

# September 2019

Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

## In This Issue...

- **Question from Canada about How to Treat Sinful Family Members**
- **Pursuit of Happiness: Mercy and Purity** | *Sunday Ayandare*
- **The Baptist Church and the Bible (1)** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **Ephesus, and the Church of Christ There** | *Patrick Farish*
- **Walking - The Need To Persevere** | *Jim Mickells*
- **Ungodly euphemisms** | *Mike Thomas*
- **His Hour** | *William Stewart*
- **The One Baptism** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Sorcery** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren  
**WHATEVER THINGS** are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely  
are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

PHILIPPIANS  
**4:8**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

"The business of man is to find out the rules in accordance with which God bestows his favors, and then to act in obedience to them" (Albert Barnes, **Notes on the Psalms**, comment on Psalm 67:1)

"Secular man, who feels so self-confident, paradoxically is plagued with fear. Pious people, who know God's sovereignty and their limitations, live in prayer and peace" (Bruce K. Waltke, **The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31**. 11; Comment on Proverbs 16:3)

## Question from Canada about How to Treat Sinful Family Members

### Questions

Is there a distinction to be made so far as social interaction with:

1. one withdrawn from in the local congregation VS one withdrawn from in another congregation?
2. one withdrawn from in the local congregation VS one who is unfaithful but hadn't been withdrawn from (whether locally or elsewhere)?
3. one withdrawn from in another location VS one who is unfaithful but hadn't been withdrawn from (brethren sometimes fail to do what they are supposed to do regarding church discipline)?

### Answers

(1) Withdrawal is a function of the local church toward its own members (1 Corinthians chapter 5). It is a part of congregational autonomy (1 Peter 5:1-4). It only directly affects the members of that local church. It affects spiritual ("deliver such a one to Satan") and social ("with such a one no not to eat") activities. It cannot be bound on other congregations or members of other congregations.

(2) Do not share in the sins of a sinner or encourage him in his sin (Ephesians 5:11), but only the local church can exercise congregational discipline (1 Corinthians chapter 5). Congregations should not accept

unrepentant sinners, but each congregation must determine for itself who fits that category (Acts 9:26-28).

(3) Withdrawal of fellowship is the function of the local church toward its own members (1 Corinthians chapter 5). The only things you can do about sinners who are not members of the local church where you are a member, whether they are Christians or not, is to try to teach them (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20) and to refuse to share in their sins or condone their sins (Ephesians 5:11). If the church refuses to take scriptural action (1 Corinthians chapter 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6), there may not be anything you can do except to state your disagreement and/or to go to a congregation that practices scriptural discipline. The family is a fleshly, earthly relationship, not one that involves fellowship in Christ. The husband and wife are "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6), not one spirit.

---

## Pursuit of Happiness: Mercy and Purity

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Nigeria

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:7,8).

The word "blessed" which is used in each of the beatitudes is a very special word. It comes from the Greek word "*makarios*." One can get a good idea of "*makarios*" from one particular usage of the word and this has to do with the fact that the Greeks always called Cyprus "*Le makaria*," which means "The Happy Isle." The Greeks did so, according to William Barclay, because they believed that Cyprus was so lovely, so rich and so fertile an island that a man would never need to go beyond its coastline to find the perfectly happy life. It had such a climate, such flowers and fruits and trees, such minerals, such natural resources that it contained within itself all the materials for perfect happiness.

*"Makarios' then describes that joy which had its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouchable and self-contained; that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and the changes of life"* (William Barclay, **The Gospel of Matthew**. 102).

In short, the word translated "blessed" denotes joy and happiness. That happiness which sees us through our pains, the joy which sorrow and loss, pain and grief are powerless to touch. That joy and happiness that shines through tears and which nothing in life or death can take away (compare John 16:22).

The pursuit of happiness is one of the things boldly written across the pages of human history. From Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the palace of King Solomon, down to the present day, man is obsessed with "good life" and "abundant life" Adam and Eve thought by eating the forbidden fruit they would derive greater happiness and pleasure.

*"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate"* (Genesis 3:6).

Perhaps no other person better illustrates the frantic but futile search for happiness through riches than Solomon. What did he conclude? "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase. This also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10; See also Proverbs 11:4, 28).

