

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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GOD'S WAY VS. MAN'S WAY

Part Two

By Burl Curtis

FOR THE ALIEN SINNER

In part one we considered that all have sinned and stand in need of salvation but many will reject God's way and will spend eternity in hell. Saying "Lord, Lord" will not save, but doing the will of the Father will (Matt. 7:21). A good moral life, without Jesus, cannot save, although it is essential to being faithful to God. Salvation is possible only through the grace and truth of God which came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17) and these are accepted by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. Confession is really a profession. Profession is "the act of openly declaring or publicly claiming a belief" (Webster). Jesus said we are to confess him openly, before men (Matt. 10:32). There is a pattern in the Bible concerning baptism. Immersion in water is always placed in time before salvation for the alien sinner. Please see Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 9:18,19; 22:16; 10:47,48; 16:30-34; 19:1-7; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21. Additionally, the contrast between God's way and man's way can be seen in the following.

7. **God's way** - when you are forgiven of your past sins, God accepts you into his house, which is the church. Paul told Timothy, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul taught the same thing to the Galatians. He addressed his letter "unto the churches of Galatians" (Gal. 1:2). He also told them, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been

baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27).

Man's way - after you accept Jesus you then join the church of your choice. Nothing in the Bible encourages you to "join the church of your choice," but everything in it requires you to remain a member of the church of God's choice. The church of God's choice is the one He purchased with His own blood (the blood of Jesus). To the Ephesians elders Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The blood of His Son, Jesus, is counted as God's own blood. With such a great purchase price, there is no way God can "wink at" saved people leaving His family and joining some man-made denomination (Acts 17:30, 31). You must be added to the church by God (Acts 2:47) and remain where God placed you.

8. **God's way** - the Way; this way; one way. Remember Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The way of salvation is always spoken of as one, never ways (plural).

- John 14:4-6, "the **way** ye know; how can we know the **way**?; I am the **way**."
- Acts 9:2, "if he found any of this **way**."
- Acts 16:17, "the **way** of salvation."
- Acts 18:26, "the **way** of God."

e. Acts 19:9, "spake evil of that **way**."

f. Acts 19:23, "no small stir about that **way**."

g. Acts 22:4, "I persecuted this **way**."

h. Acts 24:14, "the **way** which they call heresy."

i. 1 Cor. 12:31, "more excellent **way**."

j. Heb. 10:20, "living **way**."

Man's way - many ways. Please note the enemies of Jesus knew there was just one way. We should never again have to hear there are many ways to heaven.

9. **God's way** - today is the day of salvation; "now is the accepted time" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Man's way - put it off until tomorrow; take chances with your soul. But tomorrow may never come. For those who can successfully put salvation off a day at a time, tomorrow never comes. It is very, very foolish to take chances with your soul. Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt. 16:26)? A rich man died and someone asked, "How much money did he leave?" A wise man answered, "All of it."

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"WHY THE CHURCH IS DYING"

Danny L. Box (Deceased)

As a self-supporting preacher of the Gospel, I have worked for the past twenty-five years as a registered nurse. In the course of those years, I have been at the bedside of untold numbers of people as they passed from this life due to various causes. As each one died the physical death, I felt a sense of sadness and

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sorrow, but none of those deaths bothered me as much as what I am seeing happen in the Lord's church. I am seeing congregations of the Lord's church die spiritually. The reasons for this spiritual death are many, but we will look at only a few.

The Lord's church is dying because it is not being fed. Just as we need the right kind of food for this physical body to grow and be healthy, so must the church have the right food. That food is the Word of God. One of the entreaties given to the elders in Acts 20:28 was to "feed the flock." What are they to feed the flock? According to Peter, we are to be fed and desire the "sincere milk of the word," that we might grow in a knowledge of the Lord (1 Peter 2:2). Paul told the young man Timothy to "preach the word," and went on to tell him to use this word to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering." When the Word is being preached from the pulpit, in our classrooms, and from house to house, we don't have to worry about the church dying because this spiritual food will sustain us.

Brethren let's stop starving the church to death, and feed it!

The church is dying because it is being poisoned. We are being poisoned by men who would pervert the gospel. Paul warned against those who would pervert the gospel of Christ and told the church at Galatia that anyone who would preach any other gospel would be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). We have men now among us preaching their "damnable heresies," and many brethren are being led away from the truth. John warned us in Second John 9-11 not to have anything to do with these men, because if we do, we are just as guilty of poisoning the church as they are. Brethren, false teachers are deadly to the church!

