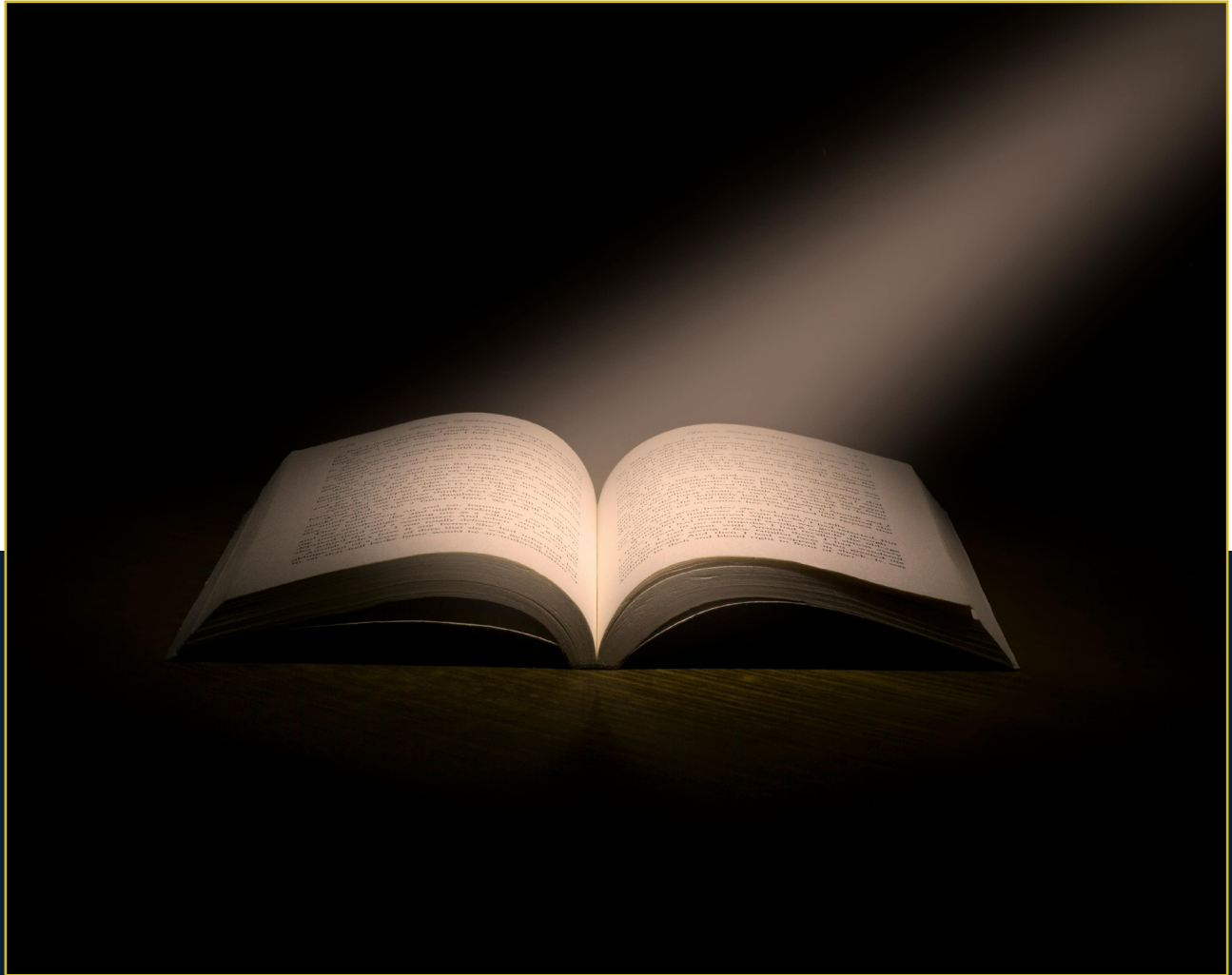




The Whole Counsel of God

JULY 2026 | VOLUME 3 | NUMBER 6

EDITOR: Dylan Stewart
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA USA

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 JUL 2026

It is with great joy that we present the sixth edition in our third volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*.

In this edition, readers will find articles such as “*What Are We Doing With the Lord's Money?*” and “*Unsound Arguments for the Truth*.” Both articles emphasize the importance of handling God's word carefully and faithfully while striving to follow His pattern in all things.

As many of you know, a publication such as this requires a significant investment of both time and effort. After much consideration, I have decided that this will be the final edition of *The Whole Counsel of God*, concluding a work that began exactly three years ago. Over that time, we have published eighteen editions covering a wide range of biblical subjects with the goal of teaching on a wide range of biblical subjects, especially those which are often overlooked and those which have created controversies among brethren. Simply put, the amount of work required to produce each issue is no longer yielding the results I would like to see. While I believe the publication has accomplished some good (if for no one else but myself), I believe my time can be better spent focusing on other opportunities which are proving more fruitful.

The weekly, often daily, work with the website remains unchanged. Lord willing, my weekly blog posts will continue uninterrupted. Since I first began writing and sending out articles via my **Bible Blog** in March 2022, I have not missed a week. If you do not receive an email every Saturday morning (8:00 AM US CT) alerting you that a new article has been posted, you can always navigate to www.thegoodnewsofgod.org/bible-blog to find the newest article, as well as a complete archive of all past articles. I pray that God will continue to bless these efforts.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported this journal over the past three years. Your kindness and support have meant so much to me. May we all continue to hold fast to the truth, contend earnestly for the faith, and proclaim the whole counsel of God wherever opportunities arise.

