

# 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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## CONSEQUENCES OF ABANDONING DOCTRINAL PREACHING

by Ivie Powell

Faithful preachers are reporting more and more an attitude that has taken hold of many elders and members in the Lord's church. That attitude is a dislike for doctrine and doctrinal preaching. There are several reasons why this has come to pass; one being a lack of understanding what constitutes doctrine. According to W.E. Vine, doctrine is “teaching, the act of teaching or instruction” (*W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 331). To indoctrinate then is to teach, preach and instruct the word of God so that lost souls will be brought to a knowledge of the truth (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 1 Peter 1:22) and so that the faithful will be strengthened (1 Timothy 4:6, 13-16; Titus 2:1-2). The fact is, every page of the Bible is filled with doctrine or teaching.

One reason why many dislike doctrinal preaching is because they think doctrine divides. This is a result of many brethren/non-brethren being confused on many doctrinal issues. This is due mainly to a lack of study on their part, as well as a lack of preaching where they attend. In actuality, to state that doctrine divides is to assert that the word of God divides. This, of course, is simply not the case. The unity of believers is based on the word of God (John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-3).

A second reason why many dislike doctrinal preaching is because they think they have “outgrown” the need for what they consider the “milk of the word.” I am confident that many hide

their true intentions—that being to reconstruct the church of our Lord towards a more moderate, less offensive approach. In other words, liberalism.

Another reason why many dislike doctrinal preaching is because they think love is lacking from the menu. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, love is the basis for preaching, period. When one warns, reproves, rebukes and exhorts it is because of true, genuine love (2 Timothy 4:1-2). When one declares God's truth on what awaits those outside of Christ, as well as apostate brethren, it is because of love. The exposure of false doctrine (which may include naming false teachers, congregations and denominations) is because of true, genuine love. Those who want to remove doctrinal preaching from the pulpit need to look at the consequences of such actions:

1. The church will lose her distinctiveness as the one true body of Christ.

2. Instrumental music in Christian worship will be viewed a “non-fellowship” issue.

3. Denominational people will come to believe they are Christians, even though they have not obeyed the gospel.

4. The Lord's people will soon believe that the church of Christ is merely a denomination among denominations.

5. The worship assembly will be turned inward instead of upward. Man's likes and dislikes will take the place of worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

6. Biblical preaching will be replaced with a Dale Carnegie, Norman Vincent Peale, Joel Osteen type of psychological approach.

7. Those living immoral and worldly lives will feel very comfortable in their sins.

8. The mission and work of the Lord's church will be turned toward the social gospel with all of its trimmings.

9. The appeal to biblical authority will soon be abandoned.

10. Open fellowship (accepting denominational baptisms) will be advanced and accepted.

11. Church discipline will be viewed as judgmental, unloving and anti-Christ.

12. Women will be given a greater role in the assembly and classroom than the word of God permits.

13. The qualifications of elders and deacons will be weakened so that just about anyone can serve.

14. Social drinking, dancing, mixed bathing and immodest apparel will become so commonplace that one cannot tell any difference between so-called professed Christians and the world.

The truth of the matter, my friend, is many congregations are being led by those who are not converted and love neither Christ, the church, nor the lost (Matthew 7:15-16). Strong, faithful churches of Christ have been, and will continue to be, loyal to doctrinal preaching. The warning of the inspired Paul quickly comes to mind: “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). To abandon doctrinal preaching is to abandon Christ.

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## THE RATIONALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

by Lee Moses

Satan has always attacked and will continue to attack righteousness and those who would follow it. Vehement attacks have been laid against Jesus Christ, the Provider of righteousness, and against the Bible, the standard of righteousness. One line of attack that has seen some success in recent years is the attack upon the **rationality** of Christianity. Infidels portray themselves as intelligent, educated, and insightful, while painting Christians as backward, ignorant, and irrational. Not only do these infidels represent professed Christians in this bad light, but they also represent Christianity as irrational.

A system of belief can be said to be *rational* when it is “based on or in accordance with reason or logic.”<sup>1</sup> One might be careful when demanding that God abide by man’s standards of rationality. Man at one time thought it highly irrational for a surgeon to be expected to wash his hands between surgeries. Man at one time thought it highly irrational to

believe that the world was anything other than flat. God is not confined to such erratic standards. However, God and the doctrines He reveals to man will always be characterized by true reason and rationality.

