

THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

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DEGREES OF FAITH

by M. A. Brawner

As a young preacher, making an honest effort to study the Word of God, I encountered an issue that took time to resolve. The issue which arose related to the topic of *faith*. Through prayerful study of the Word of God and the leadership of learned brethren, this issue was studied until Bible harmony was found. In this article, the concern that arose will be presented along with the harmony.

When one reads the scriptures, there appears to be mixed information on the topic of *faith*. For instance, consider these very familiar scriptures: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast,” Eph 2:8-9. In these verses, we correctly conclude that works have no part in faith. Grace is presented as the way God has provided salvation for man and faith is how man accesses that grace. Works are excluded. Yet, we have verses in the book of James which seem to teach otherwise. Consider these verses, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works,” Jas 2:17-18. Here we learn that a faith which is empty of works is actually a dead faith. It is a faith that is without worth at all. Here is the issue. Ephesians presents faith without works while James presents it with works. Is this a mixed message about faith or are there different kinds of faith presented in the Word of God? A prayerful study of the topic will bring us to the correct conclusion.

When the topic of faith is found in the Bible, it is normal for readers to quickly think of how people get saved. Salvation is the only way a lost person can escape hell. So then, it is right for this topic to be on the mind of any sincere follower of Jesus Christ. However, the born again know there are different kinds of faith taught in the Bible. For example, there is a great difference between believing on God with the mind and believing on God

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SUPPORTING THE CAUSE

by H. B. Little

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Luke 16:10-11.

Here the Lord is addressing His church. See Luke 16:1. He introduces faithfulness in mammon. Mammon is material things. It includes our possessions, earnings, and gains. It is money and what money can buy. We are taught to not serve material things (Luke 16:13). But we are taught to be faithful to God with our material possessions. This includes giving to the Lord's cause. So, are we—as churches and as members in particular—faithful to God and His word when it comes to giving?

Giving is a topic often neglected in our pulpits. As preachers, we fear the accusation of preaching to fill our pockets. Pastors are commanded to take the oversight of a church “not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind”. Filthy lucre is a shameful personal gain. If we pastor for financial gain, any money we receive is shamefully gained. However when we neglect to address giving, we do a disservice the Lord and His people.

The Lord wants us to support good causes. He wants us to give to the poor and needy. He wants us to give to the maintenance of public worship. He wants us to give to the ministry. He wants us to give to mission work. When we fail to do so, we harm God's cause and ourselves.

The Lord wants us to give to those unable to help themselves. Consider Lev 19:9-10.

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.

The Lord commanded Israel not to gather

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PREACH THE DOCTRINES

Submitted by J. O. Howard

This is a portion of the sermon preached by L. S. Walker in Hattiesburg, Mississippi on May 12, 1975 and published in the Mississippi Baptist on July 15, 1975.

Jude said: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 3.

You Bible readers will readily recall Paul's charge to young Timothy: “I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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 Ti 4:1-4. A fable is a lie, or a story of one's own invention.

Doctrine simply defined is “that which is taught; the principles, belief, or dogma of any church, sect or party.” The doctrines most surely believed, practiced, and held among us are the doctrines found in the Holy Scriptures.

The doctrines most surely believed among us are the Doctrines held by New Testament churches in every century since the earthly ministry of our Lord. They are, therefore, Bible doctrines. These doctrines are referred to in the scriptures as “the apostles' doctrines.” The Apostles' doctrine was the doctrine of Christ. It is first termed “the doctrine of God.”

It is the emphatic intent of our message, not only to identify these doctrines, but more specifically to emphasize the importance of preaching them without compromise, fear, or apology. This we say because we can be absolutely certain that the doctrines of the Bible are those divinely inspired, inerrant and eternal

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with the heart. Both of these types of faith are described in the scriptures, but only one of these is associated with soul salvation. Let's consider the faith which stems from the mind and compare it with the faith which springs from the heart.

