating power structures in organizations created by human traditions. While our English word religion may derive from the concept of be-

ing bound by a vow (as seen in the lives of monks, priests, and nuns), it can be more simply defined as an individual's personal practice of devotion to God. The reality of both good and bad kinds of religion is demonstrated by James's distinction between vain and pure religion (**James 1:26-27**). What is usually meant by politics in the claim that "politics and religion don't mix" is not the general influence one might have over his neighbors. Rather, it is "politics as usual." It is the pursuit for power through various political parties and their carnal machinations.

Jesus explicitly warned His disciples against engaging in "politics as usual" when some of them ignorantly and ill-advisedly sought to secure positions of power in Jesus' coming kingdom. In correcting them, Jesus observed, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those that are great exercise authority over them." Then He clearly declared, *"Yet it shall not be so among you"* (**Matt. 20:25-26**). Most would agree that Jesus meant that His kingdom would not be governed by "politics as usual." However, many Christians compartmentalize Jesus' words and thereby reason that they can engage in "politics as usual" outside the kingdom of God. This rationale reflects an inaccurate and unhealthy view of what it means to be a citizen of Christ's kingdom.

God *"has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (**Col. 1:13-14**). This transfer into Christ's kingdom does not permit us to step back into "politics as usual." Rather, Paul admonishes, *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth"* (**Col. 3:2**).

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that a saint must completely abstain from earthly things, political discourse, or the privileges that come with citizenship in an earthly city or nation. Clearly, Paul used his Roman citizenship (**Acts 16:37; 22:25-29; 25:10-12**). However, we must cautiously observe that politics has also been called “the art of compromise.” While followers of Jesus do enjoy great freedom in Him, we are not at liberty to compromise the law, teachings, or values of King Jesus in order to serve others or their causes (**1 Cor. 9:19-23**). “Politics as usual” often demands such compromises.



“Politics as usual” often distracts us from our true identity. Patriotism and political involvement can often evoke a passionate loyalty that should be reserved for the kingdom of God. Indeed, many people across the political spectrum imagine that their engagement in worldly politics brings glory to God; however, such entanglements frequently lead to being “*unequally yoked with unbelievers*.” Even the worldly have observed that “politics makes for strange bed-fellows.” Thus, saints must be continually asking themselves, “*What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with wickedness? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God*” (**2 Cor. 6:14-16**). For Christians,

our means of effecting lasting change is not through popularly elected officials or their appointed judges: “*Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord, ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty*” (**v.17-18**). The opportunity to vote is a cherished liberty. It is right to do so as conscience permits; but do not imagine that hearts are transformed by majority rule, laws, or executive orders. The saints who “*turned the world upside down*” (**Acts 17:6**) did so with the gospel rather than by populating the halls of political power with individuals who merely shared some of their values.

What are we truly seeking? If we are sincere in seeking the peace of the place where we presently live, then let us pray to God and place our trust in Him. Let us embrace the Prince of Peace instead of embracing “politics as usual.” Let us humbly identify as migrants who confess that “*here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come*” (**Heb. 13:14**), “*the city ... whose builder and maker is God*” (**Heb. 11:8-16**).



“Dead in Sin”

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Eph. 2:1-2 reads, “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world.*” Paul states here that the Ephesians were once “*dead in . . . sin.*” This phrase is used by false teachers to perpetuate the doctrine of total depravity. Those who cling to this doctrine assert that since man is “*dead*” due to sin, there is nothing a “*dead*” man can do to bring himself back to life; thus, the Holy Spirit must directly intervene. This “*death*,” as it is asserted, is imputed onto all people – even infants without the ability to discern good from evil – due to the sin of Adam. That means all people are supposedly born sinners. However, numerous passages prove this false doctrine of total depravity to be just that – false.

The word “*dead*” in **Eph. 2:1-2** simply indicates a separation between man and God, not an incapability of man bringing himself to God. **Isa. 59:1-2** states, “*Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*” Whereas physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (**James 2:26**), spiritual death is the separation of man from God. To argue that man is incapable of bringing himself to God to remove this separation is to deny the simple message of the gospel: “*The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely*” (**Rev. 22:17**; see also **Matt. 11:28**; **James 4:8**). If man is incapable of bringing

himself to God, the God of Heaven is unjust to demand people “*come*” to Him when He knows we are incapable of doing so!