Solomon further postulated that good and happy life does not come with wisdom and knowledge. "... I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" (Ecclesiastes 1:3,17,18).

Like countless millions today, Solomon imagined that happiness is a function of gratifying the fleshly desires, "eat, and to drink and to be merry" with wines and women (Ecclesiastes 8:15). However, to his consternation, he exclaimed, "this also was vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:1,10-12). Now, if true and great happiness does not come from having a large bank account, living in a magnificent building, driving an expensive, state-of-the-art car, carrying about women of easy virtue of various shades and sizes; then just

where and how does one get happy life?

The philosophers of this world, great thinkers, psychiatrists and sociologists have all searched in vain for true happiness. However, the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ announced to us in the section of the Sermon on the Mount, that true and lasting happiness derived first of all from being right with God and the true recognition that one is in His fellowship. Put succinctly, happiness is a quality of spirit rather than a set of external circumstances.

### **The Merciful Shall Obtain Mercy**

This is a statement of a principle which runs through the New Testament. To be forgiven, we must be forgiving (Matthew 18:35). "For judgment is without mercy to the one who had shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). The Model Prayer (which some erroneously refer to as the Lord's Prayer) is anchored on forgiveness (Matthew 6:12,14,15). Thus, the teaching runs through the New Testament that indeed, only the merciful shall receive mercy.

Moreover, to be merciful is to be compassionate and sympathetic. It is something like "your pain in my heart." It is not only a feeling in our heart of concern for others but love exemplified in helping to relieve their suffering.

But mercy means more than that and this is clearly seen in the etymology of the word. The Hebrew word for mercy is "*chesedh*" and this means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind and feel things with his feelings. Certainly this transcends an emotional wave of pity. It denotes a sympathy which comes from a deliberate identification with the other person, sympathy which demands a deliberate effort of the mind and of the will. This is the crux of the matter. Most people are so obsessed with their own feelings to the utter neglect of the feelings of others. Let us care enough to share. True happiness is found by extending mercy unto others. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

### **The Pure in Heart Shall See God**

What does it mean to be pure in heart? Surely, the Lord is not speaking of the organ in our bodies that pumps blood through our veins, but the biblical heart. That is, the seat of all emotions, the source of inspiration and control of all our actions.

Hence, purity of heart finds expression in people whose minds, motives, actions and principles are pure. Men who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart and are so. "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Now a big question: How very seldom do we engage in our finest actions from absolutely unmixed motives? When we give generously and liberally, do we not bask in the sunshine of our own self-approval; that we are doing something the other brethren are not doing? When we make some sacrifice, are we totally free from the feeling that man will see something heroic in us and that we may regard ourselves as martyrs? One preacher, thinking he had suffered much more than any other in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, once told this writer, "no American preacher can be in my poor financial condition and preach!" The impression was that he thought he had made the greatest sacrifice to preach the gospel. Certainly, our good brother had not read Cecil Willis' **W. W. Otey: Contender For the Faith** or **J. D. Tant: Texas Preacher**, authored by Fanning Yater Tant. These are books, among many others, that give us insight into the great deprivations and sacrifices the early American preachers made. Besides, yours truly knows a lot of American preachers who, like apostle Paul, are "making tents" to support themselves (See Acts 18:1-3), preaching the gospel "without charge" (1 Corinthians 9:18). Indeed, there are some brethren, though infinitesimally few, who are spending and being spent, doing far greater things in the kingdom than even those preachers who are receiving what they call "small support." Even when a sermon is preached, how many preachers are free from the danger of self-satisfaction as if they are the authors of the Bible

they have preached?

This matter demands from all of us the most exacting self-examination. Why do we do what we are doing? Is our work done from motive of service or motive of pay? Is our service from selfish motives or self-display? Is the work we do in the church done for Christ or for our prestige and ego? Can we bestow all our goods to feed the poor and still have not love? Can we give our bodies to be burned and still have not love? The answers to the last couple of questions is a resounding YES. Yes, if our motives are not pure.

---

## The Baptist Church and the Bible (1)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Baptist Church is one of the prominent Protestant denominations, and is well known for its conservative stand on many moral issues. There are various groups that wear the name Baptist, but probably the largest and most conservative among them would be the Southern Baptists.

