

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 THIEF ON THE CROSS

(Luke 23:43)

by Jerry Moffitt

Since many of our friends among various religious groups ignore the clear teaching of the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16), and since they fail to see the book of Acts as a casebook of conversions (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; Acts 22:16), and since they continue to use the thief on the cross as a model case of conversion, we cannot but suppose they are unknowing of several clear facts which clearly refute their position. We pray it is not such a voluntary ignorance that they cannot be reached by biblical truth. Before we list four pertinent facts let us give some background.

Jesus is giving His life for the world on the cross. The people rail at Him and so do both thieves (Matt. 27:44). However, one thief changes and confesses Him. Jesus promises that the penitent thief will that day be with Him in Paradise. Then Jesus dies, then the thief.

The argument goes that since the thief was saved without water baptism, we can be saved today without water baptism. Thus, the doctrine of salvation by "faith alone" is operative today. But let us present several truths which deny these assertions and which cannot be removed by an honest interpretation of scripture.

1. It has not and cannot ever be proven that the thief was not baptized. It is unwise to rest one's salvation on the guess or the baseless assumption that he was not baptized. Thieves **were** baptized (1 Cor. 6:9-11). They would be the type people who would need baptism for the remission of sins as much as anyone else (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). All in Judea and all Jerusalem were baptized by John the immerser (Mark 1:5), and Jesus baptized more than John did (John 4:1,2). It is likely that these former thieves were among them, especially since they had heard preaching on the kingdom (Luke 23:42).

2. If the thief somehow had not been baptized, though we need water baptism

to be saved (Mark 16:16), he did not. When he received the promise of paradise, which would include remission of sins, he was living under Judaism, not Christianity. Judaism did not require water baptism. Thus ANY Jew at THAT time would not need water baptism. Everyone reading this article today is under a different covenant than that in force when Jesus made the promise to the thief. We are under Christianity which now requires water baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). The old law was in effect when Jesus' promise to the thief was made, but it has since passed away (Col. 2:14; Heb. 7:18,19; Heb 9:16,17; Heb. 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:14).

3. While Jesus was on earth He had the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). Someone might say that He would even have more authority on earth to forgive sins now that He is in heaven. They miss the point. While alive, one may dispense his possessions as he will. When dead, they are disposed by his last will and testament. Jesus' will and testament requires water baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

4. Finally, we just want to point out that the thief was not saved by faith only. He did something. He cried out, or he would not have been saved. That's more than faith alone.

So please, let the poor thief alone. God has not made him a model case of conversion of all that one must do to become a Christian. Besides belief (John 3:16), repentance (Acts 17:30), and confession (Romans 10:9,10), the lost under Christ's covenant must be baptized to receive salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

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Think! Don't let your tongue go faster than your brain.

"Speak The Same Things"

by Tracy Dugger

Does God expect His people to believe, speak, and practice the same things? Can we expect to have the same religious convictions? Is the present existence of religious confusion and differences something we should oppose? Is truth attainable? The answer to all these questions is a simple, YES!

Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and [that] ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor.1:10). God, through the apostle to the Gentiles, made it clear that we can expect to believe and practice the same things. Then, what's the problem? The problem here is seen in the old adage, "too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

Today, religious people are divided because there are too many authorities; they venture from the only true authority in religion - the Bible. Confusion will result every time we attempt to adhere to other authorities (the church, feelings and emotions, man's doctrines and creeds, long held traditions, etc...). The only way to have unity among those who profess to believe the Bible is to put away all other authorities. Let us resolve to "speak where the Bible speaks" and "all speak the same things" (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 1:10).

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The Voice of the Lord

by Victor M. Eskew

The children had arrived home from school in high gear. All afternoon they scurried through the home. They were rambunctious. They were loud. They were almost destructive. Mom tried to settle them down, but there was no reasoning with them. Then, the back door opened.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

A tall, sturdy silhouette appeared in the doorway. A voice rang out "I'm home." The whole house became quiet. The children settled in their places. Dad had spoken.

This simple scene illustrates well the power which is found in a father's voice. Most everyone is aware of the authority which resides in dad's spoken words. This same type of power and authority is contained in the voice of God. In fact, a human's voice only meagerly compares to the voice of God Almighty.