The church is dying because it is being neglected. The church is being neglected by elders who are instructed to "take heed unto the flock" (Acts 20:28). If an eldership is paying attention as they should, then false doctrine, worldly practices, and sin that would destroy the church will be kept out. The church is also being neglected by many of its members. We have members who pay no attention to Heb. 10:25, but willfully forsake the assembly and think nothing of it. These members put more emphasis on playing and their own entertainment than they do worshipping God, little realizing that their behavior is causing the church to die.

The church is dying because its mission has been changed. The mission of the church has been, and will always be to teach the gospel to the lost (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16: 15,16); to edify, or build the brethren up spiritually (1 Thess.. 5:11; 1 Cor. 14:26; Rom. 14:19); and benevolence, or the helping of those in need (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:36-46). Today, though, the emphasis has been placed more on entertainment and playing, and pleasing ourselves, than on the actual work of the church. That is why the church is dying.

Brethren, the church is dying a little more each day, congregation by congregation, individual by individual. What can we do to turn

it around: Paul told us in 1 Cor. 15:58 . . . "Therefore my beloved brethren, Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord". Brethren, the church, the body of Christ is worth saving, so let's work to that end.

[Editor's Note: This article is a memorial tribute to brother Danny Box, a faithful gospel preacher who died a few weeks ago at the age of 51. We offer our deepest sympathy to the good family Danny left behind and pray the Lord's richest blessings upon them until that grand and eternal reunion in heaven.]

BUILDING ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN

by Bruce Stulting

We recognize the pattern principle in many areas of our lives. The seamstress needs a reliable pattern in order to make a dress. A carpenter needs a good set of blueprints in order to construct a building. Without some sort of guide or instruction, they would be in the dark regarding what their clients wanted.

The pattern principle is especially true regarding spiritual matters. In order to know what God desires, the Christian must have a pattern (1 Cor. 2:11). Jehovah has never left man to his own wisdom when it comes to spiritual matters. As Jeremiah stated, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). In spiritual matters, we are completely dependent upon God's revealed will (2 Tim 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Suppose you were to take ten seamstresses from different parts of the world and give them the same pattern, materials and equipment. Even though they are working independently of one another, by following the pattern they will all produce an identical dress. The same could be said of carpenters following the same blueprints. Now, apply this same principle to the New Testament pattern for the church. If we all

build according to God's pattern, without addition, subtraction, substitution or alteration, we will have exactly what God intended; the church.

The pattern principle is found throughout the Bible. Noah built the ark according to the pattern given to him by God (Gen. 6:14-22). Moses had to build the tabernacle according to the pattern (Ex. 25: 8,9,40). God destroyed Nadab and Abihu when they departed from the pattern of worship in the tabernacle. Later, Solomon built the Temple according to Jehovah's detailed pattern (1 Chron. 28:11-19).

The New Testament church must be built according to God's pattern. In Hebrews 8:4,5 we read, "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." The point in context is, that when God instituted the Old Testament priesthood as a type of the true priesthood, Moses could not change or alter it in any way. He was to simply build according to the pattern. Neither should we change or alter the pattern that God has ordained for His church in the New Testament.

There are other principles in the New Testament that are similar to the idea of a pattern. The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). The apostles' doctrine was the pattern that the Christians followed in the first century. All who depart from the pattern today will face the same condemnation that Nadab and Abihu did when they departed. Churches, with variations from New Testament doctrine in name, worship, organization, plan of salvation, etc., cannot say that they are following the apostles. Those who teach and practice things contrary to the doctrine or traditions received from the apostles are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16: 17, 18; 2 Thess.. 3:6).

The law of sowing and reaping also illustrates the pattern principle. In the natural order of things, everything reproduces after it's own kind. If you plant corn, don't expect to reap okra. Don't breed horses and expect to get cows. The Word of God is likened to a seed (Lk. 8:11). The Seed of God's Word, when planted in the hearts of men, will produce a Christian. It has well been said that the Bible only produces Christians only and the only Christians. If we take the Word of God and plant it in a community, you will produce a New Testament Church. However, if you depart from the pattern and plant the seed produced by the wisdom of men, you will produce a man-made denomination. In other words, if you corrupt the seed, you corrupt the crop.

We must faithfully build according to the pattern, as did Noah, Moses and Solomon. When we build according to the pattern, we will have the same name, foundation, law, plan of salvation, organization and worship, etc. as did the original church. If we want to be pleasing to God, we must be a member of a church that is, in essentials, identical to the one in the New Testament. If we are part of anything other than what is revealed in the New Testament, we have not built according to the pattern. There are those today who are laboring in vain because they have not followed the pattern of God in building His house (1 Tim. 3:15; Psa. 127:1). Though they have labored diligently, and constructed a visible organization, they did not plant the pure seed of God's Word and will thus be rooted up in the last day (Matt. 15:13).

