



# The Voice of Truth



September 20, 2009

## The Bible Is Clear

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Recently, I have been having a discussion with a man (belonging to a denomination) concerning the church. He called me a brother, and I pointed out to him how he could become my brother in Christ. His reply, he asked this question in a sarcastic way, "Do you think our Creator cares about the particular denomination one belongs to? He goes on and says, "No... our Lord and Savior wants our hearts, that's what's important to Him." Then he says, "The church of Christ as the bible refers to it is talking about all followers of Christ regardless of denomination."

First, I want to say the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship to God is sinful because it is not authorized (**Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**). Denominationalism is sinful because it is not authorized by the Bible. Whatever in religion is not authorized by the Bible is sinful. This the Bible plainly teaches. People need to realize that whatever in religion that is not authorized by the Bible is sinful, and will be rooted up (**Matthew 15:13**). The essential head of every denomination is not Christ, but Satan. There would be no denominations if all men followed the Bible.

The Bible is clear that the church is not a part of the whole; the whole being false religion. We are not to go beyond the things written (**1 Corinthians 4:6**) and when we do, we do not have God (**2 John 9-11**). A denomination is a group of people who formulate their own creed not found in the Bible.

God cannot accept denominationalism because He condemns division (**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**). There is no authority in the Bible for the Lutheran "church," Methodist, or Baptist "church," etc. The man does not live who can prove that the Bible authorizes a man to be baptized into, say the Methodist "church." Such authorization is not in the Bible. The church for which Jesus died (**Acts**

**20:28**) is the one body of people who have been saved by His blood (**Ephesians 1:7; 2:13-17**). The church for which Christ died is neither a denomination nor a part of a denomination.

Remember Jesus said, "*If ye abide in my word, (then) are ye truly my disciples*" (**John 8:31**). Then Christ goes on to say, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (**John 8:32**). Truth is from heaven, not from man (**John 1:17; 14:6; 16:13**). It must be known (**John 8:32**), believed (**2 Thessalonians 2:12**), loved (**2 Thessalonians 2:10**), and obeyed (**1 Peter 1:22; Galatians 5:7; Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8-9**). It sounds to me that there is more than just the Savior wanting our hearts.

Notice please, that denominationalists claim to be faithful servants of Christ while they **(1)** reject Christ's one plan of salvation and to accept a plan of salvation which has been invented by mere human beings (for example, salvation by grace or faith only), **(2)** reject the one church which Jesus died and enter a denomination, which also was invented by mere human beings, **(3)** to reject the way of worship which has been authorized by the New Testament and to engage in worship which has not been authorized by the New Testament. People, denominationalism is sinful because it is not authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ (**2 John 9-11; Colossians 3:17**).

The Bible teaches that every person who is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is added by the Lord Himself to the church for which He died (**Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13**). Those who have done what the Bible authorizes become members of the church of Christ; Christians, and nothing more. They do not become a hyphenated Christian (Lutheran-Christians, Methodist-Christians, and Baptist-Christians); they be-

come just Christians!

Do you see what this person is saying? He is telling me that the body of Christ doesn't matter. The church is not important. If that be the case, then he is telling me the blood of Christ doesn't matter (**Acts 20:28**). How could anyone say the church is not important? Who would say that Christ wasted His blood on the cross? You do if you say the church doesn't matter, as long as you give your heart to the Lord. If the church doesn't matter, God's eternal plan doesn't matter (**Ephesians 3:8-11**). His ideas, his attitude is, "I'm okay, and you're okay." His belief is as long as your religious you're alright in the sight of God. Wrong! Tell that to Cain, Nadab and Abihu (**Genesis 4; Leviticus 10**). I want us to notice what this man is saying, notice: The Baptists teach baptism by immersion; the Methodist by sprinkling; Baptists practice a closed communion with the Lord's Supper; The Methodist an open communion; The Baptists teach one can't fall from grace, while the Methodist can fall. According to this man's teaching, he believes both views on these subjects are correct, because it doesn't matter as long as you give your heart to the Lord. He accepts the view that God is the author of both these views on these subjects. Well God is not a God of confusion (**1 Corinthians 14:33**). Our God is ever a God of order. God demands order! He is not the author of confusion. We are to speak the same thing. "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (**1 Corinthians 1:10**). Here it is specified the need to speak the same thing, thus making it possible that there be no divisions. The speaking of the same things would be possible when all proposing to serve the Christ confined their speaking to "the oracles of God" (**1 Peter 4:11**), recognizing only the Word as authority (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). This is impossible under this man's doctrine.

