

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## THE TRUTH ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS

by Chris Perry

The wise man Solomon declared, *“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In matters of religion, it is certainly true that very little happens that is new or unusual. Innovations are introduced, doctrines are developed, but the same ideas seem to permeate every false precept. In the 1st century, the inspired New Testament writers had to deal with false teachers, just as the Lord’s church does today. And interestingly enough, the same attitudes and motivations were present back then that seem to be present in false teaching in the 21st century. In 2 Peter 2, the apostle Peter confronts “false prophets” head-on, stating, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (v. 1). In this chapter, Peter reveals for us the mind of false teachers.

First, Peter describes false teachers as cunning. In the verse just quoted, we learn that they *“privily shall bring in damnable heresies.”* The word “privily” indicates entrance through the side door, as in someone who attempts to sneak into a football game by climbing the fence, rather than walking through the ticket gate. Indeed, false teachers are sneaky! We need not wait for false teachers to identify themselves as such, to stand up and proudly proclaim, “I am a false teacher! Don’t listen to me!” Instead, we should expect them to behave as subtle Satan in the Garden of

Eden, who added one word to God’s statement, *“Thou shalt surely die”* (Genesis 2:17) and created the enticing lie, *“Ye shall not surely die”* (3:4). Jesus described the false teacher as one who *“entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth in some other way,”* and labeled such a person *“a thief and a robber”* (John 10:1). Today, false teachers make their living by twisting the word of God, subtly adding to or taking away what they see fit. For this cause, friends, we must be *“sober and vigilant”* (1 Peter 5:8), and must *“receive the word with all readiness of mind, and search the scriptures daily, whether these things are so”* (Acts 17:11). Never, under any circumstances, should we just “take the preacher’s word for it”—not even this preacher’s!

Peter goes on to observe that false teachers tend to **make merchandise** of the souls of men. By inspiration, he recorded, *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you...”* (2 Peter 2:3). It is my conviction that the single greatest driving force in the minds of false teachers is the desire to **fill the pews!** The desire for numbers has caused too many once-faithful preachers, elderships, and congregations to leave the faith, and the numerical success of many denominations has lured countless more into their folds. Many see a denomination of 10,000 plus and exclaim, “They must be doing something right!” However, the “get ‘em here at all costs” mentality serves only to make merchandise of man’s eternal soul. “It doesn’t matter what we teach them,” we think, “as long as they’re here.” “It doesn’t matter how

they live,” we tell ourselves, “as long as they fill the collection plate.” Friends, we should want as many as possible to hear the truth, and we should strive to “fill the pews” with souls hungry for the word of God. But we must never forget Jesus’ words: *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”* (John 12:32). Only by using God’s drawing power can we ever hope to have God give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Another aspect of false teaching, according to Peter’s inspired pen, is its **tendency toward immorality**. 2 Peter 2:18 describes false teachers who *“speak great swelling words of vanity, [and] they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness.”* When we consider the dividing lines between denominations and the Lord’s church, between the truth and false teaching, we should see a trend. Most often, the departure from the faith comes at matters involving Christian living. Issues like marriage and divorce, homosexuality, the use of alcohol and drugs, fornication, dancing, immodesty, and similar moral issues seem to be the most controversial and difficult issues to face. And why? Because false teaching offers what “scratches our ears” (2 Timothy 4:3). Often, we do not want to change our lives, but instead want to be accepted and coddled just like we are. However, baptism should cause us to be *“raised to walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:3-4) and prompt us to be *“dead to sin”* (6:2).

Finally, Peter describes false teachers as delivering **empty promises**. According to the inspired apostle, these teachers *“promise them liberty, [though] they themselves are the servants of corruption”* (2 Peter 2:19). Because every false doctrine wears the guise of truth, many unsuspecting and thirsty souls swallow Satan’s lies with

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hope of salvation. However, inevitably, every false doctrine—and every person who follows it—has the same end: eternal destruction. Though Satan told Adam and Eve, “*Ye shall not surely die,*” they and all following generations must face death, and “*after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27). Paul warned, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:8). The word “accursed” in the above verse is translated from the word anathema, which referred originally to the animal chosen to be burned as a pagan sacrifice. And such is the end of all who leave the doctrine of Christ.

Friends, may we all learn the lesson that Peter is trying to teach in 2 Peter 2: “*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*” (2 Peter 2:9). I pray that all those in reach of these words may already be—or may become through obedience—members of that first group.