It is intended in this writing to examine the teachings and practices of the Baptist Church and compare it with what the Bible teaches to see if it can be identified as the church we read about in the Bible that was founded by Jesus Christ. This is what he promised in Matthew 16:18 in response to Peter's confession that Christ was the Son of God: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he gave a strict rule that must be followed even today.

*"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:10-11).*

If Christ is the foundation and builder of the church, then church must follow his guidelines. The following quotations are taken from the **New American Standard Bible** and the **Standard Manual for Baptist Churches** by Edward T. Hiscox, published by the American Baptist Publication Society.

### Baptism

**Baptist Manual.** 20 – "Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of 'baptismal regeneration.'; but it is essential to obedience, since Christ has commanded it."

The Bible -- This presents a contradiction. On the one hand, the Manual says you do not have to be baptized in order to be saved, but you do have to do it since Christ commanded it. Are Christ's commands not necessary for salvation?

Furthermore, the statement clearly contradicts several Bible passages that leave no doubt as to the connection of baptism with salvation. "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Those are the words of Jesus Christ. Consider – "He who buys a ticket and gets on the plane shall arrive at his destination." Who would ever deny that both conditions must be met? But the Manual would read "He who buys a ticket shall arrive at his destination, and then shall get on the plane."

Consider some other passages from God's Word. In Acts 22:16, Paul is recounting the story of his conversion, and tells of his coming to meet Ananias, who told Paul, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

Can one be in a saved condition and still have his sins? Certainly not. So when was Paul going to be freed from his sins? Ananias said that when Paul had been baptized, his sins would be washed away.

In writing to the churches of Galatia, Paul wrote in Galatians 3:27: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Peter refers to the story of Noah and the ark, and how they were saved by water in First Peter 3:21: "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

There are other passages, but these will illustrate the connection between baptism and salvation. One might also read Romans 6:3-6 and Acts 2:38.

Thus, it is clearly seen that the teaching of the Baptist Manual contradicts the teaching of God's Word.

### **Salvation by Faith Only**

Baptist Manual. 62 -- "We believe the Scriptures teach that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in Christ..."

The Bible -- Therein is stated a popular denominational doctrine, which is "salvation by faith only."

But when we turn to God's Word, we find another teaching. Consider what James wrote in James 2:24-26:

*"You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."*

The whole point that James is making is that faith alone is dead. He wrote back in verse 19 that "the demons also believe, and, shudder." Are the demons saved, since they have faith? Why does "faith alone" not work for them?

It is not that we work to earn our salvation, but that we demonstrate our faith by our obedience. Consider what James said about Abraham in verses 21-22: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected."

If we are saved by "faith only," without any works, then we have a problem with something Christ said in John 6:27-29:

*"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.' Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'"*

Notice that Jesus told them that "belief" was a "work of God." That doesn't mean that God plants faith in our minds, for faith is something we do, a work that we do.

How is that? Consider, Raymond is an accountant who does my taxes. He collects the documents from various sources of income that I have, coupled with charitable contributions I have made, along with other documents, and then he analyzes all the information, and determines how much money I owe the government for my Income Tax.

Darrell is a carpenter who built a sun deck on the back of my house. He and others labored some hours in measuring, sawing wood, nailing and staining. It was hard work.

Now, which one actually worked? Would you say that Darrell worked, because he did physical labor, but Raymond didn't work, because he just used his brain? Of course not! Darrell works with his hands while Raymond works with his brain, as he takes data, analyzes and draws conclusions.

In this way, faith is a work. To develop faith, one must examine evidence and draw conclusions. I have faith that the Bible is true, and that it is not a product of the mind of man. I have examined the evidence, which includes hundreds and hundreds of prophecies that were made about Christ centuries before he was born, and which he fulfilled in exact detail. I have considered the many scientific facts that are mentioned in the Bible centuries before man discovered them. "Oh, that's what that means in 'such and such' a passage."

Look at Isaiah 40:22, which says that God "sits above the circle of the earth." The word "circle" is from the Hebrew word "chuwg," and refers to circle or roundness. Isaiah was written in the 8th Century, B.C. We didn't discover that the earth was round until some centuries later. How did Isaiah know this? He was inspired by God. And the Bible is filled with countless pieces of evidence that show it could not have been written by the wisdom of men.