The psalmist understood the remarkable power of the voice of the Lord. In the twenty-ninth psalm he wrote about it. "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon... The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh" (vss. 4-5, 7-8).

An example of how men react when God speaks forth is found in Exodus 20. The children of Israel had departed from Egypt. They had assembled at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Three days had been spent in preparation for God's descent upon the mountain. The moment finally arrived. The "Ten Words" were uttered. Then the children of Israel responded.

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was (Exo. 20:18-21).

Israel trembled when God spoke. Fear filled their timid hearts. They begged, pleaded for Moses to go hear the spoken words for them, lest they die. It is almost beyond our comprehension that a voice could command such power.

One day in the future this voice will speak again from on high. "For the Lord, Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:16). That voice will hold the same power as in the long ago. Humanity will quiver. Silence will fill the earth. The Lord will have spoken. [Are you ready? - ed.]

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"Edification in Christ"

by Darrell Broking

The Greek noun "oikodome" denotes the act of building. This word comes from the word "oiko," a home, and the word "demo," to build. The verb "oikodomeo" literally means "to build a house." In Matthew 21:42 oikodomeo is used as a noun, and translated builders. This same word is translated "edified" in Acts 9:31 and other places. Edification is the act of building.

Any time a wise person sets out to erect a structure, he will sit down and count the cost. In Luke 14:28, we read the words of that wise master builder, Jesus the Christ. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it?" The cost involved in being built up in the Lord's house is considerable. Very few are willing to pay that price. In Matthew 13:14 Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and

for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The price tag placed upon one being built up in the Lord's house is one's total worth. If we refuse to begin here, we labor in vain. Paul revealed to the Corinthians that the churches of Macedonia had much power in weakness, because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5).

The most important element in any structure is its foundation. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 we read, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The Jew's rejected the Christ, therefore He said to them: "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Matthew 21:42).

So it is that all edification is centered around the Lord and His good doctrine. Jesus said, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24). True edification can only result when all of Jesus' doctrine is accepted. The hard sayings of the Lord are just as important as the love and grace passages found in His word. Jesus' doctrine is the fiber holding His house together. Any time a person skimps, and leaves out some of the fiber, you can be assured that his building will not withstand the coming storm.

Inspired men in the first century were given various parts of the Lord's doctrine "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-15). We have the New Testament for that same reason today; that is, to be built up in Christ!

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Jealousy has a special knack for making a fool of itself.

"I Am the Light of the World"

by Richard Mansel

Are you scared of the dark? In the light we travel, work, visit, and walk through our neighborhoods. Yet, as the shades of night fall around us the same surroundings develop an ominous atmosphere. Shapes and shadows constrict our throats and increase our heart rate. Apprehensively, we park under the street lamp and scurry to our doors for fear of what we cannot see.

Our natural fear of darkness is of necessity, because so much evil lurks in the darkness. Those whose feet run to evil are emboldened when night falls. They hit the streets to perform all forms of mischief on terrified citizens. As a result, we lock our doors and turn on all the lights to settle our fears. Darkness and sin are indelibly linked throughout the pages of the Scripture. "Ye are all children of light and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1Thess. 5:5). Darkness is where evil resides and hell is painted as an eternity of the wretched blackness of night.

Of our Lord, John writes, "that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1John 1:5). In Him is all purity and beauty and the terror of darkness is nowhere to be found. Then, in the midst of the startling imagery of the "I Am" statements of the Fourth Gospel, John records Jesus' words, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The lessons that can be culled from this short phrase are legion.

Light is the most powerful force in the world. Have you ever contemplated the power of light? As an example of its vitality consider that a common candle can be placed in a room that is so profoundly dark that it appears to latch onto you. Yet, the darkness, no matter how powerful, cannot extinguish that candle. As Christians we can find extraordinary comfort in this fact of nature. Satan, or darkness, cannot – no matter how hard he tries – make us be lost. The choice resides with us. We have the choice to select the path to salvation or the path to destruction.

In Greek the church means the "called out." Christians, therefore, are called out of the darkness of the world to be in the light and to be light. As a result we can bring light to those around us who are bathed in darkness. But can we be lights to the world just like Christ: While we do

not have it in us to be lights like Christ, we can still be shining lights to the world (Matt. 5:14-16). When we are following close behind our Lord, His light shines on us and reflects off of us to the world. If we get farther away from the Lord, the light fades and we are no longer shining lights to the world. Why can we see the moon so well and barely see Mars at all? Their reflected light comes from the sun and Mars is too far away to receive as much light. If your influence for the Lord is weak, you are probably too far away from the source of light. When we are close to Him we can evangelize, because people in darkness see our light and migrate to us to escape the darkness.

