



"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein"
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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BIBLICAL PREACHING

Johnny O. Trail

What is good preaching? Should it be the goal of the preacher to build numbers by entertainment? Should one's success in preaching be measured by the numbers on the board at each service or is there a different standard we must use? Can one serve as an evangelist for a small congregation and still be called a "good" preacher?

There are some groups in our culture that should not be consulted to determine what "good" preaching is described as. Our society does not define what "good" preaching is. The church does not define what "good" preaching is. Simply stated, the Bible determines what is good preaching. What does the Bible state about its proclamation to members of the body and to the lost?

Biblical preaching reveals God's power to save lost humankind. Paul understood that the proclamation of the Gospel contained within it the ability to save lost human beings. Romans 1:16 says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."* The good news will propel the lost to Jesus if they respond to it in a correct fashion.

Biblical preaching reveals the truth to people — even when it is not popular. The Apostle Paul was not popular with some of the brethren at Galatia for standing against those teachers who wanted to combine elements of the Old Testament Law with the Law of Christ. Sadly, he became

their enemy for teaching the truth. Galatians 4:16 says, *"Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"* One needs to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) — even when a topic is not well-received. It could be that is exactly the sermon an audience needs to hear.

Biblical preaching focuses on the word of God for, by it, faith is produced and grown. Faithful preaching results in faithful people. Romans 10:15-17 says, *"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Faith is not developed and maintained by preaching that is devoid of Scripture. Faith does not happen by sharing man's wisdom with even the best of intentions. Preaching develops faith by preaching that reveals the word of God to its listeners. If one looks at the New Testament, it becomes evident that the writers and preachers of the New Testament quoted from and used Scripture in their discourses. Why would any person seek to do otherwise?

Biblical preaching is done even when people find it offensive and unappealing. When Paul addresses Timothy about the work of an evangelist, he never encourages young Timothy to put his finger to the wind and determine the direction of doctrinal change. Second Timothy 4:2 says,

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" We are not called to preach smooth things (cf. Isa. 30:10-11) to an audience we wish to placate (appease).

Biblical preaching emphasizes Christ and baptism. This is exactly what Philip did when he engaged the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip preached Christ to the eunuch (Acts 8:35) and the proclamation of Christ culminated in the eunuch being immersed. Acts 8:35-38 reads, *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, **here is water**; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."* One cannot preach Christ without preaching baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).

Biblical preaching exposes false teaching and error. Paul warned Timothy about the false teachers that would corrupt the church. In warning Timothy, compromise or backing down were never offered as options. He said in 2 Timothy 4:3-5, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their*

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Biblical Preaching...



Editorial...

FELIX, FESTUS & AGRIPPA

Garland M. Robinson

The Bible is the most unique book in all the world. None are its equal — nor will there ever be. Far too many do not realize it, but the Bible is the operation's manual for planet earth. It was given by a gracious and benevolent God in heaven above. It tells us of our *origin* in the world. It reveals to us the *purpose* of our existence. And, it announces the *destiny* to which every human being will arrive some day. It is to that end and for that purpose that we read, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Tim. 3:16-17).

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should **live soberly, righteously, and godly**, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:11-14).

Oh, that the world would learn about and embrace God's will. What a delight it would be to live in a world where everyone sought to do that which is right because it is right. It would be wonderful to have association with people who did unto others as they would have others do unto them (cf. Matt. 7:12)? If everyone would look to the "hereafter" rather than the "here and now," what a blessing that would be.

In what we call the "great commission," Jesus gives us the charge to go into all the world and preach/teach the Gospel to every single person on the planet (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). However, so few of the world's population hear the message of the cross. And sadly, the majority of those

who do hear it, turn their backs to it and never follow through with faithful service in the Lord's Cause.

