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

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Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

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.

Questions About Whom To Marry

Question

1. As a young Christian brother planning to get married, is it wrong or sinful to make beauty one of the requirements for a marriage partner? Please note: Godliness is also a requirement.
2. Is it right to marry a sister from a liberal congregation?

Answer

1. If you had asked only about beauty, I would have responded that it shows carnality and would lead to sin. Moses records concerning the world before the Flood:

"Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose"
(Genesis 6:1-2).

"Sons of God" does not refer to angels, for angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35-36) but are spirits (Hebrews 1:13-14) which have no fleshly body (Luke 24:39). Apparently "sons of God" here are godly men (cf. Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalm 73:15; Romans 8:14; Galatians 3:26). They chose young women to marry solely because of their beauty. What followed was the world becoming so corrupt that God decided to destroy all mankind except the family of Noah (Genesis 6:5-9).

One primary purpose of marriage is to produce godly children (Malachi 2:14-15). It is primarily the father's obligation to do this (Ephesians 6:4), but he needs the help of a devoted wife to accomplish this (Genesis 2:18; e.g., 2 Timothy 1:5).

It is implied Jacob loved Rachel rather than her sister Leah because "Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance" (Genesis 29:17, **English Standard Version**). Sexual attraction is central to marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2-5), but remember, your spouse will be your closest earthly companion (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31). Choose one who will help you go to heaven and help direct your children to heaven.

2. Choose one who will help you go to heaven and help direct your children to heaven.

Let The Context Decide What Is Going On In Psalm 22

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

We have previously written to prove Psalm 22:1 clearly indicates the writer (we assume David) was forsaken when he wrote, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" However 22:24 leads some to think David was not really forsaken - "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." But notice David has switched to the third person here. David is not talking about himself specifically in verse 24 but stating a general rule. The idea is that God has normally delivered others in David's position, so David **expects** God to do the same for him.

It should be very evident David has not been delivered yet. Notice these three verses just before 24 (written in the first person so referring to David instead of others in the past):

19 *"But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.*

20 *"Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.*

21 *"Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns."*

The above contextual considerations are an ungetoverable problem for those who say David has not really been forsaken in Psalm 22.

We have the same thing in the early part of the chapter (grammatical first person):

1. *"My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"*

2. *"O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."*

Again we see David is forsaken, but expecting deliverance because such has been done before (indicated by a switch to third person):

4 *"Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

5 *"They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded."*

Observing grammatical person is a critical function of determining the context of a statement. Anybody that purposely ignores switches in person is purposely ignoring the context of a passage. Many with a preconceived position like to cry "context" to try to intimidate those who aren't confident enough to examine the actual context of a text for themselves. Don't be swayed by such tactics. Just because someone hollers, "my position is correct because I am taking things in context," doesn't mean they are taking it in context.

We see this same "forsake but expected deliverance" idea in Psalm 13:1-6; 44:22-26; 88:14, 6-7, 1-2; 108:11-13; 60:1, 9-10, 5, 12; 79:5, 8-10; Judges 6:1, 13-14, and Isaiah 54:7-8. Why does everybody agree all these passages describe "forsaken but expected deliverance," but not Psalm 22? Isn't it only because Jesus does not quote them to apply to himself as He does Psalm 22? Is that so scary?

The context of Psalm 22:1 screams out that the writer was indeed forsaken. Why are so many inclined to deny the obvious in this case?

When There Is A Conflict, Which Do You Choose?

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

What do you do when faced with a conflict? Isn't it wise to seek an agreement? When two opposing views are considered, there is often a simple way to resolve them and reach an agreement. Suppose I have a problem with my car's engine, and I take it to two mechanics to get an appraisal for repairs. Surprisingly, they give differing opinions as to what the problem is and how to fix it. So, what would I do to resolve the matter? I would get the Owner's Manual out of the glove box and see what information it might have about the matter. After reading what the manufacturer has to say about the problem, I would take my car to the first mechanic, because his suggestions for repair matched what the manual said. Makes good sense, doesn't it?

Now, let's make an application. While our automobiles are very important to us, there is a matter of far greater importance, and that has to do with our spiritual lives and our relationship with God. If it is broken and needs to be repaired, where do we go to find the solution? Wouldn't it make sense to consult the Owner's Manual, the book we call "The Bible?"