(DTS)



Table of Contents

What Are We Doing With the Lord's Money?	4
Myth Busters #1	6
Sword Swipes	12
Unsound Arguments for the Truth.	13
Myth Busters #2	17
This is No Time to Give Up	18

The Whole Counsel of God is published bi-monthly. All correspondences should be submitted via the **Contact Form** found [here](#).

If you know someone who would like to be added to our mailing list, please provide their digital mailing information using the method of contact described above.

If you would like to schedule a free one hour Bible study at your convenience, please submit a request via the method of contact listed above.

For previous editions of *The Whole Counsel of God*, visit www.thegoodnewsofgod.org.



What Are We Doing With the Lord's Money?

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

WWW.THEGOODNEWSOFGOD.ORG



Money – it's something we think about a lot because we can't really live in this world without it. Money is also something we preach on quite a bit. Whether it's warning about the love of money, not using our money on sinful activities, etc., we think and talk about money quite often. Something churches must consider is this: What are we doing with the Lord's money?

CHURCH TREASURIES ARE AUTHORIZED

As we consider this question, it is worth noting that there are many religious people, even some Christians, who oppose churches having a treasury. In fact, there are questions about scriptural authority for churches having a common treasury. For example, Google's AI Overview states:

“Arguments against a central church treasury include claims of a lack of biblical authorization for a general fund, potential for abuse and financial mismanagement, creation of a divisive and controlling environment, the risk of members feeling excluded, and the practice of creating unbiblical expenditures beyond what the Bible directs. Some also argue that a central

treasury can shift dependence from God to wealthy individuals and may foster a spirit of materialism within the church” (Sept. 7, 2025).

Despite such questions and understandable concerns, there is no doubt that the New Testament authorizes churches to have common treasuries, i.e. “money-on-hand” somewhere, such as a bank or some other place where the church or elders deem it wise and prudent to store money. First century churches placed money aside in a way that implies they had treasuries:

- **Acts 4:34-35** – “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”
- **Acts 11:27-30** – “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”
- **1 Cor. 16:1-4** – “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay some-

thing aside, storing up as he may prosper; that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.”

The specifics of how or where first century churches set money aside are not always explained, but the money clearly was set aside to be used later in some way. Therefore, churches today are authorized to do the same.

TRANSPARENCY IS REQUIRED

Although concerns regarding abuse and financial mismanagement have led people to reject the truth that treasuries are authorized, I do at least appreciate that people care about abuse and mismanagement of the Lord’s money. I wish all people in all churches truly shared that same concern.

Due to humans being human and being tempted by Satan to do things with the Lord’s money that they shouldn’t, churches should be extremely transparent in how they handle finances. Paul said in **2 Cor. 8:20-21**, “*Avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*” This statement is made in the context of Paul’s follow-up to the instruction in **1 Cor. 16:1-4** regarding the Corinthians pooling money together to send to needy saints in Macedonia. According to **2 Cor. 8:10-11**, it had been one year since the Corinthians began to gather money for those needy Christians, yet, for whatever reason, they never completed that work. As a result, Paul lovingly admonished these brethren to finish the work they started and, while doing so, he felt it necessary to provide explicit

detail as to how this money that the Corinthians offered would make it to the proper destination. **2 Cor. 8:16-23** shows Paul enlisting a multitude of trustworthy Christians to transport the Corinthians’ funds to Macedonia, demonstrating how important is to be totally transparent and above board in every way possible when it comes to handling the Lord’s money.

Churches ought to provide information to their members explaining where every penny is and how every penny is used, and it ought to be done in as much detail as possible. Members should never have any concerns about where the church’s money is or how it is being used. Churches are authorized to have treasuries, but they need to be extremely transparent in how they handle their finances so as to potentially avoid the possibility of – wrongly or rightly – being assigned “*blame in this lavish gift.*”

WHAT CAN CHURCHES DO WITH THE LORD’S MONEY?

Although churches are authorized to maintain a treasury, they are also limited in what they can do with the Lord’s money. The New Testament reveals several broad categories of authorized expenditures.

First, churches may use funds for the edification of their members. Passages such as **1 Cor. 14:26** and **Eph. 4:11-16** provide general authority for congregations to spend money in ways that help Christians grow spiritually. Bible class materials, workbooks, Bibles, and similar resources would all fall into this category because they assist in accomplishing the God-given work of edification.

Churches may also use funds for matters related to the assembly. Since Christians are commanded to assemble together for worship and spiritual growth (**Heb. 10:24-**

MYTH BUSTERS #1

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

(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

Just because a person has faith in Christ and has been immersed in water does not necessarily mean their baptism is valid. Christians can become guilty of overemphasizing baptism so much that they act as if baptism is all that matters, regardless of what a person was taught beforehand. However, Acts 19 shows that you cannot be taught wrong and be baptized right.

Those in Acts 19 were baptized at some point in the past, but they only knew of John’s baptism. Once they learned the truth more fully, they were baptized again, this time in the name of Christ (Acts 19:1-5). These people’s first baptism was not sufficient because it was based on incomplete knowledge. John’s baptism could not accomplish what the baptism of the Great Commission accomplishes.

The same can and does happen today. If one is taught error about salvation, the church, the purpose of baptism, etc., his baptism is not made valid simply because he was immersed in water. A person must be baptized for the correct reason (see Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 22:16; etc.) in order for his baptism to be valid. A person cannot be taught wrong and be baptized right.

