

Continued from Page Three, "BAPTISM - URGENT AND ESSENTIAL"

One is not lost just because he is not baptized. He is lost because he is a sinner. If someone who can't swim falls into a lake and a boat is sent, but he won't get into the boat, is he drowning because he won't get into the boat? No, he is drowning because he is in the water. Likewise, one is not lost just because he is not baptized, but because he is in sin. Just as the boat is the means of rescue and one must get into it, the gospel is the means of salvation and must be obeyed (baptism included) to rescue from sin.

Who has the right today to label baptism as "non-essential" or in anyway minimize any of the commands of Christ? Aren't all of the commands of the Lord essential?

He said, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). As Lord, He has the right to make baptism an important step in the plan. He is the Savior and His will must become our's. He is the "author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Heb. 5:9).

If when baptized, you put one Christ (Gal. 3:27), wash away sins (Acts 22:16), have remission of sins (Acts 2:38), are saved (Mark 16:16), benefit from Christ's death (Rom. 6:3-4), enter the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), what is your condition without baptism? Why not repent and be immersed in the name of Christ for the remission of sins? Let no man deceive you. Humbly obey the gospel today.

Credit: <http://oakridgechurch.com/riggs> ♦

THE ONE BODY

The church is the body of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18). There is only one body, one church. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). The New Testament teaches that there is only one body; this one body is the church. We are "fellow heirs of the same body" (Eph. 3:6). We are "reconciled to God in one body" (Eph. 2:16). Christ is founder of only one church. "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus did not say that we would build a church, His church or one of His churches. He said, "I will build my church." The word "church" signifies singularity. Jesus did not build many different churches, but one! None should encourage any to seek the church of your choice, but the church of Christ's choice, that is, the one that is Christ-built, blood-bought (Acts 20:28), the one in which He is the Saviour of (Eph. 5:23).

Since there is one, and only one church and since Christ saves only those in that one church; thus, if one living today is not a member of that church (Rom. 16:16), then he is not saved. ♦

*If a hypocrite is between you and God,
He must be closer to God than you are.*

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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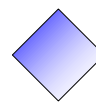


Schedule of Assembly

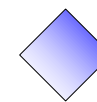
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

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

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The Voice of Truth



January 22, 2012

"Saul's Conversion"
By Jimmy Pettigrew

The conversion of Saul is one of the truly remarkable events set forth so ably by Luke the beloved physician in the book of Acts. Jesus made an appearance to Saul on his way to Damascus to bring back Christians bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Then, "And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he (said), I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:3-6).

Some have obtained the idea that Saul was saved in a manner different than other cases of gospel conversion. **NOT SO!** Saul was saved precisely as were others in the book of Acts. God has but **ONE** plan of redemption, and compare it with Saul's conversion.

First, God's Word teaches that one must hear the Word of God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Saul **HEARD**. The Bible says, "And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Again, he heard the instructions of Ananias, "and now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). There is no doubt but that he heard the Word of the Lord!

Second, the scriptures teach that one must believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believed not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Saul **BELIEVED**. This is evidenced by the fact he asked the Lord what he must do in Acts 9:6 and 22:10. An unbeliever would not care what the Lord wanted him to do. Saul's belief is further witnessed in the fact that he did what the Lord told him to

do about entering the city and awaiting further instructions on how to be saved. Saul's faith is seen by the fact he willingly did what Ananias told him to do relative to his being baptized.

Third, the Bible teaches one must repent. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Saul **REPENTED**. His repentance is strongly implied in Acts 9:9, "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." He did not manifest behavior of a man reported by many to have already been saved. He was filled with remorse; the awful crime of fighting against God and Christ was pressing upon his soul. This is the reason for his total abstinence from food and drink. Also, we must remember that Ananias would not immerse an impenitent man, for the great commission demanded repentance prior to baptism (Luke 24:47).

