

The Whole Counsel of God

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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 Nov. 2024

It is with great joy we present the second edition in our second volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We hope this month's edition of the journal finds you healthy and well.

As we draw closer to wrapping up another year, I have been reflecting on the Lord's goodness to me over these past 10 months. As many of you are aware, the last couple years presented many personal challenges to me. I frequently found myself praying that God would provide spiritually healthy distractions for me to focus on and put my time and energy into (Phil.

4:8) rather than dwelling on the many problems that persist in my life and throughout our society. God has certainly answered those prayers by continually opening doors for me to teach His word (Col. 4:3), allowing me to focus on the good parts (Luke 10:42). I am incredibly thankful for the goodness of God and am humbled to be a tool for His eternal purpose (Eph. 2:10).

With the United States presidential election being upon us at the time of publication, I have included an article titled, *"Christians and the Government."* I pray you will give this good article careful consideration as we all strive to submit to our authorities (good and bad), in accordance with the scriptures. Also included in this month's edition of the journal are articles answering questions such as, *"Should a Poygamist be Baptized?"* and *"Is Love Required for Initial Salvation?"* We hope these articles will bring to remembrance some important principles of truth. Additionally, we have included an article titled, *"Law and Legalism,"* showing the erroneous thinking permeating the religious world (such thinking that even exists among God's people) that strict adherence to God's law, and insistence on such, is somehow unscriptural. We pray these articles and all other articles included in this's month's journal will be of spiritual benefit to all who read them.

We look forward, Lord willing, to the holiday season that is quickly approaching and another new year, and we pray that all will wisely take advantage of the time God has granted us (Eph. 5:15-17). Thank you all for your continued love and encouragement.

(DTS)



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Should a Polygamist be Baptized?

OSAMAGBE LESLEY EGHAREVBA | LAGOS, NIGERIA

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QUESTION

We preached to a woman who is the second wife of a man. She accepted and desired to be baptized. Is there any reason to delay her baptism even as she is still the second wife to the man?

ANSWER

In the New Testament, when people gladly receive the Word of God, they were baptized immediately without delay (**Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 16:33; 22:16**). However, there are steps that one must take before baptism. One of them is repentance. Repentance is commanded before baptism: "Then Peter said to them, *'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'*" (**Acts 2:38**). A person does not just jump to baptism simply by hearing and believing. The people on the day of Pentecost heard the gospel and were cut to the heart (believed – **Acts 2:37**). But Peter asked them to repent and be baptized. Today, the message is still the same. People must repent of their sins and be baptized. Polygamy is a sin (**1 Cor. 7:2; Matt. 19:45**). When a man has more than one wife at a time, it is called polygyny. When a woman has more than one husband at one time, it is called polyandry. Both practices are wrong and must be repented of before baptism.

Some have argued that **Acts 2:38** refers to a particular sin of "killing Jesus" and that such was the sin that Peter told them to repent of and that applying that text to other sins such as polygamy will be a misapplication of the verse. Thus, they conclude that

polygamists should be baptized and should be taught to understand the truth so that they may repent later. However, it seems to me that **Acts 2:38** did not refer to a particular sin. The text says *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."* Notice that "sins" is in the plural. Were they to repent of "one sin" and have "many sins" forgiven? In fact, Paul was told to be baptized and wash away his sins (**Acts 22:16**). Did Paul repent of just one sin and have many sins washed away?

Will those who advocate that polygamists be baptized without repentance be willing to accept that those in gay marriages be baptized without repentance by ending the unscriptural marriage? If not, why not? I believe that the Bible teaches that repentance must precede baptism and only those who have repented should be baptized. Therefore, a polygamist (just as every other sinner) should repent before baptism.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

I am confident all reading this article agree with refraining from baptizing a polygamist until the unlawful marriages are terminated. I am also confident all who read this article agree that a person in a homosexual marriage must terminate that unlawful relationship before being baptized. However, not all will agree that an adulterer must terminate his unlawful relationship before being baptized. Why is that? If the adulterer does not need to terminate his unlawful relationship prior to baptism, then neither do the polygamist and homosexual. All three stand and fall together.

Christians and the Government

JAKE PACK | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

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In the divisive political environment present today (not just in the United States, but in the world at large), it is important that Christians understand how to act towards the authorities over us. It is important that Christians have a complete understanding of this subject as only understanding part of how God wants us to treat the government can easily lead to acting against the will of God.

First, Look at **Rom. 13** where the Apostle Paul informs the reader that every person is to be subject to the government as the governments in place have been put there by God as an avenger against the wrongdoer. Paul states that those who resist the authorities resist God who has put those authorities there. Paul also states (as does Jesus in **Matt. 22:17-21**) that paying taxes to the government is important as it allows the government to properly perform their actions.

Does this mean that the government is without fault? Is every government a force for good because they were put in place by God? Certainly not! We can easily understand from the Apostles' actions in **Acts 5:27-32** where they answered "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" From their actions Christians can understand that the instructions of God (given to us in the Bible) supersede the instructions of the Government. If the government orders you to do things contrary to the Gospel, that is the exception to your obedience to them.