(DTS)

25; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42-47), congregations have general authority to spend money on things necessary to facilitate that work. This would include purchasing or constructing a church building, renting a permanent or temporary meeting place, buying things such as seats, songbooks, communion trays, sound equipment, and other items connected with fulfilling the obligation to worship and assembly as a local church.

In addition to edification and worship, churches have the responsibility to engage in evangelism. Paul described the church as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). Contextually, Paul had just discussed the qualifications of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13), demonstrating that he had local congregations in mind and not merely the church in a universal sense. Therefore, local churches have a responsibility to “*sound forth*” the word of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:8). Since local churches have the responsibility to uphold and spread the truth, they likewise have authority to use the Lord’s money to accomplish that purpose. Local churches can evangelize through a variety of means. Certainly, expenditures related to the assembly contribute to evangelism, but the work of preaching the gospel extends far beyond the walls of the meeting house. Radio programs, church websites, sermon streaming and storage, printed literature, gospel meeting advertisements, bulletin publications, road signs, and similar efforts are all legitimate ways that congregations can use their resources to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A fourth authorized use of church funds is benevolence. In the New Testament, church benevolence was strictly directed toward needy saints.

- Acts 4:32-35 – “*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart*

and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need."

- **Acts 11:27-30** – *"And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."*
- **Rom. 15:26** – *"For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem."*
- **1 Cor. 16:1-2** – *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."*
- **2 Cor. 8:1-4** – *"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep*

poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

- **2 Cor. 9:1, 12-13** – *"Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you ... For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men."*

NOTE: Institutional brethren argue that the "all men" in this passage refers to non-Christians. However, such a conclusion ignores the very next verse, which mentions that all who received the Corinthians' gift were actively praying for them: *"and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you"* (**2 Cor. 9:14**). Are we to believe non-Christians prayed and longed for the Corinthians? That conclusion simply does not follow. Instead, the phrase "all men" must be framed within the overall context, which strictly identifies "ministering to the saints" (**v.1**). In other words, "all men" refers to Christians other than the Macedonians that the Corinthians aided. For similar examples of the word "all" needing to be contextualized and obviously not literally meaning "all," consider the following passages: **Phil. 2:19-22; Acts 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 9:22; etc.**

In every example, either the text explicitly states or the context necessarily implies that

churches provided relief to Christians and never to non-Christians. We have no command, example, or necessary inference indicating that first-century churches ever used treasury funds for general benevolence toward non-Christians. While individual Christians certainly have benevolent responsibilities toward all men (**Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:31-46; etc.**), church benevolence must match the pattern of the New Testament and only be directed toward needy saints. Such assistance may take many forms, including providing food, paying medical expenses, or helping with other legitimate financial needs that any saint may have.

A fifth authorized use of church funds is the support of gospel preachers. The New Testament clearly teaches that churches have both the authority and obligation to support men who labor in preaching the gospel. Paul wrote, *“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel”* (**1 Cor. 9:14**). While some preachers may choose not to accept support, the responsibility of churches to provide support when needed is undeniable. In fact, this aspect of the church’s stewardship is especially important and is the primary reason this article was published.



ARE WE PAYING PREACHERS LIKE WE SHOULD?

The New Testament leaves no doubt that preachers of the gospel deserve compensation for their work. In the broader context of **1 Cor. 9:8-14**, Paul defended the right of those who labor spiritually to receive material support from those whom they serve. Just as an ox was not to be muzzled while treading grain, those who sow spiritual things have the right to reap material things in return. At the same time, the existence of that right does not mean a preacher must exercise it. On occasion, Paul sometimes chose not to accept support, explaining that he preached the gospel free of charge so that he would not hinder the cause of Christ (**1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 11:7**). There are faithful men today who make the same choice. Some preach regularly and travel extensively to do so, yet decline compensation for their efforts. Whether a preacher chooses to accept support is ultimately his decision. Nevertheless, the truth remains the same: gospel preachers deserve compensation for the work they perform.

Since churches have a responsibility to support those who labor in the gospel, it is important to consider not only whether support is given, but also how it is given. Scripture clearly authorizes congregations to support preachers who are not members of the local church. Paul reminded the Corinthians, *“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you”* (**2 Cor. 11:8**). Churches, therefore, may assist faithful men laboring throughout the world and are not limited to supporting only those within their own congregation.

The New Testament also reveals the proper method of such support. In the first century, financial assistance was sent direct-

ly from churches to preachers rather than through separate human institutions overseeing the work. Paul's statement in **2 Cor. 11:8** demonstrates this principle, but **Phil. 4:15-16** makes it even clearer. The Philippians did not send funds to a missionary society or some other intermediary organization. Instead, Paul told the church, "*Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*" Notice what occurred. The Philippians sent money to Paul directly (through Epaphroditus, a member of the Philippian church [**Phil. 2:25, 4:18**]), and Paul received the money. That simple pattern should not be deviated from today. Churches should send money directly to preachers in need with no human institution or oversight from other churches.

Of course, recognizing the responsibility to support preachers does not mean congregations must exhaust all of their resources in doing so. Paul told the Corinthians concerning their contribution for needy saints, "*I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened*" (**2 Cor. 8:13**). Churches are not obligated to bankrupt themselves supporting gospel preachers. However, neither should that reality become an excuse for neglecting a responsibility the Lord has clearly assigned. Congregations must exercise wisdom in balancing their resources while still fulfilling their obligation to support those who preach the gospel.

