

# UPON THE ROCK

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## THE NEED FOR A PLAN

Paul Hoover

Do we need a pattern or plan for the worship of God? This is a seemingly innocent question, which in reality is quite misleading. This question is designed to put those who correctly worship God on the defensive. The correct question is, "Can we know how to worship without a pattern?" This question challenges those who do not worship according to the divine pattern. They must explain why they think they can know how to worship God without God having revealed that information. They must explain the logic behind a God who would create a world only to abandon it. Is it logical for God to create humanity, expect humanity to worship Him, and not reveal the method by which it is to be accomplished? Is there any indication, anywhere in the Bible, that this is the case?

Every facet of human existence is governed by a pattern. The law of the land is based on the behavioral pattern of human beings. People are expected to behave in certain ways. Laws are written to enforce that pattern on the population at large. In a society, we can have no standard by which to measure right and wrong if we have no acceptable pattern by which we measure.

Sailors, for as long as there have been such, recognize that there are patterns in the weather and in the sea. These patterns must be understood in order to be a successful sailor. It is interesting to note that the Bible recognizes even this pattern. "What is a man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion of the

works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea” (Psalm 8:48).

When God created human beings, He gave us a pattern for the male/female relationship. God gave this pattern to us, so that we would know what He expected of us in this regard. Though men do not always heed this pattern, the intent is nonetheless clear. The pattern is that of “one man, one woman, for life.” Notice that God created one woman for the one man. Adam said of this one man, one-woman relationship, “. . . they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). We can see the results of deviating from this pattern all around us. Some of the results are broken homes, sinful marriages, and children who grow up without proper guidance. How much better would it be for these children if parents would heed the pattern of “one man, one woman, for life?”

We have looked at patterns, which are followed by mankind in the process of living. Most men readily accept these patterns. We have also noticed Biblical recognition of specific God-given patterns. These patterns are logical and indisputable. We recognize patterns, which must be followed if men are to survive in this world. We understand that there are social patterns, genetic patterns, and patterns of nature. It would be foolish, when it comes to the worship of God, to deny the absolute need for a pattern.

God gave us the pattern for worship so that we can know how to worship Him. Without the pattern, we would be ignorant of God’s expectations concerning us. The Lord created man and expects man to worship Him. It is in keeping with His nature that He would instruct us in this matter.

In First Corinthians 11:23-26 we are given the pattern for the Lord’s Supper. As we study this event in the gospels we learn that we are to use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Therefore, we cannot practice the observance of the Lord’s Supper using cupcakes and orange juice. We are not at liberty to change, substitute, add, or subtract from the pattern. Not only are we told how to observe the

Lord's Supper, but also we are told when to do so. "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). In holding to the pattern, we cannot abuse the Lord's Supper by partaking of it on any other day or for any other occasion.

Christians are also commanded to give, "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" (I Corinthians 16:12).

The pattern for New Testament worship teaches Christians to sing. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). We learn from this verse that we are to sing with our hearts in a condition conducive to praising God. The pattern is one of singing. To imply that this singing can be accompanied by the playing of a mechanical instrument is to go beyond the pattern set by God.

Christians have a tremendous pattern for prayer set before us. As we study the life of Christ, the power and earnestness of His prayers should awe us. We have great examples of prayer and we are commanded to pray. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

People must recognize the many patterns, which govern the world in which we live. To see these patterns all around us only to reach the conclusion that God, who put all of these other patterns in place, would not give us a pattern by which to worship Him, is self-serving, illogical, and ignorant. We all follow some pattern. It is our personal choice as to which pattern we will follow. We can follow God's pattern of worship, or we can follow the pattern of those who will not endure sound doctrine. It all depends on what we want to hear on the Day of Judgment.

Paul Hoover may be reached at PO Box 78, Valley Bend, WV. 29293, or by email at [therock@meer.net](mailto:therock@meer.net).

## WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS BY “HEARING”

Mark E. Reynolds

In the parable of the sower Jesus describes four different types of hearers, and the consequences of each (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8). He discusses the Wayside Hearer, Thorny Ground Hearer, The Shallow Ground Hearer and the Good Ground Hearer. The sower in the parable is one who teaches the word of God. The seed, used by the sower, would be the word of God itself (Luke 8:11). It is important to understand that the emphasis of this parable is not on the sower or the seed, but on the soil, the hearer of the word of God. How would the soil receive the seed from the sower? It depends on the condition of the soil, the human heart.

The hearer is just as important as the one doing the teaching. Many are quick to blame the speaker by saying things like, “I just didn’t get anything out of today’s sermon,” or “The sermon just didn’t have an effect on me today.” The speaker may be the one at fault, but it may also be the problem of the hearer. Have you ever heard one make one of the above statements to another, just to have the other person say, “I thought it was a great sermon”?

Here are two people listening to the same sermon on the same day, yet one gets a lot out of the sermon, and the other does not. Why is this? Because one heard in a worldly way and the other “heard in a Biblical way. Jesus, the greatest preacher who ever lived had this same problem with the ones to whom He spoke. It was said of Jesus that He was the Master Teacher, and that “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). Yet what did some in the audience do with the greatest speaker of all time? They crucified Him! Was the problem with the speaker? Of course not! Then what was the problem? The hearers refused to listen!

