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"What Does The Bible Say?"

By Mike Pace

There is so much confusion in the religious world today that it is little wonder that so many souls are confused as to what to believe and what to ignore. There are literally hundreds of different teachings being promoted in our world today, all professing to be the "right way", all claiming to be God's answer to the religious community. The only way that anyone can accurately know what God's will for man includes is to examine closely what God himself had to say concerning man's salvation. Our Lord acknowledged in His prayer recorded in John, chapter 17, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" Hence, we know God's word to be the truth in all matters pertaining to the salvation of man's soul. And we also have the assurance that when man was employed by God to record His word for us, man was not permitted to interject his own philosophies or thoughts. II Peter 1:20, 21 reassures us, "*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

But now because of man's insistence to change God's word to suit his whims and desires, rather than changing his ways to conform to the will of God, there are many vain philosophies and ideals of man that are being promulgated in the religious world today. Let's examine just a few of the more common of these "philosophies" in the light of God's word to see if such are in agreement with the word of God, or if they are foreign to what the Bible says. It appears that it has become somewhat commonplace in religious discussions to hear certain idioms of expression repeated frequently that certainly deserve investigation. Especially since so many in the world today are being affected by these expressions, and even more impor-

tantly, our eternal abode rests upon our understanding of God's word and our obedience to it. What about:

"One Church Is As Good As Another"

This expression is heard frequently among those in the religious world. This is the popular ground of denominational agreement. If you were to survey the sectarian preachers in your city, you would find many of them to make similar statements. Let's see what God says through the Bible about such an idea. To begin with, Jesus said, "*I will build My church.*" (Matthew 16:18). This verse indicates the singularity of the church Jesus promised to build. We further know that there is but "one" church established by our Lord by reading Ephesians 4:4 to discover that there is **One Body**. Colossians 1:18 informs us that the **Body** is the **Church**. So, logically there is **One** church. Those who argue differently must contend with the word of God. Since Jesus built One church, it stands to reason that all others had to be built by men. It appears that our Lord anticipated that men would attempt to establish churches (religious groups other than the "church" established by Christ) of their own design. Consider Matthew 15:13, which says, "*Every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*" To say that one church is as good as another is an inaccurate statement, as there is only One church established by our Lord. Now, whom do you trust?? Men who say that "One Church is as good as another"; or God who declares that there is but One church, purchased with the blood of Christ, (Acts 20:28). No other religious group can make that claim!!

Another idiomatic expression heralded by men is something like, "*Well, we're all going to the same place anyway.*"

There are a lot of people in the world today that claim to believe that all who

are religious, honest, and sincere about their religious convictions will be saved. Haven't you heard it said, "We're all going to the same place, we're just traveling different roads." To comprehend the danger of such a statement, we must consider what the Bible has to say about such a conviction. First of all, Jesus said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*" (Matthew 7:21). Jesus was referring to people who are honest and sincere in their beliefs, but have been misled somehow. It is not only possible, but evident in the religious world round about us, that many people have been misled by their opinions and personal ideas concerning God's will for mankind. Proverbs 14:12 warns us, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" Even those who offer up evidences of their faith on the day of judgement are warned by Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, that attempts on man's part to be religious may satisfy himself, but will be rejected for not having obeyed the Lord. In John 14:6, Jesus instructs us, "*I am the way, and the Truth, and the Life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" There just isn't any other way but the way God has outlined for us. Jesus said, "*I am THE way . . .*", the **ONLY** way, "*and NO MAN* (no exceptions) *cometh unto the Father but by me.*" There just aren't any alternative ways to approach God in faithful obedience than by submission to His will. If any man teach anything different, let him be anathema!! (Galatians 1:8, 9). Don't be misled by what others teach or say. What does man say? What does God say about all religious people going to the same place? "*Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which*

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EDITOR Mike Pace
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go in thereat: because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13,14).

"Man Is Saved By Faith Only."

A statement that used to be commonly made among many preachers was, Man is saved by faith only, plus nothing and minus nothing." Apparently those men who were inspired of God to pen Holy writ knew if no such philosophy. For James wrote, *"But wilt thou know, o vain man, that faith without works is dead; Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar; Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* (James 2:20-24). James says that it by faith that we are saved, but not by faith ONLY. He states, *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* The Apostle Paul understood and taught that a person is saved by grace, but not by grace alone, it is grace THROUGH our faith. And what kind of faith? James 2:17-24 tells us that our faith MUST be made manifest in our lives by the proper kind of works. You see it is by the grace of God that we will be saved, but it is the grace of God demonstrated by our faith, the kind of faith which provokes works, that will save us. Faith, and faith alone, will not save us. It never has,

it will not presently, nor will it ever!! The Bible teaches us that Jesus *"Became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."* (Hebrews 5:9). Not just those who have faith, but those who obey Him will be heirs of eternal salvation. What does man say? What does God say?