Sin is not something imputed onto us (**Rom. 9:11**; **Deut. 1:39**; **Ecc. 7:29**; **Isa. 7:16**; etc.). When a person is spiritually dead, he is dead by the result of his own doing. The NASB translates **Eph. 2:1-2** thusly: “*you were dead in your . . . sins.*” Sin is something we do; it is a choice we make (**James 4:17**; **John 3:20**; **Col. 3:25**; **3 John 11**). All have inherited the ability to sin from Adam, but no person has inherited any other man’s sins (**Ezek. 18:20**). Ultimately, each man bears responsibility for his own sins, not the sins of Adam (**2 Cor. 5:10**; **Matt. 16:27**). It is ironic that **Rom. 5:12** (the go-to verse for those propping up total depravity) makes it abundantly clear that man is not a sinner due to inheriting the transgressions of Adam; instead, man is guilty of sin “*because all* [not Adam] *sinned.*” How much more clear could it be?

Sin results in spiritual death (**James 1:15**; **Rom. 6:23**). All who are capable of discerning between good and evil have been dead in sin, but praise be to God that all can be raised from death and be made alive in Christ: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (**Rom. 3:23-26**).

What is the Meaning of “Equality” in 2 Cor. 8:13-14?

OSAMAGBE LESLEY EGHAREVBA | LAGOS, NIGERIA

PUBLISHED APR. 2025 IN UNMASKING SOPHISTRY (VOL. 5, NO. 2)



Question

Please explain the meaning of “equality” as used in **2 Cor. 8:13-14**. Does it mean all the churches must have the same amount of money in their accounts? In situations where rich members wear expensive clothes and other members wear less expensive clothes, is there equality? Wouldn't equality mean that rich members sell their things and bring to the church to share the proceeds with the needy like Barnabas did in **Acts 4**?

Answer

2 Cor. 8:13-14 says, “*For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.*” In the context of this passage, Paul was instructing Christians in Corinth to give out of their means in order to help the poor Jerusalem brethren (**Rom. 15:25-26**; **1 Cor. 16:1-4**). It is in the usual practice for a local church to help destitute members among them (**Acts 2:44-45**; **4:34-35**; **6:1**) or destitute (needy) members outside their local assembly (**Acts 11:27-30**), especially when the need of the receiving church is greater than

what she alone can handle. In the case of **2 Cor. 8**, the church in Jerusalem had needy members that were more than what the Jerusalem church could care for. Hence, Paul encouraged other churches in the region of Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia to send support to help the needy members in Jerusalem. Paul commanded these churches to send to Jerusalem “*that there may be equality*,” thus the reason for their sending. In this response, we shall look at what equality means in the context that it was used in the Bible passage under discussion.

WHAT DOES EQUALITY MEAN?

Merriam Webster’s Dictionary defines equality as the quality or state of being equal. To be equal, according to the same dictionary, means to be alike in quality, nature or status.

In what sense is Paul talking about equality in **2 Cor. 8:13-14**? Equality in this passage means that all the churches have mutual freedom from want. In other words, there was no need among the saints in any of the churches. Let me illustrate with the following example: Suppose Brother A who is a salary earner receives his salary at the end of the month. He stocked his house with enough foodstuff that would last until the next salary comes and dispersed the remaining funds according to his needs. Suddenly, there was a heavy downpour which flooded the house of Brother A and destroyed all his foodstuff. Brother A suddenly becomes needy (destitute of daily food – **James 2:15-16**). He has no hope of survival until his next salary comes. It was announced in church what happened

to Brother A and it was said that he would be needing 100,000 naira to buy foodstuff if he would survive until next month. Upon hearing this announcement, Brothers B and C decided to give 50,000 naira each out of their abundance to Brother A so he can buy the foodstuff he needs. Brother A collects this money, gets the foodstuff and is no longer needy. When this is done, there is now an equality among brothers A, B, and C. How are they equal? They are equal in the sense that none of them is needy. The abundance of brothers B and C have supplied the needs of Brother A, and so, they are now equal since none of them is needy. Equality does not mean that brothers A, B and C have the same amount of money in their bank account or that brothers B and C had to become poor in order to help brother A.

WHAT EQUALITY IS NOT

In **2 Cor. 8:13-14**, equality does not mean that each church had the same number of members or the same number of naira in their bank accounts, but that there was no need among the saints in any of the churches. Paul said it clearly that his aim was not for the Corinthian church to become burdened in order to ease the pain of the needy Jerusalem saints but that there should be equality – mutual freedom from want.

The gathering of the manna in the wilderness serves to illustrate equality: “*He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack*” (**2 Cor. 8:15; Exod. 16:16-18**). Notice that there was equality in the gathering of the manna, but all of them did not have the same quantity of manna. Some had little and some had much. In the same way, there will be members who have much and there will be members who have little. As long as needy members of

the church are helped and no one is in need, there is equality.