One practical way churches can accomplish this work is through the assistance of deacons. While **Acts 6:1-4** does not explicitly identify the seven men appointed there as deacons, the passage clearly illus-

trates the principle of delegation. The apostles recognized that certain responsibilities could be entrusted to qualified men so that other work could receive proper attention. The same principle remains valuable today.

Because deacons must not be greedy for money, must be blameless, faithful, and spiritually mature (**1 Tim. 3:8-13**), they are especially well-suited to assist in matters involving church finances. Whether that involves maintaining financial records, identifying faithful men in need of support, ensuring support is sent properly, or monitoring ongoing obligations, deacons can be a tremendous resource to a congregation. After all, they are servants, and churches should allow them to serve in ways that best assist the work of the congregation. Wise delegation has always been an important aspect of effective leadership, and the work of supporting gospel preachers is no exception.

At the same time, churches must exercise caution and diligence before committing to support a preacher financially. The responsibility to support faithful men does not require congregations to send money indiscriminately to every individual who requests assistance. Careful investigation should precede any decision to provide ongoing support. Churches should seek to determine, as best they can, whether a man preaches sound doctrine, practices what he teaches, is scripturally qualified in his personal life, is willing to defend the truth, and is actively engaged in meaningful gospel work. Questions regarding his financial circumstances and the nature of his labor are likewise appropriate.

This diligence is necessary because financial support creates a relationship of fellowship in the work being performed (**Phil. 1:6, 4:10**). Regarding fellowship,

Paul warned Timothy, “*Do not lay hands upon anyone too quickly and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others*” (1 Tim. 5:22, NASB). Although congregations may occasionally discover that a man has concealed important information or later departed from the truth, that possibility does not excuse a failure to exercise due diligence beforehand. Churches should make every reasonable effort to ensure that the men they support are worthy of that support and are faithfully laboring in the gospel.

WHY DILIGENTLY SEARCH FOR PREACHERS TO SUPPORT?

The responsibility to support gospel preachers is far more significant than many Christians may realize. If a preacher cannot meet his financial obligations, he may be forced to take secular employment in order to provide for himself and his family. While there is certainly nothing wrong with secular work, doing so often reduces the amount of time that can be devoted to preaching and teaching. The result is one less man able to devote himself fully to planting and watering the seed of the kingdom in the area where he labors. That reality should greatly concern us! Paul asked, “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?*” (Rom. 10:14-15). Supporting faithful preachers helps ensure that the gospel continues to be proclaimed in places where souls desperately need to hear it.

Beyond that, diligently searching for saints who are in need – including preachers who are struggling financially – reveals whether our love is truly sincere. When encouraging the Corinthians to complete their

contribution for needy saints, Paul stated that he was testing “*the sincerity of your love*” (2 Cor. 8:8). Later in the chapter, he described their gift as “*the proof of your love*” (2 Cor. 8:24). The same principle is found in 1 John 3:18: “*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*” Genuine love is demonstrated through action. It is easy to claim that we care about our brethren and about the spread of the gospel. It is another thing entirely to make sacrifices that demonstrate those convictions.

The way we use our money will also matter on the day of judgment. James reminds us that “*faith without works is dead,*” and specifically illustrates that fact by describing individual Christians who see a brother or sister lacking the necessities of life but only offers the needy person words instead of actual assistance (James 2:14-17). If God cares about individuals neglecting those in need, it necessarily follows that He also cares about churches neglecting preachers in need. Jesus commended the compassion of the Good Samaritan who saw someone in need and went to great lengths to fulfill that person’s need by saying, “*Go and do likewise*” (Luke 10:37). When occasions arise to assist faithful preachers and needy saints, churches should be eager to seize those opportunities.

Those who oppose institutionalism do so because we recognize that it matters how churches use the Lord’s money. We are now several generations removed from the controversies that produced the division between institutional and non-institutional brethren, and nearly all of the men who fought those battles have gone on to meet their rewards. Nevertheless, churches are still accountable for how they use the resources entrusted to them. For that reason, it would be incon-

sistent to oppose unauthorized uses of the church treasury while neglecting to be active in authorized uses of the Lord's money. If we spend years preaching about the proper use of the Lord's money but fail to actively seek opportunities to support faithful preachers and aid needy saints, we are – to put it bluntly – hypocrites. The Lord never intended for congregations to “*bury the money*” (**Matt. 25:18**). Rather, He expects faithful stewardship of the blessings He has entrusted to His people.

Another reason congregations should diligently support preachers and aid needy saints is because such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Writing to the Philippians concerning the support they had sent him, Paul described their gift as “*a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God*” (**Phil. 4:18**). That language is incredibly powerful when you consider that Paul used nearly identical language in **Eph. 5:2** to describe Christ's loving sacrifice on the cross. The Philippians were not merely helping Paul pay bills; they were offering a loving sacrifice to God. When viewed in that light, financial support becomes far more than a mere transaction. It becomes an act of love and service. Just as the sacrifices of the Old Testament carried sacred significance, so too do the sacrifices Christians offer today in support of the Lord's work. Knowing that such loving sacrifices are well-pleasing to God should motivate us to take advantage of every opportunity to engage in them. After all, if we know of something that pleases God, we should eagerly pursue it. Paul declared, “*We make it our aim ... to be well pleasing to Him*” (**2 Cor. 5:9**).