Consider that every denomination has its own Owner's Manual plus the Bible. That makes some 42,000 denominations distinct in the ways that they differ from one another. But remember that all the creeds, manuals, catechisms and dogmas, etc., have all been written by men, and through the years changes have been made. Consider also that they all differ from one another, as well as differing from the Bible. But the Bible, the Word of God, has been revealed from heaven, and it remains true, as no changes have occurred. God has plainly stated that he will allow no changes.

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

With that in mind, consider some differences between God's Word and the creeds of men.

Salvation

Discipline of the Methodist Church. 42 – "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

Standard Manual for Baptist Churches. 48-49 – "We believe the Scriptures teach...that the gift of eternal life is bestowed...solely through faith in Christ"

We could cite other denominational creed books, such as Episcopal, Presbyterian, etc. who would have similar wording about salvation by faith only.

Now turn to the Word of God, the New Testament, and see what it has to say about this matter.

The Bible:

*"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; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, '**and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,**' and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. And 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?" (James 2:21-25)

There is an obvious conflict between the creeds of men and the Bible. The creeds say, "justified by faith alone," but the Bible says "not by faith alone." Which do you choose?

Entrance into the Church/Kingdom

Hiscox Standard Manual for Baptist Churches. 16 –

"It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but "one Lord, one faith and one baptism," and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert, by that very act, constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, "baptism was the door into the church. Now, it is different...The churches therefore have candidates comes before them, make their statement, give their experience, and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members."

The Bible – "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:23) "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (I Corinthians 12:13) "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

Question: Who gave the Baptist Church the right to change what they admit the Bible says, to a different practice? Where in the Bible are we told to vote on receiving new members?

There is an obvious conflict between the creeds of men and the Bible. Which do you choose?

Mode of Baptism

Methodist Discipline. 603 – "Let every adult Person and the Parents of every Child to be baptized, have the choice of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion."

Westminster Confession of Faith -- Presbyterians believe in Trinitarian baptism. In the process, babies or adults receive baptism by sprinkling of water, by pouring of water, or by being dipped in water during a ceremony that is said to symbolize Christ's death and resurrection.

Catholic Catechism – It is well known that the Roman Catholic Church practices baptism by pouring water on the candidate, and this includes infants.

Presbyterians, Episcopalians and others also practice baptism by sprinkling water. And another church I have heard of baptizes by sprinkling rose petals.

As to mode or method of baptism, we must consider the Salvation Army and the Christian Science Church. Their method of baptism doesn't exist, as they do not practice it. Some time ago I had a phone call from a member of the Salvation Army. I believe he was doing some sort of a survey. In our conversation I asked him why they did not practice baptism. He seemed a bit stunned, and then replied, "I guess we don't want to impose Western customs on people." I was not aware that baptism was a "Western custom." I thought it originated in the Middle East.

The Bible – The New Testament was first written in Greek, the universal language of that time. The Greek word "baptize" is defined thus: "to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet); (**Strong's Greek New Testament**) There are many passages that illustrate this. When Philip baptized the eunuch and they both went down into the water (Acts 8:38-39). John was baptizing near Salim because "there was much water there" (John 3:23).

Romans 6:4 gives a very clear picture of what baptism symbolizes.

“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Although sprinkling or pouring water had been used beginning many years after the first century, it came into use in The Church of England after the Westminster Assembly in 1643. There was a debate over immersion vs. sprinkling. Immersion was strongly contended for. But “seeing how much more convenient it was, (sprinkling) the proud, persecuting and godless bishops set themselves to have it made the law of the land. They preached it before parliament, insisting that the devil of immersion ought to be legislated out of the realm, it is so troublesome.” The Westminster Assembly convened July 1, 1643 to vote on the matter. When it came to a vote, 24 voted to continue practicing immersion, and 24 voted to accept sprinkling. Dr. Lightfoot was the chairman, and he gave the deciding vote in favor of sprinkling, and thus immersion was banned. Thus, by the vote of men, God’s teaching on baptism was outlawed.

There is no disagreement among scholars, whether Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, etc., that immersion is the true meaning of the Greek word. And immersion in water was the practice for hundreds of years until men decided they wanted something different.

