

The Door of Hope

By Randy Harshbarger suffers when His "loved ones" suffer. God has

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." (Hosea 2:5). The story of Hosea is a sad one. It is a story of sin and apostasy. Hosea, the prophet of God, married a woman by the name of Gomer. In doing so, Hosea was obeying a commandment of the Lord. They had two sons and a daughter. Their names were special and provided lessons for the people of God. They were children of whoredom and Gomer was a daughter of the age. She had been influenced by the idolatry and immorality around her. It is out of this beginning that a story so shocking and horrifying was told by Hosea.

Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. While sad, that story was not uncommon in an age of adultery and fornication. The Lord told Hosea to take Gomer back; in doing so, he paid 15 pieces of silver for her. This was half-price for a slave. Hosea in effect, rescued Gomer from the auction block. Through this experience with Gomer, Hosea learned a lesson about God and His love for the apostate children of Israel. Through his own tear dimmed eyes, and with a broken heart, Hosea could then call Israel back from sin and ruin.

God suffers when His people are unfaithful. God does not delight in those who die in sin. All of earth's sorrows are upon the heart of God. Jesus Christ understands when we hurt (Hebrews 4:14-16). Since God is love (1 John 4:7-8, 16), He

chosen to love man and, when we sin, His heart is broken. Jesus wept for the people of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:28). Sin brings agony to the heart of God. He suffered because of what sin does to us.

Sin also defeats the purpose of God's love. Sin spoils, stains, and blinds man as he turns from God. If God could deal lightly with sin, He would not be God. To sin is to turn from what God desires of us as His children. When we sin, we must repent. To refuse is to say in effect that we do not care about God's efforts to save us.

God loves the sinner in spite of the sinner's sin. God hates sin, but it is in love that He appeals to each one. Thank God for His loving kindness. In spite of Israel's sin, God still loved her.

The Lord wants us to be restored to Him. The ninety and nine are safe, but where is the one who is lost? God makes no compromise with sin. He longs for the sinner's return. God so loved to make it possible for one to be free of sin and as its condemning consequences. How hard it must have been for Hosea to take Gomer back. God loves us, but hates our sin!

Sin has no door of hope. Only the Lord can provide the way of salvation. Will we take it?



A weekly publication of the University church of Christ in Auburn, Alabama

The Auburn Beacon

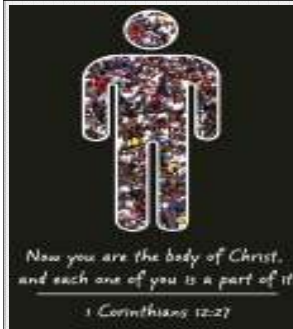


Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Volume 3, Issue 14 February 5, 2012

There is One Body, or "Church"

By J. D. Tant



Thoughts to Ponder

God's truth judges created things out of love, and Satan's truth judges them out of envy and hatred.

Ephesians 4:4 says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." In Ephesians 1:22-23 we learn that the church is the body of Christ, and that Christ is the head. We now ask, "How many bodies or churches has the Son of God on earth? Paul plainly says, "there is one body" (Eph. 4:4). This one body, he tells us, is the church. We then, of necessity, conclude that there is one, and only one, church of divine origin.

As almost all organizations on earth have some head, either human or divine, it is a matter of serious thought that every intelligent person should ask himself, "Is the church of which I am a member of human or of divine origin?"

If it is of divine origin, let us thank God and take courage. If human, let us remember that Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). No intelligent man or woman can plead ignorance nor offer excuses why he is not a member of the church of Christ, rather than some human organization. Every church, whether human or divine, has its standard of

But a third man, seeking for the truth, wanting nothing but the word of God, takes none of these standards of measurement, but simply clings to the word of God as his only rule of faith and practice. In so doing, he becomes a member of that one body we read about in the Bible.

measurement by which all members can measure themselves, and know to what church they belong. A few illustrations will make this clear.

A church claims to be founded not upon divine authority, but upon the experience of a long series of years. If a man wants to be a member of this church, he can ask himself, "Do I believe the 25 articles of religion?" "Am I trying to live up to them?" His answer to these questions will easily decide for him whether he is a member of that body.