Only the Lord knows how many have heard the "words of eternal life" (cf. John 6:68) and never obeyed them. We could speak of the *rich young ruler* (Matt. 19:16-22), the *Jews* who stoned Stephen (Acts 7), the *Athenians* and *strangers* at Mars Hill who mocked when they heard of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 17), the *chief rulers* who believed but would not confess Jesus as the Christ (John 12:42-43), and some of the Lord's own *disciples* who turned away from the Lord and followed him no more (John 6:66).

Let's consider two men who heard the good news of the Gospel but chose not to obey it.

FELIX

The first we read of Felix is in Acts 23:24-26 where he is mentioned as being the governor in Caesarea. Claudius Lysias, a chief captain among the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem who had rescued Paul from a mob that was about to kill him, sent Paul to Felix after learning from Paul's nephew (his sister's son, Acts 23:16) that *"...certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul"* (Acts 23:12-14).

How can men have such hatred and evil intent toward another human being? Paul had done them absolutely no harm. He was no threat whatsoever to them or any other man. As a matter of fact, the words he would speak could bring mercy and forgiveness to their perishing souls if they would *hear, believe and obey*.

The whole world is under such a

threat today from radicals in the religion known as Islam (Mohammedism). The current battle being waged around the globe is not one which pits nation against nation, army against army, territory against territory. It's aggressors march under the banner of an ideology — a belief that leads them to maim and murder all who will not succumb to their god. It is an action of tyranny. They are deluded into thinking they are serving God (cf. John 16:2), just as that murderous band who bound themselves under an oath to not eat until they saw Paul lying in the dust as a cold lifeless body. There was even a time when Paul himself thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9); all the while, his conscience was clear, thinking he was serving God (Acts 23:1). But fortunately, when he learned of his error, he repented and obeyed the Lord (Acts 26:19). Oh, that the world might come to the pure knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through their acceptance of the saving word (James 1:21) and their obedience thereto (Matt. 7:21), their souls could be released from its hatred, malice and evil intent. They could come to know the peace that passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

As Paul's accusers stand before Felix, they at first seek to commend him for his rule of peace and quiet and for the many good deeds done unto the Jews. Paul acknowledges that Felix had been a judge of the nation of Israel for many years (Acts 24:10). When Felix, "having more perfect knowledge of that way," heard Paul's defence, "he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter" (Acts 24:22).

"And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him" (Acts 24:24-26).

What a grand opportunity Paul had in being able to explain to Felix

(the governor of the whole territory) the way of eternal life offered through the only begotten Son of God. It is a way that demands personal responsibility. It demands each individual to exercise restraint in controlling one's passions. The lust that burns within us must be harnessed and brought into submission. Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1 Cor. 9:27). This involves *"casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:5).

Not only does righteousness demand curbing one's passions and desires, it involves right and proper living. There must be positive action in our lives to replace the void left by purging out the evil. Jesus taught, *"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first"* (Luke 11:24-26).

One of the greatest incentives for men and women to control their passions, stopping the evil in their life, filling it with joy, peace and love, abounding in a fruitful life of service to the Master, is the knowledge of the impending judgment that will one day come upon all mankind. Great is the number of people who have heard this message and have this knowledge, but so many more have not heard. That's why our task is so urgent. That's why Paul wrote, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."* (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Paul was standing before the governor of the territory. As far as I can recall, I've never been in the presence of a governor, senator or president. Have you? Perhaps you have. We count such rare occasions as an honor and

privilege. But far more important than standing before a dignitary is the fact that such a person has a soul created in the image of God, just like my soul, your soul. A person's soul will not be judged based upon their station, rank or position in life. We're all the same in the Lord's eyes. There are none above another. There is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:11). The Lord loves every one (John 15:9), cares for every one (Matt. 11:28-30; 1 Peter 5:7), died for every one (Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:8) and will judge every one based upon each person's own deeds done in this world (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-12).