So often we hear people say they cannot find happiness or the answers to the big questions of life. Skeptics usually attribute their inability to find answers to the fact that the answers do not exist. In actuality, they are so far away from God and ensconced in darkness that they are unsure of their bearings. Matters we are sure of in the light are always questionable when bathed in darkness. The reason so many people are lost in our world today – in drugs, multiple divorces, alcoholism, crimes or despair – is they are in darkness and cannot find their way. When their world is illuminated by God's light, everything becomes clearer and better decisions can be made.

This is why evangelism is so crucial. Sinners are lost in the darkness and they cannot find the lighted path that leads to heaven. Christians must take their light into the world and take the hands of the lost, so they can find the right path. Oth-

erwise, they will continue to wander in the darkness of night until they lose their lives and souls.

If you are not an immersed believer, faithful to the Lord's message, then you are lost in darkness. God's word can help you escape its chains (Psalm 119:105). Throw them off and become free to really be yourself, free to find the path God has waiting for you (Matt. 7:13,14).

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Lip Service

by David Long

There is no doubt, that the Christian life is a life of service (Rom 12:1). But what kind of service? Is the Christian service just in speech only? Will just some type of acknowledgment with my lips do? Read carefully these Bible passages.

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8). "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3). "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled'; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:14-16). "If a man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Now, just what kind of service do we read about here? Lip service! Is this kind of service acceptable to God? NO! The Christian life does involve lip service (Heb. 13:15), but not lip service only.

Did you read 1 John 4:20 carefully? *"If a man say, I love God..."* Notice what Jesus said along this same line. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

Read 1 John 3:17 with James 2:14-16. Read 1 John 2:3-5 with Titus 1:16.

Do we get the picture? Let us not be guilty of affirming our love for God with our lips while denying it by our actions

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Dr. Benjamin Spock At 91 – Has He Learned Anything?

by Ted J. Clarke

Dr. Spock, author of the famous baby book written a generation ago, was interviewed on the "Today Show" in September of 1994. Since he has been blamed (and rightly so) for being largely responsible for a generation of children raised by permissive parents, I was interested to hear what he had to say, especially since he had supposedly recanted his permissive attitudes about childrearing.

Spock said that we have raised a couple of generations of spoiled, nasty, materialistic, rebellious children in this country, but he said he did not understand why he has been styled "the grandfather of permissiveness." Perhaps he needs to go back and read his book again. At 91 years old it could be that his memory is slipping some! Of course, not all children raised the past two generations are like he described above, **but too many are!** Even though Spock has not learned that he was a major factor influencing parents to be permissive with their children, he has learned that such attitudes have gone a long way toward ruining this country.

Dr. Spock said, "Unless we teach more on spiritual values and less about the value of material things, we will continue to be on the skids." He also commented that **from the age of two or three, children are watching their parents for examples about what is important and how to act.** Spock said that Americans have been intimidated by self-proclaimed experts on childrearing and family life (like himself?) and that we need to get back to the traditional basics of family values. He also noted that we have to find a way to make marriages work and to show that children and family life are more important than material goods.

Well, well. The famous Dr. has learned something. He noted that he thought that the world is so much worse now than when he was born, in 1903. "Then," he remarked, "hardly anyone thought that anything was more important than one's family." It can be that way again, brethren and friends. The Bible teaches that marriage is for life (Matthew 19:1-9). No one ought to marry unless they know that they can live with that mate "for better or for worse," for life. Husbands are to love their

wives as Christ loved the church, and wives are to reverence their own husbands as they do Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33). Children are to be raised to honor their fathers and mothers and to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20). This is God's recipe for a good, happy family which will make a great and godly society. Of course, we do not need Dr. Spock to tell us that. If we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and His word, we will not be led astray by the likes of the former Dr. Spock and human philosophy and wisdom.

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Thank you. -Ed.

There is a lot to be said about talking to yourself and then there is a great deal to be said about talking to God.

GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP – COLOSSIANS 3:17

- 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; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- 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.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- 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; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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