But - and this may be the hardest part of this subject to follow - even when the gov-

ernment mistreats us, we still are to respect them. The Apostle Peter in **1 Pet. 2:13-17** reminds Christians to not only be subject to the authorities but also to give them honor. In addition to these instructions from Peter we can also look at the many examples in the Bible of Christians being brought before authorities: The Apostles in **Acts 5**, Paul in **Acts 24**, and even Jesus himself when he was brought before the High Priest and Pilate in **John 18**. These examples show us that even when the authorities mistreat us we are to remain calm and remain respectful of their position and their worldly authority.

One last thing to consider: even when someone is under an oppressive or evil authority, there is a reason and purpose for it. In the Old Testament God regularly punished the disobedience of the Israelites by sending an oppressive government to control them. Even further in the past, the Pharaoh of Egypt was an evil ruler used by God to free the Israelites and instill faith in the power of God. In the New Testament the actions of Pilate (the Roman governor of Judea) were used by God to fulfill prophecy by sacrificing Jesus on the cross. Whether it is to punish wrongdoers, to temper the righteous, or for some purpose we may not readily perceive, God has put in place the authorities for good reason.

To summarize, obey the authorities unless they order you to walk contrary to God's law. Respect the authorities, even when they mistreat you. And finally, understand that even evil, corrupt, and oppressive governments have a purpose.

Rejected by His Own (John 1:1-11)

MIKE JOHNSON | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

PUBLISHED JUL. 2024 IN SEEKING THINGS ABOVE

John 1:1-18 is considered the prologue of the book of John. A prologue introduces a literary work, providing background information about the characters, setting, or events. The rest of the book then explains and backs up what is in the prologue. Unlike the other gospel accounts, John proclaims Jesus to be the son of God in the beginning.

Verses 1-2 point out that Christ was present at creation and separate from God; we learn He is divine and created the world. In the course of time, He came to the earth as the “light” (**v.8-9**) so people could become children of God and receive salvation (**1:12, 29**). However, the world generally rejected him (**v.10**). More specifically, **verse 11** says, “*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*”

Speaking prophetically, Isaiah spoke about Jesus, saying, “*He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him*” (**Isa. 53:3**). Specifically, the Jews (“His own”) turned their backs on Him, not believing He was the promised Messiah. They got the Romans involved, who put the Lord to death as a common criminal. Due to their previous teaching, the Jews should have been better prepared to receive the message of Jesus than anyone else (**Matt. 10:5-6**). Even later, when entering a new city, Paul would first go to the synagogue to the Jews.

Consider the opposition more specifically. The Jews looked down on Jesus because He was from Galilee (**John 7:41, 52**).

Concerning the specific town He was from (Nazareth), some asked if anything good could come from there (**John 1:46**). Jesus performed many miracles witnessed by the two major sects of His day (the Pharisees and Sadducees) who still refused to believe Him (**John 12:37-43**). They tried to kill or have Him arrested many times (**Matt. 12:14; Matt. 26:3-4; John 10:30-31**).

The Jews also rejected Jesus because of misconceptions about the nature of the kingdom that He would establish. They thought the Messiah would lead them in overthrowing the Romans. After the miracle of feeding the 5000, certain ones were going to take him by force and make Him king (**John 6:15**). However, at His trial, Jesus responded to Pilate saying, “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here*” (**John 18:36**).

Jealousy was also an issue among the many Jewish leaders. Pilate even knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him because of “envy” (**Mark 15:10**). The feeling of the Jewish leaders that Jesus might cause them to lose their status and power played a role in their rejection of Him.

Jesus was even rejected in His hometown of Nazareth (**Luke 4:16-30**). People in the synagogue drove Him out from there and were about to throw Him off a cliff, “*when He passed through the midst of them, He went His way*” (**Luke 4:30**). At first, even Jesus’s brothers did not believe in Him (**John 7:5**).

If Jesus's "own" did not receive Him, imagine the reaction of those who did not fall into this category. Sadly, the majority of the world does not accept Him today. There are various reasons for this rejection. Consider, however, Jesus's statement in **John 3:19-21**: *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* Yet, despite Jesus mostly being rejected during His time on the earth, many did receive Him (**1:12-13**) as He continued His efforts. Further, after His resurrection on Pentecost, Jesus's apostles preached the gospel for the first time. There were 3000 baptized in one day (**Acts 2:41**), and the church continued to grow (**Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7**). This growth resulted from people spreading the message of Jesus locally and throughout the world (**Acts 5:42; 8:1-4; Col. 1:23**).

