



## The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)  
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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### **A Biblical Basis For Church Standards**

In this subject, we would like to again look at the Scriptures. What I say does not amount to much, but what God says does because it comes from God. The wording of the subject, "A Biblical Basis for Church Standards," suggests that there is a Biblical basis and we want to look at it from that perspective. What do we mean by Church standards? A very simple definition is that we mean a written (at

least generally written) standard of practice that unites us in our applications to the Scriptures. It is our application of Biblical standards and Biblical truth today. It is based upon the concept that Biblical obedience takes definite form. It is more than a mere attitude. It takes definite form.

Sometimes people think that they can have the right attitude and somehow that is good

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enough. However, in the Sermon on the Mount, after Jesus gave some very practical teaching (very definite things that we need to apply to our lives) He said, “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24). Jesus then continued, “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not.” That word “doeth,” is a very powerful word.

It suggests making them a part of our life. It suggests applying them. It suggests application.

Believing in the Scripture is always associated with an outward expression of obedience — doing. There are times in the Scripture when God tested that, for example with Abraham. Was it not enough that God knew what Abraham would do in relation to his son? God put him to the test and saw what he did. God saw that it was coming from a

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righteous man.

I would like to in this subject first of all look at I) *The Biblical basis*. I will not attempt to be exhaustive in our use of Scripture. I will refer to a number of Scriptures. We will however, confine our thoughts to several Scriptures that I would like to look at a bit more thoroughly. Matthew 16:16–19 is in response to Jesus’ question to the disciples, “But whom say ye that I am?” (verse 15) “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (19) And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The Church, as I understand this passage, is here given a judicial (not legislative) authority in relation to truth. I would like to give some reasons why I think this Scripture teaches this, but

first of all, judicial authority does not deal with establishing truth. It only deals with interpreting and applying truth. Legislative bodies make those laws in our nation, but the courts of law then attempt to decide how those laws apply. Likewise, the Church does not have the authority to establish truth, only to apply truth, which is a responsibility that God lays upon every believer. We cannot get away from it. Every attempt to follow the Scripture is an attempt to apply the Bible to our lives, to our age, to our time, and to our situations. Therefore, this is referring here to judicial rather than legislative application of the truth.

In order to understand this passage, we need to look at verse 16 as the key verse of this passage. The question is oftentimes raised as to what Jesus meant in verse 18, “That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” We need to look at verse 16 as the key verse. The declaration about the messiahship — of who Jesus was in verse 16 is at the foundation of all truth. There are a lot of Scriptures which we could use to support this — that right thinking and belief about Jesus Christ undergirds all truth. If we do not believe rightly about Jesus, everything else will be wrong. I

will give one supporting verse to add to that. (We could turn to many). 1 Timothy 3:15b, 16 speaks of the Church as, “the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” The essence of truth is what surrounds Jesus Christ. That key verse in Matthew 16 helps us to understand the fact that Jesus is dealing with truth. There are two things in focus in this passage as I would understand and that is truth and the Church, and the Church’s relationship to truth.

Why does Jesus say, “That thou art Peter, and upon this rock.” Peter, I think, sees himself as a building stone in the temple of God. In fact, Peter himself explains that he himself is not the rock in 1 Peter 2:6 when he speaks about Jesus Christ being the “chief corner stone.” Ephesians 2:20 also speaks about that. It says that Jesus is the corner stone and the apostles and prophets are the foundation stones of the building. Peter speaks about the “stone of stumbling” (1 Peter 2:8), rejected by the builders but “made the head of the corner” (1 Peter 2:7), refer-

ring to Jesus Christ, not himself. That gives perspective to it and makes it clear.

Also, another thing that would indicate that the Church is in focus is the similarity of language in Matthew 16:19 to what is given in Matthew 18:17, 18. It is very similar language and in Matthew 18 it more clearly focuses on the Church. Looking at it in that light, we can understand that the focus in verse 19 is the Church. Jesus says, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:19). What is Jesus referring to by that? Keys generally signify authority and suggest responsibility. The giving of those keys to those here signifies giving some authority and responsibility to the Church.

*God gives the Church responsibility in relation to truth in each generation.* The Church has a responsibility to define applications of truth. We will look at a Scripture and a Biblical example which illustrates the truth here very beautifully. Acts 15 is an example of this principle in action later on. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” There are some applications of truth, which when the believers unite them-

selves around those applications there is an obligation that all have which is equal to the truth.

