# Errors Heard from Those Who Have Left the Church

the wages of which is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23)

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# Worship God's Way!

Bruce Stulting
Beacon – July 6, 2009

In the first century, the church worshiped according to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). He also promised the apostles that

> *when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).*

Therefore, the apostles' doctrine is in complete harmony with the will of the Lord.

It is imperative that we continue to worship according to the New Testament pattern. Failure to do so renders our worship vain (Mat. 15:9). We read how

> *Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured*

*them, and they died before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2).*

This example admonishes us not to substitute our desires in place of God's commands.

New Testament worship was always carried out with reverence and in an orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:30). The order of the worship is usually determined beforehand by the elders. Godly men take the lead in the assembly and direct us in the various acts of worship. These men often briefly explain the item of worship in order to help us better prepare our minds to worship God. Extremism in worship is to be avoided. Ritualism or emotionalism should never characterize our worship. Today, many "new innovations" such as choirs, swaying with upraised hands, spontaneous singing, and hand clapping are being added to the worship. However, a casual reading of the New Testament will find that these acts are not authorized in worship.

Authorized worship includes the Lord's Supper, giving, singing, prayer, and teaching the Gospel. We dare not try to alter, substitute, add to or take away from the worship that God has authorized. As Christians, we are satisfied to worship God in the way that pleases Him. Any change on our part would be presumptuous and sinful.

During the singing, all members of the congregation are to join their voices together in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In doing so, we not only praise God but also teach and admonish one another as well (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). With the specific command to "sing" addressed to the individual, we do not add mechanical instruments of music in our worship songs. For the same reason, we do not have choirs, solos, or any type of mood music for entertainment.

During worship on the first day of the week, Christians are to give liberally as God has prospered them (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Our liberality in giving is evidence of our devotion to God (2 Cor. 8:1-8). Although there are many factors to determine the

amount given, our money must always be given freely (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Guests are not required to give, but they may do so if they choose. The funds collected are used in the work of the church which includes evangelism, benevolence, and edification.

A vital part of any Christian's life is prayer. Through prayer the Christian gains strength, offers thanksgiving to God, makes requests, and intercedes on the behalf of others (1 Pet. 5:8; Phil. 4:6). When Christians come together to worship, prayers are offered frequently. During times of prayer, a godly man speaks his prayer out loud with the rest of the congregation following him in silence (1 Tim. 2:8). Praying in this fashion allows us to maintain order, reverence, and avoid noise and confusion.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus as a memorial of His death on the cross (Mat. 26:26-29). The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine are emblems which represent our Savior's body and blood and help us to center our minds on the events of His death. In partaking of the Lord's Supper we have communion (fellowship) with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). In Acts 20:7 we have the example of the first century church partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week. We do not practice closed communion, but each person must examine himself that he may partake in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-29). Guests are not encouraged or forbidden to partake; it is their choice. We must, however, point out that there can be no communion or fellowship with Christ unless we are faithful children of God (1 John 1:5-7).

Teaching is also part of our worship. The Bible is the inspired, authoritative, and all sufficient Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As such, we believe that if a man speaks it should be from the Word of God (1 Pet. 4:11). Therefore, our Bible class teachers usually teach directly out of the Bible. Sermons from the pulpit will be Bible centered with Scriptures given to enable the listener to check the Bible for oneself

(Acts 17:11; John 5:39). At the close of each sermon an invitation will be given. This is an opportunity for the believing sinner to be reconciled to God by obeying the Gospel. This is done by repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized for the remission of sins (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Mat. 10:32; Acts 2:38). The erring Christian also has the opportunity to repent and ask for the prayers of the congregation (Acts 8:22).

The foregoing is a brief account of New Testament worship. From the time of the apostles, men have sought to improve upon the Divine pattern. All attempts to do so end in failure and sin. Let us stick with the pattern and worship God "in spirit and in truth." We encourage all to accept the teaching of the New Testament and "Worship God's Way!"

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# The Authority of the Scripture Concerning Worship

Jerry Moffitt
September 1990

We have always been a people who made the Word of God our authority in religion. However, since there are signs in our brotherhood of drifting from this mooring, let us express two propositions regarding why God's Word, revealed in the Bible must be our sole authority in worship.

# Proposition One: All Else Is Rejected as Authority

First, the church cannot be our authority for it did not give us the truth. Rather, truth gave us the church. The church must support the truth and be the pillar and ground of it. Paul wrote to Timothy: “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Second, we reject denominations and ecclesiastical bodies as authority. They are not from heaven, but from man (Mat. 21:25). They are evil plants the Lord wants rooted up (Mat. 15:13).