How do we handle rejection? What do we do when even "our own" refuse to listen? People we view as the best prospects may turn away from us as we try to teach them, as they did with Jesus. But, we must continue our efforts and even expand our range. Prospects are among those who are morally bankrupt (**Acts 24:1-26; John 4; 1 Cor. 6:9-11**), rich sinners (**Luke 12:13-21; 19:2-10; 1 Tim. 6:10, 17-19**), ignorant and poor (**Acts 3:14-19; James 2:1-4**), highly prejudiced (**Gal. 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:13**), and involved in religious error (**Acts 17:22-23**). As with Jesus and the early disciples, rejection should not stop us from teaching others!

THINK ON THIS

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

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you - unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Many people spend countless hours trying to persuade others to look at them in a positive light. It may be because a person has low self-esteem and feels like they need the approval of others, or maybe they just like to please others. But many times, people do this because they have something about themselves they are trying to hide. And so, folks are content to put on an act and eventually the act becomes so ingrained in them that they soon fail to distinguish reality from fiction. In essence, the lie becomes a truth to them and no one has a clue! This is why it is so important to heed the words of Paul from our verse for the day. Each of us must honestly examine ourselves daily. After all, I am the only human being that truly knows me, and you are the only human being that truly knows you. Examine your heart, examine your motives, examine your attitudes. It's crucial that we're honest with ourselves, for God already knows what's inside of us. And regardless of who we fool, God cannot be fooled!

(Jody Lusk | AL, USA – Mar. 2023)

Repentance is Necessary

RICHIE THETFORD | COLORADO, UNITED STATES
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One of the hardest things for men and women to do is to repent of their sins. Repentance is a direct challenge to man's will power. It demands that he humble himself before God, and give up everything that is contrary to His will. God's demands of repentance have kept many of the high minded out of the kingdom of God.

Repentance is a duty imposed upon all mankind. It is a plain command of God, and no man can refuse to repent without bearing the responsibility that must come upon him. When Jesus gave the world-wide commission, He said, *"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations"* (Luke 24:47). Paul said, *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30). Can anyone read these scriptures and conclude that he can be saved without repentance? I would hope not!



Let us clear away some of the misunderstanding about repentance by learning what it is NOT.

In the first place, repentance is not simply being afraid. Paul convicted Felix of his sins, Felix trembled with fear but he did not repent and turn (Acts 24:25). There are many people today who are afraid when they think of their sinfulness, but they, like Felix, refuse to repent, and die without hope.

In the second place, repentance is not simply being sorry that one has sinned. The murderers of Jesus sorrowed on Pentecost at Peter's preaching. They were pierced in their hearts by godly sorrow. Yet, they were told to repent (Acts 2:38).

In the third place, repentance is not simply and solely a reformation of life. A man may quit sin and yet not repent toward God. He may quit because that particular sin renders him unpopular in his business or among his associates. Thus, he may reform his life for selfish reasons, but such reformation is not repentance. Simply stated, repentance is a change of mind, or will, based upon godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), and resulting in a manner of life directed by Christ (Acts 26:20).

Our Lord gave us an example of repentance which we can all understand. He said, *"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went"* (Matt. 21:28-29). This boy began to reflect on what he had done, and he realized that he had disobeyed his father, thus He became conscious of the fact that he

sinned against his father, who was responsible for his very existence. When he came to himself, he acknowledged that wrong and then corrected it. He changed HIS MIND (repented) and did that which he said he would not do. Jesus said that was repentance.

Christ said to the Pharisees, *"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here"* (Matt. 12:41). Jesus here says that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonas. The Bible says: *"God saw their works and that they turned from their evil way"* (Jonah 3:10). The preaching of the prophet of God changed the mind of the Ninevites, and this change led them to turn from their evil way. This change of mind was repentance.

The Lord has given men two motives as the means of bringing them to repentance. The first motive is fear. The Bible writers say, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences"* (2 Cor. 5:10-11). This statement and all the warnings in the Bible are intended to move us to repent of our sins. The second motive God uses to bring about repentance is love. The Bible says, *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance"* (Rom. 2:4). The goodness of God is revealed in the life and death of His only Son, Jesus Christ. As we study the life of our Lord, and see the beauty of holiness manifested through His earthly pilgrimage, then follow Him to Calvary and watch Him suffer there,

dying for our sins, making it possible for sinners to be saved, and to become children of God, we ask why all this flow of love, why all this display of goodness? The answer comes back to us in the Bible, *"the goodness of God leads you to repentance."*

MYTH BUSTERS

"They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths"
(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

I think a lot of religious confusion would be avoided and possibly altogether erased if everyone realized there has never been one single person ever to be born in sin. Adam passed on the ability to sin, not sin itself - *"Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, BECAUSE ALL SINNED"* (Rom. 5:12). Sin is something we do, not something passed on to us (see Matt. 13:41; John 3:20; Rom. 2:9,14; Col. 3:25; 3 John 11; 1 Pet. 3:12; Ezek. 18:20). The very definition of sin tells us that sin is something we choose to do and not something someone gives us or passes down to us:

- 1 John 3:4 – *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"* (KJV).
- James 4:17 – *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

THE TRUTH IS OBVIOUS.

