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The Gospel of Christ

By Jared Williams

Paul by inspiration, declared that the gospel of Christ is the power of God to save them that believe (Romans 1:16). This must be the great theme of the book of Romans. After Paul declared the gospel of Christ to be God's power to save, he pointed out that all, Jew and Gentile, are sinners and are in need of the gospel. There are many reasons why we must preach the gospel of Christ.

1. The gospel of Christ is for all. Again, he said, it was for the Jew and also the Greek. This calls to mind what Peter said, ". . . of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34,35). The gospel of Christ has no barrier, in that, it is a message for all. It is a message for all because it fits and fulfills the need of all men. Paul told those at Ephesus who had embraced this gospel, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). The gospel of Christ reveals the scheme of redemption, that is, it tells of the fall of man, the coming of a savior, Christ's death and the church. So all mankind who hears, believes, repents, confesses and is baptized shall be saved.

2. We must preach the gospel of Christ because it is an urgent message to dying humanity. Surely you do not entertain the idea of living in this world forever. Death is as much a part of man as life. Job ask, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Job knew he would face death. Hebrews 9:27 teaches, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We are witnesses of the fact that death is a reality. People are dying every day. The saddest thing about death is that many are not prepared for death. They again and again ignore all the pleas in the gospel. The urgent plea of the gospel of Christ is "today" (II Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13). TODAY you need to

hear, believe and obey the gospel of Christ, because this is the only time you may have.

3. The gospel of Christ is good news of great promises to those who receive it. When Peter preached to the great host on Pentecost he said, ". . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Readers, pay careful attention to the great promises. The remission of sins is promised to all who obey this message. The promise is made that when you obey the gospel of Christ from the heart the Lord will add you to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul referred to this great promise as being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13). As a citizen in the kingdom of God one has the great promise of God hearing and answering his prayers (I John 3:22,23). As a faithful Christian one has the promise of eternal life (I John 2:25). The gospel of Christ offers these "exceeding great and precious promises" (II Peter 1:4).

4. The gospel of Christ is the true message of God. Do you believe the gospel of Christ is the message of truth? Christ stated, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). In (John 17:17) we read, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." our Lord said, "thy word is truth." Here, he also stated that we are sanctified by the truth. To deny that the gospel of Christ is sufficient to sanctify through obedience is to declare it incomplete, lacking in its purpose. Those who claim to receive "revelations, visions, and a word of knowledge" in addition to the gospel are lacking in their understanding of the gospel of Christ and are showing no respect for God and his word. Furthermore, those who make such claims are

not receiving revelations from God, else the Bible is not true. Jude 3 we read, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The faith, here is the gospel of Christ, (compare Galatians 1:23). Jude says, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Notice, once delivered, for all time, it will not be modified in any way, it will stand as it is. We urge all people everywhere to believe and obey the gospel of Christ for it is truth.

5. The gospel of Christ sets forth the church. A strong cry in the religious world is, the church has nothing to do with salvation. The gospel of Christ DOES NOT SEPARATE CHRIST FROM THE CHURCH, HIS BODY. When one believes and is baptized he is saved of past sins (Mark 16:16). As a result of the believers obedience he is added to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul in writing to the brethren at Colosse stated, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13,14).

Paul and those to whom he wrote was in the kingdom of God, where redemption and forgiveness of sins are located. Paul stated that "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). In (Ephesians 1:3) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." All spiritual blessings (forgiveness of sins, fellowship with deity, fellow saints, hope of heaven etc.,) are IN CHRIST. To be in Christ is the same thing to be in his body, the church and in the kingdom of God. To preach the gospel of Christ is to preach the kingdom, the church. We are clearly told how to get into the kingdom, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3).

Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? You need to take heed to the gospel of Christ and obey it today.



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EDITOR Jared Williams

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WHAT MAKES A SECT?

By Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

The word sect, deriving from the Greek term *hairesis*, does not occur a great many times in our beloved Bible. In the book of Acts it is used to refer to the Sadducees in Acts 5:17, to the Pharisees in Acts 15:5 and 26:5 and twice is used by non-Christians to refer to God's people-Christians, i.e., by Tertullus in Acts 24:5 in his accusations against Paul at Caesarea and by non-believing Jewish leaders in Rome in Acts 28:22 when they were convened by Paul immediately subsequent to his arrival in the Imperial City. Neither the Lord nor any of His authoritative spokesman EVER referred to the Lord's church as being a sect. Paul, in Acts 24:14, refers to what his enemies called "heresy" (sect - ASV) "so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: . . ." But that is NOT how Paul called the religious group with which he was affiliated. He knew it was NOT a sect or heresy!! We should know the same today.