Another basic Scripture on this subject is familiar. Hebrews 13:7, 17 builds upon Matthew 16. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. . . . Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” Verse 17 refers to the same group as in verse 7. The Church is given responsibility to rule. Is it or is it not? I think that is clear. “Remember them which have the rule over you.” This is Scripture. Therefore, the Church is given responsibility by God to rule. It is not a false or a usurped authority. It is not an authority without foundation. It is given by God — the God of all authority. That authority, according to this Scripture, is to be exercised in the interests of saving souls. That places a restriction and a limit on Church authority. It is to be exercised in relation to saving souls to the eternal welfare of souls.

In order for authority to be exercised safely, there needs to

be a proper basis for authority. For example in the State, the authority of a law code based on God’s moral law code always brings with it restraints to authority that make the exercise of authority safe. In the Church, the basis is New Testament truth. It goes back to Foundational truth as we referred to it in Matthew 16. *The Church is given responsibility and authority in the interest of souls.*

Another basic Scripture that we would like to look at in relation to this subject is 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12. Paul summarized the teaching of the forepart of this chapter where individuals believed not the truth. He contrasts that to the believers at Thessalonica who did believe the truth. Notice verse 13. Paul was speaking about those who believed not the truth and received “strong delusion,” and actually believed a lie. He thanks the Lord for those who believed in verse 13 and says in verse 14, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then, Paul gives them some directives to help them continue standing and to continue having a right attitude toward the truth. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by

word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (verses 15–17).

Another one is 2 Thessalonians 3:6, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” The basis here in verse 6 here for exercising authority was the tradition received of Paul. Tradition in verse 6, as well as in verse 15, refers to practices as opposed to principles. It refers to applications of established truth. There were applications, evidently, that were established by apostolic authority and these traditions mean, “accepted, standing practices,” that were promoted and taught by the apostle Paul. He calls them to be established in every good word and work (2 Thessalonians 2:17). There are a number of other Scriptures that we will look at where we have reference to Scripture that referred to truth and application.

Word and work — a basic body of truth that we believe and

accept and is outworking. That is what is in focus here in verse 15. *First two applications.* God gave the apostles special apostolic authority, and special prerogative in establishing truth, in writing the Scripture and laying down and being the foundation stones of the Church. The apostolic office was not continued because of the unique qualifications required for it. One was that they had been with the Lord, and had seen Him. However, the bishop’s office was an overseer work that was continued, and is continued in the bishop’s office today. This is where the authority for keeping the church what it ought to be finally rests.

I would like to go to another Scripture which is sometimes called the golden text of unity in the Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” How is that kind of oneness or unity to be realized? I think that there are a few suggestions here. This unity is referring to more than being united on the broad definitions of truth. Paul says in the latter part of this verse that we are to be,

“joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” The word judgment carries the thought of having the same understanding of its practical application. This brings us back to the judicial authority. The court passes a judgment on a law. What does it mean and how is it applied?

They were to be joined in the “same mind and in the same judgment.” It is like in Philippians 3:16, “Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” This refers to doctrinal unity and a practical unity in application. We have a key as to how that perfect joining is realized in Romans 15:5, 6 where Paul says, “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: (6) That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” How were they to do that? Verse 2 gives us a clue to that, “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” Also Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

How are we to think the same? How are we to have the same judgment? How are we to have the kind of unity as we had in 1 Corinthians 1:10? It comes by a

surrender of our will. The biggest problem to unity and thinking alike is our own individualistic self life. That is the problem to oneness. Therefore, the call is to lay that down and submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God, and that leads us together. A defined basis for that unity enables us to exercise that submission. That is another aspect of church standards. It is a defined working plan for moving together.

I would like to move now to my second point and look at II) *the Biblical pattern*. I would like to look at some of these Scriptures as I think we have them applied in Acts 15, which show us the application of the New Testament Scripture, and the application of the epistles. The book of Acts is a window into the New Testament Church. This particular Scripture is a window into church life where issues needed to be clarified. In the book of Acts, the history of the Early Church is given which gives a sense of direction in church life today. Sometimes we hesitate on that, and I have heard it said already, “Acts is not a pattern for the New Testament Church.” I do not think we ought to make statements like that because I think that there are a lot of applications to New Testament

truth very simply illustrated in the book of Acts. There are also some transitory aspects of Christian experience which are also put into perspective in the epistles that we find in the book of Acts. However, I think it is right that we go to Acts and see the pattern of ordination in chapter 1 and to see the way that they worked with issues in chapter 15. There are patterns there that we ought to see, and the answer.