Fourth, the New Testament teaches one must confess his faith in Jesus Christ. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). Saul **CONFESSED**. He confessed his faith in Jesus Christ when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? . . ." (Acts 9:6; 22:10). Later Paul (Saul) wrote, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." He surely confessed the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, the last, the Bible teaches one must be immersed. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ." (Mark 16:16). "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). ". . . even baptism doth also now save us . . ." (1 Pet. 3:20-21). Saul was **IMMERSED**. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,

Continued on Page Two

In This Issue...

Pages 1 to 2 - "Saul's Conversion"
Pages 2 to 4 - "Are We Preaching Opinions?"

Pages 3 to 4 - BAPTISM - URGENT AND ESSENTIAL
Page 4 - THE ONE BODY

Continued from Page One, "Saul's Conversion"

calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He "arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:18).

"Are We Preaching Opinions?"

By Jarrod Jacobs

In the last few years, I have noticed that it is popular to accuse folks of "preaching opinions" when those listening do not agree with the teacher or preacher. Regardless of whether or not the person is preaching the truth, the accusation is made when things are taught that "I do not like." In connection with this, I have noticed that questions on the radio program are often prefaced with: "What is your opinion about?" Perhaps it is that people preface their questions this way because if it is only an "opinion" that is offered, rather than what Scripture says (**Jn. 17:17**), then if we do not like the answer, we can ignore it, because, after all, "It is just his opinion."

Is this right? Are we now reduced to "preaching opinions" to people instead of preaching the truth? Is this an unfair accusation, or is it the truth?

There Is A Place For Opinions In God's Plan.

First, let us be reminded that passages like **Romans 14** and **I Corinthians 8** recognize the fact that folks might have opinions concerning certain matters. In these passages, God allows for this reality. Having opinions on matters that are not matters of faith is authorized of God! He allows us to have opinions, but our opinions are not to be taught as "fact" or conditions of salvation!

Yet, when it comes to preaching the gospel to folks, whether publically from the pulpit, or across the dinner table, or in the break room, etc., we need to forego our "opinions" and present only Bible facts (i.e., truth) to people. Let us see how it was done in the Bible and follow the examples.

Holy Men Of God Taught What God Said, Not Their Opinions.

In the Old Testament, we read *"thus saith the Lord"* no less than 400 times! Yes, all of our Old Testament heroes, from Moses to Malachi, cried *"thus saith the Lord"* when speaking to the people! In so doing, they were making it crystal clear that they were not preaching opinions, nor the popular thinking of the world at the time! In fact, *"no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation"*. These *"holy men of God"* spoke *"as they were*

We can see from this study that God has but **ONE** plan of redemption for all people. In the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, we see what man must do in order to be saved. ♦

carried along by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20-21). No, no opinions were allowed in the canon of the Old Testament! Looking to the New Testament, we see a similar truth being expressed. Before Jesus went to the cross, He promised *"another comforter"* would come to the apostles (**Jn. 14:16**). In so doing, *"He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you He will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (Jn. 14:26, 16:13).* Later on, we read from the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians. He said, *"If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37).* The apostle John also made it clear: *"We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (I Jn. 4:6).*

At no time in the Old or New Testaments do we read a claim of "originality" by any of the authors! They were not providing "opinions" nor the "popular thinking" of the day. They were providing folks with truth that originated with God (**II Tim. 3:16-17**)! God's will was revealed to man through forty-some writers over 1600 years, and we are the beneficiaries (**II Pet. 1:3**)!

Therefore, if I am interested in speaking as the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent (**I Pet. 4:11**), then what will I be speaking? Will it be my personal opinion and experience? No way! If Jesus did not do this (**Jn. 12:48-50**), then how can I justify doing it?

How Can We Determine When Someone Voices An Opinion?

Let us return to the beginning of our article, and the complaints voiced by some concerning the preacher's "opinion." How can we determine whether or not someone is offering an opinion instead of the truth? Put simply, we compare what a person says with Scripture (**Acts 17:11**). If the teaching agrees with Scripture, then this one is not promoting an opinion at all. In such a case, if I am mad, upset, or otherwise feel rebellious toward what is said,

Continued on Page Three

Continued from Page Two, "Are We Preaching Opinions?"

then this is not a reaction to the teacher, but a reaction to God, and I will answer for it (**II Cor. 5:10**)! Trying to make myself feel better by saying, "That is his opinion" did not resolve anything, because if he taught the truth of the Bible, then it WASN'T his opinion! If, however, what one teaches cannot be proven by Scriptural authority, then it was his opinion that was taught.