"Once Saved, Always Saved"

There is an extremely dangerous doctrine that has been taught among men for some time. It is the misconception that once a person becomes "saved" he cannot fall from grace. Let's see what the Bible teaches on this matter. To begin with, Paul wrote to certain Christians in some of the churches of Galatia and said, *"For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law, Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."* Paul told them that some of them *had fallen from grace*, not that the potential was there, but that they had already fallen. Jesus once taught a parable to His disciples concerning this matter. We refer to this parable as the "parable of the seeds". It is recorded in Luke, chapter 8. In verse 13 of that chapter, Jesus said, *"They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation, fall away."* Was it possible, or impossible for them to fall away? Even the apostle Paul realized that the possibility for him to fall was ever present, as he said, *"I buffet my body, and bring it into subjection: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (I Corinthians 9:27). Paul also exhorted us to *"wherefore let him that thinketh he stand, take heed lest he fall."* (I Cor. 10:12). Does that kind of language sound like it is impossible for a person to once be saved, and then be able to fall? What does man teach in this matter, and what does God say? Whom are you going to trust?

There are perhaps many other similar doctrines being promoted by men in the religious world about us. What I'm asking you to do is to examine anything you read, hear or think about in matters of religion in the light of God's word. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (I John 4:1). Always examine what men have said or taught in the light of God's word.

The Other Side Of The Coin

By the late W. S. Boyett

Before me is an item which appeared in more than one bulletin. It apparently is written by an older man, who is relating an experience which he admits happened when he was "very young". It is designed to describe the conduct of the "visiting evangelist" during a gospel meeting. Although I doubt some of the detailed descriptions of the "visiting evangelist", I do not accuse the author of dishonesty; but attribute some to the tendency of childish minds toward hyperbole.

The preacher is accused of "pointing a haughty finger not three inches from the nose of the priest (who was visiting the service) and screaming at the old gentleman, "You are going to hell!" Such conduct for a preacher, if true, would be rude and repulsive, and very unbecoming to a Christian. I have heard my brethren and others accuse almost every sound preacher in the brotherhood of such conduct; yet, in my 44 years in the church, during which time I have heard almost every preacher - as some would say, "hard and soft", I have never heard or witnessed a brother preacher doing such a thing. I have been accused of doing this very thing many times myself, but this is an inexcusable lie. I think I know what I have said and done better than anyone else, and I hear say before God that I have never done such. It is reasonable to assume that this misrepresentation that has happened to me many times, has also happened to many other gospel preachers.

I have often preached sermons on the New Birth, using John 3:1-5 as a text. In this passage Jesus says, *"Except ye be born of the water and the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."* I usually point out that scholars agree that "water" refers to baptism and to enter the kingdom; one must be baptized. I was accused once, after preaching a sermon, by one that had heard it, of "standing in the pulpit and saying that if you were not baptized you were going straight to hell." I had made no such statement. We preachers need to learn that we are responsible to preach the truth as it is revealed in God's Word. We are not responsible for the interpretation that those who apparently "love not the truth" put upon it.

In most cases the expression we hear repeated, "He said I was going straight to

hell," is the interpretation that someone puts on what the preachers say, rather than their words. This interpretation may be true and not a misunderstanding. If the Bible teaches that there is such a place as hell and that sinners will go there if they do not come to Christ, then how can the preacher tell these facts to sinners without them concluding that in their present state they are going to hell?

Jesus once said: "*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" I know no way a preacher could preach this truth to a Jew, who did not believe in Jesus, without leaving the impression that he was going to die in his sins unless he changed. To avoid this, denominational preachers quit preaching on such passages as teach that some will be lost and go to hell.

It is amazing how quick some of my preaching brethren have learned and adopted their ways. There are many churches in our land where a sinner might attend and never learn what sin is, and certainly not what to do to be saved. These churches would not want Paul to preach, for he preached that "*unrighteous, fornicators, idolators, adulterers, thieves, etc. shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" (I Cor. 6:9,10). One wonders how welcome the preaching of the apostle Paul would be in the pulpits of the congregations in whose bulletins the above mentioned article appeared. So far as I know, Paul never used the exact words: "You are going to hell", but I have no doubt that he left this impression upon many minds that were conscious of sin, and I am persuaded that no preacher can preach the gospel as Paul did without leaving the same impression on the minds of the ungodly.

To the warped mind, to preach as Paul did would be to use "hateful words to tell men and women that God loves them." One wonders if the people who were pricked in their hearts after hearing Peter tell them that they had crucified the Lord did not feel that they have been told they were lost and on their way to hell. (Acts 2:36, 37).

We hear much about the increase in crime, but not about the increase in sin. Any intelligent mind knows that when sin increases there is a corresponding increase in crime. There was a time in our land when such words as "lost", "sinner", "hell", and "damnation" were common in the pulpits. Those who heard these sermons knew what it was to be lost.

