

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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IS FIRST CORINTHIANS 7:15 AN EXCEPTION TO THE MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE LAW?

by Max Patterson

There are those today, who, in an attempt to get around the marriage and divorce teaching of Matthew 19:3-9, claim that 1 Cor. 7:15 is another exception to the law Jesus gave. Is this the case? Let us examine the matter.

Paul has set forth some of the obligations of those that are married. He then plainly teaches, “Let not the wife depart from her husband.” But, what if she does depart (leave)? Paul poses two options: She must remain unmarried, or be brought back together again with her husband (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

The question arises, what about a man or woman whose spouse is an unbeliever and is not pleased with their mate’s Christianity? Since marriage is a permanent relationship, and its sanctity is not to be looked upon lightly, what is a man or woman to do if their spouse said something like, “You cannot live with me and continue with your Christianity!” What is such a person to do? Paul’s teaching by the Holy Spirit is, “let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases” (1 Cor. 7:15). There is no question that the higher law is for a servant to be totally committed to Christ. The bondage in the verse refers to bondage to Christ.

Christ never expected one to have to give up one’s Christianity in order to preserve the marriage. There are a number of reasons why the foregoing conclusion is correct.

1. The word “bound” is **not** the word used for the marriage bond. The word used here is *doulos*. Of the 133 times this word is used in the New Testament, it never refers to marriage. The word used for the marriage bond is *deo*, as in Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:29,39, and means to tie, bind.

2. The form of the verb prohibits reference to marriage. It is a perfect passive indicative verb form [with a negative] and its force is “was not, and is not bound.” Whatever the bondage is, the believer is not now, nor have they ever been in it. It could not refer to the marriage, because if it did, one would have Paul saying you are not now married, nor have you even been in the past.

3. The context shows the relationship to be one with Christ. In verses 21 and 22, the noun form of this verb has reference to being a servant of Christ. Therefore, one has not now, nor has he ever been bound to **Christ** in fulfilling the commitments of marriage when that person to whom we are married is no longer pleased to dwell with us. The answer to the question, “What, then?” will have to be answered by other verses, as this verse does not deal with that question.

4. One cannot place an interpretation on a verse that contradicts another clearly stated law, such as Matthew 19:9.

5. 1 Cor. 7:10, 11 clearly shows the alternatives to marriage. “Let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.”

Is it not amazing that God always uses the exact word needed to convey his will? The problem is not in what is said, but our trying to wrest what is said, and that to our own destruction.

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[Editor’s Note: Brother Owen D. Olbricht has written a study on the use of the “Negative Perfect” Greek verbs in the New Testament which

provides further information for the student of the Bible, particularly as it relates to the question of divorce and remarriage. While the article is perhaps too technical for the general reader, we will be happy to provide those interested with a copy of this study. In addition to the study by Owen Olbricht, I will include some very helpful notes from brother William Woodson dealing with this same topic from First Corinthians chapter seven. Brother Woodson shows from the context that the “calling” and the “bondage” relate to the same idea, namely, “God called us, when we were saved, to be at peace with [H]im and this peace must not be sacrificed for any reason or person.” **You must send us a self-addressed stamped legal sized envelope with \$.55 postage** if you want a copy of this material.]

QUIT THE CHURCH AND NOT QUIT CHRIST?

by Marvin Rickett

Amazingly, many folks think they can quit the church without quitting Christ. They have left the church but believe they are still connected with Christ, retaining their salvation, having fellowship with Him in private, and generally enjoying His approval. They are out of fellowship with the church but still in fellowship with Christ on an individual basis, they think. Some are living with a besetting sin and still believe they are saved. It is difficult to convince a person with this attitude that he needs to repent.

One cause of this problem is the influence of Protestant “Christianity.” Protestant “Christianity,” in the attempt to justify the satisfactory existence of denominations, conceive of the universal, invisible church to which all good “Christians” belong. It has no organization, no visible congregations, no boundaries. It is manifested by various divisions (denomi-

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nations) which do have organization, are visible, and to which individuals belong. Every "Christian" is a member of the church universal, and may join one of the many denominations to express his religion and perhaps serve God better. Or he may choose not to join any denomination and still be a faithful Christian in the great universal, invisible church. He doesn't have to go to church, associate with a group of people, worship with other people, yet he is still a "saved Christian." Thus the expression, "I think you can be a good Christian and not belong to any church (denomination)." A good many of our brethren have this concept of the church. They view the "Church of Christ" as just another denomination to which church membership is optional. Therefore, they think they can quit the "Church of Christ denomination" and still belong to Christ because they remain members of the mysterious, invisible, universal church.

The above system of theology, though widely held, is thoroughly erroneous and completely anti-scriptural. The Bible teaches

that Jesus Christ is the head of the body, which is the church: "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22). There is one and only one body (Ephesians 4:4). The one body, which is the church, is visible in local congregations. It exists only in local congregations. It does not exist in denominations because denominations have no authority from the Lord to even exist. The Lord never approved of a denomination, nor does He place His church in denominations. He manifests His church in local congregations which are all identical in faith and practice. His body is the church of Christ, its congregations are churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). Everyone who is a member of the church will be a part of a local congregation of the church. There is no such thing as one remaining a "member at large," outside of any local congregation.

Can one quit the church and not, at the same time, be quitting Christ? The church is the body of Christ. To have life, the body must be connected to the head. An individual member must remain connected to the body to receive life from the head. The body is where life is. Salvation is in the body. "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). To dissociate oneself from the body is to be severed from the body. To be severed from the body is to be severed from Christ, the head (Galatians 5:4, ASV). To quit the local church is to quit the universal church because that's the only way the universal church functions. To leave the church is to leave the only place where salvation is. To quit the church is more than just leaving a group of fallible, imperfect human beings. It is quitting the body of Christ, and one cannot quit Christ's body without also quitting Christ. So when you quit the church, you quit Christ. That sounds a whole lot more serious, doesn't it?