We of the churches of Christ labor diligently to follow the pattern found in the New Testament. We plead with all who believe in Christ to join us in being just Christians. We stand ready to help all who would leave denominationalism and return to the simple pattern of New Testament Christianity. May God bless your study of His word and may you always seek to live and worship according to the pattern.

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FAITH THAT BRINGS SALVATION: A MIRACULOUS GIFT?

by Ron Wilson

Some folks would have us to believe that we are to pray to God for faith that will save us. But that doesn't harmonize with what the Bible teaches. Hebrews 11:6 teaches that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. If one prays for faith, doesn't that imply that one does not have faith? But if one does not have faith, how can that prayer be pleasing to God? furthermore James says, "But let him ask in faith . . ." (James 1:6). To ask God for faith, implies one does not have faith, but if one does not have faith, one is not asking in faith, therefore, one will not get faith! If not, why not?

Others say that faith is a *miraculous gift*. I don't recall a single instance in the Bible where faith was miraculously given by God for salvation. Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This is certainly what John was writing about in John 20:30-31, when advising that one read his account of Jesus' works in order to obtain belief (a synonym of faith). Ephesians 2:8 tells us that, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Faith is not God's gift here but the means by which the gift is obtained; the *gift* is salvation. In verse nine Paul continues, "not of works, lest anyone should boast." A *gift* is something *given*; that is, a gift (in this case: salvation) is not something that is purchased or earned by the receiver. The passage simply teaches that there is nothing we can do that makes God *owe* us anything; much less salvation.

Certainly the word *faith* is mentioned in a miraculous context in 1 Corinthians 12:9. But what is the context? Paul is discussing the miraculous gifts of the first century. Note to whom this message is directed: in verse one he calls the recipients *brethren*. Who are these *brethren*? 1 Corinthians 1:1-11 identifies

these brethren as members of the Lord's church in Corinth. These were not people who needed to have faith to be saved; they were already in a saved relationship. From 1 Corinthians 2: 4-5 we learn that these *brethren* already had faith **based upon the gospel Paul preached**. Note that miraculous gifts were distributed to each one individually (1 Cor. 12:11), and these gifts were different from each other (v. 4-6), and different individuals received different gifts (v.8-10). Note the language: *for to one is given . . . to another . . . to another . . . to another . . . etc.* If faith in this context is a gift for salvation, then there were some in Corinth who were able to heal, speak in tongues, and prophesy, but did not have faith; thus, did not have salvation. That cannot possibly be, because whatever one thinks of the Holy Spirit, either miraculous or non-miraculous, gifts of the Holy Spirit were not given to children of the devil! The members of the church of Christ in Corinth were children of God! (Compare Galatians 3:26-27 with Mark 16: 15-16; Acts 18:8). The Corinthians were folks who had been baptized. Baptism of the new Testament gospel is preceded by faith (again: Mark 16:16; Acts 18:8); **therefore**, 1 Corinthians 12: 7-9 has nothing to do with faith that leads to salvation.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

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"I CAN'T SEE ANY HARM IN IT."

Consider these guidelines when determining whether a practice is right or wrong.

1. THE PERSONAL TEST: Will doing this make me a better or worse Christian?
2. THE SOCIAL TEST: Will doing it influence others to be better or worse Christians?
3. THE PRACTICAL TEST: Will the results of my doing it be desirable?

4. THE UNIVERSAL TEST: If everyone should do this, would it improve or degrade society?
5. THE SCRIPTURAL TEST: Does the Bible endorse it, or is it forbidden by the word of God?
6. THE STEWARDSHIP TEST: Will my doing this constitute a waste of talent God gave me?
7. THE CHARACTER TEST: What will be the influence of my moral and spiritual stamina?
8. THE FAMILY TEST: Will it bring discredit and dishonor to my family, and will it embarrass them?
9. THE PUBLICITY TEST: Would I be willing for friends, fellow Christians, the elders and the preacher to know about it?
10. THE COMMON SENSE TEST: Does it agree with just plain, everyday, ordinary common sense.
11. THE FAIRNESS TEST: Is it honest, and is it practicing the golden rule?

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (Thess. 5:21-22).

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

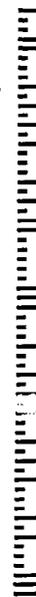
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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