Finally, diligent support of preachers and needy brethren helps accomplish another important biblical objective: equity among Christians.



EQUITY AMONG BRETHREN

The New Testament repeatedly teaches that God's people should seek to ensure that the needs of fellow believers are equitably met. In discussing this principle, it is important to distinguish between two concepts that are often confused: equality and equity. Equality means everyone receives the exact same treatment, resources, or opportunities. Equity, on the other hand, means resources are distributed according to need in pursuit of fairness. While those terms are often debated and politicized in modern society, the principle of equity is deeply rooted in New Testament Christianity.

The book of Acts repeatedly demonstrates how the early Christians sought to achieve equity among brethren. One example is found in **Acts 4:32-35**, where believers were described as being “*of one heart and one soul*.” The passage goes on to explain that those who possessed lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles so that distribution could be made “*to each as anyone had need*.” The goal was not for every Christian to possess the exact same amount of wealth or resources. Rather, the goal was to ensure that no Christian was left lacking while others had abundance.

This same principle appears in Paul's discussion of the collection for needy saints. In **2 Cor. 8:13-14**, Paul said, “*I do not mean*

that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need” (ESV). I believe the ESV’s rendering of “fairness” captures Paul’s meaning better than the word “equality” that is found in the KJV and NKJV. Paul was not advocating absolute equality in possessions. Instead, he was teaching that Christians who had abundance should use that abundance to help brethren who were in need. In other words, he was describing equity, i.e. resources distributed according to need in pursuit of fairness. That was the attitude of first-century Christians, and it should be our attitude as well. When a brother or sister has a legitimate need, God’s people should seek to meet that need as we have opportunity. This principle lies at the heart of the benevolence practiced by the early church and remains a vital part of Christian stewardship today.

Unfortunately, discussions about equity are sometimes dismissed because people

immediately associate the term with modern political debates. However, this is not a political issue; it is a biblical one. **Acts 2:38** is not political, and neither is **Acts 2:44-45**: *“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”* The early church sold individual possessions and distributed resources as any saint among them had need. **Don’t let your political preferences blind you to the truth of what God’s word plainly teaches!** The Lord establishes equality among believers. In Christ, *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female” (Gal. 3:28).* Yet, while God establishes equality in Him, Christians are responsible for pursuing equity among brethren by helping meet one another’s needs.

CONCLUSION

May churches never be content merely to oppose unauthorized uses of the Lord’s money. Instead, let us be diligent in pursuing the authorized uses revealed in God’s word. Let us support faithful preachers, assist needy saints, strive for equity among brethren, and offer sacrifices that are well-pleasing to God. In doing so, we will prove the sincerity of our love, advance the cause of Christ, and demonstrate faithful stewardship of the blessings God has entrusted to us. Peter wrote, *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:9-10).* Those words capture the spirit that should characterize every Christian and every congregation of God’s people. The Lord has blessed us richly, and He expects us to be faithful stewards of those blessings. **The question remains: What are we doing with the Lord’s money?**

SWORD SWIPES

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

Humility is not necessarily thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less and others more.

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

(DTS)

Unsound Arguments for the Truth

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

WWW.THEGOODNEWSOFGOD.ORG



One of the least wise things we can do is defend truth with unsound arguments. Even if our conclusion is correct, we do damage to the cause of Christ when we use faulty reasoning, misapply passages, exaggerate facts, or make claims the Bible does not make for itself. We should not only care about arriving at the correct conclusions - we should also care about correctly arriving at the correct conclusions (2 Tim. 2:15). Peter warned that some “twist” the scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). It is possible to twist scriptures in defense of the truth and create unsound arguments for the truth. Consider some examples.

GOD NEVER ANSWERS THE PRAYERS OF SINNERS?

As a means for encouraging people not to remain outside the body of Christ, it is often argued that God will not answer the prayers of sinners. While generally true, this discussion is actually much more nuanced than many Christians may realize.

In John 9:31, we read where a man who was not a disciple of Christ said, “We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.”

This statement, although said by an uninspired man, teaches a general truth that God does not hear the prayers of those who are not obedient to Him. An inspired writer put it like this: “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Prov. 28:9). Elsewhere, God, through Isaiah, said, “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:15). So, it’s quite clear that God does not listen to the prayers of people who do not obey Him. However, there is scriptural evidence that God will listen to and even answer the prayers of those who are not Christians but are earnestly seeking to understand/obey the truth.

Before Cornelius became a Christian, he was described as “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). During this time, Cornelius had not yet obeyed the gospel. In fact, Acts 11 later explains that he still needed to hear words by which he would be saved (Acts 11:13-14). Yet, even before his conversion, Cornelius prayed continually to God, and the Bible tells us how an angel appeared to Cornelius, telling him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4; see also Acts 10:31). God took notice of Cornelius’s prayers because he was sincerely seeking Him. However, God did not save Cornelius simply because he prayed. Instead, God sent Peter to preach the gospel to him so that he could learn what he needed to do to be saved (Acts 10:33-48, 11:14).

The example of Cornelius helps us better understand passages such as **John 9:31**, **Prov. 28:9**, and **Isa. 1:15**. The “*sinner*” described in those passages is not someone who is humbly seeking God and earnestly trying to learn the truth. Rather, these passages refer to someone who refuses to listen to God’s law and persists in rebellion. Cornelius was different. Though he had not yet obeyed the gospel, he was actively seeking God and desired to know His will. Thus, God responded to Cornelius’s prayers by providing him with the opportunity to hear the saving message of Christ.