Faith which is of the mind is taught in the Bible. Take this verse as an example of this faith: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," Heb 11:3. This verse mentions a faith whereby a person believes the biblical record regarding the creation of the world. This faith is of the mind. The Word of God is read describing what has happened in the past and the faith of the mind receives this record as true. It is by this faith that a person believes there was a great flood that drowned the whole world; that God opened the Red Sea so that the nation of Israel could cross over on dry ground; and that a great fish swallowed and preserved Jonah until the third day. We know this faith is real but children of God also know that it takes more than a faith of the mind to become a child of God.

Faith which brings a person to a state of salvation is a faith that springs from the heart. This is the faith which was described earlier from Ephesians chapter 2. Works have NO part in this faith. Some try to side step this point as it is laid out in Ephesians chapter 2 but we are unable to ignore that fact that the works of man can have NO part in salvation. This point is made in Rom 4:3-5 when the salvation of Abraham is described and in Tit 3:5-7 where justification by grace that is void of works is presented. Likewise, notice how the following verse points to the heart as the source of this faith: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom 10:10. The faith which gains access to grace in order to be saved is faith which comes from the whole heart, Jer 29:13.

This brings us back to the faith that the Bible speaks of when we are told that it is dead without works. This faith is sometimes called "the faith of Christ", Gal 2:16, and other times it is referred to as "living faith", Gal 2:20. When the Lord established His Church, He entrusted it with a specific set of beliefs and

practices. This is the "faith and order" of sound Churches as referenced in such places as Col 2:5. Jude sought to write about the "common salvation" but he found it needful to write to exhort the Church to "earnestly contend for the faith." Here Jude clearly points at salvation which he wanted to address but found that he had to write about another kind of faith. This other faith is the one the Lord entrusted to His Church.

The scriptures help us see that the Lord gave His Church a commission which is full of action verbs. The Lord told the Church to *go*. He told it to *teach* (or make disciples). The Lord said for His Church to *baptize* those who were made disciples. Lastly, He instructed the Church to *teach* those who were brought into the Church the faith which was entrusted to the Church as Jude described it. All of these action verbs amount to works. These are specific works which the Lord specifically assigned to His Church. There should be no surprise to find that the faith of Christ which Jude said was "once delivered to the saints" is a dead faith if a Church fails to engage in them.

So what is being said about faith in this article? For one, it is being said that faith might be considered in terms of degrees.

The first degree of faith could be called historical faith. It is a faith that stems from the mind. It is needful and should be honored. Who could imagine that a lost person could get saved if he failed to first believe that God is real? Yet, a person can die and go to hell if that is all of the faith he has.

The second degree of faith might be called saving faith. It springs from the heart. This faith is void of works. It is how a person gains access to grace resulting in the salvation of the soul.

The third degree of faith could be called living faith or the faith of Christ. It is the faith that was once delivered to the saints when the Lord established and commissioned His Church. Without performing the works that God has specifically given to the Church, this faith is dead. Paul referred to these works in Eph 2:10 when he called them works that "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Only Churches can be involved in these works.

The Bible presents the subject of faith in easy to understand terms. These terms must simply be harmonized. By prayerful study, such harmony can be achieved.

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all the crops of their fields. They were to leave some for the support of the poor. And the Lord's reason for this command was "I am the Lord your God". It is the Lord that sends rain and gives fruitful seasons, Act 14:17. He gives life, breath, and all things, Act 17:25. They were to imitate God who had given them so much. The command to give is not exclusive to the Old Testament. Consider Eph 4:28.

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Every able-bodied church member should desire to share of our honest living with those who are in need. Paul led by example among the Ephesians. In his final address to the elders of this church, he reminded them of it. Consider Acts 20:33-35.