In the nation of Israel, all male babies were circumcised when eight days old. Why then? Why not do it as soon as they are born? We now have medical knowledge that the clotting factor in the blood does not become active until the eighth day. Dr. Armand James Quick (1894-1978) was surprised to see the connection between the body's ability to stop bleeding and the command given to Moses 4,000 years ago.

The scientist, Dr. McMillen, does not hide his excitement about the discovery.

*"We should certainly praise the scientists who worked so hard for so many years to discover that the safest time to perform circumcision is the eighth day. Yet, at the same time we applaud this new discovery, we can hear a resounding echo of these findings from the pages of the Bible."*

The point is, faith is a work. We use our brain to examine the evidence for the Bible's divine inspiration, and then draw conclusions. Thus if we are saved by "faith only" and without any works, then Christ's answer to his questioners makes no sense. He said that "faith" is a "work."

---

## **Ephesus And The Church of Christ There**

Patrick Farish | Waxahatchie, Texas, USA

The church of Christ at Ephesus was not insignificant. Its many appearances in Scripture establish that as reality. The church at Ephesus received epistles, one from Jesus through John (Revelation 2:1-7), described as "The revelation of Jesus" ... which he made known "by sending his angel to his servant John" (Revelation 1:1). Another was written by Paul, "To the saints who are in Ephesus" (Ephesians 1:1).

Ephesus appears in Scripture, in addition to already cited passages, in Acts 18:19-24; 19; First Corinthians 15:32; 16:8; First Timothy 1:3; and Second Timothy 1:18, 4:12.

In this article we intend to indicate the significance of Ephesus and the church there by examining significant deeds and doctrines attributed to them.

### **The Beginning**

A man named Apollos came to Ephesus, recorded in Acts 18, and "knowing only the baptism of John ... began to speak boldly in the synagogue." Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and lovingly corrected his misinformation; the brothers encouraged him and, when he wished to go to Achaia, they wrote a letter of commendation – the way they should have behaved. (for further information on that "thrown in" remark turn to Second Samuel 11).

Now – back to Acts 19, and Paul and some Ephesians who had been baptized with John’s baptism. He explained to them the preparatory nature of John’s work, and that he told them “to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:4-5). Now – what did John say? He said, believe in Jesus.

What did they hear? They heard John say, believe in Jesus.

So, on “hearing this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Because, John said believe.

And that was the way folk were added to the church of Christ, then – and now.

### **Elders, Pastors, Bishops**

In Acts 20:17 Paul begins to speak to the elders from Ephesus. His speech is continued through the end of the chapter, verse 38. It is both a recital of his career in the gospel, and at the same time his “good-bye,” to those brethren. Two points claim our attention from this passage.

In verse 17 he identifies those to whom he is speaking: “Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them ...,” and continued speaking to them through verse 36. In verse 28 he tells these elders to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock , in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God ...”. The point is that these “elders” (verse 17) are identified as “pastors” (shepherds of the “flock”), and “overseers” (“bishops,” in **ASV**). The church at Ephesus had elders who ruled and led (Hebrews 13:7, 17); these elders were also pastors, caring for the flock (Ephesians 4:11); and these elders/pastors were also called “overseers (or, bishops (**KJV, ASV**)). It is therefore wrong to call a preacher, “pastor.” The same information is preserved for us in First Peter 5:1-2.

### **Oversight of Elders**

Paul instructed the pastors of the church at Ephesus to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Bishops are charged to pay careful attention to “the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” That means they should not relinquish any part of their resources – people or money – to another church or institution.

A local church is assigned work in the realms of evangelism, edification, and benevolence. It has responsibility in evangelism to the extent of its ability. It has responsibility in edification to the extent of opportunity. It has responsibility in benevolence to its membership and/or other churches of Christ where legitimate need has arisen. Benevolence is not a tool of evangelism.

In all of these areas of elders’ responsibility, limitations are imposed by the Lord. So, gargantuan works are excluded, to the dismay – and often, eventual disobedience – of those whose love of the world overwhelms them.