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**WHAT ABOUT A DEATHBED CONFESSION?**

by Dub Mowery

The terminology “deathbed confession” is generally understood to refer to that which is done by a person who is near death and feels the need to confess his or her sins to God. In determining whether or not a deathbed confession is an acceptable means of obtaining forgiveness of sins, let us analyze the inspired Scriptures. First of all, we ask, is the person who confesses his or her sins while in the process of dying an alien sinner or an erring child of God? Alien sinners are those souls accountable to God who have never obeyed the Gospel of Christ. These individuals are not in the spiritual family of the heavenly Father. An alien sinner is a person without Christ, God, or hope of eternal life (Ephesians 2:12). Erring children of God are those who have obeyed the Gospel, but have become unfaithful.

There are two laws of pardon under the New Testament. One avenue of pardon is for the alien sinner, the other for the erring child of God. Since an alien sinner is not in the spiritual family of God, he or she needs to “*be born of the water and of the Spirit*” (John 3:5). This is accomplished when a person obeys the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; 6:17-18). In obeying the Gospel to be saved, every alien sinner must receive the word of God by either hearing or reading it (James 1:21; Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31); then believing it (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repenting of sins (Acts 17:30-31), confessing his faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32-33), and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). There is not anyone who can bypass this law of pardon for the alien sinner, either by attempting to “pray through” for salvation or by any other means.

It is the erring child of God who must repent, confess his or her sins, pray to God for forgiveness of their sins, and resume faithfulness unto the Lord (Acts 8:18-24; 1 John 1:8-9; Revelation 2:1-5).

No one should wait until dying before turning to the Lord. We should devote our entire lives to Him (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13). What motivates a person to do otherwise? One cannot look into the spiritual heart of a dying person who confesses his sins. Nevertheless, it is dangerous for any person to procrastinate until their dying moment to turn unto God. There is the danger that a person’s heart will have already hardened (“conscience seared”) because of his continually rejecting the will of God (Hebrews 3:13; 1 Timothy 4:2).

It is true that some in their sunset years of their life obey the Gospel. However, a “deathbed confession” is not a substitute for obeying the Gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

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**WHAT DIVIDES US**

by Jeff Sweeten

After perusing a mile-high pile of local church bulletins, it became painfully obvious that, considering the tone and type of articles, connections to apostasy promoters, and selectivity in advertising, *the church is divided*. In making these observations, one does not wrongly judge (John 7:24), but merely inspects fruit (Matthew 7:16). The real objection to articles like this one is that division is singled out when many prefer anonymity, oblivion, and silence. Dividers hate designation in this case.

In Corinth, the church was divided. Paul confronted brethren, not on hearsay, but on reliable testimony, saying, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). This text speaks plainly to several facts. (1) The fact that we are *expected* to “speak the same thing” in regard to the worship and

service of the Lord is a divine mandate. (2) What is divinely required is humanly attainable. Because God requires that we “all speak the same thing” implies that we *can* all speak the same thing. (3) Our perfect joining is *based*, not upon majorities or charismatic leaders, but on a mind and judgment that originates from the Mind and Judgment of God. Innovation and experimentation where God has spoken is, by its definition, divisive.

Innovators are quick to say, “You are causing the division.” Not so! Neither is one unloving when pointing out sin (Matthew 23:1ff; John 8:11; Ephesians 5:11). In fact, a truer expression of love cannot be found than one who risks popularity, praise, and paycheck to “*speak the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15). So it was on the first day of the week, August 18, 1889, that Daniel Sommer would assist in drafting what has been called the “Sand Creek Address And Declaration.” He, along with other faithful and loving Christians, would do the unthinkable: identify innovation, and condemn it!

Some of the things of which we hereby complain, and against which we protest, are the unlawful methods resorted to in order to raise or get money for religious purpose, viz.: that of the church holding festivals of various kinds, in the house of the Lord, or elsewhere, demanding that each participant shall pay a certain sum as an admittance fee; the use of instrumental music in the worship; the select choir, to the virtual, if not the real, abandonment of congregational singing. Likewise the man-made society for missionary work and the one-man, imported preacher pastor to feed and watch over the flock.<sup>1</sup>

It is frightening to faithful Christians to see the very same issues that rent asunder the church of our Lord over 100 years ago once again at their terrible work. Notice some of the things mentioned that parallel our current digression.