Felix had a soul. He had sinned as all men do (Rom. 3:10,23). He was in need of salvation — being spared from the awful fate that awaits sinners in a flaming, eternal hell. Paul was giving him the information he needed to be able to have his sins forgiven. What would Felix do with that information? For a moment at least, he considered the destiny of his soul. He reflected upon his condition standing before the righteous Lord, the judge of all the earth. He saw where he was heading. It caused him to tremble. He shivered, shuddered and quaked at the thought of being cast into that eternal fire, where the beast and the false prophet are — that place prepared for the devil and his angels (Rev. 19:20; Matt. 25:41). It is a place reserved for sinners and consists of *"...the blackness of darkness for ever"* (Jude 13). He saw himself being *"...cast into the lake of fire and brimstone"* where he will *"...be tormented day and night for ever and ever"* (Rev. 20:10; 19:20). The apostle John spoke of this place called hell and said of those who go there, *"...the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name"* (Rev. 14:11).

For a moment, the thought of this awful fate hit home with Felix. For a moment, he actually thought far enough ahead to look beyond the present. But there was the devil whispering in his ear, saying, don't listen to this man, don't consider his words, think of your position, think of your power and prestige, think about what you will have to give up, think of what will happen to you, you can't do this — resist, Resist, RESIST!

Felix was confronted with a choice between LIFE or DEATH. Would he continue to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which Moses acknowledged was only for a season (Heb. 11:25), or would he choose to abandon his sin and drink of that well of living water that springs up into everlasting life (John 4:14)? The decision he made was given in his answer to Paul, *"...Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"* (Acts 24:25).

Even though Felix met with Paul many more times, the Bible leaves the story with a sad ending. Nothing more is said about that so-called "convenient season." Perhaps he had good intentions and fully intended to obey — someday. But there is no indication he ever did. On the contrary, all indications are, he never found that convenient season.

How many through the ages have been like Felix and left this world unprepared to meet God (cf. Amos 4:12)? Oh, what would they give NOW for another opportunity to repent and obey? The rich man would certainly tell us what he thought (Luke 16:19-31)! Jesus tells us that one soul is worth more than the whole world (Matt. 16:26).

FESTUS & KING AGRIPPA

Paul was left bound, imprisoned by Felix because he thought Paul might offer him a bribe to be let go and also because he saw it pleased influential Jews. Within two years, Porcius Festus took over as governor in the room of Felix.

The same contentious and antagonistic Jews who sought Paul's demise before Felix, now seeks to persuade Festus likewise. Festus orders Paul to come before him while *"...the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove"* (Acts 25:7). Paul makes his own defense and appeals to be judged before Augustus Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire. *"...After certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: ... Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou*

shalt hear him. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth" (Acts 25:13-14, 22-23).

Paul is allowed to speak and tell of the circumstances which led up to him being held in bonds and now appearing before King Agrippa. He was not at all impressed nor disconcerted by the pomp and brilliant display or the high rank of his audience. He knew full well how little worth such things are in the sight of God. All this earthly splendor and power did not for a moment intimidate him.

Paul promptly speaks of Moses and the prophets foretelling "...that Christ should suffer; and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.** And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:23-29).

Upon hearing the message of salvation, King Agrippa is moved somewhat like Felix. For the moment, at least, he lost sight of his surroundings and the dignity of his position. Thinking only of the truth he had heard and seeing only this humble prisoner standing before him, he spoke up and said, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Some think this statement made by King Agrippa was said in derision (mockery, ridicule, contempt). I'm not of that persuasion. I think he actually considered, at least for a brief moment, becoming a Christian. Paul acknowledged in Acts 26:3 that King Agrippa was an "...expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews."

Being of Jewish descent himself, he had some background in the history of Israel. He knew (exactly how much we don't know) of the prophecies concerning the Christ. And now, hearing Paul weave the prophecies together and show that Jesus of Nazareth was their fulfillment, he saw the Truth.

He was almost persuaded to become a Christian. For a little, he would embrace the Christ and His Will. However, the choice he made was to ignore it; and so, he let it pass. He was *convinced*, but he was not *convicted*. He no doubt thought he had better and more important things to do.