The church of Christ in Ephesus was worthy of praise. Jesus spoke of their works, toil and patient endurance,

*“and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.”*

**But** - this at-one-time faithful group had “abandoned the love you had at the first.” Jesus warned, unless you repent, “I ... will remove your lampstand from its place.” It has been observed, and rightly I think, that to repent, to really change one’s mind, is the hardest task anyone faces. But it is required of every sinner

(Acts 17:30, 2 Peter 3:9), and it can be accomplished by the faithful (1 John 5:16; 1:7).

Jesus says to the Ephesians, and to all, "To the one that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

---

## Walking - The Need To Persevere

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Over the last several years I have been walking on a fairly regular basis. I started several years ago just to get in a little better physical condition when traveling overseas in evangelistic efforts. About nine years ago, a visit to my doctor, revealed I needed to increase my efforts to walk for health reasons. I usually try to walk five days a week. My problem is being persistent. It is so easy to skip a day, a week or even to stop altogether. There are several obstacles to overcome, for me at least, which I face, either real or perceived. It is a lot easier to not walk, yet I really need the exercise.

The Bible describes the Christian's life as a walk. Seven times, in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, he instructs them both from a positive and negative standpoint about their walk. The Greek word used in these verses is "peripateô" and is defined as "Hebraistically, to live; i.e. to regulate one's life, to conduct oneself" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 504). This word is found 96 times in the New Testament. Vine, in his word study, gives this definition: "is used (a) physically; (b) figuratively, signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life, whether of the unregenerate, or of the believer" (1217-1218).

Notice what Paul says to the church at Ephesus when he speaks of their walk in those seven verses. They are told to walk in good works (2:10); to walk worthy of their calling (4:1); to walk in love (5:2); to walk as children of light (5:8); and to walk circumspectly – which would be carefully, exactly, accurately, and diligently (5:15). Yet there were steps they were to avoid as well. They were not to walk in the lust of their flesh fulfilling its desires, etc. (2:1-3); neither were they to walk as the rest of Gentiles in lewdness, etc. (4:17-19); and not as fools, making sure they redeemed the time (5:15-16).

Walking with the Lord is somewhat like walking physically. I must persevere. There are obstacles to overcome, some real and some perceived. It is easier to stay home from church services on Sunday night or Wednesday night. If I miss one service, is it easy to miss another, then another, etc.? There are members of the Lord's church who are sick physically and spiritually. They need encouragement and help. Are we willing to continually teach, encourage and care for those who have such needs? The world tries to influence our thinking, which will have its effect on the way we live. Are we going to resist the evil around us and stand for the ways of righteousness? It is easier to blend in with the world. The study of the word of God is vital for our spiritual life. It takes no effort to go days at a time, never open our Bibles, and spend countless hours watching TV, searching the web, or playing games on an iPhone. There are a great number of ways to illustrate this principle, but these will suffice. I must persevere!

Listen to the admonition given to the brethren at Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is for sure they had been anything but steadfast when you read the previous chapters of all the problems that existed among them. Yet it seems to me the apostle was telling them to get back to serving God, stop all bickering among yourselves, follow the word which had been preached to you, and be steadfast in this effort. It was said of Enoch:

*"After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"* (Genesis 5:22-24).

That is perseverance – three hundred years!

If I stop physically walking, my health may not be quite as good as it could be, yet the consequences will



not be devastating. I may not live quite as long, the quality of my life may not be as good, yet such is not going to change my eternal existence. But if I do not persevere in my walk with God the end results will be catastrophic. It is he who endures to the end that will be saved (Matthew 10:22). The most valuable thing I have in my possession is my soul. I cannot afford to lose it. Remember also, the choice I make in whether to walk with Jehovah or not, may also have a destructive effect on those I love: a spouse, children, grandchildren, etc. Do not lose heart, continue steadfastly, and give yourself to prayer (Luke 18:1).

---

## Ungodly Euphemisms

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

A euphemism is a phrase that serves as a "mild substitute" for another phrase or term that might be too direct, harsh or offensive. When we don't want to be too morbid in referring to death, we say the person "passed away" or "departed." If we are trying to be modest in referring to a woman's pregnancy, we say she is "expecting." These are examples of euphemisms. And while many are harmless and part of everyday conversation, others are synonyms for vulgarity and taking God's name in vain, which should concern us.