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**BIBLE LESSON NUMBER TEN**

by Richard England, Sr.

The word Christian signifies an adherent of Jesus Christ and His teaching. It appears only three times in the New Testament.

Acts 11:26 - ". . . And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

Acts 26:28 - "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

1 Peter 4:15-16 - ". . . if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

Notice particularly in **Acts 11:26** that the term is used to designate a disciple, one who is a learner and follower. Also, in the same text, notice the word "called." The Greek word translated here is found only one other time in the New Testament, where Paul by inspiration says a woman who has a husband and is married to another man "shall be **called** an adulteress" (**Romans 7:3**). The word literally means "to declare by an oracle." It is of God that the woman described is declared an adulteress, certainly not by man because men, for the most part, do not care what she does. Understanding what "called" means, lets us see that it is not just in derision by men that the disciples were "called" Christians. Regardless of how people thought the word first came to be used to refer to these people, God's hand was in the matter of calling his people by a new name.

Isalah 62:2 - "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and **thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.**"

Christians are disciples of Christ, baptized believers who are walking in the light of the gospel. The apostles were told to "teach all nations" (KJV) or to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . ." (ASV) (**Matthew 28:18-20**). Living in a nation that is not dominated by heathenistic idolatry does not make one a Christian. Consenting to the truthfulness of the gospel does not by itself make one a Christian.

Christianity is a way of life, not simply an attitude of heart.

A new convert to Christ, one who has experienced the new birth (**John 3:3,5**), is a "babe" in Christ. As such, his first (and continuing) obligation is to grow.

1 Peter 2:20 - "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Proper growth will include gaining more knowledge of God, Jesus Christ and the promised life to come. Such knowledge also helps detect, identify, and defeat false teachers. It provides the necessary guidance for this life and assurance of eternal life. Read **2 Peter: 3** and notice especially the last verse of the chapter.

2 Peter 3:18 - "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Growth requires a suitable environment (**1 Corinthians 15:33**), proper nourishment (**1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14**), freedom from the disease of sin (**1 Peter 2:1**), exercise (**1 Timothy 4:7**), and time (**Hebrews 5:12-14**).

The Christian life is a daily activity. It is how we worship, work, play, and conduct ourselves at home or away. The principles governing the Christian are taught throughout the New Testament. They include love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, godliness, patience, kindness, tender heartedness, and a forgiving spirit (**Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 4:17-32; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22**). Christians will avoid lying, adultery, stealing, evil speaking, pride, haughtiness, laziness, bitterness, envy, jealousy, whispering, back biting, malice, and all other evils of such nature.

Many people in our culture and society already know most of the things that are good and bad. Granted, there is a limit to the knowledge any one of us has. But, what a wonderful world this would be if all people lived exactly by the good things they already know!

Christian living is first becoming a Christian, then worshipping God as directed in the New Testament and

living daily so that people around us can see Christ in us.

Galatians 2:20 - "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Questions

1. What does "Christian" mean?
2. What name did the early disciples wear?
3. How does one become a disciple, a Christian?
4. Does Christianity include more than attending a worship service?
5. Name some of the principles that govern the life of a Christian.
6. Name some of the things a Christian will avoid.
7. Thought question: If the early disciples were called Christians, why do so many people call themselves by so many different religious names not in the Bible?

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THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

by Israel Crocker

The focal point of the Christian's life should be the cross on which Jesus died. It seems that some refuse to recognize its importance. If they were to realize its essentiality, then possibly a rekindling of zeal from the church would take place. Dedication to Jesus and His church can be accomplished if we realize the necessity of the cross.

Jesus had to shed His blood in order for there to be remission of sins. This principle was foreshadowed in the law of Moses and was fulfilled in Christ:

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves

with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:22-24).

Because of the cross, Christ shed His blood for the remission of our sins (Matt. 26:28), and was able to pass into the heavens on our behalf as mediator (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5).

The cross was necessary because of our sin. It seems some brethren reach the point that sin is not an important issue anymore. They are ready to battle denomination-ism, and should be, but to ponder the penalty for our sins seems to be considered less controversial. It is the opinion of this author that the price of redemption is the most controversial issue among us today. Where redemption is found and how one accesses the redemptive blood of Christ are controversial subjects, the truth of which will determine where one will spend eternity. All of the controversial subjects of faith hinge upon whether the cross was necessary. If the cross was not necessary, then why contend with others over the one church?

There are serious consequences if one does not consider the importance of the cross. If a person leaves the faith, the cross of Christ is of no benefit to him. If a person does not believe in the one church which Christ built (Matt. 16:18), the cross has no part in that person's life. If we are selfishly seeking to be entertained in worship or expecting the congregation to provide vacations for our children, what significance does the cross on which Jesus died carry for us? Does it really matter to that person that Jesus died in the first place? One should wonder.

All of Christianity centers on the cross, because it was where Christ was nailed for us. As we worship, our minds should lead to the cross; the Lord's Supper should mean everything to us when we draw our minds to Jesus' death. Our singing will bring about a sweet savor to God when we sing of His Son's victory on the cross of Calvary. Our giving should be

joyous as we consider what Christ gave (knowing our first fruits pale in comparison to God's first fruit, Jesus Christ).

We do not find any special identity with the "symbol" of the cross as denominationalism, yet the cross was necessary for Jesus to die for us, that we may be added to the church in which we have all spiritual blessings (cf. Eph 1:3, Col. 1:18). May we always remember the importance of the cross.

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- Ted J. Clarke, Editor

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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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