There is an obvious conflict between the creeds of men and the Bible. Which do you choose?

Purpose of Baptism

Jehovah’s Witnesses – “Baptism does not wash away one’s sins.” (“Make Sure of All Things,” Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. 40)

Baptist Church – “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.” (Standard Manual for Baptist Churches. 21)

There are various views on baptism’s purpose, but these two pretty well sum up many of them.

The Bible – Of several Bible passages that deal with the purpose of baptism, we will consider a few. First, note Peter’s admonition to the crowd on the day of Pentecost. After convincing many that they had crucified the Son of God, they were cut to the heart, and asked what they should do.

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Some claim that the “for” in the passage means “because of.” In the English, that word can mean both “because of” or “in order to...” But in the New Testament Greek that is not so. The Greek word “eis” always looks forward. Consider what Christ told the disciples at the Last Supper.

“And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:27-28).

Note that the phrase “for forgiveness of sins” is the same in both Matthew and Acts. The words are the same both in English and Greek. Therefore, if Peter was telling the people that their sins had already been forgiven in Acts, then Christ told the twelve that his blood had forgiven their sins even before he died. Who can believe it?

Note again Romans 6:4: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Question: When does “newness of life” come? Before, or after baptism? The wording of the Scripture is quite clear on this. This also means that those denominations that do not practice baptism have no hope of a new life. And furthermore, those who do not follow what the Bible says about immersion have no hope of

a new life either.

Furthermore, there is not one example in the Bible of a baby being baptized. The Bible teaches that babies are born innocent. They do not inherit sin.

“The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20).

It’s odd that the Baptist Manual says we are saved by “faith only,” and baptism is not necessary, but then says that baptism is “essential to obedience since Christ commanded it.” That’s an obvious conflict. I don’t need it for salvation, but do need it since Christ commanded it.

There is an obvious conflict between the creeds of men and the Bible. Which do you choose?

What Is Your Aim In Life?

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

It is getting close to the time of the year when high school students are graduating, and they either have made or are making plans for the future. They are deciding about which college to attend, what to major in, and what career they will embark upon. Most all have aims or aspirations for their lives. As Christians this should be true of all of us as well, regardless of our age. What is our aim or goal in life?

The Greek word, *philotimeomai*, is used three times in the New Testament. In the NKJV it translated “aspire” once and “aim” twice. This word is defined as “make it one’s ambition or aim, endeavor, aspire” (A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament). There are three great lessons taught us in these verses which I would like for us to consider.

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him” (2 Corinthians 5:9).

While in the physical body, the apostle was absent from the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6). Yet he knew if he walked by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), making it his aim to be well pleasing to God, he had great confidence he would be present with Him (2 Corinthians 5:8). Judgment was coming and he had to appear before the judgment seat of Christ just like all men (2 Corinthians 5:1). The only way for one to hear the words “well done good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21) was to please God. Then throughout all eternity he would be with His Father, praising and adoring Him, continually pleasing Him.

Is there anything more noble we could do with our lives than to be well pleasing to Jehovah? We should always strive to think upon things which are pure, just, and holy (Proverbs 23:7; Philippians 4:8). The words from our mouths should reflect a pure heart from which they come (Matthew 12:34-38). Our actions or deeds should show to others we are the Lord’s servants, not trying to call attention to ourselves (Matthew 6:1-4), but to glorify God (Matthew 5:16), seeking every opportunity to assemble with the people of God to worship our Lord (John 4:23-24; Psalm 122:1). This should be our aim in life.

“that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

It would certainly be wonderful if every member of the local church loved one another and that love would abound (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10). From time-to-time problems will occur in the church. It could involve doctrine, but often it has to do with opinions or attitudes of the heart. Doctrinal issues are settled by determining what the Bible teaches on any given subject. Yet matters of opinion and attitudes displayed could be easily solved if we simply loved each other.

Thayer defines the word “quiet” as, “to lead a quiet life, said of those who are not running hither and thither but stay at home and mind their business” (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). Wee should be busy working to provide for our family and for those who are in need (Ephesians 4:28). By making this your aim, think of the good one can do in the local church but also the influence you can have on those who are outside (1 Thessalonians 4:12).

“And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation” (Romans 15:20).

