

EVERYWHERE IN EVERY CHURCH

David Halbrook

Paul wrote to *remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.* (1 Corinthians 4:17). Today, is the same message taught everywhere in every church? The Baptist Church teaches a different message than the Cumberland Presbyterians, who teaches a different message than the Catholic Church. Could Paul preach in every church today?

In Baptist churches, would Paul be allowed to preach his way of baptizing sinners “the same hour of the night” (Acts 16:33), instead of waiting until “Baptism Sunday”?

In Presbyterian churches, would Paul be allowed to preach his way of salvation (faith, repentance, confession, and baptism Romans 2:4; 10:10; 6:4)?

In Catholic churches, would Paul be allowed to preach his way of appointing bishops—married men with children (1 Timothy 3:1, 4)?

Would Paul be allowed to preach his way of not permitting a woman to teach over a man, in the church you attend (1 Timothy 2:12)?

Paul’s ways were Christ’s ways. Are they your church’s ways? Are they your ways?

-- *Editor’s Note:* The past few weeks have kept this congregation busy. Now comes the challenge—staying busy individually, without a sign-up sheet or announcement of a specific activity. Will your labor stay steady or taper off until next summer?

Clipping and distributing our articles in the *Arkansas Weekly* provide just one way that you can daily instruct the lost you meet—*not lagging in diligence* (Rom. 12:11).

We will have a booth Saturday, August 6 at the White River Water Carnival. We’ll have quizzes, tracts, and a place for Bible questions.

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The Exhorter

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

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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ARE YOU PERFECT?

Jerry Fite (Glad Tidings, June 5, 2011; www.parkviewcoc.com)

When asked this question, many will say, “Certainly not!” we all have sinned. Yet Noah is characterized as one who “*was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations*” (*Genesis 6:9*). How can this be? We know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (*Romans 6:23*). The problem is not with Scripture, but with our concept of “*perfection*”. Many think being perfect is being sinless. In reality it points to being “*mature*” or “*complete*”.

We can see this point in Hebrews 5:12: “*But solid food is for full grown (perfect) men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.*” Some Christians had become dull of hearing, and not able to understand the full meaning of Jesus’ priesthood. They were like young children, not able to eat solid food, but only milk. They should have become perfect or mature by now! Therefore, we should be perfect. If we are perfect, then we will have been exercising our senses to discern good and evil.

Being perfect or complete will require that we love our enemies like our heavenly Father does. “*But I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them who persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father, who is in heaven. . . ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (*Matthew 5:44,48*). God blesses his enemies, the evil and unjust with his sunshine and rain as he does the good and the just. So, if we just bless those who treat us well, we have not reached perfection. Perfect or complete people love their enemies and do them good just as the Father in heaven does.

If we are to be perfect, we need to manifest perfect love. John writes, “*there is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love*” (*1 John 4:18*). As we love others as God loves, and manifest his character in our life, we do not have to fear the judgment. We

can face the judgment with boldness, because perfect love casts out fear. We will have been made perfect through love.

Holiness is a characteristic of God that the perfect manifest in their lives. The Lord's goal is to present us "*holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before Him*" (Colossians 1:22). Paul's approach was to "*admonish and teach every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ*" (Colossians 1:28). We are to be "*perfecting holiness*" referencing God, and manifest holiness in all facets of our lives (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Pet. 3:11).

Young people, when your friends are looking at movies with filthy language and are dressing immodestly and see you refuse to go along with what they look at or how they dress, they may call you "immature". Their thought is if you grow up and become mature, you will do what they do. Be strong in the Lord! They have confused "worldly sophistication" for "maturity". You are the mature one, living a holy life. Keep it up and continue to the end! (Philippians 3:15).

WHY DID GOD COMMAND FOR NATIONS TO BE KILLED?

David Halbrook

-- At the fair a few weeks ago, we had a container for people to write down Bible questions which they had. Below is one of the questions we received and my response. God has provided us this opportunity to teach someone about the upright character of God, aided by all who worked before, during, and after the week of the fair. If you were wondering "Did we do any good?," consider this opportunity and ask those who sat at the booth. God's word will not return void (Is. 55:11).

You asked "How can the God who commanded the Israelites to wipe out nations and kill those in their midst who sinned be related to an all-forgiving Savior?"

All sincere questions are worthy of an answer. The answer to your question is known by learning three lessons from God, found in the Bible.

1. God teaches man what He expects

God told Adam and Eve what He expected of them. God has always made this clear. In Genesis 3:6; 11:4 it is clear that people knew what God expected them to do. But, men often do the exact OPPOSITE of what He said. This describes the people God told Israel to destroy. They created their own ideas of God, rejecting the knowledge of God, what He had revealed about Himself, and what He expected of them (Romans 1:18-23).

2. God teaches man of the consequences of man's choices

When God has given teaching, He has warned of the consequences of disobedience and also offered promises for obedience. These nations who were destroyed were not punished as a random act of meanness. It was the consequences of their iniquity. Are you aware of the wickedness of those people? It is referred to in Genesis 15:16.

God is not partial with that punishment—when the Israelites followed the same path of iniquity, He punished them too, having given them plenty of warning. "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19; all of chapter 28).

3. Man chooses to listen to God or reject God. God is longsuffering.

When men rebelled against God, He was patient with them, allowing their "cup of iniquity" to fill over time (Genesis 15:16). In fact, when non-Israelite nations repented, God did not destroy them (Jonah 3:5-10), but they rarely repented. Typically, these people created their own gods, religions, and laws which resulted in extreme wickedness and rebellion. Romans 1:18-32 summarizes that process. In the case of the people God told Israel to destroy, He had been patient with them and was always willing to forgive them, but they repeatedly rejected Him. Many of those nations were practicing all types of wickedness (Romans 1:18-32), including child sacrifice to their false gods.

So, God in both the Old Testament and New Testament was, and is, a God of forgiveness. But He is also a God who describes Himself as worthy of being obeyed (By the way, obedience to Him is ALWAYS in OUR best interest. "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always," Deuteronomy 6:24. Because He is God, He knows what is best for us.). Do you agree that God is worthy of being obeyed?

When man chooses to disobey God, then they learn that God does not make empty threats. I must learn that lesson. You must learn that lesson.

After you have read these Bible verses and thought about them, I hope you will write me back and let me know your response to this answer. Or, if you have both the time and interest, I would be glad to meet you and study this, or related questions. Sometimes, people who ask this question have other questions about God and the Bible, all of which can be answered by a fair study of Scripture.

Thank you for stopping by our booth at the fair and also for leaving your question. I look forward to hearing back from you.