A Sect Defined

The Greek term means "An act of choosing, party," Vine says the term properly denotes "a predilection either for a particular truth, or for a perversion of one, generally with the expectation of personal advantage; hence, a division and the formation of a party or sect in contrast to the uniting power of "the truth," held in *toto*; a sect is a division developed and brought to an issue; the order 'divisions, heresies' (marg. 'parties') in 'the works of the flesh' in Galatians 5:19-21 is suggestive of this." See Heresy (EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS, p. 335 - All Empasis his).

These definitions show cogently and clearly why the kindred words of sect and heresy could not belong with propriety and accuracy to the Lord's church. In NO sense of the term is it a sect or heresy in its doctrinal teaching. Were it such it would cease to be what the Christ died to establish and that which He still heads (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18).

A Sect Delineated

Six clearly given points will cover the main gist of this article, viz., "What Makes a Sect?" I shall number and note them as we proceed.

(1) A sect has party or divisive spirit. As such it is not interested in attaining and then maintaining that good and pleasant unity among brethren praised so highly by Israel's Sweet Singer in Psalm 133:1-3. Furthermore, it does not take seriously our Lord's forceful petition in John 17:20-23 that the unique unity which subsisted between Him and the Father be that subscribed and submitted to by the whole beautiful band of his dedicated disciples. Sects are neither fond of the Pauline plea for the unique unanimity expressed in I Corinthians 1:10ff nor of the seven united ones in Ephesians 6:1-6. Sectarianism makes malicious mockery of every Biblical principle and command relative to "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

(2) Sectarianism majors in the perversion of God's glorious gospel. They want no part of the gospel as a whole or the whole counsel of God such as Paul said he had proclaimed with faithfulness in Acts 20:26,27. There is good reason for their adamant opposition to such. The whole gospel believed and obeyed would run them out of business presto!! They would have nowhere to operate and no one upon whom to fasten their falacious fangs. They are fond of their only "isms" such as faith only, grace only, love only, sincerity only, etc. There is not a sectarian group on earth that preaches the whole plan of salvation, the right church, correct living therein, proper worship, right organization, proper mission, scriptural fellowship boudaries, etc.

(3) Sectarianism majors in its particular party names which honor men, doctrinal stances, geographical locations, methods, governmental procedures, etc. They have always had an adamant aversion to calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways. Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Advertists, Mormons, etc., are names they prefer to the sweet and serene name of Christian or just being, in word and practice, the

church of Christ or the church of the Lord. Paul lashed out against this very party spirit - calling themselves after men - in Corinthians 1:10ff.

(4) Sectarianism thrives in the atmosphere that there are as many ways to heaven as there are groups to pave and popularize this ever growing plurality of multiple ways religiously speaking. They take pride in such. They thank God that "we can have the church of our own choice" and can "worship God as we each desire or please." They flagrantly fail to see and sense that Jesus spoke of Himself as the ONLY way to the Father in John 14:6. An early synonym of the new religion of Christianity was "the way" or "this way" (See Acts 9:2, 16:17; 22:4; 24:14). It is the "new and living way" in Hebrews 10:20. New Testament saints knew NOTHING of two or more ways each one of which was open to the preference of men and say one of which would lead them to heaven.

(5) Sectarianism has received and added impetus in recent years with SO MANY sectarian Bibles now on the market. For years I have been saying and writing that the chief thing wrong with the NIV (NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION) is its sectarianism and it has plenty of company from numerous other perverted Bibles of our day. The new Bible makers, publishers and promoters are now putting into the Bibles, so-called, what used to be reserved for denominational manuals, disciplines, creeds, etc. The devil and his disciples are not naive relative to how to promote best the cause of sectarianism - JUST INJECT MUCH IN THE WAY OF SECTARIANISM INTO THE NEW BIBLES!!! And some of our naive and duped brethren are saying that we just need to point out the weaknesses of such and then allow people Christian liberty to use the Bible of their own choice. Read it and weep!! What happens when less than knowledgeable people begin to accept these fatal sectarian errors in the NIV, RSV, TEV, NEB, etc? Only a few months back someone was telling me about a service where Romans 7 and 8 were read in a public service with all the "sinful nature" passages and non one bothered to refute such from the NIV reading. Only a few days ago a proponent of the new Bibles told me "the young woman" rendering of Isaiah 7:14 and the faith only rendering of Romans 11:20 in the RSV did not bother him in the least. WELL, IT BOTHERED ME THAT SUCH FAILED TO BOTHER HIM!!! For more than twenty years I have been warning people about such dangers and yet I agree with my warm friends, brother Ira Rice, "you just cannot warn some people."