To answer the question, ‘What does the Bible mean by ‘hearing’,’ we will investigate each type of hearer described by Jesus, then notice

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Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm

Mark E. Reynolds, preacher

## THE PLAN OF SALVATION

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2411 E, Riggin Road  
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(I Peter 1:15,16; Ephesians 5:1; 21; I Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 2:5-13). He may be counted upon to believe, teach, grow in the mastery of, stand for, and practice the revealed will of God and the teachings of Christ (Ezra 7:10; John 13:17; Hebrews 2:1-4; 5:12-6:10; I Peter 2:1-5). He may be counted on to do good whenever he has opportunity, to be ready for every good work, and to be a Christian citizen in the midst of an increasingly crooked and perverse generation (Galatians 6:10; II Corinthians 9:8, Colossians 1:10; II Timothy 2:21; Titus 3:1). He may be counted on to continue in these and all such things and to do so all of his life and even unto death (Revelation 2:10).

#### A PLEA FOR FAITHFUL LIVING

If you are not a Christian, you are urged to obey the gospel of Christ. One becomes a Christian by believing in Christ, repenting of sins, confessing faith, and being buried with Christ in baptism, thereby putting Him on, just as you have learned in other articles in this paper. However, putting on Christ is only the beginning. Earthly life is a test for the Christian, a test of faithfulness. There will be a judgment in which all Christians will be pronounced faithful or unfaithful (II Corinthians 5:10). Nominal Christianity will not pass the test. God preserves the faithful (Psalm 31:23; cf. I Peter 1:3-5). The faithful share Christ's victory (Revelation 17:14). A faithful man shall abound with blessings (Proverbs 28:20).

A baptized believer, though saved from sins committed before baptism, will not be saved eternally unless he proves to be faithful, i.e., loyal and true. God is looking at your life, hoping that you will be faithful, loyal, and true to Him, His Son, and His will. Are you faithful? Will you determine today to be faithful?

Tom McLemore may be reached at 2 Crescent Hill Dr., Selma, Alabama 36701, or by email at [tmdidymus@juno.com](mailto:tmdidymus@juno.com).

with which hearer He was pleased. It is then our responsibility to become that type of hearer.

#### THE WAYSIDE HEARER

“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:5,12). This is the person who listens to a sermon, even tells the preacher it was a good sermon, and that there were a lot of people who needed to hear it. But the problem is he fails to make the application to himself. He fails to comprehend the value of the word of God in his own life.

The Jews of the first century were examples of wayside hearers. Stephen told them, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did so do ye” (Acts 7:51). It was not the case that the gospel was not taught to them, because it was and many believed it. But there were multitudes that heard the same sermons, but instead of obeying it they resisted. Think about Judas the Betrayer. Here was one who listened to the sermons of Jesus saw the miracles Jesus performed, yet turned around and betrayed Him with a kiss! He allowed the devil to come into his heart and remove the good seed that Jesus planted. There is no doubt that Jesus is displeased with the wayside hearer.

#### THE THORNY GROUND HEARER.

“And some [seed, MER] fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:7,22). As Jesus describes this type of hearer it should be noted that there is nothing wrong with the soil. The soil is abundant deep enough for seed, good, fine and rich. But there is a latent seed in the soil, weeds that were not visible when the seed was sown. Anyone who has ever farmed, or had a garden knows all about this problem! The weed-seed will cultivate and grow, and if not

managed, will take over the crop you planted. So what do we do? We work hard to pull weeds, spray weeds and destroy weeds so that the crop we planted will be able to flourish. The thorny ground hearer accepts the word of God, but then allows other “weeds” to grow in his heart and strangle the word of God, rendering it useless in his life. Some of the weeds that Jesus said can choke the word of God out of a person’s heart are: (1) “Cares of this world” (Mark 4:19). When we allow worldly things, such as, work, recreation, and even our home life to take precedence over our spiritual life, we are being “choked.” (2) “Choked by the deceitfulness of riches” (Mark 4:19.). There is no objection to riches, by this author. David, Solomon, Abraham and Job were all wealthy, but they did not trust in their riches. Wealth, if used for the right things is wonderful. Wealth, however, cannot heal, it cannot restore sanity, nor can it purchase salvation. (3) “Choked by lust, pleasure” (Mark 4:19). We live in a society where the majority feels that “if it feels good, do it”. What feels good and what is good are many times different things altogether. Smoking may feel good, but we now know it is not good for our bodies. Jumping out of an airplane may feel invigorating, but if the parachute does not open, tragedy follows. Spiritually speaking, sin may feel good, but it is deadly to the soul. Incidentally, lawful things can often choke the word out of our hearts. A rose in the middle of a soybean field is nothing more than a pretty weed. Families, healthful recreation, work and countless other things are good for their purpose, but when they take over a man’s life, leaving no room for Christ, they are nothing more than “pretty weeds.

#### STONY GROUND HEARER

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matthew 13:5,20-21). This is a warning against impulsive obedience. This hearer immediately received the work with gladness, but did not allow it to take root. This individual goes on emotions or feelings and therefore, has a shallow religion. Excitement soon turns cold, and neglect sets in.