Innovations seemingly creep in through our “youth programs.” And, why not? Parents abdicate their responsibilities nurture and admonition (Ephesians 6:4) to professionally trained “mini-pastors,” and what a sad direction these puerile pied pipers are leading them. They come into our churches fresh from “Christian” colleges, spewing the politically correct agnosticism in which they have been immersed and infect our youth with entertainment and distractions instead of Bible, *charging admission* to concerts billed as “worship events.” (2) The *instrument of music* in worship has, once again, become a divisive issue among spiritually anemic brethren, its acceptance a natural consequence of “*praise teams*” in “worship celebrations.” And, like the leopards of the previous century (Jeremiah 13:23), they revel in ripping and maiming the church, and all under the moldy umbrella of “expediency.” (3) More and more brethren, even when they concede the overtly obvious fact that most “Christian” *colleges* are no longer Christian, will defend their apostasy and promote their events. *Para-church*

*organizations and events*, peddling everything from mission work and disaster relief to self-awareness and fad diets, are embraced as parallel organizations in which to funnel the Lord’s funds to the neglect of simple, evangelistic personal work, by which the New Testament church grew (Acts 8:4).

Yes, we will be condemned as unloving, judgmental, and narrow-minded, inviting condemnations of the most vitriolic, bitter, and mean sort—all in Christian love, of course. Should we shrink from proclaiming these truths in the face of assault? No! And, the sooner Christians embrace God’s truth, the less offensive it will be. It is the Bible upon which we will stand, and until our adversaries can or will stand to defend their divisive, unscriptural, damnable innovations, we must not allow them or their master (Satan) a minute’s peace (Matthew 10:34; cf. Joshua 24:15).

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<sup>1</sup> Earl Irvin West, “*The Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. II, A History of the Restoration Movement, 1800-1950*, (Indianapolis, IN: Earl West Religious Book Service, 1950), p. 431.

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## “PEACE AND TRUTH IN MY DAYS”

by Lee Moses

What will be the state of the church of Christ in the United States in 100 years? 50 years? 20 years? While it is difficult to know for sure, there are certainly some storm clouds on the horizon. Congregations considered to stand for the truth twenty years ago no longer consider adherence to the New Testament pattern essential to fellowship or salvation. Congregations once considered to be the staunchest stalwarts of the faith are now teetering on the brink of apostasy. These and other warning signs should cause alarm to the saints. And many faithful brethren are indeed alarmed at the direction of many of the Lord’s people. However, far too many, while not necessarily in agreement with the change agents, are turning a deaf ear to these problems.

Though generally considered one of the righteous kings of Judah, King Hezekiah sinned against God by proudly displaying all the treasures of his palace to a group of Babylonian ambassadors (2 Kings 20:12-13; 2 Chronicles 32:31). God told Hezekiah that He would punish him for this by sending the Babylonians to take away all his possessions, and to take away his descendants as eunuchs into captivity—however, none of this was to happen within Hezekiah’s lifetime (2 Kings 20:17-18). Hezekiah responded to the pronouncement of God by saying, “*Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, “Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?”*” (2 Kings 20:19).

Hezekiah was right in saying that God’s word was “good.” As always, God’s

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pronouncement was righteous and just (Psalm 119:75). However, Hezekiah's reasoning that it was good because he would have "peace and truth **in his days**" smacks of selfishness and lack of vision.

This may be a large part of the reason so many turn away from hearing about the problems facing the church today. They are not currently hearing any error preached from their pulpits, they are able to worship according to the Scriptural pattern, and visitors are able to hear what they must do to be saved. So as they perceive it, they have both "peace and truth." However, what about the church which they are leaving to their children, and to their children's children? They choose to be ignorant of the problems facing the church. Liberals and all false teachers feed on ignorance, because only knowledge can check their devious designs (Acts 20:29-32; Colossians 2:3-4; compare with Hosea 4:6). And as liberalism goes unchecked throughout various parts of the brotherhood, other congregations enjoy "peace and truth" in their own hidden little corner.

While storm clouds may be on the horizon, this does not mean that it is time to "hide in the storm cellar." Christ knew that the gates of Hades would not be able to prevail against His church; that is, even His impending death would not stop the church's establishment, (Matthew 16:18). It can be certain that as long as the church stands upon the solid rock of the word of Christ, it will never fall (Matthew 7:24-27). And as long as the church does this, all in it will be granted "*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding*" (Philippians 4:7). But if it is not preparing itself for battle, it cannot long stand:

Put on the whole armour of God, **that ye may** be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, **that ye may** be able to withstand

in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness . . .

(Ephesians 6:11-13, emphasis added).

The church of our Lord cannot be selfish; and if vision was needed at any time, it is now. We need leaders who will set goals for the future and form plans to achieve those goals. We need uncompromising preachers and leaders who will identify and address problems; not only in their own congregations, but wherever they are seen and need to be addressed. We need brethren who will see the need to address and correct error. We should all desire and endeavor to see peace and truth—not only in our days, but until the Lord comes again.

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### GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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