(DTS)

Is Love Required For Initial Salvation?

PAT DONAHUE | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES
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Gal 5:6 reads “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” So once we have the proper kind of faith, that faith must begin to work “by love” to complete (**James 2:22**) our initial salvation (unless you think one is saved via an incomplete faith), and should continue the rest of our life toward the goal of eternal salvation. When the book of **Galatians** and **Acts 15** talk about circumcision, the issue is whether or not one has to be circumcised to “be saved” (**Acts 15:1**), so when **Gal 5:6** is talking about how circumcision does not avail but faith working by love does, it is asserting the necessity of faith working by love to salvation. All three attributes must be there for one to be saved.

Love has to be the motivation for saving obedience – so say both **Gal 5:6** and **John 14:15** (“If ye love me, keep my commandments”). If someone has true faith and therefore understands what Jesus has done for them, how could they not appreciate what Jesus has done for them and love him for it?

James 1:12b also shows the necessary link between love and receiving the crown of life when it says “he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” I am pretty sure

we would all agree the “crown of life” and going to heaven are synonymous, and so the teaching of the verse would be – a sinner cannot go to heaven without loving the Lord. Am I right?

John 14:21 reads “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” In one sense God loves everybody unconditionally (**John 3:16**), that is, He wants what’s best for everybody and sent His son so they could be saved eternally. But in another sense, God only loves those that love Him, meaning He only gives salvation to those who love Jesus by keeping his commandments. This is clearly taught by **John 14:21** and **23** (“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”). So God is not going to love anybody in the sense of giving them salvation from sin if they don’t love Jesus. Doesn’t **John 14** make that abundantly clear?

1 Cor. 16:22 reads “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” The word “anathema” means “a person or thing accursed or consigned to condemnation” (dictionary.com). So if a sinner can believe and be baptized and be saved without loving Jesus, that would mean a person who dies “consigned to condemnation” (because he doesn’t love the Lord yet) is going to be saved. Does that even make sense?

“Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the Will of God”

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

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The book of Ephesians begins with Paul describing himself as, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (**Eph. 1:1, NASB**). Paul began most of his letters by emphasizing his apostleship (**Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1**). This expression is not a statement of pride but one presenting a simple fact. There are many lessons that can be learned from this seemingly simple expression.

PAUL’S AUTHORITY WAS DIVINE

Paul plainly states in **Eph. 1:1** that he was “an apostle of Christ Jesus.” During the first century, there were those in the early church who questioned the authority of Paul. For instance, a significant portion of the last few chapters of **2 Cor.** deal with Paul answering those who doubted his apostolic authority. There were some in Corinth who sought “proof” of Christ speaking in Paul (**2 Cor. 13:3**). This problem is one that has persisted throughout the centuries. Even today, many attempt to discredit the work and authority of the apostle Paul, claiming his com-

mands are not equivalent to a “thus says the Lord.” Is this actually true? Are Paul’s biblical writings not as authoritative as the words of Christ recorded in the gospel accounts?

Those who doubt Paul’s authority often point to **Acts 1:12-26**, which is where we can read of Matthias being appointed to take the place of Judas after his death (**Matt. 27:3-10**). In this passage, we can see the the qualifications for apostleship. Peter explains, “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (**Acts 1:21-22**). Since we have no indication that Paul (as Saul) was ever a follower of Jesus before his conversion in **Acts 9**, and since he worked in direct opposition to Jesus and His ministry (**Acts 8:3**), Paul clearly does not qualify to be an apostle under the guidelines described in **Acts 1:21-22**. So, should we disregard the epistles written by Paul?

Consider what Peter and the other apostles prayed in **Acts 1:24-26** when trying to determine who to appoint to the role of apostle. Here, it is recorded, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Casting lots was a practice used

in Israel for generations to discern God's will (**Lev. 16:8; Josh. 18:6; 1 Sam. 14:42**), but this passage clearly shows how the apostles requested for God - not chance - to "*show which one of these two*" He had "*chosen*." In other words, God and Christ had the final say in determining Matthias would be an apostle. This is important to recognize because, although Paul did not accompany the apostles during Christ's ministry, Jesus Himself would ultimately appoint Paul to the apostleship. Speaking of Paul, Jesus told Ananias, "*Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel*" (**Acts 9:15**). Paul, then, was most certainly a true apostle speaking authoritative commands from the Lord since Christ chose him to spread His Word, just as He chose the original twelve apostles and Matthias as Judas's replacement.