Epaphrus (Colossians 1:7); Silvanus ([Peter 5:12); Antipas (Revelation 2:13). These are people who believed in the faithful God, and as the result, they were loyal and trustworthy. They are worthy of emulation. Christians are “the faithful,” and faithfulness is one of the chief characteristics of genuine Christians (Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; cf. Acts 16:15; I Timothy 6:2).

#### THE PROOF AND PARTICULARS OF FAITHFUL LIVING

In a sense, God and Christ have placed their faith in us, and our task is to prove ourselves worthy of that faith or trust by being faithful. As Paul put it, “He counted me faithful” (I Timothy 1:12; cf. I Corinthians 7:25).

Christ entrusted the gospel to the Gentiles unto Paul, and Paul proved worthy of His confidence. Like stewards and servants of the ancient world, Christians are entrusted with responsibility, and they are required to discharge their responsibility faithfully (see Matthew 24:45; 25:21,23; Luke 12:42; 16:10,11,12; 19:17; I Corinthians 4:2). Some prove faithful and are rewarded, while others are irresponsible, unreliable, undependable, and unfaithful in their assignment so God rejected them and determined to raise up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind...” (I Samuel 2:35).

To be faithful is to be true and loyal, and Christian faithfulness is the fulfillment of the charge to live by the teaching of God and Christ. The faithful Christian’s heart and life say to God and Christ, “You can count on me to be true and loyal to you.” God and Christ may entrust believers with their word and work in good faith, expecting believers to prove worthy of this sacred trust, i.e., to be faithful.

Since faithful living is a matter of being reliable, true, dependable, and loyal, knowing and doing what is expected of the Christian is of utmost urgency. God, Christ, and the brethren may depend on the person who is living faithfully to be developing and manifesting the Christian character (II Peter 1:3-11). The faithful Christian may be counted upon to be an imitator of God and Christ and will manifest to an increasing degree the holiness of God and mind of Christ

composition which contains the words, “faithful and true” (Cf. Revelation 19:11). It is not surprising that in both testaments God’s relationship to His people is described in terms of marriage (Jeremiah 2:32; Ephesians 5:22-32; James 4:4). As God is faithful to His people, so His people are to live faithfully to Him.

SECOND ANNUAL UPON THE ROCK LECTURESHIP  
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### THE POWER FOR FAITHFUL LIVING

The root of the word “faithful” is faith. Faithful living results from being full of belief and trust in God and Christ (cf. Stephen, Acts 6:5,8, who was the epitome of faithfulness). This belief and trust is cultivated by the word of God: “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So faithfulness depends upon reading, studying, understanding and obeying the sacred writings (cf. II Timothy 2:15).

The faithful living under consideration is a loyalty, reliability, dependability of believers and is founded upon their faith. Classical statements regarding this faithfulness are found in Paul’s second epistle to Timothy: “know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day...It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (II Timothy 1:12b; 2:11-13).

There are many people whom inspired writers have described by the term “faithful:” Moses (Numbers 12:7; Hebrews 3:2,5); Abraham (Galatians 3:9); Timothy.(I Corinthians 4:17); Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7); Onesimus (Colossians 4:9);

There are many examples in the New Testament of such hearers. There were many disciples who turned their backs on Christ and “walked no more with Him” (John 6:66). Demas, at one time walked as a Christian, but forsook the cause (II Timothy 4:10). Still today many do well in their walk with Christ until it costs them something. Many will live for Christ until their feelings get hurt or they are asked to do something besides taking up space. It is then when the stony ground hearers allow the sun to dry up their weak root system, and they vanish away.

### THE GOOD SOIL HEARER

“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23). Whereas the wayside hearer is unreceptive, the stony ground hearer is shallow, and the thorny ground hearer is receptive, but no fruit is produced; the good soil hearer not only hears with his ears, but also with his heart! Having heard the word of God he works to keep it, or as Luke put it, “having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). He does not allow Satan to snatch it away, but rather meditates on the word day and night (Psalm 1:1-2). He brings forth fruit according to his capacity, not that of others. And he does all of this with patience, which does not mean inactivity, but does mean perseverance. He listens to learn, and learns to love the truth.

The Bereans were good hearers: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed..,” (Acts 17:11-12). When they heard, they believed. The Pentecostians were good hearers, in that, when they heard the preaching of Peter and the other apostles they had the courage to obey a “new religion” (Acts 2:37-47).

It is clear that Jesus is pleased with the “good soil hearers.” It is also clear that biblical hearing is equal to obeying; “Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee...because thou hearkenest not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his

statutes which he commanded thee” (Deuteronomy 28:45). Jesus said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and DOETH them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand” (Matthew 7:24,26). To hear without obedience is to harden our hearts. What does the Bible mean by hearing? Simply put, it means to listen to the word of God with our ears, study it with our eyes and obey it with our ALL!

Mark E. Reynolds may be reached at 2411 E. Riggin Rd., Muncie, IN. 47303, or by email at [mreyn8391@aol.com](mailto:mreyn8391@aol.com).

## THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF BELIEF

Roger A. Rush

Faith is defined as: 1a: allegiance to duty or a person: LOYALTY b (1): fidelity to one’s promises (2) sincerity of intentions 2 a (1): belief and trust in and loyalty to God (2): belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion b (1): firm belief in something for which there is no proof (2): complete trust 3: something that is believed esp. with strong conviction; esp: a system of religious beliefs (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, page 418).

Faith is an essential element in our response to God. “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” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is defined in Scripture as “...the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Living faith is the operative agent in man’s obedience to God. It is faith that leads to action. Faith and works are inseparably linked. One is ineffective without the other (James 2:14-26).

it to see for ourselves what it actually says. When it comes to the plan of salvation the teaching of the Scripture is so plain and so easily understood that we must have help to misunderstand what the Sacred Book has to say. We urge that every reader take the Word of God for what it says, and humbly and faithfully obey what it says that it may be well with our souls in time and in eternity. Baptism is essential to salvation, and it is essential because God says that it is. Do you trust God? Then take Him at His word! Do not let any person tell you that God does not have the ability to let us know what we must do to be saved.

D. Gene West may be reached at 1105 7th Street Moundsville WV 26041 or by email at [dgwwvsop@juno.com](mailto:dgwwvsop@juno.com)

## LIVING FAITHFULLY

Tom McLemore

In this issue of *Upon the Rock*, you will have learned about responding to the gospel and becoming a Christian. It is hoped that you have obeyed the gospel or that you are seriously considering it. When one has become a Christian, what then? The answer is summarized in the directive, “Live faithfully.”

## THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITHFUL LIVING

What does it mean to live faithfully? Faithfulness consists of such attributes as truth, loyalty, reliability, dependability, etc. Such faithfulness is characteristic of God, God’s Son, and God’s word (See Deuteronomy 7:9; Isaiah 49:7; Jeremiah 42:5; I Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; I Thessalonians 5:24; II Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 2:17; 3:2, 5, 6; 10:23; 11:11; I Peter 4:19; I John 1:9; Revelation 1:5; 3:14; 19:11; Psalm 119:86; 138; Titus 1:2,9; Hebrews 6:18; I Peter 2:22). Likewise, the Christian must be faithful.

Living faithfully to God is like faithfulness to a marriage covenant. Faithfulness in marriage means fulfilling the promises made in the marriage ceremony. A faithful spouse is loyal, devoted, chaste, and loving. Many a marriage ceremony has featured the musical

The third question we wish to ask is: If baptism is unessential to salvation, why did an Apostle of Christ say that it saves? “There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:21). Baptism is the antitype of the salvation of Noah and his family by water, as was set forth in the previous verses. No amount of wrangling over whether Noah was saved in the water or out of the water will reduce the strength of this God breathed language. Baptism is the antitype of the salvation of Noah and his family by the waters of the flood and as such it now saves us. One can deny this until he turns blue, and when all is said and done the verse will still say “there is also an antitype which now saves us namely baptism...” Now, why would the great Apostle *Peter*, the same Apostle who commanded believers who had murdered Christ to repent and be baptized on the Day of Pentecost, say that baptism “now saves us,” if, indeed, that is not the truth? That appeals to neither rhyme nor reason! Again, by arguing about what the “good conscience of this passage is, and by arguing about whether Noah was saved in the water or out of the water, many have sought to deny what the passage plainly says. And when the last argument and quibble has been made by the last man on the earth the “everlasting gospel” will still say what it has always said, and that is that we cannot be saved unless with believing penitent hearts we allow our bodies to be immersed in the grave of baptism. For two thousand years now this verse has said what it says, and when twenty thousand years have passed by, unless the translation is deliberately corrupted, the passage will still say the same. And when the Day of Judgment finally arrives the passage will still read the same, and we will be judged by what is says and not by what we wanted it to say!

If we were to investigate every case of conversion found in the great Book of Acts, we would find, without exception, in every case of conversion that either the person(s) was baptized, or he was commanded to be baptized. How strange it is that we are unable to accept the plain truth of God’s divinely inspired word. The reason we do not accept the plain truth of Holy Scripture is because Satan does not want us to be saved, and so he throws every stumbling block he has in our path, and one of those stumbling blocks is our allowing the clergy to tell us what they think the Bible says rather than our reading

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Given the importance placed on faith in Scripture, it is imperative that we understand the meaning of faith. Faith is often seen as the proverbial “blind leap into the dark,” a crutch for weak individuals. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Superstitions result from ignorance and fear of the unknown. They are maintained despite evidence to the contrary. They are unsupported by facts. They originate in ignorance. Faith is often associated with superstition. In fact, one of the definitions provided in Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary for faith is “firm belief in something for which there is no proof.” I suspect that to be the definition many people attach to “faith” in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

Faith, as used in Scripture, is not belief without proof, but belief based on evidence. Peter admonished Christians to provide reasons for their faith, because our faith is reasonable (1 Peter 3:15). Our faith in Creation, in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, in the resurrection, in eternal life rests on a solid foundation of evidence.

Given what we know about the universe, faith in God is far easier to sustain than faith in the Big Bang, or any other evolutionary hypothesis. The same can be said for our belief in the Bible as the word of God, and our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. I have no doubt that faith will always be under assault by non-believers, but I also know that faith has nothing to fear from truth. As our knowledge increases, our faith will grow proportionately. “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

For centuries men have struggled with the biblical concept of faith, and especially to reconcile faith and works in relationship to

salvation. Paul wrote of Abraham: “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:1-3). But James wrote: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (James 2:21). These two passages are not contradictory as some argue, but are complimentary.