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

While a missionary in Asia, Paul earned his own living. He provided for himself and for others in need. In doing so, he personified the words of Christ, happier is the person who gives than the person who receives that gift. Paul also taught that churches (not just individuals) should give to support the poor. Consider 1 Co 16:1-4.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of 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. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Paul told the Corinthian church to take a collection among themselves for the support of the impoverished Christians of Judea. This collection was to be

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PREACH THE DOCTRINES

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principles of truth found therein. "Methods are many, principles are few; methods change, but principles never do."

It is time to preach such doctrines as the Trinity of the God-head—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the infallibility and plenary verbal inspiration of scriptures, etc.

It is time to raise our voices above the feeble and un-supported opinions of the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ. A frustrated and bewildered human race needs to hear the Biblical doctrine of the hereditary and total depravity of man in his natural state involving his fall in Adam.

The doctrines of Christ's blood atonement for fallen man; justification before God without any admixture of works or human merit; and the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer in Christ needs to be heard wherever the Word of God is preached. It is always an occasion of joy to hear the message of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ back to the right hand of the Father, making His triumph over sin and death.

It is time to preach the doctrine of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. In this day when the Holy Spirit is being maligned, and His work so mis-construed by the preachments of late-day sensationalists and rank heretics; this doctrine is especially important.

It is time to let all know who want to know, where we stand on the doctrine of the Church. Baptists have historically held that Christ Himself established a local visible church during His personal ministry on earth; and that He is therefore its Founder, Foundation, Head and Lawgiver or Commissioner. Any so-called church institution since the earthly ministry of our Lord is clandestine.

Our Lord set two ordinances in His church—water baptism (immersion) and the Lord's Supper. These are to symbolize the essence of the Gospel (1 Co 15:1-4)—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

What is more, it is time to preach the personality of Satan, as "the god of this world," and the "prince and power of the air." A sophisticated society led by pseudo-intellectuals needs to quit kidding themselves and know that Satan is a person and his power is real.

The separation of God's children from the beggarly elements of this present world system must be preached without

compromise. For all God's children there should be salvation, separation, and dedication.

Also, we must preach the separation of the Lord's churches from all so-called churches or church alliances which advocate, practice, or uphold heresies and other human innovations which are not in harmony with the Word of God—such as open communion, alien baptism, pulpit affiliation with heretical churches, modernism, liberalism, and all kindred evils.

It is time to sound forth our position in total rejection of the Universal Church fallacy, as well as all other late-day innovations. There is no such thing mentioned in the Bible as a universal visible or invisible church. Our Lord established a local tangible body of baptized believers. We also reject the idea of ordaining to the high office of the ministry persons not scripturally qualified.

It is time to teach the historic doctrines of the true Baptist faith. The great biblical doctrines, when rightly taught to people, form a strong restrictive barrier which protects the church from error without. They also form a clear set of guidelines for rightly dividing and understanding the Word of God, keeping pure the truths within.

Most people, by their very nature, seem inclined to extremes. God's people are no exception. Such extremes often create an imbalance in our teaching ministry. There should be, for example, a balance between doctrine and evangelism in the life of our church. There was a time when doctrines were emphasized to extremity at the expense of needed evangelism. Now the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. Evangelism is being stressed at the expense of doctrinal truths. A people with diluted doctrinal strength do not know what they stand for, much less why!

Yes, it is time to teach and preach the doctrines most surely believed among us. "Beware," Jesus said, "of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Mat 7:15. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Mat 15:9.

A reflection by the Apostle Peter says: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among

the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' The saddest part of it is expressed in the next verse: "And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." 2 Pe 1:20-2:3.

"Take heed," warned the great apostle, "unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing so thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." 1 Ti 4:16. Young preachers, and old ones for that matter, listen carefully!

Let us hear once again Paul's grave charge to young Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. PREACH THE WORD; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come [and it is here] when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lust 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 Ti 4:1-4. These passages very clearly explain why we have the legion of false religions and the denominational babel we have in the world today.

In a word of warning to the Ephesians, he says: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Eph 4:14.