We plead with everyone to realize that he can be just a Christian, not some so-called "hyphenated-Christian" – a member of some

denomination. There never has been a need for any denomination. There is no present need for anyone to be a member of a denomination. All one needs to do is obey the gospel of Christ, the seed, which is His word (**Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:20-25**), as a penitent believer being baptized unto the remission of your sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**), and you have the assurance of God, as set out in His word, that you will be a member of the church for which Jesus died (**Acts 20:28**), in which Christ is a Savior of (**Ephesians 5:23**), you will be just a Christian. Obedience to the Bible makes nothing but Christians. And there is no way to become a Christian except by believing and obeying the Bible.

### "Spiritual Growth On A Stopwatch"

By Jarrod Jacobs

We are familiar with passages which stress the fact that our time on earth is limited (**Ecc. 9:5**). Solomon wrote, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*" (**Prov. 27:1**). In the New Testament, James wrote by inspiration: "*Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (**Jas. 4:14**).

Knowing our time on earth is limited, it should not be surprising to read passages which emphasize making our lives right with God while we have the time and opportunity. In **II Corinthians 6:2**, the apostle Paul wrote, "*... behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" In addition to this, we read, "*Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts...*" (**Heb. 3:7-8**). These and other Holy Scriptures urge us to make sure we are Christians now, and make sure we make proper choices while we have "today" and "now". We have no "lease" on life, thus the need for urgency in becoming a Christian when we have the opportunity.

At the same time, we read such passages as, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (**II Tim. 4:2**). This passage is clear that one who is preaching must exercise patience as he preaches to others. Perhaps he is going to have to

preach on a subject more than one time in order for people to comprehend and do what God expects. What do you think? Just as a parent needs patience in instruction in the home, so also a preacher needs patience in showing others the truth. Further, we see that “*patience*” is considered by God to be a part of the fruit of the spirit (**II Pet. 1:6**). God intends for His children to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (**II Pet. 3:8**). Jesus said “*come*” and “*learn*” of Him (**Matt. 11:28-29**). No doubt this “*learning*” takes time!

While we are aware of the fact that folks can hear one sermon, believe one sermon, and obey one sermon, as did so many in the book of Acts; growing and learning spiritually takes time, doesn't it? If not, then why the distinction between the “*novice*” (**I Tim. 3:6**), or a “*babe*” in Christ (**I Pet. 2:2; I Cor. 3:1**) and one who is mature (**Heb. 5:14**) or “*spiritual*” (**I Cor. 3:1; Gal. 6:1**)? If no time for growth is necessary, then one could grow from “*carnal*” to “*spiritual*” in a matter of moments! Yet, this is not the case, is it? It takes time and patience as folks grow in the Lord. So, which is it? How do we reconcile the passages emphasizing “*urgency*” in bringing folks to Christ with the passages which stress the need for being patient with people as they grow and mature?

In truth, there is no contradiction. God is speaking about two different aspects of one's spiritual life. On the one hand, we see the need for making sure we are Christians, forgiven of our sins. This should be done without delay because we do not know what might happen during the course of a day (**Acts 2:38, 22:16, 16:33; Prov. 27:1**). Without obedience to the Lord's plan for salvation, we are lost, spiritually dead while we live, and are bound for a devil's hell. We must do everything we can to escape the clutches of Satan and get out of his kingdom and into the kingdom of Christ (**Col. 1:13**). Therefore, we see the need for showing folks the truth and urging them to come to the Lord before it is too late. On the other hand, spiritual growth demands time and experience. It requires us spending time in God's book in order to see the truth, and making

the necessary changes (repenting). This is the principle revealed in James one as he compares and contrasts the deceived person and the blessed man (**Jas. 1:22-25**). It is a new experience, a new way of life, and a new way of thinking (**Rom. 8:6**)! Knowing the kind of time and effort necessary for spiritual growth, is this not another factor which would encourage urgency in bringing folks to Christ? Once baptized, we don't know how much longer we might have to live and mature in the Lord!