In the Roman text Paul showed that Abraham’s righteousness was not achieved by meritorious works on his part, but that Abraham’s faith was the key ingredient in Abraham’s relationship with God. James did not deny what Paul taught, but he did elaborate on it. Thus, the passage in James teaches that the proof of one’s faith is works. Abraham proved his faith by obeying God’s command to sacrifice Isaac. Paul showed that works alone will not save, and James demonstrated that faith alone will not save. It is only when faith and works are joined that faith is made alive (James 2:26).

To prove that faith without works cannot save, James argued that even the demons believe that there is one God, and they tremble at the thought. However, the demons are not saved (James 2:19). The faith which saves must be living, active, and obedient. That is the kind of faith Abraham had.

Works without faith cannot save. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Nothing we do by way of good works can ever merit for us our salvation. We can never be good enough, or do enough good to deserve heaven. God sent Jesus into our world as the bearer of His grace (John 1:17).

The Protestant Reformation was a protest against a “works only” salvation. But, the leaders of the Reformation made the mistake of going from one extreme to another. As a result, a “faith only” mentality developed. The epistle of James struck a death’s blow to the faith-only doctrine forcing Martin Luther to call that letter an

Jesus said if a person wants to be saved, there are two things that he must do: (1) He must believe, that is, he must believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Savior of the world. (2) He must be immersed in water (that is what baptism is). When he has done that, Jesus said, he will be saved. Usually when this passage is advanced to show the necessity of baptism someone will come up with the quibble that Jesus did not say he who believes not and is baptized not shall be condemned, only he who believes not, so baptism is unessential to salvation. That certainly is a convoluted kind of reasoning because there never has been a person on the earth that did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who wanted to be baptized in order to be saved. The last thing a nonbeliever in Christ would have on his mind would be baptism. Jesus, in this passage, said that it takes two things to save a person, faith and baptism, but it only takes one thing for a person to be lost and that is no faith. The above convoluted argument in no way reflects upon the necessity of baptism for salvation, it only throws up a smoke screen to keep honest seekers after salvation from seeing what Jesus plainly said, and because we most often accept some preacher’s interpretation of the Bible rather than what the Bible plainly says, we have been fooled by this smoke screen.

The second question we wish to ask is: If baptism is unessential to salvation, why did the Apostle Peter tell three thousand people, on the day of Pentecost, that in order for them to receive the remission of their sins they had to “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). If the remission of sins of which Peter speaks in this passage is predicated upon repentance, and it is, then it is also predicated upon being baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ. Some will accept the repentance but they reject the baptism because of prejudice against what the Word of God plainly says. If you do not need to be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins, then you do not need to repent because the same rule of logic that removes one removes the other. Yet to the best of our knowledge, no one takes the position that one can be saved from sins and not repent of his sins! The Holy Spirit, who caused Peter to speak upon this occasion said, repent and let every one of you be baptized.” What mere man dares challenge the Holy Spirit?

## IS BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION?

D. Gene West

If one were to sit down and read his New Testament without carrying all of the denominational baggage that usually accumulates during our lives here, he would have no trouble at all understanding that baptism is, indeed, essential to the salvation of the immortal soul of man. However, since what we have just suggested is not very likely the case, at least not here in the United States, it is necessary again to set forth some arguments to prove that in order to be saved from past sins, and in eternity, it is absolutely essential for a penitent believer in Jesus Christ to experience immersion in water in order to be saved. Those who believe in salvation by faith only, or by grace only, have denied for four or five hundred years that baptism is part of the salvation that God presents by grace through faith. And though this denial has been at the very heart of many sermons and debates in the religious world, the New Testament of our Lord and Savior has not changed its teaching upon this subject, or on any other so far as that is concerned, in the last two thousand years. And when all is said and done, and the last denial of God's truth upon this subject has been shouted from the house tops, the Bible will still say what it has always said, and man will still be accountable to what the Bible says regardless of all of the theology that may be spun by man upon the earth.

Rather than approaching this subject in the manner that we usually do, and there is nothing wrong with that, we have chosen to demonstrate the essential nature of baptism for the remission of sins by asking a series of questions, which are designed, we hope, to get us to see and understand what the Bible plainly says.

The first question we wish to ask is: Would our Lord Jesus Christ REQUIRE a thing of mankind which is unessential or unnecessary to our spiritual well being? On the day that our Lord resurrected from the dead He gave His Apostles the following command: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). No language ever recorded by man, or spoken upon this earth is more easily understood than this.

"epistle of straw," and thus of no value. James, however, reconciled two diverse views, reminding his readers that faith and works are joined to produce a life pleasing to God (James 2:14-19). Faith is the motive for obedience, and obedience is the proof of faith. This is clearly illustrated in Hebrews 11.

Belief, as it is frequently used in Scripture represents all that is required of man to respond properly to Jesus. Saving faith must be so understood (John 3:16-18). Belief, especially as it relates to salvation, is used as a synecdoche. This is a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole. Belief then, represents all that is required of one in order to obtain the designated promise of salvation.