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What Makes a Sect?

(continued)

(6) Rampaging sectarianism in our age is certainly abetted by the commonly accepted notion that everything is permissible in religion which is not explicitly prohibited. This opens the floodgates for countless innovations. Where does the New Testament say explicitly, i.e., directly "Thou shalt not offer incense in worship to God, use cake and ice cream on the Lord's Table, sprinkle babies, honor the Pope as Christ's Vicar on earth, or a hundred other things commonly done in the name of religion?" NOWHERE! Yet such are soundly and solidly condemned. Where and how? By the crystal clear concept that God only accepts what He has authorized and NOTHING ELSE. The forgiving have NO authorization from Deity and the Book they gave us (See Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6 - ASV). All these six help promote sects today. SECTARIANISM IS NOT NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY BY A COUNTRY MILE AND THEN SOME!!!!



EASILY CONVINCED

The minister plunked wearily into an easy chair. He told his wife he had just attempted to persuade his congregation that it was the duty of the rich to help the poor.

"Did you convince them?" she asked.

"I was half-successful," said the minister. "I convinced the poor."

Etta Caldwell Harris, Ark.



The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.

Purity of the Seed is Important

By Ernest Loomis

Once upon a time four farmers prepared their fields for planting, all took seed from the same sack and planted in their respective fields. When harvest time came one harvested corn, another wheat, another barley and yet another oats, all having got their seed from the same source. How many people could I persuade to believe that?? Few if any, for we know God designed all things to bring forth after its own kind; But yet when it comes to spiritual things, some people insist on us believing that spiritual seed from the word of God will bring forth many different kinds of fruit (denominations).

All would agree that in the plant and animal kingdom the seed planted determines the harvest. This is equally true in the spiritual kingdom. Jesus said "... the seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). That seed planted nearly 1900 years ago in Jerusalem produced Christians only, and the same seed planted today will produce the same thing. The seed of the field can be contaminated or crossed within a species and the fruit will not be pure; such as crossing white and yellow corn; sweet corn and field corn; sugar cane and kaffir etc. Such is also true spiritually. Cross the seed of the kingdom, the word of God, with the doctrines of men, teaching of sectarianism or commandments of denominationalism and the fruit of such a cross will not be pure, i.e., the fruit will not be just a Christian. Plant white corn and yellow corn side by side and the fruit will not be pure; Plant the seed of the kingdom along with the Disciplines, Manuals, Catechisms, Book of Prayer, or any other man made creed and the fruit will not be pure. Along about now someone is ready to say, "Oh! but you are judging!

No, I'm not. Jesus said "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20) and I am just inspecting the fruit. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). He also said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

Just how would I be accepted in any town if I should preach ten different doctrines, the same ones you find in most towns? I wouldn't be accepted. I would be called all sorts of un-complimentary names and people would have no respect for me. Why then can ten different men come to any town and preach those same ten doctrines and be praised for it? If the teaching of all ten men is right and good, why can't one man teach all ten different doctrines and it still be right. The doctrines and creeds of men has only resulted in confusion, skepticism and infidelity but Jesus never meant it to be that way for he prayed for unity of all believers (John 17:20-21), and Paul condemned division and party names (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

We humbly and earnestly plead that you go back beyond the creeds of men, party names and denominationalism to the pure word of God as was taught by the apostles and inspired men in the first century, plant that seed and the result will be just Christians. Peter planted that seed on pentecost and "they that gladly received received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41); "... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

P.O. Box 452
Seymour, MO 65746

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Are You Preaching?

*There isn't a word that a preacher
can say,
No matter how lovely or true;
Nor is there a prayer his eager lips
can say,
That can preach such a sermon
as you.*

*You vowed to serve Christ and
men know that you did,
They are watching the things
that you do;*

*There is not one action of yours
that is hid,
Men are watching and studying
you,*

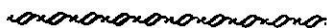
*You say you are no preacher?
Yes, but you preach
A wonderful sermon each day.
The acts of your life are the things
that you teach,*

*It is not the things that you say.
So, Christian, remember you bear
his dear name,
Your lives are for others to
view.*

*You are living examples, men
praise you or blame,
And measure all Christians by
you.*



Speak not in the ears of a fool:
for he will despise the wisdom of
thy word.



A good name is rather to be chosen
than great riches, and loving favour
rather than silver and gold.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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