Third, we reject human reason as authority. God has made it foolish (1 Cor. 1:18-31), so the way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23). Under this category we would place traditions of men (Mat. 15:7-9), human philosophy (Col. 2:8), secret knowledge (1 Tim. 6:20-21), and all men as an authority. Men can be false teachers (2 John 9-11; 1 John 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 3-4).

Fourth, we reject angels (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:13-15), and human experiences (Mat. 24:24; 2 Cor. 3:13) as authority concerning worship. It is possible for us to be deceived, especially in the realm of human experience.

# Proposition Two: Why Scripture Is Our Sole Authority

First, only it is the Word of God (Deut. 8:3; 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). No other book, than the Bible, can stand

tests intended to discredit this claim.

Second, it is in the Bible that God exercises His authority (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thes. 2:1-3; John 14:16-18; John 14:26; John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). God had authority and delegated it to the Son (Heb. 1:1-3). The Son put it in men (2 Cor. 5:20), and they wrote it down (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thes. 2:1-3).

Thus, third, the Bible claims to be an authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:5). As a church, we dare not sail off the map of God's Word.

Fourth, Jesus appealed to Scripture as the final authority to settle religious concerns (Mat. 22:28-33; Mat. 19:4-5; John 10:35-36). The apostles did the same, quoting Old Testament passages to authenticate their teaching.

Like the Hebrews writer, time fails if we try to tell all. Scripture is our authority for it is reliable; it will judge us; and, it is indestructible. It will convert us (Psa. 19:7), guide us (Psa. 73:24), cleanse us (John 15:3), save us (James 1:21), sanctify us (John 17:17), edify us (Acts 20:32), and work in us (1 Thes. 2:13). What else could we ask? So may we continue to hold it up as our sole authority in Christianity.

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# The Glorious Gospel of Christ

Danny Douglas

Gospel is translated from the Greek euangelion, and it means: "glad or joyful tidings, good message, good news." Indeed, the Gospel is good news (Rom. 10:15). It is the God-given duty of the Lord's church to proclaim it to a lost and dying world

(Mark 16:15-16). And, as wonderful as the Gospel is, the soul who refuses to obey it will not be saved, but eternally destroyed (2 Thes. 1:7-9). Now, let us consider why it is such good news, and why it is so urgent for us to obey and teach it.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul,So is good news from a far country" (Prov. 25:25). The good news of God, the Gospel, was brought down from heaven to earth by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). Inspired men have recorded this message for us in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Man is lost and condemned without the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). To downcast man, lost in sin, hungering and thirsting for salvation—the Gospel has come!

If we really appreciated the Gospel of Christ, then we will be willing to: (a) suffer for it, like Paul (2 Tim. 1:8-9); (b) sacrifice for its proclamation, and realize that carnal things are very small in comparison to the spiritual blessings brought forth by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:11-18; Eph. 1:3-7; 3:8); (c) "be fellowhelpers to the truth" (3 John 8); (d) be "fellowlabourers" in the Gospel (Phil. 1:17); (f) spread the Gospel message ourselves (Acts 8:4; Prov. 11:30); (g) help others to be trained to preach and teach it (2 Tim. 2:2). *In the Lord's church today, we urgently need to have a greater love and devotion to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God"* (1 Tim. 1:11), which is the "glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4).

# Why Is the Gospel Such Good News?

1. *The Gospel is good news because it tells man of the Savior who came to earth to save him* (Luke 2:10-12; 19:10). As the song says: "Why Did My Savior Come To Earth…Because He Loves Me So" (1 John 4:8-10; Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 5:6-11; Rev. 1:5). In the Gospel we learn about: "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20b). A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord.

The Gospel announces: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that

he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Man, under the condemnation of sin, has a Savior who loves him, and who shed his precious blood to save him and wash away his sins (Mat. 1:21; Rev. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:19). Man does not have to be lost in hell (Rom. 5:8-9). Now that is truly good news!

2. *The Gospel is for all people* (Rom. 1:16; Acts 15:7). Jesus commanded His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Indeed, Christ "by the grace of God" tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

3. *The Gospel is good news because it is the "gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us" (cf. Tit. 2:11-12). Because of God's grace, man has the privilege of being taught the Gospel of Christ. Moreover, the Gospel is the message of God's grace, and the grace of God has made the Gospel possible. By it we have access to God's grace (Tit. 2:11-12; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1-2; 10:17; Tit. 3:4-7; 1 Cor. 15:1).