I get the distinct feeling that many people want the blessings and privileges that come with faith, but they desire few of the responsibilities of discipleship. They want the Father close at hand, but never take time to talk to Him in prayer. They want to be spiritually alive but spend little time with the bread of life (the Bible). They want a faith that will sustain them in times of trouble but have little thought of God when things go well. They want worship to be exciting, emotionally fulfilling, and spine tingling, but are spectators not participants in the assembly. They talk about the importance of Christ in their lives, and then crowd Him out of their lives. Paul described these folks as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5).

Faith in Jesus Christ is life changing, or at least it was meant to be. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). To follow Jesus requires that we rid our lives of all that is contrary to His will and nature and that we imitate His life, His love His devotion and His compassion. It is impossible to share in the blessings of Christ while rejecting the responsibilities of discipleship. Ours is a life changing faith. It is a living faith expressed in humble obedience on a daily basis.

Roger Rush may be reached at [rogerrush@juno.com](mailto:rogerrush@juno.com)

## THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

Phil Grear

Of all God's commandments, repentance may be the most difficult to obey. And yet it must be obeyed. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will Judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31 NKJV). Fulfilling this command is a matter so serious that we must determine exactly what God meant by "repentance".

### WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT

Repentance is not fear. One can be afraid and never repent. Something frightening occurs, and we promise God, "If you will get me through this, I will turn to you." But the problem passes, the fear ceases, and we forget our promise. There has been no repentance, just an emotional reaction to fear. Even the devils tremble at the thought of God, but none ever repented (James 2:19). Repentance may come from fear, but repentance is not fear.

Repentance is not conviction. Conviction is awareness of our doom as a sinner, and is absolutely necessary to our salvation. We must be convicted of our helpless and hopeless situation before God. But such conviction does not guarantee repentance. When Paul reasoned with Felix concerning "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come," Felix was afraid. But rather than repenting he said, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25). His fear did not lead to repentance.

Repentance is not sorrow for sins. Many have been sorry for their sins (at least sorry they got caught), but never repented. It is true that godly sorrow can lead to repentance; "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (II Corinthians 7:10); but it is not repentance.

wise believe. I hold nothing to be (strictly speaking) necessary to salvation but the mind which was in Christ." There you are. If a man thinks so little of our Lord's Word concerning the purpose of baptism, then the mode makes little difference.

Another Methodist, Mack B, Stokes, writes in MAJOR UNITED METHODISTS BELIEFS, p. 120, "...infant baptism is real baptism and therefore does not require to be repeated. Once more, we deplore the spoiling of this great sacrament by the use of a flower dipped into the water and placed on the infant's head. Why? Because that has no historic significance. No flower can take the place of the hand of the man of God placed directly upon the infant's head. We are dealing here with a profound spiritual mystery, not a touching ceremony."

Is that not interesting? Mr. Stokes says that using a flower to sprinkle water on a baby is something that he, and others, "deplore" because it "has no historic significance". My question is simply this: If men begin now, in the year 2001, to use a flower and they continue to do so for 250 years or so, will it then be acceptable because it has "historical significance"???

These kinds of things help members of the Lord's church to see the vast difference between we and the denominations around us. There is a vast gulf that exists between the Lord's church and the man-made denominations, and the topic of baptism serves well to point out the many differences we have. Baptism is immersion in water for the remission of sins, and in order to get into Christ where all spiritual blessing are located (Acts 2:37-38; Ephesians 1:3; Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:26-27). It is essential for one's salvation from sin (Mark 16:15-16; I Peter 3:20-21). Our sins are washed away in Christ's precious blood when we submit to God's Will and are baptized into His death where the blood was shed (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-5). Thank God for the Bible that so clearly, and wonderfully directs us into the Truth on this matter.

James E. Farley may be reached at 759 Ratliff Creek Road, Pikeville, Kentucky, 41501, or by email at [mscoc@kymtnnet.org](mailto:mscoc@kymtnnet.org)

they wrote the Bible (II Timothy 3:16-17; I Corinthians 2:13). The Holy Spirit could have used the Greek word for “sprinkle” when he was referring to baptism. That word is *rantizo*. The Holy Spirit could have chosen to use the word for “pour” when he was referring to baptism. That word is *cheo*. But the fact of the matter is, He did NOT use either of these words, but used *baptizo*, for baptism is immersion.

If you would substitute words like “pour” or “sprinkle” (in Greek or English) in passages like Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; and Acts 22:16, they would make absolutely no sense grammatically. For instance, Mark 16:16 says that “he” who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Notice that “he” is being baptized. If baptism is immersion this makes perfect sense. “He who believes and is immersed.” You can immerse a person, right? But substitute the word “sprinkle” here “He” is the one being sprinkled. Now, how do you sprinkle a person? Do you grind him up and sprinkle him out of some kind of container??? The same is true when you substitute the word “pour” here. How do you “pour” a person? Do you first put the person in a basket then pour HIM out of the basket???

Yes indeed, if the Holy Spirit wanted to convey the idea of sprinkling water or pouring water on someone’s head, He surely knew how to get that idea across, but the fact is: HE DID NOT SAY THAT!