This example should provide comfort to those who are sincerely searching for God (**Heb. 11:6**). It shows that God is willing - to adapt an old expression - to meet truth-seekers halfway. If someone genuinely desires to know and obey the truth, God will ensure that the opportunity to learn truth will be provided to them (He does the same for truth-seeking Christians who are in error too [see **Phil. 3:15**]). At the same time, the example of Cornelius also reminds us that prayer alone does not place a person into a saved relationship with God. Cornelius still needed to hear and obey the gospel message; the same is true for us today. While God may hear the prayers of those who are sincerely seeking Him, the prayers of those who continue in rebellion and refuse to obey His word will not be accepted.



MATT. 18:6 TEACHES WE SHOULD PROTECT CHILDREN?

It is not uncommon to hear **Matt. 18:6** used as a passage to teach that we should protect children from harm. Certainly, protecting children is a scriptural principle (**Exod. 22:22**; **Psalm 82:2-4**, **127:3**; **Eph. 6:4** etc.). The Bible consistently presents children and, in general, the defenseless as people to be protected rather than ignored, mistreated, or exploited. However, **Matt. 18:6** does not teach us anything about the necessity of protecting literal children.

Jesus said, “*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck*” (**Matt. 18:6**). Notice that Jesus specifically referred to “*little ones who believe in Me*.” This tells us that Jesus was not referring to the literal child in their midst but, rather, the people who would be “*converted and become as little children*” (**Matt. 18:2**). While this could include literal children who are believers, the focus is on Christians who are spiritually weak or vulnerable. So, **Matt. 18:6** is not talking about protecting children but, rather, is warning about the danger of causing brethren to stumble into sin (**v.10 & 14** make it especially clear that “*little ones*” is not in reference to literal children but believers regardless of age). As Jesus often did, He used something literal that His audience could identify with - in this case a literal child - to make a spiritual point. The point being that brethren, especially those who are spiritually weak or vulnerable, must be protected and never influenced, encouraged, or caused by our words, actions, etc. to commit sin.

The actual point of **Matt. 18:6** is that Christians must never do anything that would cause a fellow believer to sin. Let’s not make the text say something it doesn’t actually say

(we should protect literal children) to defend an otherwise scriptural truth.

1 COR. 13:8-10 PROVES GOD NO LONGER WORKS MIRACULOUSLY?

I think all members of the Lord's church understand that miraculous spiritual gifts have ceased (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**). However, some brethren go too far and argue that God no longer works miraculously whatsoever today. That is one of the most common unsound arguments for the truth that I have ever heard.

1 Cor. 13:8-10 does not prove that God no longer works miraculously today. **1 Cor. 13:8-10** only proves that God no longer works miraculously through human beings by means of spiritual gifts as He did in the first century. Saying God no longer miraculously works through men is not the same thing as saying God no longer miraculously works at all.

Passages like **Heb. 2:3-4**, **2 Cor. 12:12**, **Mark 16:20**, and **1 Cor. 14:22** show that miraculous gifts through men had a specific purpose. God's people performed various miracles to confirm and reveal the word of God, as well as serve as signs to unbelievers. Just like with **1 Cor. 13:8-10**, these passages prove the temporary nature of miraculous gifts performed through men, but those texts do not prove that God Himself would ever stop working miraculously altogether.

We need to be careful to never put God in a box that He did not put Himself in. The New Testament simply does not teach that God will ever stop working miraculously in this world. In light of this, we must avoid speaking where the Bible does not speak (**1 Pet. 4:11**). God said nothing about Him ceasing to work miracles in this world. Therefore, we have no reason to assume/infer

that God has stopped working miraculously. Obviously, we should not throw around the word "miracle" every time something good happens, but, at the same time, we should not act as though God is limited only to what we can explain through natural means.

God is still "*able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ... think*" (**Eph. 3:20**). Let's not "*limit*" the Holy One of Israel (**Psalms 78:41**) by making unsound arguments for the truth when teaching our Pentecostal, Holiness, and similar friends that miraculous spiritual gifts have ceased.

SMOKING, DRINKING, ETC. ARE SINS BECAUSE OF 1 COR. 6:19-20?

It is very common to hear brethren argue that smoking, drinking, and recreational drug use are sinful because "*your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*" (**1 Cor. 6:19**). This, however, is an unsound argument for the truth.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 is so often taken out of its context that I think many brethren could not tell you the specific sin Paul was condemning which led him to say what he did about the Spirit of God dwelling in Christians' bodies. In context, Paul was specifically addressing the sin of "*sexual immorality*" (**1 Cor. 6:18**). Paul's point is that our bodies belong to God and should not be used for fornication because the Holy Spirit dwells in us (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**) and if a person commits fornication, he "*sins against his own body*" (**1 Cor. 6:18**). Therefore, Christians are to honor God with our bodies by avoiding the specific sin of sexual immorality. **1 Cor. 6:19-20** teaches the importance of sexual purity and has not one iota to say about drinking, smoking, etc. If **1 Cor. 6:19-20** condemns those sins, then they would also necessarily condemn a wide range of other

bodily decisions, such as a poor diet, lack of exercise, etc. I hope you can see how the argument that says **1 Cor. 6:19-20** principally condemns those sins is wildly inconsistent and unsustainable. More importantly, it is not supported by what the actual words on the pages say.