Dictionary.com gives these definitions for the following terms:

Gosh: "a euphemistic alteration for God." Golly: "a euphemism for God."

Gee: "a euphemism for Jesus." Heck: "euphemistic for hell."

Darn: "a euphemistic word for damn."

Some might feel good about saying "Oh my Gosh" instead of "Oh my God," but by definition there is no difference in the two. One is just another way of saying the same thing. I doubt very few people knowingly say Gosh, Gee, Heck or Darn with the intent to be impure, but that does not remove the impact these words have on others, especially those who know the definitions. God said, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29). In every language there are certain words and gestures that express vulgarity or irreverence. It is God's will that we avoid these expressions in having a positive influence on others.

The last thing we should do is shrug our shoulders and say it doesn't matter what we say or how we say it. Jesus warned, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). Think about that statement. We will be judged by our words. It is that serious! And when we consider how God specifically taught people to refer to His name with dignity, we should be especially concerned about defiling it. He told the Jews, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Those who disregarded this rule were to be punished (Leviticus 24:11-16). We may not be under the Law of Moses, but we are still not to blaspheme God's name (1 Timothy 1:20). A new covenant did not change His position as "the High and Lofty One...whose name is Holy" (Isaiah 57:15).

I know it is not always easy to control our speech when we are angry, nor is it a simple task to discontinue words we are in the habit of saying. (We definitely need God's help and mercy in putting on the new man.) Nevertheless, we must learn to harness our tongue because we "will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word" we have spoken (Matthew 12:36, NIV). And if profanity and taking the Lord's name in vain are wrong, then certainly anything similar to them in sound and thought are just as "careless."

---

## His Hour

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

In his God-given wisdom and by the direction of the Holy Spirit, Solomon wrote a wonderful and poetic discourse on God's use of time. He begins, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..." Then, after listing several "times," the Preacher extols God's use of time, saying, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11).

As we consider the gospel of John, it is interesting to note the multiple references to a particular "hour" in Jesus' life. In all but one case, the hour under consideration would seem to be the hour of His death. He knew that this hour would come; He came into the world for this hour. Let's notice the texts.

At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, the supply of wine ran out. Mary mentioned the lack of wine to Jesus, who responded, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). By the end of the account, the guests were drinking the best wine ever to be poured. This is the one occasion when the hour mentioned is not associated with His death. It may be His manifestation to the public by miracles that He spoke of. Or, even more precisely, He may have been waiting for it to be known that the wine had failed so that without doubt, this miracle "manifested His glory" (John 2:11).

In the beginning of John 7, we are told Jesus spent His time in Galilee, for the Jews in Judea sought to kill Him. With that setting, the instruction of Jesus' brothers, "...Depart from here and go into Judea..." is entirely cruel. John explains to us, "For even His brothers did not believe in Him" (John 7:5).

Jesus' response was prompt, "My time has not yet come..." (John 7:6). It was not time for Him to die yet. He did go to the feast, but not in such a way as to give the Jewish leaders an opportunity against Him (John 7:10). It is not that Jesus feared the scribes and Pharisees or that He didn't trust the Lord's care - He refused to yield to a temptation of the devil (John 7:3-4; Matthew 4:5-7).

After arriving in Judea, Jesus spoke with the leaders before the people. He defended His teaching (John 7:16-18) and inquired about their intent to kill Him (John 7:19-20, 25-26). Though "they sought to take Him ... no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come" (John 7:30). It was not yet time for Him to die.

At the same feast, the Jews brought a woman who had been caught in adultery to Him, "...testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him" (John 8:6). He passed their tests and defended Himself against their accusations "...and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come" (John 8:20). It was yet time for Him to die.

In the final year of Jesus' ministry, after He had raised Lazarus from the dead, the council on Jerusalem gathered to discuss what they should do about Him. Caiaphas urged that they should put Him to death (John 11:47-50) "Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die..." (11:51). His time was fast approaching.