Paul obviously wanted to take the gospel to places it had have never gone before. This was a man who was dedicated to sharing the power of God unto salvation with those who were lost (Romans 1:13-17). Most are not able to go places where the gospel has never gone and even to places where it has been shared. Yet there is a lot we all can do in making sure people are taught this good news about Jesus Christ. Can you tell someone what you did to be saved? Give an individual a Bible Correspondence Course? Set up a Bible study and even if you can't teach the class, I am sure someone would volunteer to do so? Provide financial support for one who can go or one who is already preaching in some area? Are you busy praying for those who are preaching this message? Jesus said, “Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38). Our aim should be, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

If our aim is to please God, live a quite life, and do all we can to share the gospel with those who are lost, when our time on earth is no more, our life has not been lived in vain. What is your aim?

It's Never Just A Piano

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

I live 150 miles from where the first instrument was brought into worship services of groups that would be known as churches of Christ. The actual melodeon is on display at Midway University (Kentucky), and I hope to make it over one day to see it if for no other reason than to be reminded of the great chasms that come when brethren rely on human opinion instead of the Scriptures.

Whenever a church decides to use mechanical instruments in worship, they open a door to many other departures from God's will. Frankly, many compromises have already occurred to get to the instrument, but the departure is not official (in some people's minds) until the piano and guitar (or melodeon) are brought into the building. From there, anything that meets human approval is seen as acceptable to God, be it social, charitable, or even immoral. “As long as we acknowledge Jesus and do good in the community, we are glorifying God as a church” is the mindset. The concern for doctrinal right and wrong then becomes as stable as a kite in the wind—changing with every generation, moving from faith to faith, following the path of least resistance.

Altering God's pattern in worship is nothing new. People have been doing it since Cain brought his own type of sacrifice (cf. Genesis 4:3-7). It is the ultimate reason the nation of Israel was led into captivity. When Jeroboam, their first king, was afraid of losing the people's loyalty in going to Jerusalem for worship like God wanted, he set up golden calves in other cities to use in worship instead (1 Kings 12:28). The crowds were gullible, naïve, and apathetic enough to follow his lead without considering God's word. In fact, Jeroboam sold them on this venture by appealing to their spiritual laziness and indifference. “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!” (verse 28). The people bought into his lies “hook, line, and sinker” and performed every other form of error he initiated (verses 31-33) because they were trusting in their opinions and emotions instead of God's Word. As a result, this “became a sin” for them (verse 30) even though they could not determine it by their current circumstances. Everything felt fine, but behind the scenes evil was ramping up for further

victories. What they failed to realize was their compromise was only a steppingstone to further apostasy and even idolatry by future generations. For two hundred years

“the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight...So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day” (2 Kings 17:21-23).

In Israel’s case, error did not end with the golden calves and served as just the beginning. Further departure would eventually follow with future generations living in ways the previous generations could have never predicted. Like the old saying goes, “Once you open the flood gate...” there is no stopping the waters. Further departure is always imminent once human opinion and emotions are appealed to instead of God’s word. In our case, those who dismiss

God’s instructions to sing in church (“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,” Ephesians. 5:19) and opt instead to sing and make melody on a device instead, are opening the door to further compromise. Future generations will not only build on that error, but they will also make worship into nothing more than entertainment and sensationalism. Consequently, the religious community goes from gospel preaching to gimmick-promoters, from rebuking sin to ignoring it, from pleading for faith and repentance to demanding a rock concert and theatrical performance. It is just like what happened to Israel, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play” (1 Corinthians 10:7).

History always repeats itself because there is nothing new under the sun. Meanwhile, “The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God” (Psalm 14:2). In every generation, He is looking for those who are wise enough to trust in His word instead of their opinions and feelings, especially in matters of worship. He knows that “the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

Maybe I will make it to Midway, Kentucky some day to see the device that was a catalyst to so much change and departure among God’s people – departures that are still occurring and evolving as we speak. But even if I do not make it there, I must watch my own heart and test all things in my own life. Do I still worship God according to His will, or am I seeking my own desires? Am I wise enough to know there is no stopping the waters once the floodgate opens? And do I realize that God will let me believe a lie in religion if that is my preference – by sending “strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)?

God help us to love Him with all of our heart and to have the integrity and faith to seek only His word. For Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

I Can Do All Things...

