



THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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Forest Hill Church of Christ

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Pulpit Evangelist

Matthew Jones,
Personal Evangelist

Garrett Olney, Youth
Jordan Pugh, Youth

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.
Afternoon Worship.... 1:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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“You Don’t Believe In...”

Barry Grider

Often members of the churches of Christ are accused of not believing in certain Bible related doctrines, which in reality they do believe. These charges are generally made because of the ignorance of those making the observations. It is the purpose of this article and those that follow in subsequent weeks to help all of us understand what we do believe about certain biblical matters of which we are often accused of not believing. Let it be understood that faithful children of God and faithful congregations of the churches of Christ believe the Bible to be the inspired, inherent word of God (2 Tim. 3:16,17) and upon this basis comes our defense of that which we believe to be right.

Sometimes churches of Christ are accused of not believing in the biblical doctrine of grace. In fact, some members of the church of Christ have concluded that we do not believe in the grace of God. However, to the contrary faithful children of God understand that the grace of God is fundamental to man’s salvation. Grace properly understood is God’s unmerited or undeserved favor bestowed upon man. Were it not for the grace of God we readily admit that salvation would be impossible. The sending of Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins was a precious gift of God’s grace and is clearly demonstrated by the following passages:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Furthermore, for one to deny the grace of God is to deny the clear teaching of the Bible. Paul wrote, “Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved;)” (Eph. 2:5). The accusation made by religious friends that churches of Christ do not believe in grace is because faithful children of God reject the notion that we are saved by grace alone. Evidently such accusers have not considered that such a doctrine leads one into universalism and thus the salvation of the whole of mankind. Hence, the doctrine of grace alone would not even necessitate belief and repentance. Interestingly in the Hiscox Baptist Manual it is stated, “We believe the scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly by grace” (Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, Edward Hiscox, chapter 8, article 4). If that is what Baptists believe then why do they ask adherents to repent and put their faith in Christ, if indeed salvation is “wholly by grace.”

However, the Bible teaches, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Notice that grace is conjoined with faith. Grace is God’s part in our salvation. He took the initiative to save us. Faith is man’s positive response to God. Notice, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men. Teaching us that by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11, 12). Did you notice that God’s grace came through teaching or instruction? What is this teaching or instruction? Listen to Paul, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

Noah was saved by the grace of God (Gen. 6:8) but not by grace alone. The writer of Hebrews states, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7). Noah’s faith was manifested by his positive response to the commands of God (Gen. 6:22). Noah was saved by grace through an active, living, obedient faith. So it is a false notion to conclude that members of the churches of Christ do not believe in the grace of God. However, we do not believe that grace alone saves. We believe that salvation is by grace through an active, living obedient faith. We believe this because that is what the Bible teaches and, hence, that settles the matter.

The Conversion of Simon the Sorcerer

James Meadows

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:13).

The growth of the church in Jerusalem brought great hostility and persecution (Acts 8:1). Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 8:2); the Christians were scattered throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:1b); they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4); and Philip “went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). Many of the Samaritans “...believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). Simon was also converted.

Simon Before His Conversion

First, his name was Simon. “But there was a certain man, called Simon . . .” (v. 9a). Second, he had evidently resided in the city a long time. “. . . which beforetime in the same city. . .” (v. 9b). Third, he practiced sorcery or “used sorcery” (v. 9c). “A sorcerer is one who mutters incantations or speaks in ventriloquial whispers, as if under the influence of the spirits of the dead” (ISBE, Vol. 1, p. 296). Fourth, he “bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one . . . because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (vv. 9b, 11b). Fifth, the people “. . . all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard . . .” (vv. 11, 12a).

Simon was one of the best know citizens, if not the best known, in the city of Samaria. Simon’s conversion must have produced a tremendous impact on the city of Samaria, and it shows the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Simon’s Conversion

Simon heard and saw the same miracles which the other citizens of Samaria saw. “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip sake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:6-8). The miracles confirmed the word which Philip spoke (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). Simon saw the difference between what he was doing and what Philip was doing more clearly than anyone. He naturally would have been slow to accept as genuine the miracles Philip performed, but he would have been equally quick to discern them as false if they had not been true.

Simon heard the same truths that the other Samaritans heard. He heard the word (Acts 8:4). He heard Christ preached (Acts 8:5). He heard “things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ . . .” (Acts 8:12). It is interesting to note that when Philip *preached Christ* he also preached the church and baptism (Acts 8:12, 35, 36). Those who preach Christ today will do the same.