It was not long however, until some of Satan's stooges began to call this type of preaching "Hell fire and damnation preaching". As a result, preachers in many

pulpits began to omit such from their preaching. I believe that history will prove that it was at this time that the increase in sin and crime began to snowball. Now we are reaping the harvest of wickedness that has resulted from this preaching of compromisers. The rule seems to be: Tell people that God loves them, but do not dare tell them that Satan is after them or maybe already has them.

We are experiencing a re-run of the kind of teaching that brought on the exile in Babylon. Isaiah said: "*Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge.*" (Isa. 5:13). Then in verse 20 he says: "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter . . .*" Preaching that does not draw a line between good and evil, light and darkness and sweet and bitter, will bring on the destruction of any people.

Changing Attitudes About Divorce

By John Waddey

In past days, Christians and the church stood firmly opposed to the evil practice of promiscuous divorce and remarriage. Always there have been those who were weak and compromising in dealing with this problem. Some never preached on the subject, though they did hold the scriptural point of view. Others performed marriages for divorcees with never a question about the circumstances of their divorce or a scruple about doing so. Some few tried to justify their beliefs and practice but seldom in a bold public way. Now things are changing. In recent years there have been several books and pamphlets published that boldly challenge the long held views on the subject. Not only would such brethren excuse the practice of divorce and remarriage, but they accuse brethren who cry out against this of being trouble-makers and persecutors of innocent people. Here is why.

SOME REASONS

1. Some congregations have many remarried divorcees in their midst. To appease them they have abstained from preaching against the sinfulness of the situation. Many times the oft-married brother or sister becomes very prominent in the life of the congregation. Feelings of guilt make it necessary either to admit the wrong and right it, or to try to justify the situation (I Cor. 5:6).

2. Some leaders in their desire to have a larger growing membership are anxious to take in anyone regardless of their life and conduct as long as it is not outrageous by community standards. They equate quantity with quality.

3. Some preachers measure their message by the popularity charts. That which is unpopular is quietly passed by (II Tim. 4:3).

4. Some are intimidated by wealthy or influential members of their congregation whose lives are affected by this problem. Fearing reprisals or trouble, they conveniently preach on other, acceptable themes (I Tim. 6:17-19).

5. Preachers who weakly went along with accepting such divorced people and who perform marriage ceremonies for them had to rationalize their conduct in the face of Jesus' teaching.

6. Some leaders who once stood opposed to the divorce evil have been gradually worn down by pressures of a degenerate society that steadily beats upon the walls of the kingdom and is slowly encroaching upon the conduct of its members. Their resistance has finally given away to the new morality.

7. Some leaders held the correct, scriptural view and taught it until a member of their family entered into a second marriage which stood condemned. Under those circumstances, they adjusted their thinking to clear the guilty (Prov. 17:15).

8. We now have many leaders in the church who have grown up in congregations with little or no teaching on the subject. Men who are not taught on a given subject cannot provide effective leadership in that area (Hosea 4:6).

9. Many have been so confused by the numerous theories being tossed about on the subject that they do not quite know what to believe or do.

10. Some leaders have unconsciously grown so accustomed to the darkness of this moral sin that it just does not seem too bad any more.

11. Many have allowed their sympathies for hardships that would be faced by the families, especially where children are involved, to blind them to the righteousness of God's law.

12. Some brethren have turned to this compromising view because they were "turned off" by the attitude and conduct

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of some leaders who opposed divorces and remarriages which are contrary to Jesus' teaching. Some were harsh and heartless in dealing with men and women trapped in unlawful marriages (II Tim. 3:24, 25). There have been cases of discrimination where some were called to account for such illicit unions while others were passed by (James 2:9). Some ignore the exception Jesus allowed - "for fornication" - and insist on no innocent parties in a broken marriage. Such attitudes always drive some souls to opposite extremes.

13. Some brethren are always looking for easy solutions to hard problems. There are no tougher problems faced by congregational leaders than those of unscriptural marriage unions. While it is highly desirable to seek new and easy solutions in the secular realm, it is fatal in the spiritual (Prov. 4:25-27).

14. Some falsely believe that God's word is not static and unchangeable, but plastic and may be adjusted to meet the changing moods of man's behavior (Matt. 24:35).

15. No doubt, some men are being used by Satan to corrupt and weaken the Lord's church (II Cor. 11:13-15).

16. Human wisdom has sometimes been allowed to be exalted above the revelation of God on these matters. Unscriptural divorce and remarriage just does not appear too bad to man's jaundiced eyes (Isaiah 55:8, 9).

17. Liberals who scoff at God's law and reject the very idea of a law that man is expected to conform to cannot bring themselves to accept this strict, high standard for marriage and divorce.

Though men may protest and though a score of alternative views may be proposed Jesus' word still plainly says, *"And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: And he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery"* (Matt. 19:9).

CONTRIBUTIONS

INDIVIDUALS

Clyde and Delphia Smith	\$32.00
Eleanor Davis	5.00
William N. Gray	10.00
Carrie Anderson	10.00

CONGREGATIONS

Church of Christ, Marionville, Mo. . . .	\$10.00
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How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

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