What a tragedy it is for people to hear the Gospel, learn the Truth, but then fail to take action in obedience to it. There will be no excuse for people like this on the day of judgment, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Paul's reply to Agrippa was, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). Paul's sentiment was like that of the Lord: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). He expressed a similar thought in Romans 10:1 when he wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

Instead of desiring to learn more or to repent and obey, Acts 26:30 says "the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them" and walked out. Agrippa's curiosity was satisfied. As they left, they talked among themselves, saying, "this man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar" (Acts 26:31-32). But the case had already been referred to that higher court and was now beyond the jurisdiction of either Festus or Agrippa.

The inspired record does not reveal if Festus, Agrippa or Bernice ever considered these words or events ever again. We're left to conclude they never obeyed the Gospel or even cared about hearing it again.

Wouldn't it be great if people everywhere would repent and obey the Gospel? Paul wished this to be so and devoted his life to that end. Wouldn't it be great, this very hour, that

those who read this message would devote themselves to obeying the Master. It can be so with you. It's YOUR choice. What will YOU DECIDE?

Almost is not enough. Almost is to fail. Almost will bring an eternity of eternal punishment. Almost means you're lost.

Can't we persuade you this very day to **believe** in Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the Savior of the world (John 8:24; John 3:16)?

Won't you **repent** of your sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38), turning from them in your mind, changing your attitude, disposition, and way of life?

Are you willing to **confess** faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of mankind (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10)?

Won't you be **baptized** for the forgiveness of your sins that they might be washed away in the precious blood of Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-18; 1 Peter 3:21; Eph. 1:7)?

Won't you **live faithful** unto the Lord the rest of your life (Rev. 2:10; II Cor. 15:58)?

Do it NOW. Do it TODAY.

Biblical Preaching...

(Continued from page 81)

own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." The climate in our culture is unbridled acceptance of any person's doctrine or moral values no matter how alien one's position is from what Scripture teaches.

Hopefully, you hear biblical preaching from the one who mounts your pulpit. Audiences should demand nothing less from these men than the proclamation of the truth (John 17:17). There may be other hallmarks of biblical preaching, but this provides a general list of what is expected of those who publicly proclaim the word of God. To offer less, is to imperil the souls of the ones who come to feast upon the word in Bible study and worship settings.

2698 Old Clarksville Pike
Ashland City, TN 37015

HAS GOD ANSWERED YOUR PRAYERS?

Jonnie Hutchison

*God will hear and answer our prayers
but He will do so in agreement with his unlimited knowledge
and according to his eternal purpose.*

Among the great blessings and privileges of being a Christian is the opportunity to approach the God of heaven and earth through the avenue of prayer. The Hebrew writer declares, *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:16). We are assured that God will hear and answer our sincere prayers as we ask in harmony with His revealed will. *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”* (1 John 5:14).

God’s greatest servants have always been men and women who prayed regularly and consistently. The Bible records the prayers of Abraham (Gen. 15:7; 17:18; 20:17), Daniel (Dan. 2:17-18); Solomon (1 Kings 3:6-9), David (1 Sam. 23:10-13; 2 Sam. 7:18; Psalm 51:10-13), Ezra (Ezra 9:6); Gideon (Judges 6:36); Habakkuk (Hab. 1:2-4); Hannah (1 Sam. 10:11); Isaac (Gen. 25:21), Jesus (Matt. 11:25; John 17:1-26; Luke 23:34, 46), Paul (Acts 28:8; Eph. 3:14-21; 2 Cor. 12:8), Peter (Acts 9:40); the church (Acts 12:5) and the disciples (Acts 4:29-30); just to name a few. The prayers of these faithful men and women were answered by the very same loving God that we serve.

