

GOD CARES ABOUT DOCTRINE

David Halbrook

Are you interested in doctrine? The apostles' doctrine was originally taught (Acts 2:42). The doctrine of Christ is essential to having God (2 John 9). Obeying doctrine from the heart keeps us from being servants of sin (Romans 6:17).

The word doctrine means teaching. Paul gave the same doctrine to every church and expected there to be "no other doctrine" (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1:10; 1 Timothy 1:3).

Ironically, churches who teach conflicting doctrines all claim to be led by the Holy Spirit. Would He really teach one church to sprinkle water and another to immerse in water for baptism? Would He teach some people salvation by faith only and others salvation by a sinner's prayer? God is not the author of such confusion and division, nor is He pleased with it (1 Corinthians 14:33; 1:10). But some people are glad for different churches and teachings thinking it offers something good for everyone like a buffet. God's doctrines are not given to suit our individual taste but to reflect His perfect wisdom. The doctrine of Christ shows the salvation of Christ resulting in the church of Christ (Acts 2:47). How could you not be interested?

-- *Editor's Note:* For some reason "doctrine" sounds more intimidating than "teaching" though they have the same meaning. Find and use our article in *Arkansas Weekly* to help others think about the teachings from God and contrast them with the teachings of men.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

October 21, 2012

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RED, YELLOW, BLACK, OR WHITE: CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

John Gentry (<http://havebiblewillpreach.com>)

While going through some of my papers from my trip to India last fall, I came across some notes I had scribbled on the side of an outline on Cases of Conversion in the book Acts. Typically in such a lesson I focus on the fact that in every case of conversion people were converted/saved in the exact same way. However, what makes this even more fascinating is the different people or groups that Luke chose to include in his cases of conversion. Here's what I scribbled down with the different groups of people listed to the left (and in **bold**) followed by the typical way I would previously word the case of conversion along with the pertinent passage.

- **Jews** (from different countries) – Jews on Pentecost, Acts 2.14–41
- **Samaritans** (not really Jews or Gentiles) – Samaritans, Acts 8.5–13
- **African** – Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8.26–39
- **Murderer** (of Christians) – Saul, Acts 9.1–19 (w/ Acts 22.1–21; 26.9–20)
- **Gentile** – Cornelius (House), Acts 10.1–48 (w/ Acts 11.1–18)
- **European Woman** – Lydia (House), Acts 16.13–15
- **Middle Class, Nameless Worker** – Philippian Jailer (House), Acts 16.25–34
- **People from a Very Sinful City** – Corinthians, Acts 18.1–8
- **People from a Center of Idol Worship** – Ephesians, Acts 19.1–7

Luke included cases of conversion than ran the gamut of the human race—people of God (Jews), worldly people (Gentiles), outcasts (Samaritans); men (jailer), women (Lydia); rich (Lydia), poor (jailer), slave (eunuch); sinful (Saul), morally good (Cornelius); people from different countries, even continents (eunuch: Ethiopia, Africa; Jews/Samaritans/Ephesians: Asians; Lydia/Corinthians: Europeans); people from very unlikely places such as a very sinful city (Corinth) or a center of idol worship (Ephesus); not to mention those from different cultures—Jewish, Roman, Greek. Yet, despite the vast differences in those chosen, everyone was converted/saved in the exact same way. Powerful.

THE NONPROFIT LIFE

Jeff Smith (<http://electronicgospel.com/articles/2012/7/6/the-nonprofit-life.html>)

At various times in our lives, we are moved to personal reflection, wondering if all our effort and personal investment of time, energy, and sacrifice have been worth it.

Whether it is a graduation, reaching middle age, listening to a dire diagnosis, or some other major event, we begin to ponder if it has ultimately amounted to anything. What have we made of our lives? What have we done with our talents and opportunities? What would we have done differently if we had known then what we think we know now? What does the future hold?

For the disciple of Christ, these questions are loaded with spiritual consequences, especially as it sometimes seems wicked people have prospered where we have suffered. We judge everything in life according to value – not always its material worth, but also its aesthetics, emotions, and other intangible assets. When we begin to feel as if our lives have not proven profitable, we become prone to discouragement, depression, and even digression, making these assessments powerful tools of the tempter to lure us away from our inheritances.

This, naturally, is nothing new. Centuries before the ministry of Christ, the prophet Malachi observed this attitude among his own generation.

You have said, “It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?” And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.” (Malachi 3:14-15)

Malachi witnessed the development of an attitude that faithfulness was futile because the unfaithful often prospered and went unpunished, at least as far as the eye could see.

That is also the issue with which the patriarch Job wrestled, as his physical joys evaporated and his worthless counselors misled him. The effect of their false accusations was to deepen Job’s confusion about the relationship between faithfulness and reward. Job had been faithful, but he was no longer enjoying any obvious reward. Of the wicked whom he had observed, Job asserted,

They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to

him? Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me. (Job 21:13-16 ESV)

In the midst of his mourning and scratching, Job was working hard to sort out why the wicked were wrong, where the profit was in prayer and piety if a faithful man could be stricken so thoroughly. When our afflictions or self-assessments turn negative, we can become susceptible to the same kind of misguided disappointments.

Job’s experience proves the fallacy of the ancient and timeless theology concerning the relationship between faithful piety and earthly reward. God allows us to peer behind the curtain on life’s mundane stage to witness the tempter’s accusations and the necessity of trial and temptation. Our modern experience simply continues to confirm what Job’s friends acknowledged and what Malachi’s generation observed, even though they could not comprehend it – the good sometimes suffer and the wicked sometimes prosper, but neither injustice is an indictment of a God whose concern is for eternity. This theodicy of justice is weighted toward Heaven and Hell, with earthly affairs serving only as a precursor and determinant, not the main course (Hebrews 9:27-28).

As we assess our lives, success cannot be judged according to checking account balances, residential square footage, or social envy. The most profitable life ever lived ended in poverty and shame upon a Roman cross, after all, and many are the heroes who have perished as teenagers on fields of battle.

We must remind ourselves – constantly – that eternal life is what matters and that everything that happens here is merely another step along the path. That is the divine perspective – that is why God can observe and suffer such injustice as he patiently waits until the right time to send his son back toward Earth (Romans 2:1-11). What’s past is prologue.

Unless that becomes our perspective, we are doomed to digression or depression.

The apostle Paul, who sacrificed earthly stability for eternal hope, offers an inspirational example, writing Corinth:

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (Second Corinthians 4:16-5:1)