

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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“UNDER AUTHORITY”

by Jerry C. Brewer

The Bible often speaks of one doing something when, in fact, others did that thing under his authority. When Jesus was asked to heal a centurion's servant, he approached the man's house, but

the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it (Luke 7:6-8).

The centurion's meaning was that Jesus could heal his servant by His authority without actually being present in his house. The same kind of language was used of Jesus baptizing His followers. “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized...Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all me come unto him” (John 3:22, 25-26). But John later records that, “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard

that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea and departed again into Galilee” (John 4:1-3).

The centurion in the first instance above was said to do something when his servants carried out his order, acting under his authority, and Jesus was said to baptize more disciples than John, although Jesus did *not* do the actual baptizing. His disciples did the baptizing *under His authority*.

Now, consider the Great Commission. In recent years it has been claimed that this commission was not given to all Christians—either in the first century or today—but to the apostles only. The fact is that it was spoken to the apostles (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). But does this mean that the church today is under no obligation to obey this command? The New Testament was not written *to us*, but its precepts are binding on us. It was written *for us*. For instance, Paul's command to “*withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6) was written to the church at Thessalonica. Does that mean it is not applicable to churches today? Of course not! It was written to Thessalonica *for* the church in all ages from an apostle whom Jesus styled a “judge” of “the twelve tribes of Israel” in Matthew 19:18. Apostolic authority is Christ's authority and when we obey apostolic authority, we obey Christ.

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus said to His apostles, “*But ye*

shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to be witnesses for Jesus—His only witnesses, there are none today—and their authority as His witnesses would extend to the end of time. When they spoke by inspiration as they were empowered, it was as though Jesus Himself spoke (2 Corinthians 5:20). Thus, the apostles were “under authority” from Christ and their teaching was Christ's teaching.

After the establishment of the church in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2) there was a great growth of its numbers, attended by a great persecution against it by the Jews. That persecution culminated in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr to the Cause of the Lord (Acts 7:54-60). Prior to this, the Cause of the Lord had been restricted to Jerusalem, but this event and the persecution that followed caused members of the church to flee the city. One of the most significant passages relating to our topic is found in these words: “*...and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles . . .* Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1, 4; emphasis JCB). That the Holy Spirit had Luke to add, “*except the apostles*” is significant. When faithful Christians went everywhere in Judea and Samaria—where Jesus said the apostles would be witnesses—the apostles were still in Jerusalem. Yet, it can be said that the apostles preached “*throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria*” just as “*Jesus made and baptized more*

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(continued from page one)

disciples than John (though Jesus baptized not, but his disciples)." The apostles were, indeed, witnesses to Jesus in Judea and Samaria without ever going there themselves. Where did those scattered brethren get the message they preached? From the apostles. What they preached was the "apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42) and they preached it "under authority" of the apostles.

And, though they never left Jerusalem, the apostles were also witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" when those who were scattered abroad, "traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19-20). When tidings of this came to the apostles' ears in Jerusalem, they did not themselves go to Antioch. Instead, they sent Barnabas "under their authority."

To insist that the Great

Commission is not for us today is to repudiate the authority of Christ expressed through His apostles. He sent them "under authority"; and they, in His name, sent others "under authority." And we today are as much under the authority of Christ and His inspired apostles as the church of the first century.

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IS JESUS WATCHING?

by Roelf L. Ruffner

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and threw in two mites, which made a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all that she had, even her living" (Mark 12:41-44).

It is believed that in just inside the temple courtyard in Jerusalem there were thirteen large brazen boxes shaped like trumpets, narrow at the top and broad at the bottom. One can only imagine the sound of the money as the rich cast in their large offering. Yet the sound of the widow's two mites (small copper coins) barely made a tinkle as they fell into the box.

And there was a witness to this display of human behavior – the Son of God – the Heart Searcher. **Jesus knew the motivation behind the contributions being made.** Some were giving because they were expected to and so make a great show of it. They gave of the excess of what THEY had earned. It was THEIR

money and THEY were doing Jehovah and the temple a favor by being so generous. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1).

Contrast this with the example of the poor widow. Her contribution was **sacrificial** in nature—"of her want she cast in all that she had, even her living" (Mark 12:44). I imagine she could have put those two mites to good use by perhaps providing more food for herself and her children. But she chose to give them to Jehovah because her heart was filled with gratitude. **She put Him first in her life.** He had allowed her to survive one more day.

Dear Christian, what is our attitude in contributing of our means? **Do we realize that giving is as much an act of worship to Jehovah as praying or partaking of the Lord's Supper?** It is not just a custom the church practices to pay her bills. It is a command of the New Testament. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches in Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

On Sunday do we fumble around in our pockets at the last moment to find something to tip the Lord with? Or have we **predetermined** that our worship will be a sacrificial one; like the widow's offering. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

Brethren, I believe one of the sins that the Lord will lay at the feet of the

church of the 21st Century is the stinginess of many of its members. **We often fail to see the big picture.** Our accumulated assets are just a gift on loan from God. In essence we are just **stewards** of His riches. He expects us to use those borrowed riches to His glory. Think of the glory that could come to Jesus Christ if His bride had more resources for evangelism, benevolence and edification! The thought staggers the mind!