Sometimes people pray to God expecting their prayers to be answered but are disappointed in the outcome. They may express this disappointment in words like “I prayed about it, but God didn’t answer my prayer. Why?” In answering this question consider the following:

Did you ask according to His will? According to 1 John 5:14, asking according to God’s will is a condition to acceptable prayer. If one asks for something which is contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Bible, then he need not expect his prayer to be answered.

Did you ask in faith with no doubting? Regarding the subject of

praying for wisdom the book of James affirms, *“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord”* (James 1:6-7). The faith in this passage refers to one’s personal faith. How confident were you in your prayer that God would both hear and answer it? Or, did you doubt he would? Jesus said, *“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee”* (Mark 11:24). “The doubter forfeits all legitimate expectation that his prayer may be answered” (Coffman).

Have you forgiven others? Jesus taught, *“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses”* (Mark 11:25-26). One who harbors a grudge or an unforgiving attitude toward others is not ready to seek God’s forgiveness. Until one repents of such an attitude he need not expect God to forgive him even if he asks in prayer. (See Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Did you pray with humility and reverence in recognition of your own unworthiness? Jesus gave a parable of a Pharisee and a publican (Luke 18:9-14) to contrast two different attitudes that impact prayer: self-righteousness and humility. The parable speaks of a Pharisee and a tax collector who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee’s prayer showed an utter disregard for his own guilt as well as a lack of respect for others. While the Pharisee exalted himself telling God all the good things he had done and how much better he was than others. The tax collector, in humble recognition of his own unworthiness, refused to raise up his head before God, beat himself on his chest and said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus ended this parable by

explaining the tax collector was justified before God *“...for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”* (Luke 18:14). One ought to approach God in prayer with the deepest of humility and reverence if he expects God to accept his prayer.

Are you an impenitent sinner?
Are you truly doing God’s will in your life? The Bible reads in John 9:31, *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.”* According to these words, God does not hear impenitent sinners in the sense of answering their prayers. On the other hand, God does hear the prayers of those who do his will. The inspired Solomon wrote, *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is his delight”* (Prov. 15:8). The prophet Isaiah was inspired to reveal, *“...your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”* (Isa. 59:2). Obeying God and becoming a faithful Christian assures us of the fact that God will hear and answer our prayers according to His will.

God will hear and answer our prayers but He will do so in agreement with his unlimited knowledge and according to his eternal purpose. He may not always answer our prayers in the way we expect or on our timetable. Sometimes God may say “no” in answering our prayers. We should accept that He will hear our prayers; if we and place our trust in Him that He will answer our prayers as to what is best spiritually for all involved. Then with confidence we can say with the Psalmist, *“But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer; nor his mercy from me”* (Psalm 66:19-20).

3980 Murray Paris Rd.
Hazel, KY 42049

IS PRAYER A SCRIPTURAL SUBSTITUTE FOR BAPTISM?

Rick Owens

The majority of the preaching one finds in Media (and the denominational world) instructs the alien sinner to confess he is a sinner and ask Jesus to come into his heart. In other words, he is told to pray to Jesus for salvation. If it is the case one can pray to Jesus for salvation, there would have to be evidence in the Bible to support that claim. There are three ways in which one determines authority from the Bible.

First, there are **direct commands**. Peter commanded those on the Day of Pentecost to, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38).

Second, there are **examples** provided by the first century church, such as the day of the week they came together for worship, *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight”* (Acts 20:7).

Third, authority may be established by a **necessary inference**. An example is having authority for a church treasurer. Paul said, *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”* (1 Cor. 16:1-2). From that, it is known that the church collected money from its members, and if money was collected, it can be inferred there would be a treasurer appointed to oversee the money.

Understanding how New Testament authority is established, notice the **“sinner’s prayer.”** If it is authorized, there must be a direct command for it, an example of it, or an inference to be drawn. However, there are no Biblical commandments stating one should recite a “sinner’s prayer.” There is no Bible example of anyone ever reciting a “sinner’s prayer” to receive salvation. And, there are no inferences which can be drawn demanding a “sinner’s prayer.” Some have concluded the publican praying in the Temple is an example of the “sinner’s prayer” (Luke 18:13), but nothing could be further from the truth! The publican was not an alien sinner; instead, he was a Jew and part of God’s chosen people. He was also in the Temple praying to God, not as an alien sinner, but as a member of God’s family.