IS THAT REALLY WHAT IT MEANS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

I'm not a big basketball fan, but I will tune in from time to time to the NBA Finals. In 2015 I watched the Golden State Warriors win the championship, led by the league MVP Stephen Curry. Curry is open about his faith. He attributes his talent to the Lord and acknowledges God in each basket he scores by pounding his chest and pointing to the sky.

In February of 2015, Under Armour lunched a new shoe called The Curry One, which has "4:13" on the tongue lace loop. Of the number, Curry said:

It represents a Bible verse I wear on my shoes, Philippians 4:13. It says, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' It's also my mantra, how I get up for games

and why I play the way I do.(1)

Curry is not alone in using Philippians 4:13 about athletic prowess. Former NFL QB Tim Tebow painted "Phil 4:13" among other verses in his eye black. It is commendable that they are open about their faith, and it's right to give God the glory for good things we have in life, but their use of Philippians 4:13 is a common misuse of the text. Too often, it is recited by folks as though it were some mystical incantation from which we can draw power to rise to whatever challenge or occasion we are faced with.

If the Christian can do all things through Christ, then every Christian should be 100% successful at everything they do, right? Whether it be sports, school, work, investing, relationships - whatever it be, the Christian who rubs this great gene lantern in Philippians 4 should find success. In fact, there is no reason to think that a Christian who invokes the power of Philippians 4:13 wouldn't be a successful multi-sport athlete, financial expert, doctor, politician, and 29 other things all wrapped up into one. Why limit the text? It says all, not some things.

I wonder, if Christians on opposite teams or with contrary interests in the same activity both cite Philippians 4:13, who gets God on his side? It is foolishness. Such use of the verse is nothing but silly superstition.

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians while under house arrest in Rome (how many "name it and claim it" folks know that?). If it had some magical power to give success to the Christian, Paul could have used it to free himself. He didn't because it doesn't. It's not about prosperity or accomplishments; it is a text about contentment. Take a moment and read our 15 verse context, Philippians 2:6-20.

Verse 6-7 encourage us to focus on prayer, to bring our struggles to God. He does not say God will answer all our prayers in the way we desire. Paul asked God to remove an issue in his life and the answer was no (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). What we can find in prayer is release from anxiety, peace in our hearts, and confidence in God's care.

In verses 8-9, Paul seeks for us to focus on the right things in life - things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. We want our minds to be centered on God's will and on examples of it put into practice (v 9).

The church at Philippi was dear to Paul, and he to them. They had sent support to him to meet his needs in the past, and at verse 10, he says they'd done so again. Though he was grateful for their gift of love, his words in the next few verses demonstrate the lack of anxiety and fullness of God's peace in his life that he had encouraged in them. Notice verse 11-12:

*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am,
to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound...*

Paul trusted in God to provide for his needs. He didn't worry about things. If he had much and was full, he was thankful; if he did not, then his confidence was in the Lord, that his needs (not wants) would be met. Just a few verses later, the apostle would write:

...my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (4:19)

Philippians 4:13 is not about achieving our dreams and desires. It is about us focusing on the truly important things in life (spiritual service), and finding contentment in all the things that come up against us in this life, knowing that God is watching and will provide our needs.

1 <https://rapzilla.com/2015-02-charged-by-belief-steph-curry-releases-curry-one-shoes-with-a-giveaway/>

To "pour water on a duck's back" is an expression that is usually used when a person's action is seen as having no effect. The water droplets literally roll off a duck's back when you pour water on it. Thus, one is seen as pouring water on a duck's back if one does or attempts something futile which does not bring physical result. If you have ever observed a duck, you may have noticed that no matter how often the duck dives under the water, it comes back up looking quite dry. This is because of the kind of feathers they have.

One popular American preacher, Barton W. Stone (1772 – 1844) had used this phrase at a point during his lifetime. After preaching the Biblical doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins for some years, he decided to quit and stop preaching it because the majority of the people of his time were not accepting the teaching, even though what he was teaching is true and scriptural.