4. *The Gospel is good news because by it we are begotten by God—we become His children* (1 Cor. 4:15; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). When one obeys the Gospel of Christ, he is begotten by God and born into His house, the church of Christ—the kingdom of God (1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13-14). As physical children are begotten by their fathers, God's children have been begotten by His seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23). What a privilege to be a child of God (John 1:12-13)! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).

5. *The Gospel is of God. It is the "gospel of God"* (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:17). It is from God—not men! Inspired men received it from God; they did not receive it from man (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Unlike the teachings and inventions of man, it is perfect and eternal

(Eph. 1:13; John 8:32; Tit. 1:14; Mat. 15:9; 15:13; 2 John 9; 1 Pet. 1:25; Rev. 14:6). "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:13).

6. *Christ's Gospel is good news because it tells man of heaven and makes the hope of heaven possible* (Col. 1:5). Yet, we must be stedfast and faithful, and be not moved away from the Gospel hope if we are to reach Heaven.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel… And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gos- pel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:3-5, 21-23).

7. *The Gospel of Christ brings peace. It is the "gospel of peace"* (Eph. 6:15; Rom. 10:15). By the Gospel, God has made peace between Jew and Gentile, and between Himself and man (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). Because of the Gospel, man is able to have his sins remitted by the blood of Christ, and therefore have access to God the Father (Eph. 2:13-18). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). By the Gospel "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), which the world cannot provide! (John 14:27; 16:33).

8. *We are called unto God by the Gospel, and by it we are able to obtain "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thes. 2:14). "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). Thus, the

Gospel is the only means by which God calls men to Him. Thus, we can understand why God wants all men to hear the Gospel of Christ (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). What are we doing about it?

9. *The Gospel of Christ is good news because it is "the power of God unto salva tion to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2). Our "Saviour Jesus Christ…hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10), "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). It informs man that to be saved, he must: hear and believe the Gospel (Acts 2:38; 15:7; Rom. 10:14-17); repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30); confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10); and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Having put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4), one must remain faithful (Rev. 2:10; John 8:31-32; 14:15, 21-24; 1 John 1:7). The sacrifice of Christ has made Gospel preaching possible (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:2; Eph. 2:13; 3:8)! How great it is!

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# Are We to Judge?

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Every false teacher and every one whose behavior is sinful tries to hide behind Matthew 7:1-4, actually behind a partial quotation and a misapplication of these verses. When these verses are cited by these workers of evil, usually all that is stated is: "Judge not." In short, they say that any sort of criticism is contrary to God's Word because Christ here

condemned all judging. The only thing wrong with this is that it is totally self-contradictory and totally false.

First, as with many false doctrines it is self-contradictory. Here stand the false teachers and the impenitent sinners stating that all criticism is sinful, and yet they seem not to realize that they are self-condemned by the very principle that they advocate. They criticize and condemn those who would criticize or condemn them. They violate the very principle that they advocate. This is not unusual. Those who violate God's Word try desperately to avoid the condemnation of that Word by seeing a different application and interpretation of that Word when it comes to themselves. Paraphrasing Peter in 2 Peter 3:16, these false teachers and sinful "wrest" this Scripture and others to their own destruction.

Second, neither the text before us, its context, or any other Scripture teaches what they want. The Lord does not condemn all judging either here or elsewhere in Scripture. It should be obvious from the text itself that Jesus here has a special kind of judgment under consideration which He condemns. Jesus describes this judgment as coming from someone who is in a worse condition than the one he condemns. Using the terminology found in the New King James Version, the one condemned has a "speck" in his eye while the one who is doing the condemning has a "plank" in his own eye. The Lord condemns the person who is unconcerned about his own sin while being more than eager to point out and condemn the sin in others. The Lord here condemns the judging done by the hypocrite and the double standard of hypocrisy. The self-righteous hypocrite is wrong because he magnifies the sin of others while ignoring the glaring sins of his own life.

Notice the verse which follows our text: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Mat. 7:5). In this statement, Jesus makes it clear that He is not condemning all judging for in this verse He tells us

what we must do regarding the sin we observe in the lives of those around us. Jesus says that we must first deal with our own sin, and then we will be able to see clearly enough to help others rid themselves of sin. The lesson before us is: sin must be dealt with in our own lives before we can help others deal with their sins. Do not ignore our own sins and then concentrate on the sin of others. The same standard, God's Word, applies to all.