They had a disagreement. I will not read very many verses here, but there was a disagreement in verse 2. “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them.” Some were attempting to bring the New Testament believers under the Old Testament yoke and bondage to the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas said, “No, that is not what the good news of the New Testament is all about. That is what we are teaching and preaching. You cannot do that.” How were they to decide? They said, “Yes,” and there was dissension and disagreement. They determined in verse 2 that they should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question, and they did that. Verse 5 says, “certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed,” gave their view and they came to the

apostles in verse 6 to consider it and there was much disputing in verse 7. There was a disagreement here in focus.

The answer to this disagreement was for the Church, under the leadership of the apostles, to speak authoritatively on some necessary things. “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Verse 28). These necessary things that were arrived at are referred to in verse 20 and they are, 1) “that they abstain from pollutions of idols,” 2) “from fornication, 3) “from things strangled,” and 4) “from blood.” Those were the necessary things that were arrived at by the Church here.

I would like to point out that these things were applications of Bible truths. The Church took her responsibility to clarify applications. When it was left to everyone’s idea, you have what happened in verse 2 — “no small dissension.” That will always result when it is left to anybody’s idea, neither is it safe. There are a number of reasons for that which I would like to give. The applications formally adopted by any church should only be the necessary things. That is one point I would like to make.

The church is responsible for



clarifying applications based on truth, but that clarification should stop with the necessary things. It is possible to go too far. We acknowledge that. That is something we must see. The question is raised sometimes, “How do you know what keeps a church from going too far?” I would say that the only safeguard, really, is a spiritual church that is sensitive to the Holy Ghost. That is exactly what we see here in this passage. “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” (Acts 15:28). It is a church that is concerned about truth. It is a church that is concerned not about establishing its own authority, but by a church that is interested in grounding people in the truth. That must be our concern, and as it is, then that church is a church which God has given authority in relation to this.

I would like to look at *a few guidelines that we can discover from this passage for determining what the necessary things are*. These four areas that they spoke on give us four different areas of application that I think the church needs to speak on in every age. 1) The first one was an application that was designed to protect them from the pollutions of their age — not eating things offered to idols. It is significant that the apostle Paul said

later that eating meats offered to idols is really nothing because what are idols. What does an idol do to meat that was offered to it [1 Corinthians 8:4]. However, the danger that lay in that, by doing it, was that it accommodated the pollutions of the time, which were associated with idolatry, the grossest forms of immorality, and all kinds of sin. Eating meat offered to idols accommodated that system. A matter that in itself was neutral was not neutral because of all that was associated with it.

Our applications — the applications of a spiritual, Scriptural church need to reflect the spirit and the thrust of the Scriptures in protecting us from dangerous practices and pollutions of the age which could well lead us back into sin. They may be some things that in themselves might be neutral, but because of where they have a tendency to lead us, they are no longer neutral. What might be some things like that? We could say it includes things like the radio and television that reflect the pollutions of the age. However, there are those like a man who told me recently that they got rid of their television because of what it was doing to the family, but he missed it. Therefore, he decided to get a television for himself and he said,

“I only will look at the news and the weather and a few things that I feel gives me information that I need,” but I know that it is not good for the children.” Well, he had that for a while and he told me later that he had to get rid of it because he discovered that even for himself it was leading him to right into a stream of corruption, that he could not handle.

People say sometimes, “There are some good things on the television. There are some good radio programs.” We do not deny that there are some things on there that would not be spiritually undoing, but look at the package. A position on this is of tremendous help in saving, and protecting us from the pollutions of our age. If you question that simply look at the way in which fads no longer sweep communities; they sweep nations and the world, the whole nation, and nations because of the influence of television. It perpetuates evil in a tremendous way. That would be one example.

Another example, another application which we make that saves us from that is that some of us have a plain coat on. We talk about the plain coat. What is the purpose and the value of the plain coat? One of the reasons for the plain coat is that it is a testimony against the necktie. The lapel

coat accommodates the lapel tie. It is part of that. Therefore, it is a testimony against fashionable attire in men’s wear. We could go on and on. There are many illustrations. We sit separately in our worship services. We have that as a practice. We believe mixed seating helps to promote, and accommodates a lower morality very often, and a breakdown of reserve that we want to protect. There are many things like this that we could say protect us from the pollutions of the age. It takes wisdom to work and to evaluate as we face issues in the world today.