It is certainly a shame that man has come along and perverted the Word of God so terribly that many millions are confused about such clear matters as this. Some time back there was a story in our paper here with the headline, “2000 TO BE BAPTIZED BY USING A FIRE HOSE.” The denomination was “The United House of Prayer For All People”, and at their “72nd Annual Convocation” they actually used a fire-truck and fire hoses to sprinkle water on 2000 of their believers! It is absolutely amazing how far denominationalists will go to usurp the authority of the Word of God on such matters,

There are men who come along in every generation to do just that; to usurp the authority of the Word of God. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church wrote in his LETTERS, III, 36: “You think the mode of baptism is ‘necessary to salvation.’ I deny that even baptism itself is so; if it were every Quaker must be damned, which I can in no

Repentance is not reformation. One who has repented will reform his life, but it is possible to reform one’s life and not repent. A drunk can realize that whiskey is making a fool of him and destroying his *family*, and therefore decide to give up alcohol completely. He may then become a good husband and father, even a pillar in the community, and never be aware that God is in His heaven. He has reformed, but not repented.

#### WHAT REPENTANCE IS

Repentance literally means to get a new mind,” It is a change of mind that results in a change of life. This is illustrated in a brief parable of Jesus:

“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. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go” (Matthew 21:28-30). Notice the first son refused to go, but then “regretted it (*repented*, KJV) and went.” He changed his mind about his father’s command, and did what he was told. His change of mind had resulted in a change of life. Repentance is saying, “Lord, thy will be done” rather than “My will be done.” It is making a decision to live by God’s law, whatever that law might require. This change of mind will result in a change of life. The drunk stops drinking, the adulterer returns to his family, the gossip controls his tongue, the unbeliever obeys the Gospel, etc. The repentant one has changed his thinking about his obedience and relationship to God.

#### WHAT CAUSES REPENTANCE?

Repentance may be caused by the goodness of God: “Knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4). God’s “goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering” should motivate us to realize how much He loves us. Considering all the wonderful blessings, both physical and spiritual, that He has given us ought to cause us humbly to bow before Him and gratefully recognize Him as our Lord. Realizing we have received so many “good and perfect gifts”

from Him (James 1:17) ought to touch the hearts of each of us and cause us to want to serve Him.

Repentance may be caused by godly sorrow: For godly sorrow produces repentance (II Corinthians 7:10). The thought of Calvary ought to impress on us the seriousness of sin. Understanding that God sent His Son to that cross simply because He loved us should touch us deep within our hearts. What a tremendous price Christ paid for us! What amazing love that cross symbolizes! What loving goodness is extended to us from the great Almighty God of all the universe! When we contemplate that beautiful love, how can we but experience sorrow for the way we have hurt Him? How could we possibly not want to do whatever it takes to honor the God who extended that love? Certainly we would want to make whatever changes it would take to show our love for Him. If He loves us that much, how can we refuse to live by His law? How can we not change our minds and learn to think as He thinks?

Notice that both motivations to repentance come from the word of God. There is no other method of bringing people to repentance than the Bible. Other gimmicks and methods may “get them to church,” but it will not bring them to repentance. Only the goodness of God and godly sorrow can do that.

#### REPENTANCE IS DEMANDED

Repentance stands between the sinner and salvation. Without it one has no hope. It is impossible to be right with God while in rebellion to Him. “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).

Phil Gear may be reached at 2863 East High Street. Springfield, OH. 45505.

perhaps necessary in our northern climates) has rendered obscure to popular apprehension some very important passages of scripture. (LIFE AND EPISTLES OF PAUL, Vol. 1., p. 518). It is interesting that these denominationalists admit readily that the practice of baptism in the New Testament was always immersion, and that the practice of using other “forms” actually goes against “important passages of scripture.” The Catholic Bower wrote, “Baptism by immersion was undoubtedly the apostolic practice, and was never dispensed with by the church, except in case of sickness, or where a sufficient quantity of water for immersion could not be procured. In both these cases, baptism by aspersion or sprinkling was allowed, but in no other” (HISTORY OF THE POPES, Vol. II, p. 110).

However, one really does not have to rely upon Greek scholars nor upon Bible historians for the truth on this matter. The Bible is certainly clear enough in any language, even in English. For instance, John 3:23 declares that John was baptizing where there was “much water.” If baptism was something other than immersion, why would there be the requirement of “much water”?

The Ethiopian nobleman was baptized by Philip (Acts 8:35-39), and the Word declares that both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and that both of them came up out of the water. If baptism was something other than immersion, this would make little sense.

Jesus said that when the Comforter came, which is the Holy Ghost, He would teach the apostles “all things”, and bring “all things” to their remembrance (John 14:26). He told them that when the Holy Spirit came upon them, He would “guide” them “into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 16:13). When the Spirit revealed what baptism was, he caused the inspired apostle Paul to write that it is a burial (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

You see, the Holy Spirit revealed these things to Paul and the other apostles and prophets and they wrote these things down in “a few words”, so that we can read and understand God’s will for mankind. (Compare Ephesians 3:3-5; 5:17; John 8:31-32). God, through the Holy Spirit actually gave the inspired men the very words to use when

Larry G. Reynolds may be reached at 6600 W. Kilgore Ave. Yorktown, IN 47396, or by email at [reynconnie@iquest.com](mailto:reynconnie@iquest.com)

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Mark E. Reynolds, Editor  
 Larry G. Reynolds, Co-Editor  
 Paul Hoover, Founding Editor  
[Mreyn8391@aol.com](mailto:Mreyn8391@aol.com)

Your comments are welcomed and appreciated!