A needy is a person that is destitute of basic necessities of life and does not have the ability to work and earn a living (**James 2:15-16**). A person who can work but would not work and would want to keep asking for help is not a needy person (**2 Thess. 3:10**). If Brother A choses to resign from his work with the intention of asking the rich brethren for money every month to buy foodstuff, then he would not be qualified to receive help. The Bible says such should not eat. So, not everyone who does not have money is a needy person.

WHY EQUALITY DOES NOT MEAN EQUAL AMOUNT OF MONEY OR STRENGTH

The parable of the talent shows the master gave the servants different quantities of talents (**Matt. 25:14-15**). If equality means the same amount of money, Jesus would be promoting inequality here.

Unlike other churches, the church in Philadelphia had “*a little strength*” (**Rev. 3:8**). If equality means that no church should be richer than the other, then why did God commend the church in Philadelphia for being faithful despite their little strength?

James teaches that different people will come to the assembly, some with “*fine clothes*” while others with “*filthy clothes*” (**James 2:1-7**). This proves that Jesus recognizes that we must not all wear the same type of clothes to be equal. Those with “*fine clothes*” are obviously richer than those with “*filthy clothes*,” and they are all members of the same church. We are still equal even with the different categories of clothing and the different amounts of money in our bank accounts.

In **Acts 20:35**, Paul says we should support the weak. For how long? For as long as they continue to be weak (if the weakness is not a deliberate attempt on the part of the brother to remain weak). If he is weak as a result of an accident, then we must support for as long they exist and as we have the opportunity (**Gal. 6:9-10**). If it is a deliberate act of being weak (such as unwillingness to work or change), we must discipline.

If Brother A works so hard to make money to buy an expensive car, there is no sin in that. There is no sin in using or buying expensive things. Mary used an expensive perfume on Jesus (**John 12:3-8**). Jesus was buried in a new, unused tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy follower of Jesus, fulfilling the prophecy in **Isa. 53:9** that the Messiah would be buried with the rich (**Matt. 27:57-61**). There is nothing wrong in using expensive things, but the rich must remember that they have an obligation to take care of the poor as they have the opportunity (**1 Tim. 6:17-18; Matt. 25:31-46**). The rich man was not condemned because he was rich or because he enjoyed his life on earth but because he refused to be rich in good works (**Luke 16:19-31; 1 Tim. 6:17-18**).

CONCLUSION

The Bible says godliness with contentment is great gain (**1 Tim. 6:6**). Christians must be content (**Phil. 4:11-13**). Lack of contentment will lead to envy and will cause one to miss the clear meaning of equality. One will be envious of those who have and would want them to empty their purse for you – that is not equality. Let us work very hard to become rich in good works and not have the mentality to always be the one to keep receiving help because “*it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (**Acts 20:38**).

DID YOU KNOW?

When the influential early 20th century gospel preacher David Lipscomb was asked to explain in his publication “The Gospel Advocate” if the instruction to “not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (**2 Cor. 6:14a**) has any reference to marriage, Mr. Lipscomb stated:

“To be yoked together is to be so connected as to be compelled to walk together in such a manner that the walk and conduct of one is necessarily influenced by the walk and conduct of the other. Wherever a relationship of this kind exists between a Christian and an unbeliever, they are unequally yoked together. The marriage relation is certainly of this character ... In the marriage relation the Christian has many duties that would greatly be hindered ... by the conduct of the other party. Outside of this scripture, it is plainly contrary to the spirit and letter of the teachings of the Bible that Christians should marry those without. Paul says of the widow: “Let her marry whom she will, only in the Lord” [1 Cor. 7:39b]. He here merely applies a general law to the widow. The same truth and principle are clearly taught in the prohibition of Jewish marriages with those of other nations, and the evils resulting therefrom are recorded for our warning.”

Questions Answered by Lipscomb and Sewell, p.754-755 (1921)

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion

E.R. HALL, JR. | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

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Nearly everyone, regardless of their Bible knowledge, believes the Holy Spirit operates in the converting of a person from a sinner to a Christian. The controversy begins when the question arises: **How** does the Holy Spirit do His work of conversion? Generally, there are two ideas: direct and immediate as opposed to indirect and through a medium or agent. Let's examine both ideas and compare them to the Scriptures.

DIRECT OPERATION

Many believe and teach the Holy Spirit works separate and independently from the Scriptures, the revealed word of God. Should this be true, consider an answer for these questions: If the Holy Spirit works directly on the mind of a sinner to bring about salvation, why are there no Christians where missionaries have not gone? If the Holy Spirit works directly, what is the need of preaching and teaching God's word? If the Holy Spirit works independently of the gospel, the revealed word of God, how can the gospel be the power of God unto salvation (**Rom. 1:16**)? For the Holy Spirit to work directly upon a sinner and independent of the Scriptures, His work would make the Bible a "dead letter." Thus, this idea about the Holy Spirit's

work does not harmonize with what the Scriptures teach. It must be a man made idea!