Let me be clear - smoking, drinking, recreational drug use, etc. are sins, but not because of **1 Cor. 6:19-20**. For example, **Eph. 5:18** and **1 Pet. 4:3** are the key passages telling us that drinking, including drinking without the intent to get drunk, is a sin. Smoking, drinking, and drug use are sins because Christians are not to be “*brought under the power of any*” (**1 Cor. 6:12**; **2 Pet. 2:19**). These things are sins because they affect our judgment (**Prov. 20:1, 23:29-35**; **1 Thess. 5:5-8**; **1 Pet. 5:8**; etc.). Smoking is a sin because it violates **Phil. 2:4** and **1 Cor. 10:24** by negatively affecting people around us via second hand smoke. Smoking, drinking, recreational drug use, and many other harmful habits are sinful for a variety of biblical reasons, but not because of **1 Cor. 6:19-20**.

THE HOLY SPIRIT STRICTLY WORKS THROUGH GOD’S WORD?

In reacting against Calvinism, Pentecostalism, and other charismatic denominational errors in regards to the role of the Holy Spirit, some brethren go too far in the opposite direction and claim that the Holy Spirit only works through the word of God today. **Rom. 8** teaches that such an argument simply is not true.

Paul wrote, “*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you*” (**Rom. 8:11**). Paul was not speaking about the word of God raising Christ from the dead. He was speak-

ing about the literal Spirit of God personally raising Christ and personally dwelling in believers. That same context goes on to say that “*the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us*” (**Rom. 8:26-27**). This intercession is tied to the Spirit’s indwelling presence mentioned earlier in **Rom. 8:11**. The Spirit who dwells in Christians is the same Spirit who intercedes for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven at the right hand of God (**Rom. 8:34**), while the Spirit intercedes from within believers’ hearts (**Gal. 4:6**). That is something the Holy Spirit does personally and not through the written word of God. Therefore, it is an unsound argument to tell our denominational friends that the Holy Spirit only works through the word of God today.

None of this means the Holy Spirit gives anyone new revelations today (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**) or overrides anyone’s free will (**Acts 7:51**). However, we should not react to one false doctrine by possibly creating another which says the Holy Spirit only works through the word of God today since **Rom. 8** conclusively proves that argument is false. We can show denominational people their errors regarding the Holy Spirit without limiting what the Bible says the Spirit does for believers apart from the word of God.

EVERY CONVERSION IN ACTS MENTIONS BAPTISM?

In defending the necessity of baptism for salvation (**Mark 16:16**; **Acts 2:38**; **Acts 22:16**; **1 Pet. 3:21**; etc.), I have heard gospel preachers all of my life say that every single conversion in the book of **Acts** mentions baptism. Having heard that repeated my entire life, I was quite shocked to discover such an argument is an unsound argument for the truth.

Some conversions in **Acts** clearly mention baptism, such as those on Pentecost

(Acts 2:14-47), the Samaritans preached to by Philip (Acts 8:5-16) the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35-39), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16), Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48), Lydia (Acts 16:13-15), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-34), Crispus and the Cor. (Acts 18:1-8), and the twelve men at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-5). However, there are also cases where baptism is not specifically mentioned in the immediate account. For example, Acts 4 records that many believed, and the number of disciples grew to about five thousand men (Acts 4:4), but nothing is ever explicitly stated about baptism in this passage. Likewise, Acts 11:21, 24 says that “*a great number believed and turned to the Lord ... and many people were added to the Lord,*” with baptism never being mentioned.

Of course, we know the people mentioned in Acts 4 and Acts 11 were baptized because of what passages like Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; etc. plainly teach. My point is not that baptism was absent from these conversion cases, but that the text does not always explicitly say so like I have heard many preachers claim all of my life. We do not need to exaggerate facts to prove the necessity of baptism. The Bible already teaches baptism is necessary for salvation clearly enough without us making unsound arguments for the truth.

CONCLUSION

Bad arguments do not become good arguments simply because they are used in defense of the truth. In fact, unsound arguments can do more harm than good because they allow people an easy opportunity to see our faulty reasoning and, therefore, dismiss the truth altogether. If we want to defend the truth effectively, we must do so honestly, carefully, and accurately. Truth does not need exaggeration, misrepresentation, or faulty reasoning to stand on its own two feet.

MYTH BUSTERS #2

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

(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

Publicly debating the truth is not only permitted in scripture, it is positively approved. Jesus publicly debated the truth (Matt. 22:15-46), as did Paul (Acts 17:2, 17; etc.) and Apollos (Acts 18:28). That said, our motives matter greatly when it comes to debating scripture.

We should not debate merely to check a box (that’s pretty much the definition of Pharisaism [Matt. 15:8-9]), win an argument, embarrass an opponent, gain a following, or prove how much we know. A person who possesses all the knowledge in the world but lacks love accomplishes nothing in a debate (1 Cor. 13:2). The goal in debating should never be personal victory; the goal must be trying to help souls learn the truth. That is why it should not matter one iota if there are many or only a few people able to hear the debate.

Some only want to debate scripture if it will reach a large audience. However, if our objective is to try rescuing a soul from error, then even if only the person being debated benefits, the effort is worthwhile (Luke 15:7). The value of a debate is not measured by the size of the audience but the debaters’ faithfulness to God’s word and the attempt to lead someone closer to Him.