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## THE METHOD OF BIBLICAL BAPTISM

James E. Farley

The very word, ‘baptism’ means ‘to immerse,’ so when one asks, ‘What method of baptism do you use?’ he is actually asking, ‘What method of, immersion do you use?’ One only has to study the Greek lexicons to see that this is so. Liddell and Scott state, ‘*Baptizo*: to dip in or under water.’ Thayer states, ‘to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge, to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water.’

Bible historians also confirm this fact clearly. Conybeare and Howson state, ‘It is needless to add that baptism was (unless in exceptional cases) administered by immersion, the convert being plunged beneath the surface of the water to represent the death to the life of sin, and then raised from this momentary burial to represent his resurrection to the life of righteousness. It must be a subject of regret that the general discontinuance of this form of baptism (though

## WHAT IT MEANS TO CONFESS

Larry G. Reynolds

‘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 ‘(Acts 8:37). Every person who comes desiring to be baptized is asked to make this simple confession, to state that he believes that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. This confession made by the eunuch to Philip two thousand years ago, is fundamental to Christianity. We must not neglect it today.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE CONFESSIO

When Jesus preached, men formed various opinions of him. Some said he was a prophet, some John the Baptist, some Elijah, some an impostor. The Jews put men to the test. They wanted to know whether a man was accepting or rejecting Christ (John 9:22). Jesus met the test with a test of his own (Matthew 10:32,33). Simon Peter was the first to make this complete confession (Matthew 16:16). And Jesus replied: ‘And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ (Matthew 16:18). This was the origin of the great and good confession.

It is indeed the rock upon which the divine institution of the Kingdom of Christ is founded. Evidently there was a definite confession used in Paul’s time for he speaks to Timothy concerning it (I Timothy 6:12,13). Here is the scriptural basis for calling it the ‘good confession.’ There are many other confessions that are good. This is not called a good confession, but the definite article is used in the Greek showing that it was THE good confession which is required of all those who would follow Jesus Christ.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONFESSIO

It is an oath of allegiance. It is a statement of heart-felt commitment to Christ. If we fully realize its import then we are confessing that our life will be changed. This is the essential faith we acknowledge that

Jesus is the Christ. When one accepts this cardinal fact, he does not hesitate to accept the truth of the resurrection or the miracles or heaven. The good confession is a natural response to the preaching of the early apostles and to the writing of the gospels. Not only the four gospels, but the Acts of the Apostles shows that the words of this confession are the heart of the gospel.

The whole purpose of the apostolic ministry was to argue and enforce the claims of Jesus upon the faith, reverence, and heart-felt obedience of all people as the Savior of the world. They did not come preaching an elaborate theology; they came preaching a person, Jesus Christ, born of a woman yet declared to be the Son of God with power. Peter brought this out in the climax of his sermon on Pentecost. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). This was the confession that pierced their heart and brought them to surrender to the conquering Christ.

This confession affects everything else. It is not just a step in a plan of salvation. It is a statement of allegiance. How many have died for this confession? Its implications are deep and wide. You are committing yourself and all that you are and have and hope to be to this Christ

#### CHRIST MADE THE CONFESSION AND DIED FOR IT

Before Caiaphas, the high priest, Jesus made the confession and was unwilling to change it, even though it caused Him His death. The high priest cried out, "...I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said' (Matthew 26:63,64). The high priest rent his clothes, an act of serious indignation, fear and sorrow at this truth.

Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice for us. He met death for our sins, the innocent for the guilty. No man intelligently makes this confession without feeling that he is a sinner needing a Savior. To confess the Christhood of Jesus is to confess oneself a sinner and to come to God bearing this precious Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. The

good confession is a promise to serve Christ; it immediately precedes baptism in the Name of Christ for the remission of sins.

#### HOW THE CONFESSION IS MADE

The confession is made with the mouth (Romans 10:9,10) before witnesses (II Timothy 6:12). One would be enough as the eunuch to Philip. It is important that the one who baptizes, know that you believe. It is not necessarily a formal confession but a natural outpouring of faith.



HAPPY NEW YEAR  
FROM THE EDITORS AND WRITERS OF  
UPON THE ROCK

#### ALL MEN WILL SOMEDAY CONFESS CHRIST

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). This will be the confession, not the acknowledgement of a friend or sinner in need of grace, but the confession of those who have rejected the Lord in life. They will confess at the judgment. What an agonizing thing to have Him "Know us not" (Matthew 10:33).

In closing, may I admonish you to confess Him every day. Let us make it a natural part of ourselves with humbleness, yet with courage. If He is the most important fact in your existence, then you will say so. Polycarp said at the risk of his life, "How could I deny Him, my Lord and Savior?" If you have not confessed Him for the first time before men, and made Him the Lord of your life by your obedience to Him, do so now that you may stand justified at the judgment.