

Dealing With Differences

The other day, for the umpteenth time, a discussion on Facebook ended with the charge that churches of Christ claim they are the only ones going to heaven, that it is "their way or the highway"... Such extreme and emotionally charged accusations are usually the sign of a bankrupt position which is not credible on its own.

By Aubrey C. Belue

And, for the umpteenth time, and for those who retain a sense of decency and intellectual fairness, let me offer some thoughts.

1) There are many kinds of "churches of Christ". If one looked hard enough, he could probably find "churches of Christ" that did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, that followed no divine pattern, and that were separated from the most extreme "scriptural teachings" by name only. In the very nature of the case, there is no central voice of "churches of Christ" so one labors in vain to substantiate this charge.

2) All churches today, right or wrong, are made up of "people" – flawed, biased, sometimes bigoted and judgmental, often worldly and carnal, temperamental – people. And individual "people" have no standing in speaking for "churches". What a given person might opine, or even what a local group might hold collec-

tively, cannot provide grounds for a universal accusation.

3) The charge is false! At least, among members of the "church of Christ" I am familiar with. No one that I know claims to be perfect – which is another way of wording the charge! In the past for sure, and in days to come, likely, we have all been mistaken about scriptural truth at one time or another. But, there is ABSOLUTE spiritual truth, and it "cannot be broken" (**John 10:34**)

4) I don't know ALL truth, but I know SOME truth – The truth that I KNOW applies to both you and I, and it is the same for both of us. Usually such folks are claiming a "flexible" truth -- you have "yours" and I have "mine"... which is neither scriptural nor reasonable. One thing members of the "churches of Christ" (at least those who are familiar to me) do that makes them different – they search for truth at all costs, are willing to surrender their point of view if it contradicts truth, and work to bring all others to that truth. But we can't have that, can we?



Brad Marshall (Allie Hosey's Cousin)	Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller)
Betty Mcareavey (Mary Ann Roberts' mom)	Audrey Barnett (Joanetta's sister-in-law)	Betty Bradford	Hazel Gilliland (Toni's relatives)
Tom Davis (Walker Davis' Uncle)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Toni Herd	Rebecca Davis (Chuck Hahn's Niece)	Holly Law
John M. Rhodes and Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)	Ellie Vaughn (Scott and Genna's baby)

August Birthdays

- 2-Emma Miller
- 7-Heath Donahue
- 7-Joey McGee
- 8-Alli Luther
- 9-Elliot Weldon
- 9-Troy Swenson
- 10-David Hartsell
- 11-Walker Davis
- 11-Andrew Kiser
- 12-Jon Coleman
- 13-Brendon Kirby
- 13-Ariel Ramsey
- 15-Kalee Reid
- 16-Cade Smith
- 18-Makayla Chittam
- 19-Brettlyn Currier
- 19-Taylor Lawrence
- 20-Caleb Law
- 21-Matt Cavender
- 23-Jordan Flatt
- 23-Colton Miller
- 24-Sophie Hall
- 27-Chip Freeman
- 28-Larry Rouse
- 28-Cole Johnson

News and Notes

- ☒ - Lets keep in our prayers our expectant mother, Nicole Pender!
- ☒ - Please pray for Bobby Holloway who has suffered a stroke.
- ☒ - Please continue to pray for Scott Perkins' dad, Joe.
- ☒ - Remember our upcoming meeting with Paul Earnhart, August 23-27!
- ☒ - The ladies class will be this Thursday. At 7 PM at Esther Biddle's house on "heaven."
- ☒ - Be sure and get your picture made for the bulletin board and updated directory! Please see Paula Davis.
- ☒ - Let us work to welcome our students that are returning and to meet the large number of new students arriving!
- ☒ - Audio CD's are provided in the foyer immediately after each service. You can also download them at www.auchurch.com

The Auburn Beacon



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

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A People of Principle

By Tim Nichols

It is impossible to enslave, mentally or socially, a bible-reading people. The principles of the bible are the groundwork of human freedom.

Thoughts to Ponder

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments. (**Psalms 119:73**)

Christians, above all others, are to be a people governed by principles. The world may not yield to an obvious code of conduct, but God's children recognize that the distinct teachings of God's Word give us higher and better rules than our own to guide us through life. Just as Luke wrote of "those things which are most surely believed among us" (**Luke 1:1**), we can speak of our common commitment to settled principles that have been revealed from Heaven. Those precepts are the standards held high by the pillar and ground of the Truth (**1 Tim. 3:15**). They are honorable, virtuous, and noble (**Phi. 4:8-9**). Only to the degree that our scruples are shaped by untainted Truth can we live uprightly.