INDIRECT OPERATION

Before the completed revelation of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit spake through holy men: "*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (**2 Pet. 1:21**). The Holy Spirit was to testify of Christ. As Jesus was speaking in **John 15:26**, He said, "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*" The Holy Spirit also revealed all truth: "*Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come*" (**John 16:13**). The context of **John 16** shows Jesus is speaking to the twelve apostles and also gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (**Acts 1:2-5**). In **Acts 2** we read of the fulfillment of that promise when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they spake "*as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (**v.4**). The apostles spoke and wrote all truth which the Holy Spirit revealed unto them and we have it written in the New Testament. Therefore, everything the Holy Spirit does, including the work of changing a sinner to a Christian, He does through the medium or agency of the Word: "*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (**Eph. 6:17**).

Here are things the Holy Spirit does and, at the same time, we can see how the

revealed Word, the Scriptures, also does the same thing:

- The Holy Spirit and FAITH (**Gal. 5:22**); the Word and FAITH (**Rom. 10:17**).
- The Holy Spirit and BEING BORN AGAIN (**John 3:5-6**); the Word and BEING BORN AGAIN (**1 Pet. 1:23**).
- The Holy Spirit QUICKENS (**1 Pet. 3:18**); the Word QUICKENS (**Psalms 119:50**).
- The Holy Spirit SAVES (**Tit. 3:5**); the Word SAVES (**Jam. 1:21**).
- The Holy Spirit PURIFIES (**1 Pet. 1:22**); the Word PURIFIES (**1 Pet. 1:22-23**).
- The Holy Spirit SANCTIFIES (**Rom. 15:16**); the Word SANCTIFIES (**John 17:17**).
- The Holy Spirit LEADS (**Rom. 8:14**); the Word LEADS (**Psalms 43:3**).
- The Holy Spirit COMFORTS (**Acts 9:31**); the Word COMFORTS (**1 Thess. 4:18**).
- The Holy Spirit STRENGTHENS (**Eph. 3:16**); the Word STRENGTHENS (**Psalms 119:28**).
- The Holy Spirit INSTRUCTS (**Neh. 9:20**); the Word INSTRUCTS (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).
- The Holy Spirit CLEANSSES (**1 Cor. 6:11**); the Word CLEANSSES (**John 15:3**).
- The Holy Spirit CONVICTS (**John 16:8**); the Word CONVICTS (**Tit. 1:9**).
- The Holy Spirit TEACHES (**1 Cor. 2:13**); the Word TEACHES (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).
- The Holy Spirit REPROVES (**John 16:8**); the Word REPROVES (**2 Tim. 4:12**).
- The Holy Spirit JUSTIFIES (**1 Cor. 6:11**); the Word JUSTIFIES (**Rom. 3:28**).

Yes, everything the Holy Spirit accomplishes in conversions today, He accomplishes through the Scriptures that He revealed to the apostles and prophets. Every person who becomes a Christian does so as a result of the work the Holy Spirit does through the Scriptures, the Word of God. He reproves, teaches, produces faith, quickens, purifies, saves, and justifies. After becoming a Christian, the Holy Spirit leads, comforts, strengthens, and instructs but, again, this is accomplished through the agency of the Word, which is “*the sword of the Spirit*” (**Eph. 6:17**).

THINK ON THIS

“Meditate on these things”
(**Phil. 4:8, NKJV**)

Although Paul faced certain death at sea in Acts 27, even enduring a shipwreck (v.26), he never stopped trusting God (v.21-22). Paul said, “*Take heart, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told to me*” (v.25). Paul’s faith never waned. The rest of the people aboard the ship, on the other hand, lacked faith (v.15, 20). This provides a good lesson for us today. If we lose faith amidst various trials, we risk spiritual shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19), but if we “*take heart*” and trust in God for deliverance during those difficult times by looking to Him for guidance and leaning upon Him for strength, we will eventually land safely at the eternal shores of paradise: “*And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!*” (2 Tim. 4:18). (DTS)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).

“Dead to the Law”

CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR.