### Christianity Demands Thinking

Many atheists enjoy thinking of themselves as having greater capacity for thought than do believers in God. In the late nineteenth century, atheists referred to themselves as “rationalists”—the implication being that no one who believes in God could possibly be rational. This rhetoric has only become more heated in recent years as atheist Richard Dawkins calls belief in God “delusional.” Christopher Hitchens refers to God’s “yokel creationist fans.” Avowed enemy of God Bill Maher wields a broad paintbrush in his attempt to link ridiculous beliefs and practices of various world religions with Christianity—since world religions do ridiculous things, Christianity must be ridiculous as well, or so the reasoning goes.

While Christianity faces sufficient opposition from its open antagonists, some of the worst incriminations against the rationality of Christianity come from “within.” Many professed Christians do their part to convince others that practicing Christianity must require a full frontal lobotomy. Many profess to practice Christianity while actually practicing **emotionalism**, basing their doctrines and actions upon emotions with a wholesale rejection of reason. Some such persons might be found rolling in the aisles and shouting meaningless gibberish at a Pentecostal gathering. For others, it may not be as dramatic as this—but they still have the erroneous concept, “Come worship time, the brain goes off.” It is all about having a “halleluiah good time.” Perhaps what they practice could be called **emotionolatry**, because they gear everything in their worship toward the excitement of the human emotions rather than toward the pleasure of God. Such emotionalists are generally characterized by tremendous Bible ignorance. Since they have no actual rule of faith, they do not need the Bible. Thus, they can defend neither their religion nor the Bible.

This is not the Christianity described in the New Testament, which **must** be

one’s rule of faith for one to be a Christian (Romans 1:16-17; 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:16). Jesus instructed his hearers to think logically, and reprimanded them when they failed to do so. Several times He rebuked the religious leaders of His day with the question, “*Have ye not read . . . ?*” (Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31). Of course they had read each of the Old Testament Scriptures He referenced, and He knew that. His point was that they failed to draw the correct conclusions from each of those passages. They failed to **think** correctly.

The New Testament portrays the apostle Paul continually **reasoning** with people regarding Christianity:

*“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned** with them out of the scriptures”* (Acts 17:2).

*“And he **reasoned** in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks”* (18:4).

*“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he **reasoned** of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee”* (24:24-25, emphases LM).

Notice in this last reference, that although Paul was reasoning, his audience could not bear to think about such things. There can be little doubt that many of Christianity’s fiercest antagonists are so because they cannot bear to be reasoned with regarding such matters as “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” So who is the more rational?

The Lord’s plea extended in Isaiah’s time still holds true today: “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD*” (Isaiah 1:18). God calls us to reason. Christianity demands thinking. This does not mean that one must be an

educated man to be a Christian. But one must take thought and come to his own fully-committed decision before becoming a Christian. Contrariwise, we see some of the most educated people the most incapable of independent thinking (1 Corinthians 1:26; Mark 12:37b). It is often these attackers of Christianity who are the victims of groupthink.

### Christianity is Based on Evidence

One can do all the thinking in the world, but that thinking is vacuous and vain if one does not reason upon adequate evidence adequately considered. As Naaman the Syrian said, “Behold, I thought . . .” (2 Kings 5:11-12). He reasoned based upon no evidence except his own reasoning. This would have cost him the opportunity to be cleansed from his leprosy had not his servants presented him additional evidence by which he could then draw the proper conclusion (verses 13-14). The *law of rationality* states, “One should only draw such conclusions as the evidence warrants.” This is exactly what Christianity teaches: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Some seek to undermine Christianity by redefining *faith* to mean a decision made **without** adequate evidence. The infidel Voltaire said, “Faith consists in believing what reason cannot.” Notice that Voltaire gives very different meanings to *faith* and *believe*. He acknowledged that he would believe certain things, yet insinuated that he did not have faith. However, according to Biblical use, *faith* and *believe* have essentially the same meaning; the difference being that one is a noun while the other is a verb: “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe . . .*” (Hebrews 11:6, *emph. LM*). The two clauses say essentially the same thing, except the first expresses the thought negatively while the second affirms it positively. One cannot please God without faith; therefore, to please God one must believe/have faith. The two terms both express *belief*. For Voltaire to say that “Faith consists in believing what reason cannot” suggests that reason cannot allow one to believe **anything**. Is this rational?

Biblical faith consists in believing

what reason **demand**s, because evidence compels such faith. Faith is produced by the word of God (Romans 10:17). How is this? First, the word of God provides the necessary facts and instructions that must be believed and obeyed. Second, the word of God provides evidence to allow true faith. After John had provided numerous witnessed attestations to the undeniable truth that Jesus was the Son of God, he wrote, “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (John 20:30-31). John’s purpose, and that of the Holy Spirit, was not to write an exhaustive biography of Jesus Christ—it was to provide sufficient evidence for faith.