Paul's apostolic authority is well-documented in scripture, beginning with Christ appearing to him on the road to Damascus, leading Paul to change from one of the most well-known persecutors of first century Christians (**Acts 9:13**) to one of our most vital sources of information in the Bible. Paul told the Corinthians that he was sent by Christ Himself to "*preach the gospel*" (**1 Cor. 1:17**) because he, like the other apostles, possessed the "*mind of Christ*" to impart the wisdom of God (**1 Cor. 2:16; see also Gal. 1:11-12; Matt. 28:18-20**), as guided by the Holy Spirit (**John 14:26; 2 Pet. 1:19-21**). Since the church is "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, [with] Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone*" (**Eph. 2:20**); since Peter - another apostle of our Lord - considered Paul's words as authoritative scripture (**2 Pet. 3:16**); and since "*all Scripture is God-breathed*" (**2 Tim. 3:16**,

NIV), if we attempt to discredit the authority of Paul by claiming he was not a true apostle of Christ, we call the Bible - thus God - a liar. Let us never be guilty of contributing to such error.

THE MESSENGER MIGHT GET ATTACKED

Why would Paul begin most of his letters by emphasizing his apostleship? Allow me to suggest that this did not occur merely by happenstance; Paul likely knew people would not only question his authority but would likely attack his character, leading him to stress the source of his authority.

Paul was no stranger to the fact that when false teachers cannot refute the message they often try to discredit the character or reputation of the messenger. Paul experienced this first-hand in **2 Cor. 10**. Many in Corinth responded to his first letter positively even though harsh rebukes abounded throughout the letter (**2 Cor. 7:6-7**), yet there were still others in Corinth who responded negatively, even seeking to discredit the divine authority of Paul by mocking his appearance (**2 Cor. 10:7**). Specifically, some said, "*For his letters . . . are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*" (**2 Cor. 10:10**). It is indeed true that when Paul labored in Corinth he was in a weak state (**1 Cor. 2:3-4**). Furthermore, it is likely true that Paul was not the most eloquent speaker either (**1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1,4; 2 Cor. 11:6**). It is also generally accepted by scholars that Paul likely did not have the most imposing appearance (the scriptures do not definitively state this to be true); yet, when we act like these select few Corinthians by attacking the source of truth and correction rather than accepting rebuke from righteous people (**Psalms 141:5**), we deflect from the real problem - ourselves.

SENT BY CHRIST & BELONGING TO HIM

The word “*of*” denotes an association between two entities, typically one of belonging. As **Eph. 1:1** shows, Paul was an apostle “*of*” Christ Jesus, not only sent forth by Him (**Acts 9:15-16**) but also belonging to Him. When Paul defended his apostleship in **2 Cor. 10**, he stated, “*If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s (2 Cor 10:7b)*. One would think Paul may have been tempted to elevate himself above others given his divinely appointed position granted to him by Christ. Yet, Paul described himself and the other apostles in the same way as any other Christian - “*just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s.*”

The Corinthians needed to be reminded that Paul, although he was an apostle, was not their head or source of salvation. Paul asked, “*For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:4-11)*. Of all men who could have distinguished himself from the “common”

Christian, Paul instead recognized he was simply Christ’s possession just like all other Christians (**Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 6:19**). For us today, regardless of whatever big-name preacher helped convert us and regardless of our race, gender, etc., all Christians belong to Christ (**Gal. 3:28**). We are all fellow saints (**Eph. 1:2**) and servants (**Rev. 22:9**) belonging to Him (**1 Pet. 2:9; Tit. 2:14**).

EVERYTHING IS BY THE WILL OF GOD

Paul not only repeatedly emphasized his apostleship when he began his letters, but he also repeatedly emphasized that his apostleship was “*by the will of God.*” Everything in life - even the divine appointment of apostleship - happens by the will of God.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He acknowledged that God’s will would be accomplished on earth just as it is in Heaven (**Matt. 6:10**). James also reminds us in **James 4:15** that it is only by the will of God that we wake up each morning. Therefore, we ought to say, “*If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.*” We are completely and utterly dependent on God. Paul told the Athenians that it is God who “*gives to all life, breath, and all things . . . for in Him we live and move and have our being*” (**Acts 17:25, 28a**). Examining this passage, Gill, in his exposition explained, “The natural life which men live is from God; and they are supported in it by him; and from him they have all the comforts and blessings of life; and all motions, whether external or internal, of body or of mind, are of God, and none of them are without the concurrence of his providence, and strength assistance from him.” We should all be like Paul and proudly declare that our lives and good fortune are the result of God looking kindly upon us. Truly, it is by God’s will that we live and move and have our being.

Can Women Audibly Confess During Church?

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

WWW.THEGOODNEWSOFGOD.ORG

1 Cor. 14:34-35 clearly states, *“The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”* Many who correctly understand that this command forbids women from teaching, preaching, leading prayer, leading singing, etc. during the church assembly when the whole church has come together in one place (**1 Cor. 14:22**) still assume it is perfectly appropriate for women to audibly confess Christ or audibly confess sins during the whole church assembly. Let’s examine why such audible confessions are condemned by **1 Cor. 14:34-35** for the very same reasons women are prohibited from teaching, preaching, leading prayer, leading singing, etc during the church assembly.