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The inspired apostle Paul reminded Jewish Christians at Rome that they had “*become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that [they] should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead*” (**Rom. 7:4**). He makes it clear as to what “law” he refers to when in **v.7** he says, “*I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” Just what is the significance of this statement, “*Dead to the law?*”

THE LAW GIVEN TO JEWS

In **Deut. 5:2-f** we read, “*The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*” We can read of that incident in such passages as **Exod. 19-ff.** The only way for a Gentile ever to have been under (alive to) the law of Moses was by proselyting, or becoming of “*the circumcision.*”

THE PURPOSE OF THAT LAW

In **Gal. 3:19** we read that the law “*was added because of transgression,*” and in **v.24** we read that it was to serve as a “*schoolmaster to bring us [the Jews] unto Christ, that [they] might be justified by faith.*” These passages, as well as others, clearly show that the law of Moses was intended to be a temporary system of instructions for the Jews.

JESUS WAS BORN UNDER THE LAW

“*But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of*

a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (**Gal. 4:4-5**). Although there were many attempts to prove Jesus guilty of violating the law, none were successful. He alone kept that law perfectly. In fact, He himself said that he came to “*fulfill*” the law (**Matt. 5:17-f**). While some would accuse Him of “destroying” the law, He assured them that He had not, and that nothing would pass from the law “*till all be fulfilled.*”

THE DURATION OF THE LAW

This is implied in two of the passages given to show the purpose of the law; namely, “*till the seed should come,*” which “Seed” was the Christ, according to **v.16**, and “*the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*” (**Gal. 3:19, 24**). But note the statement of our theme: Paul said the Jews had become “*dead to the law.*” Death basically means a “separation.” They had become separated from the law that they might be married to Christ. Now note that he says this was accomplished “*by [“through,” ASV] the body of Christ.*” As we have noted, Jesus said He came to “*fulfill*” the law, and this He did (**see John 17:4**). When He had fulfilled the law, He “*took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*” (**Col. 2:14**). Thus, by His death Jesus brought the law of Moses to an end. In this He was “*blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was*

contrary to us,” or He was breaking down “the middle wall” which stood between Jew and Gentile. The apostle reminded the Ephesians that in this He made it possible to “reconcile both [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16).

LAW OF MOSES NO LONGER BINDING

As we have noted, the law was never binding upon the Gentiles, and the Jews became “dead” to it by the death of Christ; therefore, that law, having served its purpose, is not binding upon anyone now! In fact, the Galatian Christians, who were being misled by Judaizing teachers, were told that “*Christ shall profit you nothing*” if they attempted to be justified by the law; they had “*fallen from grace*” (Gal. 5:1-4). The Colossians were reminded that they were not to be judged by stipulations of the law, such as “*meat, or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon or of the sabbath days*” (Col. 2:16). The law of Moses is no more binding on anyone today than is God’s law of marriage upon one whose companion is dead. Paul told the Romans, “*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man*” (Rom. 7:1-3). We, therefore, cannot justify anything in religion today by that law, but must rather turn to the law of Christ for all things (Col. 3:17).

CONCLUSION

No one can serve God today while appealing to the law of Moses for their authority for such, whether it be Sabbath keeping, burning of incense or mechanical music in worship. “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*” (Heb. 1:1-2a). “Then,” someone asks, “does the Old Testament serve no good purpose today?” Yes. We are reminded that “*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*” (Rom. 15:4). We see a good illustration of this in 1 Cor. 10:1-12, wherein we are reminded that the same thing that happened to God’s people back in the wilderness might very well happen to us! And so we can gain many good things from the Old Testament now; but for authority for our teaching and practice in religion today we must appeal to the law of Christ. We are (or should be) “married to Christ.”

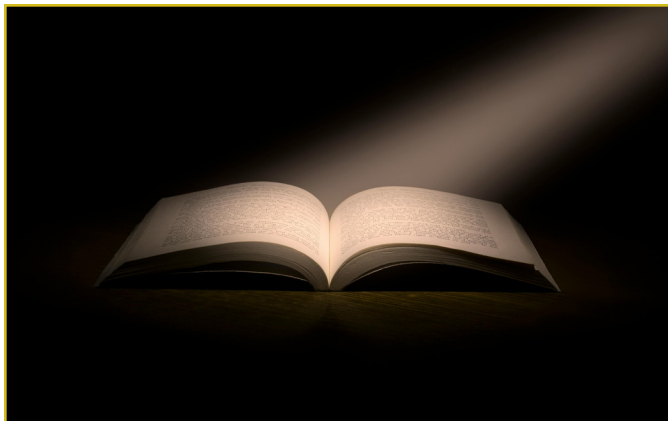
SWORD SWIPES

“Shun profane and vain babblings”
(2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV)

When we are promoting “unity in division,” we are openly and willfully welcoming dissension in the Lord’s body.

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:11).

(DTS)



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