Another man may have a different standard containing only 18 articles of faith, and find out whether he is a

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Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the Building	Monday 7PM Ladies Class at Paula Davis'	Tuesday 8 PM "Truth Seekers" at Student Center - Room 2310	Wednesday 12 Noon Ladies "Women of the Bible" class at the Dembowski's
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Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Eli Williams (Friend of Sarah Norman)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler)	Haylie Watson (Tyler Claxton's Relative)	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins' Grandfather)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)	Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Betty Bradford	Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom)	Debra Lowe (Toni Herd's Friend)

February Birthdays
2 - Wesley Herd
2 - Ken Sullivan
3 - Chris Long
5 - Mark Zeanah
5 - Josh Redden
6 - Jackson Fowler
8 - Grant Burton
13 - Leslie Freeman
13 - Megan McMurray
14 - Leighton Daniels
15 - Terria Burton
15 - Ella Miller
16 - Seth Humphrey
18 - Caralise Hunt
20 - Haley Chittam
20 - Laura West
22 - Windy Dembowski
22 - Elizabeth Anne Calvert
22 - Alexander Calvert
23 - Greg Lanier
24 - Jeff Jerkins
26 - Maghen Smith
27 - Julie Johnson

News and Notes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our college Devotional will be next week!
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We are encouraged by the high participation of our members in our Eldership process. Let us continue to work together in this effort!
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We will soon have new church directories. Let us use them to encourage one another!
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All audio from our services are posted at www.aubeacon.com
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Let us warmly greet and get to know our visitors!

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes 7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

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member of that church founded upon *that* standard.

But a third man, seeking for the truth, wanting nothing but the word of God, takes none of these standards of measurement, but simply clings to the word of God as his only rule of faith and practice. In so doing, he becomes a member of that one body we read about in the Bible.

When did Christ become head of the church? Paul tells us that it was when God raised Him from the dead (**Eph. 1:20-22**). Then, if you or I belong to a church that claims an organization prior to the resurrection of Christ, it is not the church of Christ, but is of human origin. And it does not contain the blessings of salvation nor eternal life.

At that time, after Christ's resurrection, it was proclaimed to the world that Christ had been crucified and had shed His blood for our sins. That is the blood of the spiritual body of Christ. As we expect forgiveness only in the shed blood of the Son of God, no one can go further back than the time when He shed His blood and established His church without introducing the blood of bulls and goats, for they were the only shed blood then, and by them no one could ever be justified (**Heb. 10:4**).

All members are component parts of the body to which they belong, and the body must contain all the parts. Each member draws its life from the body of which it is a member. No member can live when cut off from the body. Neither can a man live a Christian life outside the church of Jesus Christ.

Just as well talk about a live finger, a living foot, a strong arm, or a growing limb when cut off from the body, as to talk about a child of God outside the church of Jesus Christ. These members are all Christians — nothing more, nothing less. They are brethren in Christ, governed by the law of the Spirit, and members of His body, doing the work He has commanded them to do.

All living bodies, whether natural or spiritual, are brought into existence by a process of law, and

are perpetuated by principles of law. To this rule, there can be no exception. So it is in becoming members of the church of Christ. We are all made members — are made free — by **"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2)**. This law is also called the **"New Covenant"** and established upon better promises than the old (**Heb. 8**).

"The law of the Spirit" teaches me that I must hear the gospel of the Son of God; that I must have faith in Jesus; must repent of my sins; must confess Christ before men; and must be baptized to arise and walk in newness of life. After that, I must **"live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12)** that I may finally enter into that rest that remains to the people of God.

But, what church should this be, and what name should it wear? Christ said, **"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18)**. Luke says that God, **"added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47)**. To which church did the Lord add the saved? Paul says it was the church of God at Corinth (**1 Cor. 1:2**) and the churches of Christ in Asia.

No where did Paul ever write a letter to the Mormon, Campbellite, Baptist, or Methodist churches. Then, if we are members of any of these institutions, let us remember that they were founded by man — not by God.

Can we go back to the fountainhead, believe the same things, obey the same commands, and let the Lord add us to His church as He did people nearly 2,000 year ago? If we can, will it not be better to do this and let the Lord add us to His church, and serve him, than it will be to spend our time and usefulness in a church not found in the word of the Lord?