Frank Richey (2022) gives the narrative thus:

"In 1803, Barton Stone came to the conclusion the necessity of baptism for remission of sins, and he taught it, but over the years quit. The doctrine regained popularity in the late 1820's when a young man named Benjamin Franklin Hall began to teach baptism for remission of sins. In 1826, while traveling through Kentucky, he stopped at the cabin of some friends on Line Creek at Gamaliel, Kentucky. The family was not home, so Hall entered the cabin to wait for their return. While there, he saw a copy of the Campbell-McCalla debate. When he read Campbell's statement about the necessity of baptism for remission of sins, he immediately determined to preach it. Hall went to see Barton Stone and asked him why he did not preach this doctrine, and Stone replied that he had preached the doctrine twenty-five years before, but stopped because it was like 'pouring water on a duck's back.' He said the people rejected the doctrine so he quit preaching it."

Here is one man who was so zealous about preaching the truth that he just discovered, and here is another individual, an experienced preacher of at least 25 years who had preached this same truth before but decided to dump it since he seems not to be getting the desired result. While it is true that rejecting a preacher and his message could be discouraging, that should not be a reason to stop preaching the truth. God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:5-7:

[5] *"As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

[6] *"And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.*

[7] *You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious."*

It is not the job of gospel preachers to force people to accept the truth. Gospel preachers are simply to speak the true Word of God at all times (2 Timothy 4:2) regardless of the opposition and/or the level of reception of the message by people. We must not make the mistake of thinking that our effort is futile when people do not accept the truth we are proclaiming. This is because Paul said that the labour of those who are always abounding in the work of the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). As God told Ezekiel, we must continue to preach the truth to the people whether they hear or whether they refuse. They will have no excuse on the last day and they can never be bold to say to you; "You never mentioned Him to me." We must fulfill our obligation and be pleasing to God.

At this point, it is important to commend and emulate the effort of Benjamin Franklin Hall (1803-1873). He was a courageous young man with great zeal to preach the truth and help others receive it. He was able to meet and discuss this issue with Barton Stone and got him back to teaching the truth. Hall was just a young boy of about 23 years in 1826 while Stone was about 54 years of age. What that means is that Stone had been preaching this truth regarding baptism which he then dumped even before Hall was born.

Hall was not discouraged, neither was Stone too proud to accept correction. In fact, Hall's consistent effort of preaching this truth led to the conversion of many other great men. In the words of Richey (2022):

*"Hall, in the same year, made a trip into North Alabama, preaching in Jackson, Madison, and Lauderdale counties. In Lauderdale County he preached a sermon at the church on Cypress Creek. In this sermon he preached baptism for remission of sins. Four young people responded to the sermon. Among them was Tolbert Fanning who became editor of the Gospel Advocate and president of Franklin College where he taught David Lipscomb and T. B. Larimore, one of the most in demand preachers in the last part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Alan Kendrick was also baptized at this meeting. Kendrick baptized 6,000, including his brother Dr. Carroll Kendrick, who became a preacher and is believed to have baptized about thirty thousand. Perhaps the greatest influence to come from this gospel meeting was from James A. Matthews who was preaching in the area but had not preached baptism for the remission of sins. Upon hearing Hall, Matthews determined to preach this doctrine and wrote Stone in his journal, **Christian Messenger**, three articles concerning this doctrine, urging Stone to once again teach the necessity of baptism for remission of sins. The articles, titled 'The Gospel Plan of Saving Sinners,' appeared on pages 125-129, 150-154, and 211-213 of the 1829 Christian Messenger. They advanced simple biblical authority for belief, and repentance and baptism for remission of sins, as opposed to various sectarians. As a result of these articles, Stone once again took the position that baptism was necessary for remission of sins."*

Some people think that older and more experienced people are better qualified to teach the truth and make converts than younger people, but this is not always true. I have heard of congregations that would not allow young people to mount the pulpit simply because they are "young." Some congregations will even refuse to engage a preacher simply because he is "too young," and most people will look down on the truth simply because the person preaching it is "too young." All of these are wrong mindsets that could be detrimental to anyone who is carried away by them. Truth should always be appreciated regardless of who is saying it; and rather than be a discouragement to anyone because of their age, it is best to encourage them to do more wonderful work in the kingdom of God.

Reference

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The Covenants (Part 2)

Vinson Hulen | Quitman, Arkansas, USA

So, Jesus came to fulfil the old law? What does fulfil mean?