Brethren, **Jesus Christ is watching!** What is He seeing in my heart and your heart as we contribute on Sunday? As Jesus told the church of Christ at Ephesus, *“I know thy works, and thy labour....”* (Revelation 2:2).

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“I’m Not a Saint!”

by Lee Moses

Sometimes, one reproved of sin will respond by saying, “I’m not a SAINT!” And so, the reasoning goes, whatever sin in which he is involved should be excused because he is “not a saint.” He should be held to a lower standard than that lofty standard of “saint.” However, this reflects a misunderstanding of the term “saint.” And it is a term very commonly misunderstood. Let us examine the meaning of the term “saint”; and thus, what it means to say, “I’m not a SAINT!”

What a Saint is Not

One Who Has Never Sinned

This is likely the most common way the term “saint” is misapplied. But to call one a “saint” does not mean that person has never sinned. Aaron was called *“the saint of the LORD”* (Psalm 106:16). Yet Aaron had fully cooperated in the making and worship of idols, which fully incurred the wrath of God (Exodus 32). He had

sinned at other times as well (Numbers 12:1-11; 20:10-12, 24). Yet this did not preclude his being *“the saint of the LORD.”*

The term “saint” is found numerous times throughout the New Testament referring to members of the churches—the members of the church in Jerusalem were saints (Acts 9:13; 26:10), yet they were not perfect. They failed to recognize Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul) as a follower of Christ (Acts 9:26), and had numerous other issues among themselves. Even the members of the church at Corinth were *“called saints”* (1 Corinthians 1:2); yet they were divided by their contentions (1:10-12), they were carnal (3:3), they had failed to withdraw fellowship from an especially deviant fornicator (5:1-13), they were taking one another to civil court (6:1-8), and were guilty of numerous other sins.

That the term “saint” applies to human beings other than Jesus Christ tells us something—it tells us that saints sin. Although Jesus never sinned, other human beings do:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

For in many things we all stumble . . . (James 3:2, ASV).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (v. 10).

If the term “saints” meant “human beings who have never sinned,” it would be a meaningless classification, because only Jesus could match that classification. But this is not what it means.

One Given Exalted Status by the Church

The Roman Catholic Church has

a longstanding (but Biblically unauthorized) tradition of *canonizing saints*. When an extraordinary event happens, the Romanists like to describe the event as a “miracle” (against 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Acts 8:18). They then attribute the miracle’s cause to a renowned deceased member of their religion, or to an early Christian. Such a miracle is “considered proof that the person is in heaven and can intercede for us.”¹ Once the Roman pope attributes two alleged miracles to a single person, he will then canonize the person as a “saint.” “The title of saint tells us that the person lived a holy life, is in heaven, and is to be honored [effectively ‘worshipped,’ LM] by the universal Church.”²

Obviously, such a process is foreign to Scripture, and has no Divine sanction. Furthermore, in **no** sense does the term “saint” identify one honored above others in the church. According to the New Testament, **all** the members of **all** the churches of Christ are called saints. We already noted this with regard to the churches in Jerusalem and Corinth. Paul addressed the church at Rome, *“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints”* (Romans 1:7, emph. LM).³ Every last member of that church was called a saint. A saint is **not** one given specially exalted status by the church.

What a Saint Is

A Christian

God’s people in Christ are called by various designations in the New Testament—Christians (Acts 11:26; I Peter 4:16), brethren (Acts 9:20; 14:2; Romans 1:13), disciples (Acts 6:1-2; 21:16) . . . and **saints** (Rom. 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2). Paul used the terms *brethren* and *saints* interchangeably: *“Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you”* (Philippians 4:21). As pointed out in last week’s bulletin, **all** those whom the Lord added to His church were called saints. One cannot be a Christian without also being a saint. If you say, “I’m not a SAINT”; you also say, “I’m not a CHRISTIAN”!

A "Holy One"

Although being a saint does not mean that one has never sinned, a saint is distinct from a sinner. While all faithful Christians are saints, the term *sinner* is reserved for those who are presently alienated from God through sin (Rom. 5:8; James 5:20; I Pet. 4:17-18). Saints may sin occasionally, but this does not make them sinners. The word *saint* literally means "holy one." Saints have been set apart from the evil of the world for service to God.

The fact that Christians are also called *saints* tells us that our conduct should match such a noble designation. Paul instructed the Roman Christians, "*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchræ: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also*" (Rom. 16:1-2; emphasis LM). Paul effectively said, "You **are** saints—**act** like saints," not doubting that they would. Similar, he wrote to Ephesus, "*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints*" (Ephesians 5:3; emphasis LM). Again, "You **are** saints—**act** like saints!"

Conclusion

We all ought to be saints—Christians, "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Saying, "I'm not a SAINT" simply will not excuse one's sin. There is no excuse for sin—but, thankfully, there is pardon (Isaiah 55:7; Titus 2:14). However, that pardon is only extended to those who are willing to become saints of God.

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NOTE

Part three of our series "Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together," intended for this issue, will be in the October issue, Lord willing.

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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1 <http://www.catholic.org/saints/faq.php>

2 Ibid.

3 Literally, this says, ". . . called saints"—"to be" is not in the actual text. This indicates that "saint" was a term by which they could all be identified.

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