

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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SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

Barry O'Dell

Merriam-Webster.com defines truth as, “the real facts about something: the things that are true.” For many, when it comes to understanding the Bible, truth is subjective. In other words, the “truth” one holds is based on personal experience, feelings, or opinions. Because of this approach to Scripture there are many who are frustrated in the search for truth to the point of giving up. Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is there a way that is right and cannot be wrong? Can we know for sure what God expects His people to do and believe? When addressing these questions it is important to understand the following about truth:

1. According to God’s word, truth is not found in one’s personal feelings about a matter. Just because something is believed to be true does not make it true. When Joseph’s brethren dipped his coat in the blood of a kid of the goats, they were able to convince Jacob that his son was dead (Gen. 37:29-34). He was convinced that his son was dead based on the

evidence presented! In fact, when all of his sons and daughters attempted to comfort him, he refused to be comforted (Gen. 37:35). In Jeremiah’s day, a false prophet by the name of Hananiah caused Israel to “trust in a lie” (Jer. 28:15). Absolute, objective truth is not determined by what one believes to be true.

2. According to God’s word, truth is not determined by what the majority believes to be true. Jesus teaches that a majority of people choose to enter to wide and broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). God instructed Israel, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment” (Exo. 23:2).
3. According to the teaching of Christ, truth is not found in tradition. Practicing or teaching something for a long period of time does not mean that God approves of what is practiced or taught. When

confronted about the tradition of hand washing Jesus told the Pharisees, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition” (Matt. 15:3)? Of those traditions Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

In the search for truth one cannot depend on personal feelings, prevailing thought, or human tradition. God’s inspired word is the only source for absolute, objective truth. Jesus told the Jews who believed on Him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32). John 17:17 informs us that God’s word is truth. Our loving God has provided us with a Book that is without error, without contradiction, and that gives us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Truth does not change with time. 2 + 2 will always equal 4! Likewise, the truths revealed in God’s word will never change or become antiquated.

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FOREBEAR ONE ANOTHER

Bobby Liddell

Christians share a special, spiritual, and eternal relationship with “one another” that transcends the differences of “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” and lasts forever (Rev. 7:9; 1 The. 4:13-18). Our blessed relationships and faith-building responsibilities are reciprocal and reflexive. Thus, what we do properly is from one to another, and of one by another. In the body of Christ, we share the mutual responsibility (and mutual expectation) to “forbear one another in love” (Eph. 4:2).

FORBEAR ONE ANOTHER

Mounce wrote of “forbear”: “Anechomai means ‘to bear with, endure, tolerate, put up with’ something or someone When the object of anechomai is personal, it means to put up with or tolerate an individual” (213). If we forbear,

we put up with personalities, bear with shortcomings, and tolerate slights and injuries. We will thank God for those brethren with more acclaim, more abilities, or more opportunities, and we will reach down to the “little ones” who seem insignificant, lacking in knowledge, deficient in ability, behind in maturity, and seek to raise them up to where they should be.

Forbearing does not mean tolerating continuing sin (1 John 3:4, 8-9; 5:16-17). “The riches of” God’s “goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” (Rom. 2:4; cf. 3:25), should inspire us to endure patiently, to forbear lovingly, and to forego revenge, even upon those who have grievously wronged us, because of our love for them, and for the Lord’s body. God’s being forbearing does not mean He overlooks sin, but that He desires man’s salvation, in spite of all man has done against Him (John 3:16-17). God, not man, determines what sin is, and who is guilty (1 John 3:4; Rom. 7:13). One is not a sinner just because: (1) He differs in a matter that is optional, judgment, or a scruple (Rom. 14), (2) Another dislikes him, or is jealous of his position, or his success, or, (3) Someone accuses him (Rev. 12:10). Additionally, one is not free from guilt simply because one chooses to overlook his sin under the guise of forbearance.

Some decry forbearance, and foolishly and falsely define “longsuffering and patience” as sinful “toleration and compromise.” We must never let anyone coerce, accuse, condemn, or sanction us into believing we sin when we follow the Lord’s command to be forbearing. Let us put aside

pettiness and pride, and inculcate within us lowliness, meekness, and forbearance (Eph. 4:2), that we might help men to be productive now, and saved eternally. Only then, will we have the proper disposition to confront sin, and to rebuke sinners correctly.

FORBEAR ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

Love for one another identifies us (John 13:34-35). Love is patiently enduring in addressing conflicts, dissolving disputes, or restoring broken unity (1 Cor. 13). To extend to others the forbearance we all need and want, because of genuinely seeking the good of the other, and of the body of Christ, will, when properly received, result in healing, instead of additional injury. Brethren, who bow their hearts to listen to the God of Heaven, stoop down to lift up the lowly; listen to, and learn from, the least; and think more highly of others than they do of themselves. God, through Paul, warned: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15). Loving forbearance would eliminate such devilish conduct.

