

“Thousands of Conflicting Interpretations”

David Halbrook

Last week, I read of a man who quit teaching the Bible because he no longer believed in God. One reason he gave for changing is “thousands of conflicting interpretations” of the Bible. The problem of division discourages many people.

Do you believe God approves of “thousands of conflicting interpretations” about salvation, worship, godly living, and leadership? This is modern denominationalism--separate religious groups with many separate teachings who accept each other anyway. Paul warned about teachings that differ from Jesus’ in 1 Timothy 4:1-2. He did not say “accept them in spite of their teachings” but “shun” them (2 Tim.2:16-18).

In Scripture, the churches of Christ were not different kinds of religious groups (Rom. 16:16). Jesus did not give the apostles different teachings to start different kinds of churches. He gave them one set of teachings about salvation, worship, daily life, and leadership that would unite every person who accepted them (Matt. 28:18-20). The church of Christ in Quail Valley is serious about that unity. Are you? If so, let’s sit down with an open Bible, identify what hinders that unity, and find God’s solution.

Editor’s Note: Our article in *Arkansas Weekly* (Tuesday) is a basic explanation of who we are and what are goal must be regarding man’s approach to division. Find someone who might benefit from this, and future articles. While people are busy trying to solve the problems of money management, time management, and family management, someone must help them see the importance of paying attention to truth. Will you?

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Samuel Southall, and others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

Please check the bulletin board in the back. There is a new schedule for preparing the Lord’s Supper. Please give attention to the list for volunteers for our signboard

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

February 16, 2014

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Does the Church Save?

Franklin T. Puckett

One of the most widely held beliefs of our day is the teaching that a man is saved by faith alone. Nearly all of the denominational creeds have the idea embedded in their articles, either clearly stated as in the Methodist Discipline, or else clearly implied. It is taught that man is saved miraculously, the very instant he believes in Christ, and that this belief is wrought in his heart by the action of the Holy Spirit. Man, in this view, is wholly passive and unable to do anything at all to bring about his salvation. It is all the work of the Holy Spirit. Neither the man's obedience, nor the commands of Christ are taken into consideration. It is purely a miracle.

This is surely one of the most damnable of all false doctrines which curse the land this day. It does more to produce indifference in the hearts of the people toward the church, and to diminish respect for the church, than anything I know. It leads men to deny the essentiality of the church altogether. So strong a grip has the doctrine secured on the hearts of men that it is a very common experience to hear devoted religious people say, "Oh, the church is not important," "The church does not save," "One can go to heaven just as well without being a member of the church as he can in the church," etc. Now if by the word "church" such people mean some denominational institution, then surely no Bible student anywhere would argue with them. On the contrary, every informed person will agree fully with the idea that membership in a denomination (any denomination) is not essential to salvation.

But no person who has reached the age of accountability, and has transgressed God's law either by omission or commission, will ever reach heaven without being a member of the church which is revealed in the Bible. I call your attention to the fact that Jesus Christ is the "Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). It is Christ who saves; Christ who is the Savior; and not the church. "The church" does not save; the church is the thing saved! "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the Savior of the body." What does Christ save? He

saved THE BODY. But what is "the body?" It is the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ is the head of the church – his body. And it is this body which is saved by Christ.

The conclusion is clear from this that if one does not belong to the church, he does not belong to that of which Christ is the Savior. It was the church which was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28); and it is "to the church" that the saved are added (Acts 2:47). There are no saved out of the church; there can be none. For everyone who is "saved" is "added" to the church by the same one who saves him – God.

The church was purchased by the blood of Christ. Unless we are willing to say that Christ was swindled when he bought the church, we must recognize that the value of the church is equal to the value of the blood of Christ. If the church is not valuable, then Christ was cheated when he purchased it with his own blood. If one is to be saved by the blood of Christ, one must be a part of the church, his spiritual body, which was purchased by that blood. If one is a sinner, at enmity with God, then salvation and peace and reconciliation are to be had ONLY in the church, the blood purchased possession of Jesus Christ. "For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:14-16).

Where are people reconciled to God? In the one body, the church. Where is peace found? In the one body, the church. The Bible says that the body is the church, and that peace and reconciliation are to be had in the body, and not out of it. Talk about being "saved by the blood of Christ!" My friend, if you are ever saved by the blood of Christ, it will be because you have come into that body where you are reconciled to God by the cross of Christ. The blood which was shed for our redemption can save us only in the church. There is no other way.

Does the church save? Of course not. It is Christ who saves! But what does he save? He saves the body, the church. God exercised great power when he raised Jesus Christ from the dead and "made him to sit at his right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). So the church is the fullness of Christ. It was not some human institution, or some man-

made denomination which he purchased with his blood; it was "the church." It is over this body that he reigns as head; it is here that the fullness of God dwells. It is here and here only that salvation is promised to the penitent sinner.

We are pleading with people to become members of the New Testament church. We are pleading that men and women in our day do exactly what they did in the days of the apostles. These people then heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, and were buried through baptism for the remission of sins. And when that happened God added them to the church. Here they were reconciled to God, washed and made clean by the blood of Christ; they were then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. They were IN the church--the saved of God.

Putting Our Trust in the Lord (Greg King)

Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5 Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered. (Psalm 40:4-5)

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Trusting God is a real test of our faith and knowledge and understanding of Him and His word. Do I trust God no matter what comes? No matter what! That's what I have to do! The alternative is to trust in myself and lean on my own understanding. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps. When it appears that my life is spiraling out of control, I have to remember that God loves me. The God that created the heavens and the earth and created mankind is alive and working in our lives today. I've got to trust him to direct my path.

I have thought a lot this week about Job. If ever a man trusted in God it was Job. When God finally responded to Job and his question of why; beginning in chapter 38, Jehovah God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind. God directed Job's attention to His unequalled power, His unchallenged wisdom, and His almighty presence. Things that Job already knew about God. Things I know about God. Knowing who God is, knowing of God's presence, knowing that God has plans that we cannot see and do not understand should be sufficient to help us achieve peace during trial. We must not allow the turmoil and suffering of this life to rob us of our faith, joy, and trust in God or keep us from obtaining the comfort He promises to provide.