

Unfamiliar Bible Words: Church (3)

David Halbrook

In this last article on the word *church*, let's consider the question "Why are there many different kinds of churches?"

Paul preached the same word *everywhere in every church* (1 Cor. 4:17). Is the same message taught everywhere today? No. There are many different kinds of teachings, and that is why there are many different kinds of churches. Is God pleased with this? Paul said "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). God gave one message and any change to that message must be rejected. Do any churches today change the original message? If they do, God rejects them and their message. It is not true that "one church is as good as another."

Study the Bible to learn the truth and to know whether churches today teach His word. Do they teach that we choose sin or inherit sin (Jam. 1:14-16; Ezek. 18:20), we are saved by faith or by faith only (Jam. 2:19-26), baptism does or does not save (1 Peter 3:21)? Study the Bible to learn whether you, other individuals, and various modern churches have God's approval (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Jn. 4:1).

Editor's Note: Our *Arkansas Weekly* article deals with a question almost everyone asks from time to time so you could give this article to almost anyone this week, and they will likely be interested. Will you meet anyone this week who needs to study the topic of this article? If so, find a way to encourage someone to read it and then, if possible, to have a conversation with them about it.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
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Does the Right to Act Mean the Act is Right?

Kyle Pope

In many ways Christians living in the United States of America are very fortunate. We have the freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, and freedom of speech. We live in a society that has set laws based on many of the moral values we hold dear. This leads us to take great pride in our country and the individual rights we possess, but, Christians, must never confuse the allegiance we hold to our nation with the responsibility and allegiance we have as citizens of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20). A human government might grant the liberty to engage in activities that God condemns, but that doesn't mean that God allows such behavior. We must recognize that simply because we may be given a right to act that doesn't necessarily mean the act is right.

Let's consider some examples. If someone wronged me, I might have the legal right to take them to court and sue them for damages. Jesus taught, however, "I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak also" (Matt. 5:39-40). Jesus offers a command here that would have seemed shocking to His audience! A cloak was a person's outer garment that in ancient times could stand as security for a pledge or agreement. Mosaic Law demanded that such a garment could not be kept overnight, leaving a person exposed to the elements (Exod. 22:26-27). The tunic was a person's inner garment.

Someone who would be so hardhearted as to sue for the inner garment essentially left the one he had taken to court naked. This shows the force of Jesus' command. Not only should His disciples yield to the "evil person" who would take an inner garment, they should go even further and demonstrate their unselfishness by giving that person the outer garment! Such horrible treatment is certainly the behavior of an enemy, but Jesus taught "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to

those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Although we might be within our legal rights to object to such treatment, Jesus teaches that there can be a spiritual benefit from allowing ourselves to be wronged. In following Divine character “you may be sons of your Father in heaven” as you imitate God, who is good to friend and foe alike (Matt. 5:45).

The apostle Paul addresses the same matter when it comes to brethren. Some in Corinth had brought suit against fellow Christians, going to the civil court of unbelievers for settlement of grievances (1 Cor. 6:1). This was shameful because Christians should set the standard of behavior from which unbelievers should learn (1 Cor. 6:2-5a).

Fellow Christians should help one another resolve conflicts between brethren (1 Cor. 6:5b). Even if, such resolution does not occur, Paul may draw on Jesus’ teaching above in asking Christians who would behave this way, “Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?” (1 Cor. 6:7). In some cases the values, attitudes, and treatment of others that a Christian should demonstrate call on us to willingly accept wrong, rather than do wrong in order to avenge ourselves. There might be times in which our responsibility to provide for family demands some utilization of our legal rights in order to protect ourselves (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8; Acts 22:25-29; 23:27; 25:19; 28:19), but these teachings of both Jesus and Paul clearly show there are times when it is not right for Christians to act upon something that might be within their legal rights.

Another example concerns what we could call decency. Our world allows men and women to wear clothing in public settings that exposes all but their most private parts. Americans act as if it is their right to walk around virtually naked while swimming, at the beach, or during times of recreation. Even in other settings, standards of decency are constantly being challenged. Women who once saw modest clothing as a protection against the lustful gaze of the ungodly, now affirm that it is their right to dress however they choose. It is true that Paul taught that we have parts of our body that demand “greater modesty” and are “unpresentable” (1 Cor. 12:23), but he also taught Christians to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety, and moderation” (1 Tim. 2:9). When the Lord covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve, He did not merely cover their “unpresentable parts”—He made “tunics” for them that covered their upper body and legs (Gen. 3:21). Throughout Scripture, God describes uncovering the thigh as “nakedness” (see Exod. 28:42; Isa. 47:2-3). Clearly just because our culture grants us the right to dress this way, does not mean that it is right before God.

One of the most blatant examples that that has filled the headlines in recent years concerns so-called “same-sex” marriage. The Supreme Court will soon rule on two major cases that will dramatically affect the legal status of those who engage in a covenant between those of the same sex which they seek to equate with lawful marriage. Some states already allow homosexual marriages. The time may come shortly when this is imposed on every state in the union. Our children may then be taught in schools, and indoctrinated by an ungodly media that this is perfectly acceptable, because it is “legal.” If this happens, will that change God’s law? No. God has always considered homosexual fornication (just as He does heterosexual fornication) “an abomination” (Lev. 18:22; cf. Ezek. 22:11). Both male and female homosexuality are condemned by God and will disqualify those who do not repent of this sin from eternal life (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:9-11). No matter what rights government might grant to men and women regarding this sinful behavior it will never mean that this act is right!

Christians must realize that while we are to submit to civil government and obey the laws it enacts (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-15), in obedience to the gospel now “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20). We may value our American citizenship, but we cannot forget that in truth we are only “sojourners and pilgrims” in this world (1 Pet. 2:11). The standard which determines what is right is not human law, popular trend, or modern philosophy. It is now, as it has always been—God’s word, which leaves all “naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13). This is the only source by which we can guide our actions and in truth determine when rights we may be granted are truly right.

<http://olsenpark.com/Bulletins13/FS15.11.pdf> *Faithful Sayings* May 26, 2013

41 *Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD—Your salvation according to Your word.* 42 *So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.* (Psalm 119:41-42)

The mercies of God are not ours to dispense as we see fit. The salvation of God is available to all, but only “*according to Your word*”. God’s word reveals salvation – not our feelings, opinions and desires. It is the height of presumption to expect God to save sinners in some way other than how His word teaches (Matt. 7:21-23). Trust God’s word to answer every reproach. Be faithful according to His word and the mercies of God will come to you (see Rom. 12:1).

Joe. R. Price *Sword Tips* #394 (February 22, 2015)