Hebrews 11:1 provides, if not a **definition** of faith per se, a good **description** of it: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Admittedly, the King James translation allows some confusion—certainly the mere **belief** in something does not provide substantial evidence it is so, does it? The American Standard Version translates this verse, “*Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen*” (*emph. LM*). A reading of both renderings together gives a good sense of the verse—faith is an assurance based upon substance; it is a conviction based upon evidence. As Adam Clarke said of the word alternately rendered “evidence” and “conviction,”

[It] signifies such a conviction as is produced in the mind by the demonstration of a problem, after which demonstration no doubt can remain, because we see from it that the thing is; that it cannot but be; and that it cannot be otherwise than as it is, and is proved to be.

The Bible alludes to the fact that one can know that God exists, and can know some attributes of God, by examining the evidence from the physical creation (Psalm 19:1-4; 104:24; 139:14; Romans 1:19-20). Certainly the case for the existence of God can be presented in a

logical fashion. The Bible provides evidence of itself that it is accurate, and that it is the word of God, by predictive prophecy, by miraculous confirmation, and by the certification of trustworthy witnesses who saw proof (Isaiah 44:28; Mark 16:20; John 19:35; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8; et al.).

Is it not reasonable of God to offer evidence of the claims the Bible makes? Is it not an appeal to man’s God-given ability to reason that such evidence is provided for consideration? And is it not therefore rational for man to *hold fast* those things which are then *proved* to be *good*? (1 Thessalonians 5:21). After all, the very **law** of rationality tells us to draw the conclusions which are warranted by the evidence.

### Christianity Demands Only the Reasonable

Many of the attacks made upon Christianity are focused directly toward God Himself, effectively saying, “Who does God think He is? How **da**re He try to tell us what to believe and what to do, when we are fully capable of making such decisions for ourselves?” They attack God as unreasonable; they conclude, therefore, that it is irrational to follow Him. But God only demands what is reasonable.

When God pled with Israel, “*Come now, and let us reason together,*” the people were failing Him miserably. He described them, “*Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; they are gone away backward*” (Isaiah 1:4). He pointed out how He had “*nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me*” (verse 2). Did He not have rightful cause for anger? He pointed out that even “[*t*]he ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (verse 3). They failed to think; they failed to be rational.

Yet He only continued to demand of them what was reasonable: “*Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the*

fatherless, plead for the widow” (verse 16-17). If the people hearkened to God’s reasonable request, they would be blessed. In the Christian age, God yet demands nothing unreasonable (1 John 5:3).

If there exists an All-Powerful Creator of the universe, it stands to reason that men should acknowledge Him as their Creator (Isaiah 45:18; 42:8). If He created mankind that they might love Him and share fellowship with Him, it stands to reason that they should fulfill their purpose or suffer consequences for failure (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:3-9; Ecclesiastes 12:13).

If all things truly originate with and belong to the Creator, and men are privileged to make use of things that are His, it stands to reason that men should express gratitude whenever they do make use of what is His (Psalm 24:1; 1 Timothy 4:4). If we are guests in another’s house, we are reasonably expected to abide by the rules of that house (Hebrews 3:4).

If we ourselves originate with and belong to the Creator, it stands to reason that we should use our minds and bodies wholly to the service of the Creator (Romans 11:36-12:1).

If there are things that cannot abide in the presence of God, it stands to reason that we not be allowed to bring those things into God’s presence (Isaiah 59:1-2; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:14-16). God has been more than reasonable in telling us what we may do and must do. He has been more than reasonable in providing the means of atonement for our failures (Romans 5:6-10).

If the Son of God died for our sins, it stands to reason that we die **to** those sins and live for Christ (Romans 6:1-23; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Yes, there are some things that are beyond our understanding. However, where things are beyond our understanding, it is more than reasonable to trust in the One Who understands all things: *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deuteronomy 29:29).

**Conclusion**

Satan has had success attacking Christianity by claiming it is irrational—but Satan can only have success as he perpetuates lies (John 8:44). Christianity is extremely rational because it demands thinking, is based on evidence, and demands only the reasonable. Not only is Christianity rational, it is the **only** rational option. To deny our Creator and our Savior, and to fail to live by His word, is highly irrational.

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford American College Dictionary*, s.v. “Rational.”

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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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