Jesus knew from the beginning of His ministry that He was to die for the people. Now as the time approached, He acknowledged that it was soon time for Him to be crucified. When Mary anointed His feet with costly oil, and His disciples balked at the waste, He defended her, "...she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always" (John 12:7-8). He knew that the time was at hand.

On the next day, Jesus was received by the crowd in Jerusalem as "...the King of Israel!" (John 12:13) Jesus knew, "...the Hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12:23). That He is speaking about His death is evident, for He would shortly thereafter say, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:27-28). His speech in the context clearly shows that He knew the time was at hand - His hour had come.

Again, John acknowledges this important hour as Jesus and His disciples gathered "...before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father..." (John 13:1). Later that night, Jesus would be arrested, and the next morning, He would be crucified.

Having left the upper room in which the feast was shared, Jesus went out to the garden to pray. More of Jesus' prayer is given in John's account than any other gospel. In John 17:1, Jesus began, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You..." He was ready to go to the cross, that God would be glorified, and mankind might be sanctified and justified in Him.

Why is all this important? What benefit is there in this for us? As Solomon said, "He made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Through this appointed hour - the hour of Jesus' death and the subsequent resurrection three days later - God has provided the means whereby all individuals, though stained by sin, might be made pure and holy, and have the hope of heaven. What a wonderful hour!

---

## The One Baptism

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### Introduction

There have been several baptisms in past ages: Moses' baptism "in the cloud and in the sea," the "washings" of the Law of Moses, John's baptism, Jesus' baptism of suffering, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the end of time the ignorant and disobedient shall be baptized with fire. But there is only one baptism authorized by the Lord in the New Testament at the present time.

*"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).*

What are the characteristics which identify this one New Testament baptism?

### One Authority: Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, commanded baptism. He promised, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

His chosen apostles have the authority of Jesus behind them. He informed them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (John 13:20). "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (John 20:21)

*His apostles repeated His command to be baptized. "Then Peter said to them, '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).*

How could anyone, therefore, claim that the one baptism, baptism by the authority of Jesus Christ, is non-essential?

Furthermore, since no other baptism is by the authority of the Lord Jesus, all other baptisms are spiritually worthless. When Paul encountered twelve men at Ephesus who had received John's baptism, he baptized them "in the name of Jesus."

*And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5).*

If those who had received John's baptism had to receive baptism by the authority of Christ, certainly no

denominational baptism will suffice.

### **One Element: Water**

What is the element of New Testament baptism? In other words, in what should you be baptized?

When the Ethiopian eunuch desired to be baptized, he first asked Philip, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36) Then they "went down into the water," where Philip baptized the eunuch. Afterward "they came up out of the water" (Acts 8:38-39).

Cornelius' household received the Holy Spirit.

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God (Acts 10:44-46).*

The apostle Peter then asked, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:46-48). Since this water baptism was "in the name of the Lord" (verse 48), it was New Testament baptism.

### **One Action: a Burial**

People often talk about the "modes" of baptism. By this they mean different ways to be baptized. The modes of baptism are usually listed as sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. What does the will of Christ require for the action of baptism?

The New Testament teaches that in baptism there is "water." "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"(Acts 10:47). In fact there is "much water." "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized" (John 3:23).

It teaches that before one is baptized he must go "to" the water. "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36).

Furthermore, he must go "into the water." "So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38).

The doctrine of Christ requires that the one being baptized be "buried."

*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).*

The Gospel further states that baptism includes a being raised from the water. We were "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

Finally, baptism includes coming "up out of the water." "Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).

Can we honestly say that either sprinkling or pouring meet all these requirements? Have you been baptized or did you receive some humanly devised substitute for the divinely required action?

### **One Subject: a Penitent Believer**

Are infants proper subjects of New Testament baptism? Who should be baptized?

Jesus revealed that all believers are to be baptized. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Peter put repentance before baptism in the first sermon preached under that Great Commission. "Then Peter said to them, '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).

The same passage equates reception of the word with baptism. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

The evangelist Philip baptized the Samaritans after they had believed.

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done (Acts 8:12-13).*

The Philippian jailor and his entire family believed before they were baptized.

*Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household (Acts 16:29-34).*

The inspired writer records, "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8).

There is no authority for infant baptism in the New Testament. Thus, the proper subjects of New Testament baptism are people who have believed Jesus Christ is the Son of God, have repented of their sins, and have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ.