(DTS)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

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

This is No Time to Give Up

IRVEN LEE

PUBLISHED JAN. 1988 IN GUARDIAN OF TRUTH (XXXII:2, PP.35-36)

Elijah went to Mount Horeb in getting away from those who threatened his life, especially Jezebel. The question that came from the Lord was, “*What doest thou here, Elijah?*” Elijah’s answer came from his discouraged heart. “*He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and-I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away*” (1 Kgs. 19:14).

Christ came into a wicked world and sent his apostles out into that Roman Empire with its atheism, idolatry, and immorality. The apostles’ work was not in vain. Why did God select a generation that was given to greed and carnality? “*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son*” (Gal. 4:4). Did he make a mistake in selecting that generation? That age was very much like ours. If those apostles and other disciples could go to cities like Ephesus and Corinth and reach many people, could not a few men with the zeal of the early disciples and the same gospel do as they did? Men are going out today and planting the seed and seeing a harvest. Hollywood and humanists have made it more difficult to reach people, but there are some hearts that can be reached.

Servants of the Lord do not use carnal weapons, but their weapons are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Paul had gone into Corinth and established

the church in that city of idolatry and immorality associated with pagan deities. Greece had atheists, so many who thought that they were only animals certainly lived in that city of trade and corruption. “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

It was difficult to keep the people who had been washed from going back to their old ways. Whatever sin becomes common in a community tends to come right on into the church. The use of alcohol and other drugs is common everywhere, so it becomes a problem to the church. Divorce is in the world about us, so expect it among church members. This is not new. Recall the parable of the sower. Some seed fell on the wayside soil, some on the stony ground, some fell among thorns, but there were some with good and honest hearts and they brought forth fruit. It is that way in this generation. We do not reach all when we preach the gospel, nor do we keep all who make a start in the right direction; but we should remember that there are some with good and honest hearts in our time.

The Lord may have to remove the candlestick from many churches. That was a possibility among the seven churches of Asia (see **Rev. 1-3**). Bold and faithful teaching may save some sick churches if they will endure sound doctrine (**2 Tim. 4:1-5**). There is room for hope that some who went into the digressive movement in the recent decades may be restored. The liberal preachers and churches are going further and further in their move back to denominationalism. As they do this, some preachers and churches are awakening and are moving back toward a safer course. Maybe we can gradually trade our worse members for their best! Many will cross the line of separation going to the liberals, and others will cross as they come back to safety.

Some churches have zero growth, gaining only as many as drop out through death or unfaithfulness. This is discouraging, but there are new churches starting and growing. Some older churches are also setting a good record. Take a good look at the fine young people who have ability and conviction. Fifty years ago many churches met only one hour per week for Bible study, and there were not many capable teachers. Young men went their own way on Sunday. This was true especially in rural churches. It is possible now to see factions, worldliness, indifference, lack of growth, and all these things depress some who care. But keep looking, and you will see young adults who attend night services, conduct some home studies, and maintain high moral standards. Some point out that there are but few. Did the Lord promise many (**Matt. 7:13-14**)?

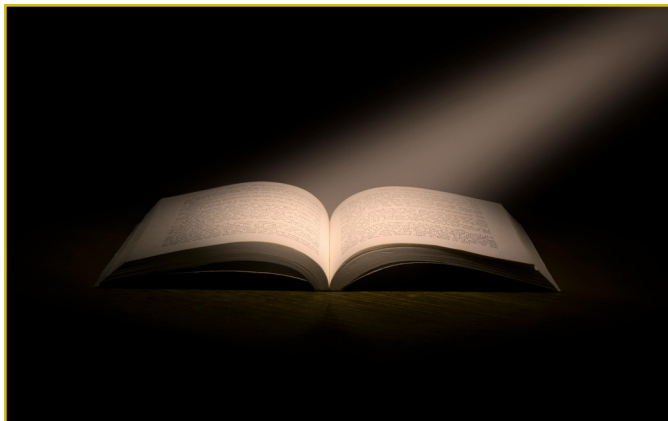
Churches grew fast in the 1930s and 1940s, but we baptized people faster than we taught them to have special regard for Christ as the head of the church. Faithful servants of the Lord have regard for the silence of the Bible as well as for the words. A practice is

not scriptural if it is not even mentioned in the Book (see **2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19**).

Drug addicts and fornicators are not happy people. Suicides are very common among them. The Roman world with a life style like the worst in our world were not a happy people. The pleasure of sin is but for a season. The righteous people have the promise of the life that now is and of the life that is to come (**1 Tim. 4:8; Mk. 10:28-30**). The Roman pagans could see that Christians had something good that they themselves did not have. They may have first observed the courage of those who died for their faith. The church in the next generation may suffer more persecution from the world, but there will still be Christians who worship God.

As you see the weakness among those who profess to be Christians you may become discouraged to the point of hopelessness or you may double your efforts as you fight a good fight. The Lord may “shake the tree” so that the faulty fruit will fall. He did that in the last part of the last century by the societies and instruments of music. The tree has been shaken just as hard in the last part of this century. Study the word and meditate on it so that you will not fall for the next unscriptural practice or doctrine that comes to test us (see **1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Thess. 2:10-12**).

Put on the whole armor and stand (**Eph. 6:10-20**). These are times that try men’s souls. Take your place in the front lines. My generation of preachers fought some good battles, but we will soon give way to another, and as we step aside for the next generation we leave them with problems. There will still be battles to fight. The gospel is still here and still powerful. We need to urge all who come after us to pull down the strongholds of evil with the Lord’s weapons.



www.thegoodnewsofgod.org