Defining Words Does Not Constitute Teaching One's Opinion.

While we are studying, let us also remember that when a teacher or preacher defines words for us so as to better explain a Bible word or passage; this does not constitute an "opinion". The writers of the Bible defined words from time to time. For example, the Lord's body is defined as the church in **Colossians 1:18** and **24**. In **Revelation 1:20**, we see the "seven stars" defined as *"the seven angels"*, and "seven candlesticks" defined as *"the seven churches."* **John 17:17** gives us the definition of *"truth"*. Read it and see. There are many other examples, but the point is that defining words is not expressing a personal opinion. Rather, it is getting to the heart of the matter in teaching truth!

Therefore, when someone today uses a Bible dictionary to define Bible words, this is not done to express a personal opinion! Rather, it is an effort to get to the heart of the matter and define a word from the original language (Hebrew in the Old Testament or Greek in the New

BAPTISM - URGENT AND ESSENTIAL

By David Riggs

In New Testament times people were baptized as soon as they heard the gospel and had faith in Christ (**Acts 2:41; 8:35-39; 16:30-34**). There were no postponements or delays; there was no such thing as waiting for a "baptismal day." It was always "straightway," "the same day," "the same hour of the night," etc. They thought baptism was urgent and essential.

Furthermore, the inspired men of the New Testament did not take baptism lightly. They never poked fun at it saying, "There's no power in the water," neither did they accuse some of trusting in "water salvation." They taught that Jesus made atonement for sin in His death, and they commanded all to believe, repent, and be baptized in order to receive the benefits of His death (**Rom. 6:3-4**). They viewed baptism as an act of faith in and submission to Jesus Christ, the Savior, who has all authority (**Matt. 28:18**

Testament) rather than merely relying on the "common" or "popular" definition from 21st century English. Seeing that the Bible was not written in the 21st century, it is wise to go back and find the original meaning to Bible words! Are we doing this?

Last, when we allow the Bible to be its own commentary in showing the fulfillment of prophecies and the like, we are simply teaching truth. It is not the expression of a personal opinion. Let us not forget this.

Conclusion

Are there people guilty of teaching personal opinion? Absolutely! This was happening in Bible days (**Gal. 1:6-7; II Pet. 2:1-3, 17-19; Jer. 28; II Tim. 2:16-18; Rom. 16:17-18**; etc.), as it is happening today. Let us therefore be wise hearers, as well as be honest with the truth. When we *"handle accurately"* God's word (**II Tim. 2:15**), and when we mature spiritually (**Heb. 5:14**), we are better able to recognize when someone is pushing an opinion rather than teaching the truth.

Hopefully, it is clear that those of us who love the Lord and want to spread His word in public and private ways (**Acts 20:20**), are not preaching opinions. Rather, we are teaching the word of God to others in the assurance that those who are taught will do the same (**II Tim. 2:2**). Let us faithfully *"preach the word"* to folks and save their souls!

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

-20).

All would freely admit that there is no power in the water of baptism. The power is of the Lord. Jesus healed a blind man by anointing his eyes and saying, *"Go wash in the pool of Siloam."* (**John 9:6-7**). The blind man did not object by saying, "There is no power in the water." He knew that the power was of the Lord and he needed to obey to receive the blessing. Likewise, there is no power in the water of baptism, but one must go to the water to receive the blessing. To be cleansed of leprosy, Naaman was told, *"Go and wash in Jordan seven times..."* (**2 Kings 5:10**). There was no power in the water of Jordan, but if Naaman had not obeyed, he would not have been cleansed. Similarly, if one does not obey in baptism, he will not be cleansed.

Continued on Page Four