### **One Purpose: the Remission of Sins**

In Mark 16:16 Jesus promised, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." The Lord divided people into two categories, the saved and the lost. Those who do not believe will be lost. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Christ made baptism as much a condition of salvation as He did belief. There are only two categories, not three. Jesus knew nothing of unbaptized, saved people. To be saved, one must have enough faith in Jesus Christ to obey Him in baptism.

The inspired apostle Peter commanded, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). The conjunction "and" joins "Repent" and "be baptized" just like a coupling pin joins two box cars of a train. Just like those box cars, as long as the coupling pin "and" is there, "Repent" and "be baptized" must be going in the same direction. Furthermore, the word "for" in Acts 2:38 is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 26:28, when he revealed, "... this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Did Jesus shed His blood unto the remission of sins? Then you need to be baptized unto the remission of sins.

Ananias commanded Saul of Tarsus, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). According to the inspired record, the order is

“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Protestant preachers advise, “Call on the name of the Lord; your sins will be washed away; then be baptized and arise.” They precisely reverse the divine order.

According to Romans 6:3-4, baptism brings the sinner into Christ.

*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).*

In Christ he receives “every spiritual blessing.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). This includes salvation. “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10). It also brings the sinner into the death of Christ, where he receives the benefits of His blood, justification from sin.

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:9-10).*

By going through a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we demonstrate our faith that we are saved by His sacrifice for us. Thus we receive the benefits of His death in our behalf. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ (verse 3) and being in the death of Christ (verse 4). It also comes between the new life in Christ (verse 5), being united with Christ (verse 5), being united with the Lord’s crucifixion (verse 6), and freedom from sin (verse 7).

*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:5-7).*

### Why Delay?

There is only one baptism today by Jesus’ authority (Ephesians 4:5). That baptism has five great characteristics whereby you can tell it apart from all others. **It has one authority - Jesus Christ, one element - water, one action - a burial, one subject - a penitent believer, and one purpose - the remission of sins.** “Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.... shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) Surely you will not allow refusal to obey this simple command to keep you out of heaven. If you have not received the one baptism, this act of faithful obedience stands between you and all the wondrous blessings in Christ. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

---

## Sorcery

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

The wildly popular Harry Potter series of books and movies has reintroduced the subject of sorcery into the mainstream of popular culture. Vine’s dictionary gives a good summation of sorcery (“witchcraft,” King James Version). The term is a translation of the Greek word “pharmakia ... (Eng., ‘pharmacy,’...). It “primarily signified ‘the use of medicine, drugs, spells’; then, ‘poisoning’; then, ‘sorcery....”

*“In ‘sorcery,’ the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer” (587).*

Sorcery either includes or is related to fortune telling, seances (attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead), casting spells, voodoo, astrology (belief that the movements of the heavenly bodies determines or influences the course of life), and Satan and demon worship.

The Native American Church, composed of 250,000 American Indians, uses the psychedelic qualities of peyote, a cactus, in their worship. This is sorcery.

The Law of Moses forbade sorcery under penalty of death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27). Moses commanded Israel, "You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes" (Leviticus 19:26, English Standard Version). He further decreed:

*"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 'For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD...' (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, **New American Standard Bible**).*

Isaiah called Judah to turn away from listening to sorcerers to hearing the Lord and denied that sorcerers had any real knowledge (Isaiah 8:19-20). The impotence of sorcerers was dramatically demonstrated when King Nebuchadnezzar's greatest sorcerers could not tell him his dream, whereas Daniel, the young prophet of God, could (Daniel chapter two).

Evil King Manasseh, whose ungodly practices caused the destruction of Judah

*"... made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger" (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6).*

The basic fallacy of all forms of sorcery is an appeal to any spiritual power other than the Lord (Isaiah 8:19-20). They are deceitful and fraudulent and have no real power (cf. Acts 13:6-11; 19:11-16).

Those who practice this sin will be lost (Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8).

#### Work Cited

W.E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

---

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Meditate On These Things (MOTT)  
2950 Hwy 5 S  
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653  
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

**vertical** DELIVERED BY  
**response**  
Try It Free Today!