2) *Another necessary thing will also reflect obedience to God’s principles for their race established by God.* I am looking now at blood — the eating of blood. (I am looking at the last one). We went from the first one here in verse 20 to the last one. When was not eating blood part of the Mosaic law actually? It was established by God in Genesis 9:4. It was given to the race actually. It was built into the Mosaic law, but was one of those principles for the race. It is a little bit like the Lord’s day observance. The Lord’s day principle is involved here. That was established by God at Creation. There are certain applications to that principle that we apply in our

own time. We are not under the Old Testament sabbath laws. No, but the principle is a rest day for rest, worship, and serving the Lord. That principle was established at Creation. Therefore, we have some standards related to Lord's day observance. There were some things related to marriage, which was also something given by God for the whole race.

Then, the necessary things will also reflect the help of Old Testament details on some things that let us in on God's attitude toward certain things. Things strangled was an Old Testament application to the command by God not to eat blood. Why should we not eat things strangled? It is because the blood was in it. That is why. Therefore, it was an application to the Old Testament command, or the command by God after the flood not to eat blood. There are some things that we receive some direction on. I might give one. In Deuteronomy 22:5 God says, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." That is a part of the Old Testament law, and we do not feel that simply because that is part of the law it was done away with in the New Testament.

It does however, let us in on an application that God Himself made to a principle. That gives us a sense of direction today. There are a number of things like that.

3) Then also, the necessary things must reflect the direct teaching of the Scriptures. Fornication is mentioned here. It is a moral principle that is involved. We need to take a strong stand on those direct applications from the Word. Modesty would be an example of that. However, what is modest? By moving together in a common application, it helps bring us close and helps us toward the application of this principle. Simply making our dresses a certain way does not guarantee modesty. However, when there is a conviction for modesty, the approach that we take helps us to that end and there would be other applications here as well.

I would like to move onto the present challenge today. I think it is clear from these Scriptures and various things that to have a unified church, there needs to be a common Scriptural interpretation of New Testament truth. "We are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). The idea of that, as well as the many Scriptures of submitting one to another, is that we see the bless-

ing and the benefit of taking a group approach, rather than an individual approach to applying these principles of Scripture. These Scriptures would certainly support that. I would like to give a few things now as to what it will do for us.

*One thing that it will do for us is that it helps to protect us against "extremism."* A balanced application of truth is always in the best interests of truth. Extreme application will finally break down on the application to truth. What might be an extreme application? One of the things that we see from Acts 15 was that the applications that were given did reflect the times in which they were living. We do not see it as necessary to go back to dress as in the Biblical times, but we see it as rather making applications that fit to the times in which we are living. One individual I knew, felt convicted about wearing sandals instead of regular shoes because it reflects more what the practice was in Bible times. That does not build truth. It would be what we say is an extreme application. Individual applications have more of a tendency to do that.

*Another thing that it does to protect us is that it establishes a common standard of practice and guidelines which help me to*

*understand something about myself.* How does that happen? It is interesting how when we begin to have spiritual struggles, we usually soon begin to chafe under the discipline of the church. Some people say, "You can keep that thing to the 'T' and not be a bit spiritual." I agree. It also significant and interesting that so soon, when individuals have spiritual struggles, keeping Scriptural applications in place becomes a burden. Why is that? The closer that our applications are to the truths and principles of Scripture, the more it will be that way. Truth becomes a burden to the person who does not love it. It always is that way and it helps us to wake us up. We may say, "Why does the Holy Spirit not do it?" He does that, but sometimes God brings into an individual's experience some things that shake and wake them up. We all sometimes need that kind of thing, and God does that. Certainly, many times that happens as a result of the burden that church standards become to us.

For the person that loves the truth, it does not become a burden. It becomes something we love to do. It becomes something joyful. It is not bondage. It becomes a way that leads me into the freedom of the Spirit to express truth and live it with my

brethren.