If the Bible were re-written to accommodate the false practice of a “sinner’s prayer,” instead of the words chosen by the Holy Spirit, it be filled with man’s words. Such as:

1) “He that believeth and PRAYS shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). 2) “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they PRAYED, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he PRAYED, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:12-13). 3) “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder

me to PRAY? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water; both Philip and the eunuch; and he PRAYED him” (Acts 8:36-38). 4) “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and PRAY, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Remember, Paul had been praying for three days. “The like figure whereunto even PRAYER doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21).

These verses DO NOT say pray, prayed, or prayer because the Holy Spirit chose some form of the word immerse (transliterated “baptize”) in the English language.

There is not one example in Scripture where the alien sinner is commanded to pray for salvation. Baptism is the point at which one is forgiven of sins. It is not more important than believing, repenting and confessing, but it is just as important! If one were to walk to the other side of the room, each step would be needed, but the last step is the one wherein the person could say, “I reached the other side.”

The previous scriptures were changed, to show the seriousness of the soul-damning doctrine of “faith only.”

1209 Green’s Lake Road
East Ridge, TN 37412

QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WHO DEFEND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Jason Patrick Hilburn

1. Even though I do not believe Christians must drink alcoholic beverages to be saved, I will fervently defend the use of beverage alcohol, even if it causes serious problems for the church or for individuals (cf. Psalm 133:1; Prov. 6:19; 20:1; Rom. 13:10; 1 Cor. 10:32-33; Eph. 4:3; 1

John 2:10). True or False?

2. I honestly believe one can convert people to Christ with a beer in his hand (cf. Matt. 5:13-16). True or False?

3. Christ commanded Christians to preach the Gospel to every creature, so the brother who buys alcohol must

preach to the seller of alcoholic beverages (Mark 16:15-16). True or False?

4. Christ commanded Christians to preach the Gospel to every creature, so the brother who drinks alcoholic beverages must preach to the people who knows he drinks alcoholic beverages

ages (Matt. 5:13-16). True or False?

5. Christ commanded His followers to let their lights shine before others. One way they can fulfill that command is by drinking beverage alcohol (Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:12). True or False?

6. I truly believe that people can glorify God by drinking alcoholic beverages (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31-33). True or False?

7. When people find out that someone who calls himself a “Christian” drinks alcoholic beverages, it will not bring reproach upon the Lord’s church, but rather people will glorify God (Matt. 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12). True or False?

8. I do not believe that drinking or advocating beverage alcohol could cause problems for others (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 10:32-33; 1 John 2:10). True or False?

9. I care more about other people’s salvation than I care about beverage alcohol (1 Cor. 8:12-13; 10:32-33; 1 John 2:10). True or False?

10. By drinking alcoholic beverages, one is setting an example that others can safely follow (1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7; 1 Tim. 4:12). True or False?

11. I believe it is OK to tell children they can drink alcoholic beverages when they become of legal age (Matt. 18:1-7). True or False?

12. If one of those children later becomes a drunkard, dies in a car accident, or goes to Hell because of alcohol consumption, I will not feel guilty (Matt. 18:1-7). True or False?

13. I do not believe there are varying degrees of drunkenness (Gal. 5:19-24). True or False?

14. I can define the exact point when “drunkenness” occurs (Gal. 5:19-24). True or False?

15. A home is a more spiritual environment because of alcoholic beverages (Gen. 18:19; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7). True or False?

16. I love God more than I love alcoholic beverages (Matt. 22:36-38; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). True or False?

17. I believe one is doing his best to obey God’s command to be sober when he is drinking alcoholic beverages (1 Thess. 5:6-8; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 4:3-7; 5:8). True or False?