Divine precepts are to be kept diligently (**Psa. 119:4**). We are to long for, love, and meditate upon them (**vv. 15, 40, 159**). We can understand them and talk of them (**v. 27**). They give us comfort and hope when men hold us in derision (**vv. 49-56**).

Divine principles come as a package (**Psa. 119:128, 168**). We either trust God and obey Him concerning all of our ways, or we do not trust Him at all. He Who inspired the living, powerful Scriptures that are able to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts knows everything about us and everything about every situation that we will encounter (**Heb. 4:12-13**).

Divine principles are the hand of God helping us (**Psa. 119:173**). They require us to acknowledge our own lack of personal wisdom and our need to rely upon

Him. Those who count themselves wise enough to value their own wisdom above God's slaps His hand away.

Principles connect with one another (**Isa. 28:10-13**) to se builds upon another and enlarges it. Some make perfect sense only when understood in light of some others. All are consistent with all others. True precepts from the mind of God never contradict each other.

When human principles enter the stream they corrupt it. Sometimes men become guilty of attempting to teach others of their duty toward God by using mere human principles.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men (**Isa. 29:13**).

This practice seems to especially prevail when difficult matters arise and consequential choices must be made concerning people. Even well respected and well-meaning brethren have been known to invent principles with which they attempt to control others under special circumstances. These often contradict and nullify principles God gave for our guidance.

For example, God teaches us to meekly seek to restore those overtaken in a fault (**Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25**) and shows us that doing so has the effect of saving a soul from death (**Jam. 5:19-20; Jude 23**). We are to mark those who "cause divisions

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Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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and offences contrary to the doctrine... and avoid them" (**Rom. 16:17**). God's principle is that we must have no company with brethren who will not obey God, but to admonish them as brethren rather than as enemies (**1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 The. 3:6, 14-15**). We are not to bid God speed to those who will not respond to such admonitions (**2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim 3:5; Tit. 3:10**).

God provides a very detailed prescription for applying this principle to personal offenses (**Mat. 18:15-17**). These precepts are not difficult to understand or to apply until precepts of men interfere. Perhaps because these principles require action with reference to people we know and love and those who are unpleasant and bothersome men find it easy to develop their own principles that modify those of God. Even otherwise sound brethren can be as guilty of this practice as are those who are apparently going out from among us. Since these Divine principles touch upon so many matters that affect the kingdom from fellowship with denominations to our personal duty to assist some specific brother to go to Heaven - it is worth our time to notice some of those human principles that would abrogate Divine ones.

"We Can Never Be Sure of the Facts"

This agnostic human precept flies in the face of Matthew 18:15-17 and ignores the force that God tells us to give to credible testimony (**Num. 35:30; Deu. 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28-29**). On the face of it, whenever God teaches us that we are to do certain things under certain conditions, then those conditions can be known to exist at least some of the time.

"The Truth Is Always Midway Between the Extremes"

This is not merely a harmless, human, unbiblical observation. It has grievous consequences when applied. It judges all testimony to be unworthy of belief. If we applied it consistently, we would have to find the midpoint between the testimony of Diotrephes and that of John (**3 John 9**) and between every other set of extremes between the Bible and the world. The Truth often has an extreme contrasting lie. Our duty is either to find the Truth or to recognize that we have not found it.

"It is Wrong To Deal With Personal Attacks; We Can Only Challenge the Doctrinal Sins of Others"

We are not able to find such precepts in the Divine principles. These human precepts would condemn Paul for dealing with the Corinthian brother who had his father's wife and John for responding to the personal attacks of Diotrephes. In our day these principles would

provide safe haven for every slanderer and fornicator, whether in pulpit or pew.

Divine Principles do not yield. Unqualified Divine principles apply to all persons at all times and in all circumstances. Their nature is such that we cannot use them today for one purpose and then discard them tomorrow for different purposes. We cannot apply them to foes and then ignore them when friends are involved. They guard us from being partial in our judgment (**1 Tim. 5:21**). While they sometimes force us to act when we would much rather remain still, they also restrain us when we might otherwise act rashly.

Divine principles unite. When we keep them pure, they bring us together. When we contaminate them they divide: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (**Psa. 119:63**).

Divine principles liberate. They free us from the obligation to act when many around us apply pressure to do so. "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed" (**Psa. 119:45-46; see also vv. 69, 78, 87, 94, 110, 134**). They free us from the responsibility of deciding what ought to be done or said (1 Cor. 4:1-4).