In the light of our historical heritage, it is time to preach the doctrines most surely believed among us. Our forbearers did not fail to preach the doctrines. We will either continue to preach and uphold our historic biblical doctrines, as did others before us, or else we will lose our identity as a peculiar and separate people. We cannot be like everyone else and at the same time be true to the scriptures. Israel's downfall was in their desire to be like others.

The perversions of the scripture text by a rash of so-called new and better translations, versions, etc. of the Bible threaten to give to the world a Bible without truth or inspiration; a church without a divine message; and a plan of salvation without the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It is time to preach the doctrines most surely believed among us.

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personally delivered by a messenger of the church to those in need. This practice should be emulated by means of charity collections and needy funds.

The Lord wants us to give in support of public worship. Consider Exo 35:4-5, 21.

And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord...And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

On this occasion, Moses was preparing to build the tabernacle for public worship in Israel. The materials for the tabernacle were donated by the people. This was not by suggestion. It was "the thing which the Lord commanded." The Lord commands His people to give to the support of His public worship.

Consider David—a man after God's heart—and his desire to give to God's cause, and the blessings of the Lord that followed. Consider 2 Sa 7:1-2.

And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

God had established the throne of David. God had blessed him with peace in the land. God had given David riches such that he was living in a house of cedar. David looked around and considered what God had given him richly to enjoy. Then he considered that the house of God, the tabernacle, was a tent. David realized that God's public house of worship was of greater importance than his own house. And he desired to build God a better house of worship. While he was not permitted to do so—because he had been a man of war—God was pleased with the thought. And because of that, God made promise to David to build him a sure house. In other words, God would establish the throne of David's posterity and would use them to bring

about the birth of the King—the Lord of Glory. The Lord desires for His people to financially support His house of worship.

The Lord wants us to give in support of the ministry. While Paul supported himself as a tentmaker, he advocated for the support of ministers. Consider 1 Ti 1:17-18.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

Paul says that they who preach the word and teach doctrine should receive support. He then quotes the Lord and says "the labourer is worthy of his reward." Christ spoke these words when He sent the apostles (Mat 10:10) and the seventy (Luke 10:7) to preach among the cities of Israel.

The Lord wants us to give in support of mission work. Paul addressed this matter in a letter to the Corinthians among whom he had been a missionary. Consider 1 Co 9:6-14.

Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Paul used several forceful arguments in this passage. He asked if a soldier on a foreign field supports himself. The answer

is no. He is supported by those that send him. He quoted the law saying that the ox that treads the corn eats the same. He then interpreted the law saying that this law was given for the minister's sake. He should be supported in the field in which he works. He used the example of the Levites in the Old Testament. They worked in the house of God. They kept it up. They offered the sacrifices of the people. And they were supported by those sacrifices and offerings. Paul concluded that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. In other words, we should support any brother and his family who forsakes his livelihood and enters the mission field.

We need to support the Lord's cause. We might think we don't have enough to give. Let us remember the poor widow woman who cast two small coins into the temple's treasury, Mar 12:42. The Lord said she gave more than those that gave great sums of money. They gave from among their wealth. She gave though she had very little. The Lord's praise of her abides with us today. The Lord is not looking at the amount we give. He is looking at the condition of our heart when we give.

Consider again our lesson from Luke 16:11. If we are unfaithful in material possessions, will God commit to us true spiritual riches? The answer is obviously no. When we fail to give the Lord material things, we rob ourselves of the spiritual blessings that God desires to provide for our churches. Consider Mal 3:8-10.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, Even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be meat in mine house, And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, And pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

I receive far more financial support than I deserve, both as a pastor and in this work. I don't desire a dime more. I don't write these things out of need or greed. I write them because our obedience to God in material things is important to God, which includes giving. *I desire fruit that may abound to your account, Phi 4:17.* If we give, God will bless us with true riches. Let us support God's cause.

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