Remember, our zeal, earnestness, and work will do us no good if not on the right foundation. The foolish — as well as the wise man — built his house (**Matt. 7:21**). But he was not careful as to his foundation. Then be wise and build upon the one foundation that will never fall and, finally, with God you shall forever dwell.



Bible Baptism

By Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The basic principle of all obedience is understanding. "He that heareth the word and understandeth it"—**Matt. 13:23**. "Go preach the gospel—he that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved"—**Mark 16:15-16**. Believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not all that must be understood in rendering obedience in baptism—there are other essential principles of a gospel faith.

Institutions with design carry the necessity of understanding the design. Example: The Lord's Supper—"Do this in memory of me." No man can observe the Lord's Supper "in memory" of Christ without knowing it. The proposition "for" in **Acts 2:38** is "EIS" in the original, and the proposition "in" of **1 Cor 11:23** is the same "EIS" in the original. No man can take the Lord's Supper in order to, unto or into, the memory of Christ if he does not know it, and for the same reason no man can be baptized in order to, unto or into the remission of sins or salvation, if he does not know it. One cannot accidentally obey God.

If it is not necessary to understand the purpose of baptism, why is it in every case emphasized from the preaching of John to the last verse on the subject in the New Testament? If it is not to be understood, then, that part of the subject is non-essential and when we preach the design of baptism we are preaching something not necessary to be believed, therefore, preaching a non-essential. Why debate with a Baptist preacher on the design of baptism if its design does not have to be believed or understood? Why debate on a non-essential?

Is there a single case in all the New Testament where the person baptized did not understand the purpose of the act?

It is sometimes said that the purpose is not a part of the command. Let us see:

Acts 22:16 "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." The subject understood is you—with the triple predicate—and fully rendered with each part supplied it reads: You arise and be baptized and you wash away your sins. Arise is part of the command; be baptized is a part of the command; wash away your sins is part of the command. No man can do that who believes his sins have already been washed away.

It is said that "to obey God" is the main purpose of baptism. Then why is that purpose never stated? Is it not singular that the New Testament failed to mention the main purpose in connection with the command, but on the other hand emphasized the non-essential purpose, or the purpose not necessary to be believed? "Remission of sins", "into Christ", "shall be saved," "newness of life," and all other

expressions are just one design stated in different ways. Baptism has only one design. Alexander Campbell established this premise, and lays it down in that very proposition, in his book on "Baptism." I mention this because so many refer to Campbell on the subject.

We are sometimes asked: If it is necessary to believe that baptism is for the remission of sins then should we not make it a part of the confession and ask every one "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and do you also believe that baptism is for the remission of sins?" This is dodging the issue. Try it on the other contention. If the main purpose is "to obey God," then, the argument would require that it also be made a part of the confession: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and are you being baptized to obey God?" It's a poor rule that will not work both ways. As a matter fact, all sincere people in religion perform every act of religious service with the general motive to obey God. Baptism has a very specific purpose—just as does the Lord's Supper—and the general idea that it is a command, but not essential to salvation or that it is a duty but the duty of one already saved is a perversion of Bible teaching. If one can be scripturally baptized with such a belief then all our preaching on the subject is inconsistent.

To say that a man can believe that he is saved before he is baptized, and then be baptized to be saved, is to argue that what a man believes has nothing to do with what he does.

It is frequently said that if one is satisfied we have no right to question them. Why should we hold an inquest? Paul evidently "held an inquest" over the twelve in Acts 19. True, the same thing may not be wrong in the case before us—but something was wrong there and something else just as vital may be wrong now. Satisfaction is not salvation. Apply the argument to other things people believe and do in religion and where would it lead to? If it can be applied to baptism why not to everything else?

It takes more than the right act to constitute valid baptism. The right act based on the right belief: Error preached, error heard, error believed, is error obeyed. Truth preached, truth heard, truth believed, is truth obeyed.

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." This cannot be made to mean "You may believe error but if in your error your aim is to obey God, then your error will make you free, anyway." Such apologizing for denominational error cannot advance the truth. It is much easier to teach people to obey the gospel than to defend them in their error.