*Another benefit that it does is that it establishes the basis and framework for sound administrative practices in the church.* Our leaders are given the responsibility of keeping the church and disciplining the erring. Many Scriptures confirm this. That is another subject which runs through the New Testament Scriptures very clearly. The discipline, by the body's consent, certainly provides a basis. Our leaders, when they move and work with an individual because of refusing to practice what is commonly accepted among us, they are doing that by the body's consent, because the church as a whole has decided on this. There is a unified approach that becomes a basis for sound administration.

*Church standards also protect a proper attitude toward sin.* There is a line beyond which if we go, we violate the Word of God when it comes to application. An example is modesty. What is modesty is everyone's guess. Since we are subject to change and are changeable, for some people those lines keep moving. It is simply very fluid. I have had people that argued that point already whom I have talked to. Sometimes those individuals who are pressing that point are

individuals that have had (you might say) a frame of reference that gives them some sense of direction in this. Maybe they can hold that. However, for many of us, I think the facts are that we become very fluid in our understanding of where that line ought to be.

Church standards help to establish a line. It help us to understand that we cannot merely have any application and meet the standard of Scripture. It is just not that way. It is simply a fact, and that is the way it is.

Church standards develop stable personal convictions. It helps us to keep in place a consciousness that there are some principles of the Scripture that must be applied. The conviction that this must be applied is always with us because of our agreed upon approach.

*This also conditions us to a disciplined personal life.* That is another good important value. If we will stay close to the Lord, there are certain disciplines that we must keep in place in our own life. For example, can a person stay close to the Lord and be very haphazard with reading the Bible? We would say, "no." We need to expose ourselves daily to the Scripture, if we will grow spiritually. It needs to be a priority to us, but to do that takes

some discipline. Discipline imposed upon our own flesh in one area helps us to deal with that old flesh in another area. That is the way it works. The discipline of church regulation imposes a discipline upon our flesh which can help us to keep some other disciplines in place. Many testimonies could be given to that effect.

*Another value is that it disciplines us or conditions us for an unknown future.* We do not know what God has for us as a people of God in the future. One looks at the conditions in society and the seemingly increasing gap between what society thinks is acceptable — the fact that there are situational ethics — what seems right to an individual is nearly the common way of arriving, supposedly, at right and wrong today — and over here we have the truth of God’s Word. Sometime back I was speaking to a minister in our area of a fairly large church in our community which would be a fairly fundamental church by worldly church standards. There was a sister in our congregation who had been in a divorce situation and she came out of that and her husband was relating to this other church. He called me to enlist my help in getting them back together again. I told him that I really cannot

help him do that. “I really feel for the situation. My heart is torn as I think about the struggles and difficulties. However, we have some clear teaching of the Scripture. We are obligated to it, no matter how I feel.” Then he said, “You gotta face reality. Reality is that there are a lot of divorced and remarried people, and in the church today (I mean the fundamentalist church) the divorce rate is the same as in the world. That is reality. I suppose that you would have to admit that within your own church that is also true.” I said, “No, we try to stay by the Scripture.” After some discussion I said, “Now, don’t you think (he was an older man) maybe that if we had been discussing this fifty years ago that we might agree?” He agreed, “Yeah, maybe, I would have agreed with you fifty years ago, but times have changed.” Then I said, “The Bible did not change.”

As we think of how times have changed and how that gap is widening in understanding, we can expect to see less room given for living out the principles of the Scripture. There is always room for people who claim to believe but do not live it. It is a little bit like Balthazar Hubmaier an “Anabaptist leader,” who taught believers baptism but did not

believe in nonresistance. His followers used the sword in an attempt to protect themselves. Eventually Balthazar Hubmaier was captured and in prison he agreed that he would stand still on his beliefs (meaning that he would no longer promote them). He would still believe them but he would no longer promote them. He was still put to death, but his followers picked that thing up. They decided that they would stand still. That ended persecution for them quite quickly because they were not doing anything. They were fitting in. They were not standing for anything anymore. They were believing, but they were not applying.

In the area of applications is where the problems will come, if our society would become more intolerant. Coming under the discipline of a regulated church life imposes upon us a discipline that will help us even in the event that we would face persecutions and hardships in that way.