In Romans 2:1, Paul calls attention to this same sin among the Jews which Jesus identified and condemned in Matthew 7. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

Further, Paul admonishes the "spiritual" who see a brother overtaken and overcome in sin to look to themselves when trying to bring the sinner back to faithfulness (Gal. 6:1). Sin in the lives of others should not be ignored. The presence of sin unrepented of brings death (Rom. 5:12). Recognizing sin and its consequence is necessary to obey the instructions of Galatians 6:1. In other words, judging is required to obey this passage. Yet again, those that obey this command are cautioned not to overlook their own sin and/or ignore it, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Looking again at Matthew 7, notice that Jesus in this very context rather than condemning all judgment required judgment of those who would obey Him. For example, He commands, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Mat. 7:6). Jesus is not talking here about literal dogs and swine. The pearls to which He refers are not literal. He is teaching us that we need to discern (i.e., distinguish, or judge, between those who will recognize the worth of the Word of God and those who will reject it, abuse it, and try to destroy it). To obey this

command we must be able to judge others so we can tell who are the “dogs” and “swine.”

Jesus also warns us about false prophets in this same chapter of Matthew. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). We must, therefore, be able to discern who these false teachers are. Jesus tells us how to make this judgment when He said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Mat. 7:16). In this passage judgment is far from condemned; it is absolutely necessary!

As we expand our view of God’s Word to include the remote context of Matthew 7:1-4 we observe that judging is again required. Those who would have us believe that Jesus condemned all judgment would have Jesus contradicting Himself. In John 7:24 Jesus states, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” Note that in the latter part of this statement Jesus said, “judge righteous judgment.” Righteous judgment is commanded. It is therefore not optional. If we obey Christ, we will judge righteous judgment. The judgment Jesus requires of us is not according to outward appearance; things are not always how they appear. The judgment Jesus requires is righteous; that is, according to God’s Holy Word, the Divine Standard of right and wrong. “All thy commandments are righteousness” (Psa. 119:172).

Jesus commended the Ephesian church for their ability to make judgments regarding who were and who were not apostles. He said of them, “thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). Jesus would not have commended them for what He previously had condemned. When Peter sinned, Paul rebuked him to his face (Gal. 2:11-14). This behavior on the part of Paul was the right thing for him to do. Nevertheless for this to be done necessitated judgment, the ability to know that what Peter had done was wrong. Peter’s behavior was sinful, and Paul rightly condemned it. In his discussion with the Corinthian church

regarding the fornicator in their midst, Paul poses the question: “Do not ye judge them that are within?” (1 Cor. 5:21). According to the way this question is stated the correct answer is: “Yes, we are to judge those that are within the church.” The inspired solution for the sin in the congregation at Corinth required judging. Judgment was necessary to discern the sin and the sinner so they could be dealt with appropriately.

The truth is that Jesus does not condemn all judging in Matthew 7, or elsewhere. What is condemned is hypocritical, self-righteous judging that overlooks sin in one’s own life and concentrates on the sin of others. When the Word of God is obeyed and taught, sin will be reproved and rebuked and the way of righteousness will be commended. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Righteous judgment is necessary to recognize and expose sin and to recognize and obey the Truth. Try as some might to protect their sinful practices and doctrines by twisting the meaning of God’s Word, one day we will all stand before God in judgment. All will be held accountable for their behavior according to the standard of God’s Word (John 12:48). It behooves us all to begin now making the right application of that Word to our lives. When sin occurs in our lives we need to deal with it in the way that God tells us in His Word. When others care enough about us that they condemn the sin that exists in our lives, we should be grateful and apply the remedy demanded by God’s Word so we might be saved. Rather than looking for a way to avoid what God has said, we need to be willing to turn from our sin and obey God to have the forgiveness that He offers. Condemning those who would help us identify sin in our lives so we might remove it is foolish indeed. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21). However, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, Even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 17:15). Someone has well written, “Refusing

to warn a person about his sin is just as unloving as refusing to warn him about a serious disease he may have. A person who does not warn a friend about his sin cannot claim love as his motive." "When one runs to Matthew 7:1-5 to protect the false teacher and impenitent sinner in the body of Christ, he either does not understand the passage or he deliberately perverts it" (Dub McClish, The Edifier, June 14, 1984).

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