To be clear, the word translated “silent” in **1 Cor. 14:34** is different from the word translated “silence,” or quietness, found in **1 Tim. 2:11-12**. The command given in **1 Cor. 14:34-35** is given under the following circumstance: women must remain silent when the “whole church” has come together (**1 Cor. 14:23, 26**). Therefore, **1 Cor. 14:34-35** addresses issues specific to the church assembly while the command in **1 Tim. 2:11-12** is a general command that applies outside the assembly.

Now, **1 Cor. 14:34** says, *“For they [women] are not permitted to speak.”* There are no caveats and no exceptions listed here that make it appropriate for a woman to speak when the whole church has come together. Paul explains the reason why women must remain silent in church by concluding, *“For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”* Again, no situations are described that make a circumstance when a woman speaks during the whole church assembly anything other than “shameful.” Therefore, the passage is not just forbidding women from teaching or usurping authority over the man as in **1 Tim. 2:11-12**, but, rather, **1 Cor. 14:34-35** tells us women are both prohibited from taking a leading part in the worship service as well as “not permitted to speak” in any way when the whole church is together, period (participating in congregational singing would be the only exception [**Eph. 5:19**]). This fact is verified by the beginning of **v.35**, which instructs women to ask their husbands at home “if there is anything they desire to learn.” Asking a question to learn is not placing women into leadership roles, yet women

are still restricted from asking questions in the church assembly. Therefore, we can conclusively say it is unscriptural for a woman to audibly confess faith in Christ or confess her sins when the whole church has come together because she is not permitted to say *“anything”* during the assembly.

That said, women are absolutely required to confess Christ if they want to obey the gospel and become a Christian. **Rom. 10:9-10** makes this clear: *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”* This command is all-inclusive and applies to both men and women. Similarly, if a woman becomes a Christian but sins, she has the responsibility to confess her sins. James wrote, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed”* (**James 5:16a**). However, women are also required to pray (**1 Thess. 5:17**) and teach (**Titus 2:4**), yet we understand that **1 Cor. 14:34-35** forbids women from audibly praying and teaching during the whole church assembly. On those same grounds, a woman must not audibly confess her belief in Christ nor confess sin during the whole church assembly since doing so causes her to violate **1 Cor. 14:34-35**.

Only men are permitted to speak when the whole church has come together. If a woman desires to confess during the whole church assembly, she cannot do so audibly, which means the only way that confession can be accomplished within the assembly is if a man speaks on her behalf. However, if a woman wants to audibly confess Christ or confess sin (both of which are required for initial salvation and maintaining her salvation), she can do so outside the whole church as-

sembly like the Ethiopian eunuch confessed Christ to Philip in **Acts 8:37**. This confession happened outside of a church assembly and, based on the context, was a one-on-one confession between the eunuch and Philip. This example shows us that women can confess outside the assembly since **1 Cor. 14:34-35** prohibits them from doing so audibly when the whole church has come together. Thus, women have two options for confessing the name of Christ or confessing sin that would allow them to still remain in compliance with the command found in **1 Cor. 14:34-35**.

Did You Know?

There are many commonly held assumptions about certain Bible subjects that many Christians parrot even though the Bible never actually provides these often repeated answers. For example:

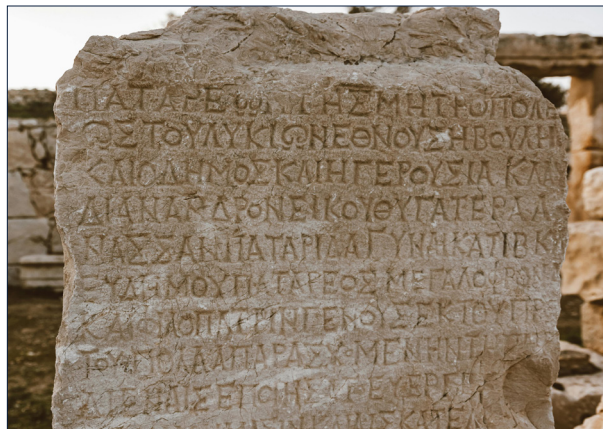
- The Bible never explains why Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times in John 21:15-17. Many assume Jesus did this because Peter denied Jesus three times (Matt. 26:69-75), but the Bible never overtly states such.
- The Bible never specifies what was Paul’s *“thorn in the flesh”* (2 Cor. 12:7). Many assume this *“thorn”* was something related to his eyes due to what is stated in Gal. 4:15, 6:11, but this could just as easily be merely a coincidence.

Just a reminder: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deut. 29:29). (DTS)

"It's in the Greek"

GREG GWIN | TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES

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As we study and discuss the New Testament there is sometimes a reference made to things that are contained in the original language. Someone will mention that “the Greek says” this or that. It’s not a bad thing to try to understand something about the meaning of words as used by the inspired writers, but a couple of warnings are in order.