*There are precedents in Scripture.* I will give one application of one recent one. During World War II, there had been a lot of studies made of the Mennonite and Amish young men who went into the army in World War II, took a Conscientious Objector status,

went into Civilian Public Service, or otherwise. The scale is exactly in relation to the rigidity of church standards. Those who held to standards, very few of their young men went into the army and gave in when under that challenge. On the other side there were those Mennonites who had gone full circle and were simply another worldly church. Most of them in those situations went into the army. Many of those did not intend to, but gave in under pressure and questioning. I think that they had scarcely an imposition into their life before and they could not handle this one. Church standards and discipline condition us for an unknown future by hardening us as “as . . . good soldier(s) of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). We come under discipline required for facing the battle and the hardships of battle as the people of God.

I would like to, in conclusion, challenge us to together have the conviction 1) to make Biblical truth practical, and 2) to do it with the same mind and the same judgment — to flow together with the people with whom we move. Sometimes people say, “Well, I am at one with the overall general Church of Christ today.” However, we need to relate to the people of God in the

congregation where we find ourselves. That is where bone meets flesh. That is where we rub shoulders with other people who are also wanting to go in that direction and it is to those people, not the scarcely definable “universal Church,” but the congregation that we relate to. That is one thing it helps us to do. A church

discipline helps us as that kind of visible church to move together in the same mind and in the same judgment and present a unified witness. It also helps us to remain the kind of challenge to each other that we need to be to keep the faith in this time. May the Lord help us to that end.

### Scripture References

<b>Genesis</b>		<b>Romans</b>	2:13, 14	5	
9:4	10	15:5, 6	7	2:15–17	6
<b>Deuteronomy</b>		<b>1 Corinthians</b>		<b>1 Timothy</b>	
22:5	11	1:10	6	3:15b, 16	4
<b>Matthew</b>		3:9	11	<b>2 Timothy</b>	
7:24	2	8:4	9	2:3	15
16:16–19	3	<b>Ephesians</b>		<b>Hebrews</b>	
16:19	4	2:20	4	13:7, 17	5
18:17, 18	4	5:21	7	<b>1 Peter</b>	
<b>Acts</b>		<b>Philippians</b>		2:6	4
15:5	5	3:16	7	2:7	4
15:28	8	<b>2 Thessalonians</b>		2:8	4
15:20	8	2:11, 12	5		

### From the Previous Issue:

#### Why Churches Drift

From a message by Harlan W. Martin

Sunday, July 03, 1983

Valley View Mennonite Church



**Book Reprint** (Continued)  
**One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study**

LESSON 4.

**The Calling of Disciples.**

1.

*Name:* Simon called Peter

*When First Called:* Shortly after the beginning of our Saviour's ministry.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Was brought to Jesus by Andrew his brother.

*References:* John 1:41, 42

*Former Occupation:* Fisherman

*Distinguishing Characteristics:* Boldness. Eloquence. Imprudence.

*Remarks:* The leading apostle to the Jew. The recognized spokesman. The first apostle to baptize a Gentile. Author of two epistles.

2.

*Name:* Andrew

*When First Called:* Shortly after the beginning of our Saviour's ministry.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Was attracted to Jesus by the testimony of John the Baptist.

*References:* John 1:35–40

*Former Occupation:* Fisherman

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* Has the honor of being the first of Christ's disciples. Brought people one by one to Christ.

3.

*Name:* James (The Greater)

*When First Called:* Shortly after the beginning of our Saviour's ministry.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Was with his father in the ship mending nets when first called.

*References:* Matthew 4:21, 22

*Former Occupation:* Fisherman

*Distinguishing Characteristics:* Impetuous emotion.

*Remarks:* The first martyr among the apostles for faith in Jesus. The sons of Zebedee were surnamed Boanerges, or "sons of thunder."

4.

*Name:* John

*When First Called:* Shortly after the beginning of our Saviour's ministry.  
*Manner of Their Calling:* Was with his father in the ship mending nets when first called.

*References:* Matthew 4:21, 22

*Former Occupation:* Fisherman

*Distinguishing Characteristics:* Impetuous emotion. Loving disposition.

*Remarks:* The disciple whom Jesus loved. Author of the Book of John, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation. A son of Zebedee.

5.

*Name:* Philip

*When First Called:* The day after the calling of Peter and Andrew.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Jesus found him in Galilee and commanded "Follow me."

*References:* John 1:43, 44

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* The first to receive the significant call, "Follow me."

6.

*Name:* Bartholomew

*When First Called:* The day after the calling of Peter and Andrew.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Was brought to Jesus by Philip. (See remarks).

*References:* John 1:43, 44

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* It is the general opinion of Bible students that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person.

7.