FORBEARING IS AN IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANS

Paul wrote about those whose lives were “hid with Christ in God,” instructing them in, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” From Colossians 3:1-17, note that forbearing is a Christian characteristic of those who: (1) Are risen

with Christ, (2) Seek things that are above, (3) Set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth, (4) Are dead, but alive in Christ, (5) Expect to appear with Him in glory, (6) Have put to death their members upon the earth, (7) Have put off the evil attributes of the old man, (8) Have put on Christian characteristics of the new man, (9) Have put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, (10) Let the peace of God rule in their hearts, (11) Let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, (12) Do all, in word or deed, in the name of the Lord, (13) And, give thanks unto the Father by Him.

CONCLUSION

Forbearing one another in love is a Christian characteristic that we must work to acquire, to practice, and to perfect within us. Forbearance requires patience with one another, demands slowness to anger, and also stresses readiness to forgive. Forbearance endures the trials, overcomes weakness, and claims the victory—and does so with lowliness and meekness. Forbearing one another in love should not seem to us to be unusual or unknown. Rather, we should be faithful practitioners of bearing with one another, ready to forgive, and gentle in our dealing with others. If we love one another, as we should, we will know the blessings of forbearing, even if we must suffer in order to do so.

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Bobby Liddell serves as the Administrative Dean for Memphis School of Preaching.

Christian Participation in Government

By: Johnny O. Trail

Should the child of God become involved in politics? To hear some people talk on social media, it seems that one is committing sin to complain about anything political or to differ from what any person in politics offers as public policy and law. It is almost as if they believe that we should follow our leaders like mindless sheep down any path that is put forward regardless of how immoral or wrong their policy might be. Such considerations should not be determined along party lines. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong regardless of political affiliation.

One might think this is clear cut in regards to issues that exist in our nation that are egregiously wrong. Murdering the unborn is sin. Homosexuality is sin. Same sex marriage is sin. Sadly, there are Christians in social media and other settings that seem to argue *for* these moral wrongs under the banner of “it is politics and it should not matter!”

Even so, the logic of this idea is not founded or rooted in scripture. *Politics do not fall under some special category that God does not consider on the Day of Judgment*. All of our works will be considered by God. While it is true that our primary focus is the proclamation of Christ and His life giving gospel, we are not precluded from having a role in political affairs as long as that role does not result in immorality. II Timothy 2.4 says, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life;

that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

Still, there are those who issue complaints about Christians weighing in on issues that are decidedly political in nature. Is the child of God expected to merely follow without expressing any objections? If one takes this position, it might be argued, incorrectly, that one should not vote, call representatives, or participate in any political discussions at all. Clearly, one can see the absurdity of such an idea.

How would one make this argument from scripture? The Apostle Paul was one who stood for his rights when he was improperly imprisoned. As a Roman citizen, he had special rights under the law. Understanding this fact, Paul used his rights when he was thrown into prison for no real reason. Acts 25.11 records Paul saying, “For is I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.” Paul had a right to fair treatment under Roman law.

As one considers the political and moral landscape, it is sadly apparent that Christians are living in perilous times. This is true in America and in other nations. Just recently Houston, Texas issued a court order demanding that preachers turn over any sermons dealing with homosexuality, opposition to “gender neutral”

bathrooms, or the lesbian mayor of that city. Starnes writes:

The city of Houston has issued subpoenas demanding a group of pastors turn over any sermons dealing with homosexuality, gender identity or Annise Parker, the city’s first openly lesbian mayor. And those ministers who fail to comply could be held in contempt of court.¹

Should we sit idly by while our rights under the constitution are being trampled over and ignored? The law is for the protection of all people—Christian or otherwise.

If it was wrong for Christians to be involved in politics and government, several of the people converted in the book of Acts would have had to leave their

government jobs behind. Cornelius was a member of the Italian cohort (Acts 10.1). This was a Roman military unit designed to be the right hand of Caesar in supporting his policies. The Philippian Jailor was a part of the Roman Judiciary (Acts 16.23). One does not see either of these men resigning from their positions as a part of the repentance that is required before a person becomes a Christian (Luke 13.3, 5).

Johnny Trail is the preacher for the Sycamore Chapel church of Christ in Ashland City, TN.

¹Starnes, Todd (2014). “City of Huston Demands Pastors Turn Over Sermons.” Fox News <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/10/14/city-houston-demands-pastors-turn-over-sermons/>

GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

**SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER CONTRIBUTIONS 2014
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Viola church of Christ (Viola, AR)	50.00
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Lowell church of Christ (Springdale, AR)	100.00
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Mammoth Spring church of Christ (Mammoth Spring, AR)	2000.00

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