First, there are relatively few real scholars of the Greek language, and there are NONE who have become such by spending a few hours looking at reference books or following links on the Internet. Not even those who have enrolled in one or two semesters of Greek studies at a college or university are qualified as true experts in this complicated field of study. This being the case, it is highly unlikely – effectively impossible – that the average person is going to find some undiscovered ‘nugget’ of information hiding in the Greek that was never noticed by those who have spent long years of dedicated work studying and learning the language. For instance, we had a situation where, in discussion of the mean-

ing of certain words in an important New Testament text, one fella made it a point to emphasize his high marks in two semesters of Greek during his college days. He then proceeded to claim that the established Greek authorities were wrong, and that he had a better understanding of what the words meant and how the passage should be translated. There was little use in further discussion because he had – at least in his own mind – settled the matter with some ‘insider’ knowledge of what was ‘in the Greek.’

Additionally, we should never convey the idea that the average person who has never studied Greek is incapable of comprehending the will of God. The truth is that large teams of competent scholars have combined their efforts to produce a number of excellent translations in the English language. Any diligent student today can take these versions and fully understand what God would have him to do. It may very well be – and often is the case – that a guy who couldn’t tell an ‘alpha’ from an ‘omega’ knows more about the real sense of a Bible text than another individual who has trouble ‘seeing it’ from behind his pile of Greek reference books.

Any and all efforts to fully understand the inspired Word – including studies of the original languages of the Bible – and apply it to our daily lives are commendable. But, be cautious about novel interpretations and conclusions that are based upon claims about what is ‘in the Greek.’

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

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

Law and Legalism

H.E. PHILLIPS

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Law is: “A general rule of action or conduct established or enforced by a sovereign authority; as, a law of Caesar; a law of God” (Webster’s Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged). Webster says of legalism: “Close conformity to law.” Law and legalism are not the same. “Law” (nomos) means “Anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law.” The New Testament uses the word as “a command, law; . . . of any law whatever,” “a law or rule producing a state approved of God” (taken from Henry Thayer’s Lexicon). It is a rule or principle established by authority.

The law of Christ is his word: the truth by which men are made free (**John 8:32**). It is that perfect law of liberty which will convert the soul (**James 1:25; Psalms 19:7**). It is the inspired scriptures that is sufficient to perfect a man unto all good works (**2 Timothy 3:16,17**). The only way this law will make one perfect unto all good works is to obey it. How else could it be done?

LEGALISM

“Legalism” has several different definitions, opinions, and views. The word is more often used by those of ultra-liberal attitudes toward the authority of Christ, and obeying all the commandments of God for the remission of sins, worship, etc. Some will deny this conclusion, but hundreds of quotations from books and magazines are available to prove it. Their writings and preaching

bewail the idea of “keeping the letter of the law” and conforming to a rigid code of rules to be perfectly obeyed in order to obtain the blessings of salvation promised by God upon obeying him. The nature of law, the purpose of law, and the author of law make little difference to those who shrink from the very idea of obeying divine law. Law keeping, they say, smacks of Phariseeism.

I want to give the definition of “legalism” from one who stands opposed to obeying “a code of rules” for the remission of sins. Harold Key wrote an article in Mission Messenger of February, 1963, under the heading, “The Threat Of Legalism:” “What, then, is legalism? Legalism is the attempt to reduce the will of God to a code to a list of commandments with the subsequent concentration upon the commandments rather than the God whose will the commandments attempt to express. Legalism is obviously an attempt to be related to God upon the basis of law. It is a legal rather than a personal relationship. It holds the position that justification and eternal life are rewards of fully and correctly doing all that the law requires” (Volume 25, Number 2, page 17) . . . “Legalism tears the very heart and soul out of the New Covenant” (ibid., page 20). What if there is no attempt to reduce the will of God to a “code to a list of commandments”? Take it just as it is! What if there is no attempt to concentrate upon the com-

mandments rather than the will of God? (How could one do that, anyway?) What if one simply obeyed the commandments from the heart, as he must do to obey the will of God? *“but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”* (**Rom. 6:17-18**). Would that make him a legalist? If yes, what is wrong with that? That is what I am: call me a “legalist.” The person who does not obey the law of Christ is under condemnation from the word of God (**2 Thess. 1:7-9**). This definition pretends to judge the heart and motive of the one obeying the law of Christ. There is no way to be related to God but by his word, his law. One must be born again to be related to God, and that requires obedience in baptism by faith (**John 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 1:23**).

Robert Meyers edited a book entitled *Voices Of Concern*, published by Mission Messenger, Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1966. In his Introduction he gave his motive for publishing several articles from men and women who left the church of the Lord. In part he said: “Thousands are restless and dissatisfied with the aridity of exclusivism and authoritarianism. Bright young minds are refusing to be put off with answers that have no more to commend them than the hoary beard of antiquity” (page 3). His goal is: “The book obviously means to urge no one way of religious expression, but to plead from such evidence as is here the need for unity in diversity” (page 5). The boredom and dissatisfaction of bright young minds to the aridity of the straight and narrow way of Christ (**Matt. 7:13-14**) does not commend them to the “hoary beard of antiquity” and therefore they turn to freedom of any religious expression that pleases them, and the

“unity in diversity” concept of Christianity. That is the reason the author gave for his book. That is rejection of the will of God any way you look at it. These minds do not know God and understand nothing of the “love of God” as revealed in the Bible. If that is the alternative to legalism, I am what they call a “legalist.”