*Name:* Thomas

*When First Called:*

*Manner of Their Calling:*

*References:*

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:* Prudence.

*Remarks:* A man like Thomas was needed to even up the fiery zeal of some of the other apostles. Also called "Didymus," (twin).

8.

*Name:* Matthew

*When First Called:* Near the close of the first year of our Lord's ministry.

*Manner of Their Calling:* Was sitting at receipt of custom when he heard the call.

*References:* Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27

*Former Occupation:* Tax-gatherer

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* Called "Levi" by Mark and Luke. Author of the Book of Matthew.

9.

*Name:* James (The Lesser)

*When First Called:*

*Manner of Their Calling:*

*References:* Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15

*Former Occupation:* Said to have been a priest.

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* Son of Alphaeus.

10.

*Name:* Simon (the Canaanite)

*When First Called:*

*Manner of Their Calling:*

*References:*

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* Called "Zealotes."

11.

*Name:* Judas

*When First Called:*

*Manner of Their Calling:*

*References:* Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:*

*Remarks:* Also called Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus

Name: Judas Iscariot

*When First Called:*

*Manner of Their Calling:*

*References:*

*Former Occupation:*

*Distinguishing Characteristics:* Covetousness. Revengefulness.

*Remarks:* We know only three things about Judas: he was an apostle, a treasurer, and a traitor. Iscariot means “from Kriot,” a town in Judea.

NOTE: — 1. All the disciples were Galileans with the possible exception of Judas Iscariot.

2. The promptness with which the disciples responded to our Saviour’s “Follow me,” is worthy of our imitation.

1. Which one of the disciples made the greatest sacrifice?
2. Give probable reason why Jesus was especially intimate with John.
3. Why was Peter’s name changed to Cephas?
4. Did the disciples follow any secular occupation after they were called by Jesus to follow Him?
5. What was the nationality of the disciples?

## **Children’s Book Reprint**

**CHARLOTTE.**

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CHARLOTTE was a young Portugese. She lived in the island of Madeira — that beautiful island, whose hills are crowned with grapes, and whose air is so soft and balmy that invalids often flock there in quest of health. Charlotte’s own father was dead, but her mother was still alive. Besides Nicola, a brother six years older than herself, whom she tenderly loved,

there were other brothers and sisters who shared her affection. Charlotte was a sweet and amiable girl; she was devout, and tried to learn the will of God. As her family were all Roman Catholics, she confessed her sins to the confessor, prayed to the Virgin Mary, and hoped she should get to heaven if she paid the priest well for the pardon of her sins.

A gentleman from Scotland, Dr. Kalley, came to live in Madeira. He was a good and noble man. He was a Bible Christian also; not a Christian without the Bible, as many a poor Catholic thinks he himself is. It was not long before he saw, in his walks among the people, how ignorant they were of true religion their minds were blinded and their consciences burdened by ceremonies and observances which not only did no good, but which did much harm, by shutting out a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Kalley sighed and prayed over the subject for some time, until he thought he would open some small schools in his neighborhood, just to teach the children who were growing up, how to read: nobody could object to that, he was sure. The poor islanders were much pleased; they were very glad to be taught. As soon as they could read pretty well, the doctor gave the little ones some good and pretty books; then he distributed a box of Testaments which he had received from Scotland. Soon he gave a Bible to one and sent a Bible to another, which were read with the greatest interest. The Bible was a new book to them, yes, quite new, for the Romanists did not think it was

safe to allow the people to read it. Now that they did get it, they were very glad indeed; they kept knocking and knocking at the doctor's door: "Please give me a Bible," "Please give me a Bible." One day Dr. Kalley met Nicola, Charlotte's brother, and into his hands he put the precious book. Nicola went home: "See," said he, "I have got one of that good Scotchman's Bibles; let us all read it, and see what it contains."

In the evening, the family flocked round the young man, and he read to them. I do not know where he began to read; but we can easily see how much interested they must have become, because we, who have always had the Bible, never get tired of it: the story of Moses and David is just as delightful to us today as it ever was. Evening after evening Nicola continued to read. How eagerly they listened; how thoughtful it made them. When they came to anything which perplexed them, I dare say Nicola used to go to Dr. Kalley and beg him to explain which the doctor was delighted to do.