18. I believe that beverage alcohol does not work against the fruit of the Spirit, such as self-control (Gal. 5:19-25). True or False?

19. I believe that God wants one’s inhibitions removed by alcohol (Gen. 19:32; Gal. 5:23). True or False?

20. I believe it is God’s will for one to destroy his brain cells with alcoholic beverages (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Titus 2:6-8). True or False?

21. Someone who is otherwise faithful can be comfortable and confident if he is drinking an alcoholic beverage when the Lord returns (1 Thess. 5:2-8; 1 Peter 4:1-7). True or False?

22. I honestly believe the mere act of drinking an alcoholic beverage cannot damage one’s influence or reputation at all (1 Cor. 10:31-33; Rom. 14:21). True or False?

23. Drinking a beer is not harmful to one’s body or influence, therefore there would be nothing wrong with a Gospel preacher drinking a beer at a restaurant with brethren, visitors, or even a new convert following Sunday morning worship (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Cor. 10:31-33). True or False?

24. Drinking a beer is not harmful to one’s body or influence, therefore there would be nothing wrong with a Gospel preacher drinking a beer from the pulpit in worship, as he might normally drink from a bottle of water. True or False?

*Jason Patrick Hilburn
PO Box 759
Baker, FL 325*

CONTRIBUTIONS

Marion & Linda Schow (memory of Joan George)	\$ 5 0	Anonymous.....	\$100
Julia & Robert Sarver	\$100	Robert & Beverly Pitts (memory of Jimmy Rigsby)	\$ 2 0
Midway C/C, Bradyville, TN (memory of Joan George)	\$150	Robert & Beverly Pitts (memory of Kenneth Buchanan)	\$ 2 0
Jean Ware	\$ 2 5	Paul Gilpatrick & Charles Blair (memory of Lucille Gilpatrick).....	\$500
Sherry Nachlinger	\$ 2 0	Mary L. Aldridge.....	\$100
Norman & Gayle Cozort.....	\$ 5 0	Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN.....	\$100
Doyle & Glenda Woodall	\$400	Gary Stanton (memory of Elizabeth “Ann” Fricks)	\$ 7 5
J. K. & Betty Gossett	\$100	(She took it upon herself to make sure every family got a copy of STOP each month)	
Chuck & Nancy Verkist.....	\$ 5 0	Jean Ware	\$ 2 5
Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN.....	\$100	Baker C/C, Baker, FL.....	\$ 2 5
Douglas & Pricilla Pace (memory of Renee Pace Dunn).....	\$100	Clyde Randolph.....	\$ 3 0
Allen & Irene Tate	\$100	Anonymous.....	\$240
Sheldon Wright	\$ 2 5	Ed Waggoner	\$100
Wanda Bouldin (memory of Jim Boyd)	\$ 5 0	Jerry Morgan	\$300
Baker C/C, Baker, FL.....	\$ 2 5	Church of Christ, Walling, TN.....	\$100
Raynell & Francine King	\$250	Anonymous.....	\$100
Michael & Cherly Cook	\$300	Pine St. C/C, Vivian, LA	\$200
Ed Waggoner	\$100	Neelys Bend C/C, Madison, TN	\$100
Doyle & Glenda Woodall	\$500	Church of Christ, Fort Gibson, OK.....	\$750
Berea C/C, Rock Island, TN	\$200	Anonymous.....	\$ 2 5
C/C at Mt. Della, Pikeville, TN	\$ 5 0	Bradford C/C, Bradford, IL	\$150
Marilyn Brantley (memory of Jim Boyd)	\$ 2 5		
Neelys Bend C/C, Madison, TN	\$100	Beginning Balance	\$20,581.67
North Marshall C/C, Calvert City, KY (memory of Jim Boyd)	\$ 5 0	Contributions	\$6,730.00
Johnny Wayne Barnes.....	\$100	Debits	
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Del Brantley.....	\$ 5 0		
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