Principles impose obligations. Principles become premises, premises lead to conclusions, and conclusions have consequences. We bind ourselves with a duty to act in ways that agree with our principles once we have expressed what they are (**Rom. 2:1, 3**). The man who asserts that "the truth regarding another's conduct cannot be known," for example, must remain passive and silent at all times. Otherwise he is clearly out of duty, and his own conscience should testify to his hypocrisy if he speaks even once concerning another's conduct. No rebuke or kindly admonition should be needed to show it to him. He will be judged by even the arbitrary principles that he seeks to bind upon others (**Mat. 7:1-5**). We must take care not to adopt unbiblical principles as standards of judgment for others.

May we rather fill our hearts and mouths with Divine principles and apply the winnowing fork to those that are human.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (**Col. 2:6-10**).



Doctrinal Madness

By Jonathan Perz

"Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad." (**Acts 26:24b**).

These words were uttered by Festus as Paul made a defense for his faith before King Agrippa. The Greek word translated "mad" is mania, denoting frenzy or madness. While clearly Festus in his worldly wisdom was saying Paul was "out of his mind," Paul was obviously of sound mind according to God. However, I wonder if Festus' charge might not practically apply to some students of God's word today.

There are many who commendably spend a great deal of time studying every iota of God's word, attempting to learn what God has actually and practically revealed. Unfortunately, some go far beyond the scope of beneficial Bible study, even attempting to parse things beyond jot and tittle. attempting to piece together from here and there what God has not revealed. While we can know just what God has revealed and not one bit more, no amount of "reasoning" will pry one thought from God's mind that He has not revealed. Attempting to do so, no matter how carefully or astutely, will cause a form of doctrinal mania or madness, if you will. No, you will not read about this in a psychologist's handbook or a medical journal. It is tongue-in-cheek for what often happens to those who seek definitive answers to questions better left for God. In an effort to KNOW EXACTLY HOW God does this or that, we can end up all over the place doctrinally speaking, often well beyond the scope of doctrinal soundness (**cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1**).

I know we like to KNOW and sometimes even need to KNOW. Knowing is good (**cf. Eph. 5:17**). Untempered knowing can be bad (**cf. 1 Cor. 8:1**). However, we also need to realize that faith is oftentimes enough (**cf. 2 Cor. 5:7**). Faith bridges the gap between what we can know with 100% certainty and what we do not know with 100% certainty or what we cannot completely understand. It is okay to say, "I can't tell you EXACTLY how God does this, but I can tell you that He does do it" (**cf. Deut. 29:29**).

Without even considering the obviously futile parsings, such as exactly when Jesus will return again, something plainly revealed we will not know until it happens (**cf. Matt. 24:36, 42-43**), there are endless debates on exactly how God does many things He does. Never-ending wrangling ensues on exactly how God forgives sin, exactly how God created the universe, exactly how God will end the world, exactly how God will punish evil-doers, exactly how God will raise the dead, exactly how the Holy Spirit dwells in us. On and on the list goes. Detail by detail are futilely grasped for, fought about and divided over. At some point, a student of God's word has to come to terms with the fact

that God hasn't plainly told us exactly how He does everything or exactly how he will do some things. We just know that He did, He does and He will. We have to bridge the gap between our absolute knowledge and His absolute revelation and will with our absolute faith.

Instead of going mad doctrinally speaking or getting mad emotionally speaking at those who differ with your hypotheses, theories, speculations, presumptions and assumptions on exactly how God does something, perhaps we can do a bit more uniting on what we can know for sure -- that God does what He says and reveals what He wills us to do (**cf. Eph. 4:3**).

Let it be plainly known, I am not advocating this as a means of unity in doctrinal perversity, nor am I advocating doctrinal shallowness or ignorance. There are things God has plainly revealed and that we MUST know. Nor am I naive enough to believe that we will agree on everything. Division is a reality (**cf. Matt. 10:34**).

I am advocating the idea that while we are diligently striving to rightly divide the word of truth (**2 Tim. 2:15**), that we are careful not to unnecessarily chop it up into such tiny little pieces that it fails to resemble the word of truth any more. Likewise, let us be careful that we do not chop His body (the group of those whom He has saved - **Acts 2:47b**) up into such little pieces trying to prove ad infinitum and ad nauseum how right "we" are and how wrong "they" are on such matters. In other words, this is meant to impress the need for dogmatic prudence, particularly with unrevealed details of God's will. Let us not think or go beyond what is actually written in our desperate quest for academic knowledge that might very well be above our pay grade (i.e., belongs to God) and beyond the scope of practical application or consequence.

Instead, let us do what God has plainly revealed for us to do. These are things that we do not have to cross ocean to find or reach into the farthest parts of heaven to unveil. They are plainly set forth and often simple enough to accomplish. "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it!" (**Deut. 30:11-14**).