Sadly, we find some Christians who grow impatient with their brethren. They leave folks with the impression that they expect them to have grown to the same point that they are even when they may not have been a Christian for the same amount of time. This is a mistake, and shows a certain amount of immaturity on the part of one who should be mature! We ought not expect someone to mature in five minutes to the degree that required five years of us! Christians are at different places in their spiritual growth, and this is understood by God. It ought to be understood by us. At any assembling of the saints, we will see folks who are “*babes in Christ*”, still struggling with issues that others have conquered (**I Cor. 3:1**). We will see those who have matured some beyond that point, all the way to the spiritually mature, such as are described in such passages as **Galatians 6:1**. This is a wonderful thing, and there is no sin or shame associated with being at different points in spiritual growth. In fact, the chapters of **Romans 14** and **I Corinthians 8** are directed toward the interaction the strong (“*spiritual*”?) Christian has toward the weak (“*babe*”?) Christian. The strong shows patience toward the weak (**Rom. 15:1**), but at the same time, the weak needs to continue to grow so that he can be mature (**II Pet. 3:18**). Again, there is no sin or shame associated with being a babe in Christ who is trying to learn and overcome the struggles he has in his life. Too, the strong Christian ought to be patient as he sees a fellow brother or sister trying to learn and mature. He was once in that very same position! Where is our patience today?

While it is clear that those who are immature need time to grow, where problems are seen is when Christians refuse to grow! For example, the Hebrews were chastised for their failure to grow. Read carefully the words of **Hebrews 5:12-14**. *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillfull in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*

Notice the Hebrew Christians were not chastised for not growing as fast as some other Christians. They were not compared to the Ephesians, Colossians, or any other group or individual Christian. It is not wise to compare ourselves with others in that way (**II Cor. 10:12**). Rather, the reason the Hebrews were chastised was due to their failure to grow at all! Yes, just as in physical growth, some people grow faster than others, spiritually. Unlike physical growth, though, spiritual growth is a CHOICE we make, and evidently for a time, the Hebrew Christians chose not to grow. Brethren, let us have patience with ourselves and with one another as we mature in the Lord! We do ourselves no favors; we do no one else any favors when we put people on the proverbial “stopwatch”, either expecting our spiritual growth to come instantaneously, or expecting others to grow at

the same rate we did, or to “catch up” with us in a short time!

### Conclusion

If someone joined a health club, or if he showed an interest in music and wanted to play music with others, or joined some other group where he was to be around folks of varying talents and abilities; that person is generally shown patience as he “catches up,” learns, and gains experience that the other people already have. Why can we not show that same understanding and patience toward our brethren? The older brethren are to “*be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience*” (**Titus 2:1**). Where are these men today? The servant of the Lord “*must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient*” (**II Tim. 2:24**). Are we acting as the Lord’s servants? The man of God is to “*follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*” (**I Tim. 6:11**). Where are these men (and women) of God? Being patient is a qualification of elders in a congregation (**I Tim. 3:3**). In fact, it ought to be evident in the lives of every Christian (**I Thess. 5:14**). This is our point in this article!

It is high time we stopped putting people’s spiritual growth on a “stopwatch” and in love and concern figured out where people are in their lives and helped them to grow. As a result of this kind of patience and care, not only will we see growth in the “babes in Christ,” but mature Christians will grow stronger as well. *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com*

### What Must I Do To Be Saved?

**Hear and Learn** - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

**Believe** - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

**Repent** - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

**Confess the Lord** - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

**Be Baptized** - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

**Continue in the Apostles' Teaching** - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

#### About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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##### Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

[www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com](http://www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com)