One of the writers in “Voices Of Concern,” was J. P. Sanders. On pages 40 and 41 he says this of legalism: “We have seen that the priest seeks an exact system of faith which can be the basis for the sect, and he seeks it through the authority of the church or the authority of literal Biblical interpretations. This system is a code of requirements, or what is often called ‘the plan of salvation.’” Legalism sees sin as a violation of the written code. The code may or may not have relevance to man’s need; it may be simply arbitrary requirements revealed by God. Man’s disobedience to these rules becomes an affront to God.

Arrogance is at its best when man claims to decide which of the commands of God he will obey and which he will not obey; which are relevant and which are not. All scriptures of God are relevant to man’s needs to make him perfect to all good works (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**). If the “rules” are from heaven, and they are, disobedience to them is an affront to God. Who will decide which rules of God man can ignore and still please God?

For example, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (**Heb. 11:6**). Is this relevant to man now? What if the dissatisfaction of bright young minds to the aridity of the rigid rules of God does not commend them to faith in God,

may they freely dispense with this rule and seek “unity in diversity”? Shades of infidelity!

Some, for example, put great emphasis on baptism as “essential to salvation.” They do not usually put the same emphasis on forgiving enemies as “essential to salvation” though Jesus said more about this than about baptism. This implies that legalism makes baptism “essential to salvation” whereas Jesus gave more emphasis to forgiving one’s enemies than to baptism. Baptism is essential to salvation regardless of how much is said about other matters. Of course, the necessary conclusion is that the rigid rule of baptism for the remission of sins must go in order that the bright young minds that seek the freedom of personal choice for their salvation may not be bound by this unnecessary rule. Baptism is a command in the name of Christ (**Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:48**). One cannot be saved without obeying in baptism from the heart (**Rom. 6:17**).

Since legalism holds sin to be a legal violation, it holds salvation to be a legal payment. Man as a sinner must do certain things required of him for forgiveness. This seems to be sarcasm. It is not “legalism” that holds sin to be legal violation, it is God (**1 John 3:4**). Sin is the transgression of the law. Salvation is not a legal payment. I know of no one who believes or teaches that doctrine. Salvation is by grace through faith (**Eph. 2:8**). Faith that saves is faith that works in obedience to the commands of God (**James 2:20-26**). A sinner must do certain things “required of him for forgiveness” or God’s word has no power to save. But it does have such power (**Rom. 1:16**).

These statements bespeak one thing: Obedience to law is unnecessary to

obtain the grace of God for remission of sins. It is evil and the cause of division in the body of Christ, and a barrier against the grace of God. On the other hand, they claim, love will answer the prayer of Christ for unity and make us acceptable to God without obedience to law. You read the works of the apostles of this rebellion against the law of Christ and see if this is not true. That is the crux of what I have read from advocates of liberalism.

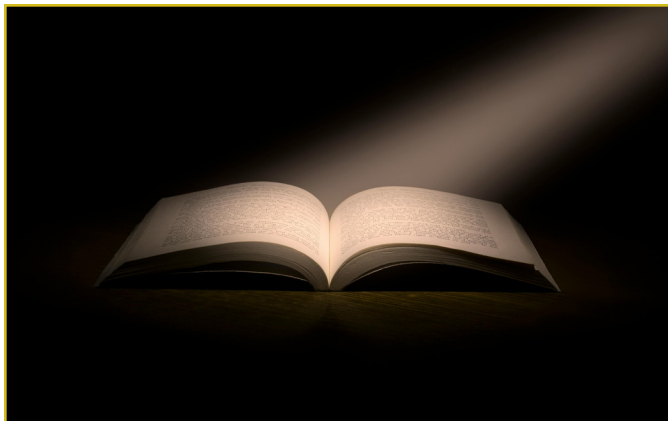
Let us understand the meaning of the words “legal” and “legalist” and “legalism.” “Legal” means that which is authorized or permitted by law. “Legalism” is that system which holds strict, literal adherence to law. “Legalist” is one who accepts the strict and literal obedience to law. If “legalism” is wrong and evil, all law ought to be rejected, and iniquity is a virtue. Whoever requires obedience to the law of Christ promotes division and fosters callous hearts. That is the consequences of this plea for abandonment of the New Testament law as the revelation from God to save the obedient believer in Jesus Christ.

SWORD SWIPES

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

**We need to do less assuming by the
Scriptures and do more proving by
the Scriptures.**

***“For he vigorously refuted his Jewish
opponents in public debate, proving
from the Scriptures that Jesus was
the Messiah” (Acts 18:28, NIV).***
(DTS)



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