The Greek word for "fulfil" is <pleroo> which means to: to satisfy, to finish and to complete.

a. How did Jesus fulfil or complete the old law?

Colossians 2:14: *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."*

b. So, the old covenant has been completed, and no one lives by it today? Proof is in the Scriptures!

Galatians 3:19-29

19 *"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed (Jesus) should come to whom the promise was made (Abraham); and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

20 *"Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.*

21 *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

22 *"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

23 *"But before faith came (faith in Jesus), we were kept under the law (OT), shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

24 *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster (tutor) to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

25 *"But after that faith is come (the gospel of Jesus), we are no longer under a schoolmaster (tutor).*

26 *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

27 *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

28 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

29 *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

c. But what if I want to hold onto the old law?

James 2:10: *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."*

d. So, righteousness comes from only the new covenant?

Galatians 2:21: *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law (the old covenant), **then Christ is dead in vain.**"*

Keeping any of the old law is saying that Christ's death wasn't needed!

e. So, there definitely was a "change of the law"?

Hebrews 7:11-12

11 *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

12 *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

Hebrews 9:16-22

16 *"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the **death** of the testator (Jesus).*

17 *"For a testament is of force **after** men are **dead**: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.*

18 *"Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.*

19 *"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,*

20 *"Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.*

21 *"Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.*

22 *"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Without the "shedding" of Christ's blood, there is no remission (removal) of sins and there is no new covenant (testament).

Hospitality

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Albert Dabbs of Humphrey, Arkansas and I spent my first week in Africa in January 1992 in the home of Brother and Sister Sunday Ayandare in Ibadan, Nigeria. We had with us money from American brethren to pay for all our expenses. We offered to pay Brother Ayandare for giving us food and lodging for the week, but he indignantly refused the offer. He said brethren in Racine, Wisconsin had fed him in their homes and lodged him for a week free of charge. We objected that they were relatively wealthy, and it wasn't a big sacrifice for them as it was for him. He replied, "Isn't that what hospitality is?" We sheepishly hushed.

"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'Love will cover a multitude of sins.' Be hospitable to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:8-9). What does the Bible teach about hospitality?

The adjective translated "hospitable" literally means "kind to strangers" (Mounce. 1304), and is a

qualification of elders (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). The noun “hospitality” (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2) also refers to “kindness to strangers, hospitality” (Ibid).

The Hebrew writer reminds us that some people, by being hospitable, unwittingly entertained angels” (Hebrews 13:2). Of course Abraham and Sarah did this when the men (the Lord and angels disguised as men) came to their tent, and Abraham and Sarah prepared them a sumptuous meal (Genesis 18:1-8). Lot also unknowingly welcomed angels into his home (Genesis 19:1-3), and Manoah and his wife acted in a similar manner (Judges chapter 13).

The point is that exercising hospitality brings unexpected blessings. Rick Lanning has been a preacher of the gospel for many years. He says one major reason is his parents would keep the visiting preachers in their home, and Rick spent many hours listening to their spiritual conversations in his parents’ home.

Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:33-34), and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3) all shared their homes with strangers and were blessed.

The inspired writers command hospitality as an important expression of our love for one another (Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:8-9).

We must not limit our hospitality to family and friends, who can repay our hospitality (Luke 14:12). Rather, we must share our generosity with “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” Luke 14:3-4). Don’t invite folks with the expectation that they will invite you in return” (Ibid). Richard and Sharon Zeiger and Joe and Kaye Davis both had Christians into their homes for several days who could not repay them.

We should show the love of hospitality to the poor and needy (Luke 14:13-14; Job 31:16-17), visitors to our assembly (Hebrews 13:2), fellow Christians (1 Peter 4:9), and visiting preachers; (3 John 5-8). By the way, taking them to a restaurant and keeping them in a motel counts. Remember what the Samaritan did for the man who had fallen among thieves? (Luke 10:30-35)

We should exercise our hospitality fervently (Romans 12:11, 13) and cheerfully (1 Peter 4:9) rather than half heartedly and grudgingly.

The Lord will richly reward even our small acts of hospitality (Matthew 10:42). On judgment day the Lord will condemn us if we fail to provide for our needy brethren, but he will welcome those who practice these acts of love and hospitality with eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46). Which reward will we receive?

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