But nobody listened more attentively than Charlotte. Her eyes are fixed on Nicola; she will not lose a word. All along, Charlotte had thought her sins were pardoned. The priest told her so; she had heard him say,

“Daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee.” As her brother read on, she found out that the priest had used language that he had no right to; that though her sins were *paid for*, they were not pardoned. She saw that she was a sinner, and nothing that the priest could do would give her comfort. Then she heard the words, “Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). It was Jesus’ voice. She found there was no other high priest but Jesus, no other mediator between her and her God but Jesus; there was nothing that could wash away her sins but the blood of Jesus. To Charlotte’s troubled conscience these truths were more precious than gold and sweeter than honey. She forsook the confessor and the confessional, and gave herself up to seeking God through Jesus Christ. The priest was very angry, and threatened to punish her; but no matter, God was on her side, and she came out a clear Bible-Christian. So did her mother, so did Nicola, and so did several others of that little household. Nicola soon opened one of the doctor’s schools in his mother’s house, and Charlotte helped him. These labors of love proved a delightful employment to this brother and sister; they were never so happy

in their lives.

Meanwhile a dreadful storm was brewing: black clouds gathered over the hills, and the thunder muttered in the distance. Like Charlotte’s family, many others had become “Bible readers,” and upon these the storm soon burst — it was the dreadful storm of persecution. The priests of the Romish church would bear it no longer; they hated the Bible and the Bible-readers, and they were determined to be revenged. Madeira was altogether in the hands of Romanists; so they could do as they pleased. They raged like hungry wolves. One day, they sent soldiers to Charlotte’s house, who broke rudely into it, seized her mother and all the family who were at home, bound them with chains and drove them to prison. When the poor women did not go fast enough, they pricked them with iron pointed ox-goats, such as people use to drive cattle with, while a rabble of wicked boys and men scoffed and spoke cruelly to them as they passed along. They were driven to prison, and fastened up. Here they were denied all comforts; the prison was very gloomy, but they did not mind it; God comforted them, and made them so happy that they sung hymns of joy.

This made the priests terribly

angry, and they said, "You shall not sing — you shall not pray; give up your errors, and come back to us." Their Bibles had all been seized and burned in a bonfire; but sometimes their friends contrived to send them a leaf of the Bible or an epistle in some food — perhaps hid in a loaf of bread, or covered up with a layer of grapes. Here Charlotte's family were confined two whole years, until they were let out — not to go home again, but to be banished into unknown lands; to have their all taken from them,

and to be put on board ships, poor and destitute, and sent away, never to come back to the island again. "Become Catholics, and you may stay," said the priests; "but if you continue Bible-readers, you shall go."

They said, "We will go; the Lord will take care of us." These poor exiles, hundreds in number, first were carried to Trinidad, but have now found their way to our own land, and are happily settled on the prairies of the West.

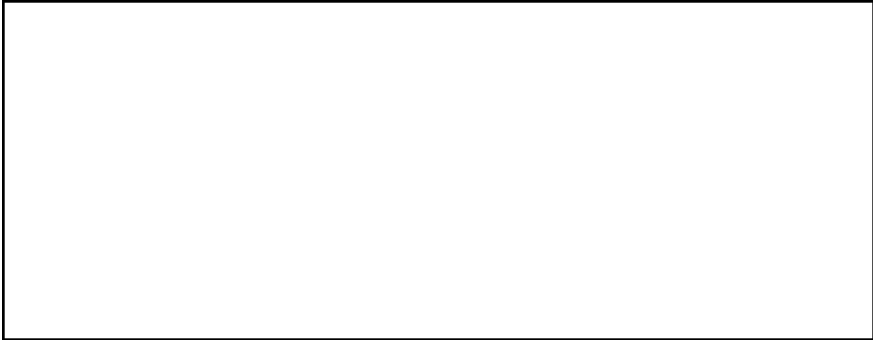
H. C. K.

## FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

**26. Obedience to God is essential, both to salvation and to acceptable Christian living.**

It is the promise of God: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 7:23). Christ not only taught His disciples obedience, but He expressly said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). Again let us quote from "the disciple whom Jesus loved:" "If any man say, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). God's commands to obey are not autocratic. All the instructions that come from Him are con-

ceived in the mind of the Infinite and are therefore perfect in wisdom. To disobey invites disaster and failure as a Christian — to say nothing of the fact that there is a terrible destiny in store for them "that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). God's plan of salvation, and of acceptable Christian living, includes obedience to His holy Word. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).



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