Simon believed the same truths that the others believed, namely truths about the church, about Christ, and about baptism (Acts 8:5, 12, 13). The word “also” suggests that Simon’s belief was of the same nature as that of the other Samaritans.

Simon “was baptized” (v. 13a). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . .” (Mark 16:16). Peter told believers on the day of Pentecost to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .” (Acts 2:38). In obeying “from the heart that form of

doctrine” (Rom. 6:17) Simon was made free from his sins (Rom. 6:18), just like we all are.

Simon’s Sin After His Conversion

When the church in Jerusalem heard that “Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John” (Acts 8:14). When Peter and John came to Samaria they laid hands on the Samaritans and imparted to them miraculous power (Acts 8:15-17). “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:18, 19). Simon’s sin was in trying to buy the power which God had given the apostles. Simon’s heart was not right in the sight of God.

It was Simon’s sin, on this occasion, which led many to question the genuineness of his faith. Professor Hackett, in his commentary on Acts, says the reference is to his “supposed or apparent state, not his actual position.” Barnes writes, “That Simon was not a real Christian is apparent from the whole narrative . . . This act of Simon shows conclusively that he was influenced by improper motives in being connected with the church.” (*Barnes’ Notes on Acts*, p. 142).

Several facts show conclusively that Simon was a genuine convert, and that claims to the contrary are false. First, those who make this claim believe in the impossibility of apostasy. Simon did fall, so the advocates of this doctrine have to argue that he never was saved, or they have the example of a saved man falling. The latter won’t fit their doctrine. Second, if Simon was not saved, then the Samaritans were not saved. The divine record states that they all did the same things, namely, heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 8:12, 13). Third, one who declares that Simon was not saved takes issue with the Lord. He declared that “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Luke says Simon believed and was baptized” (Acts 8:13). Fourth, if conversion means that one can never again be influenced by his old habits, then Simon was not a genuine convert. But both Scripture (1 John 1:7-9) and common sense show that old habits can and do lead us into sin on occasions. Fifth, if Simon was an alien sinner why didn’t Peter tell him to repent and be baptized like he did the Jews on Pentecost? He didn’t tell him to repent and pray for all the sins he had ever committed, but to repent and pray about “this thy wickedness” and “the thought of thy heart.” Sixth, if Simon was not really converted then he passed the inspection of inspired men three times. Philip was “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3), but he never accused Simon of hypocrisy. Peter was baptized in the Holy Spirit and he never pointed Simon out as a pretender. “Finally, and if possible, more convincingly, Luke, the inspired historian, with all the facts before him; namely, the faith, baptism, amazement, and defection of Simon: records for all ages and generations, ‘And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.’ If Simon did not really believe, Luke knew it; but he says nothing about it” (Goodpasture).

Some Lessons Gained From Simon’s Conversion

First, conversion does not involve so complete a removal of old mental habits and passions that they no longer influence one after conversion. Many contend that when a person is genuinely converted, that his old habits and ways are so far removed that they never influence his life again. “If conversion involves so

LORD'S TABLE

PRESIDE: Jackson Greer Evan Manning
ASSIST: Paul Connell Andrew Knipple
 Kevin Knipple Sam Rickles
 C. J. Stafford Jonah Wood

A.M. OPENING: Harold Mangrum
A.M. CLOSING: Robert Jeter
P.M. OPENING: Robert Berch
P.M. CLOSING: Allan Hart

If you are unable to lead prayer or serve at the Lord's table, please contact Cedric Huff or Paul Connell.

RECORD, WEEK of April 30, 2017

BIBLE STUDY:	205
A.M. WORSHIP:	280
P.M. WORSHIP:	175
CONTRIBUTON:	\$16,602

OUR SICK

Jerry Manning is scheduled for an MRI Friday, May 5.

Rufus Washington is scheduled for out-patient sinus surgery May 10.

ILL AT HOME: John Connell, Kay Downey, and Marion Maund.

HOMEBOUND

Bessie Berry	Albert & Ruth House
Ann Castleman	Clarine Justice
Virginia Ditto	Ryan McCullar
Hazel Eskew	Helen Palazola
Tommy & Nell Herndon	Jerry & Betty Robbins
Anita Hopper	James Terry

REQUESTED PRAYERS: Cindy Dawson and Cassie McCondichie.

OUR SYMPATHY IS EXTENDED TO Kay Downey in the passing of her sister, Agnes Nichols, who passed away Friday, April 28.

KIRBY PINES Retirement Community worship service each fourth Sunday 8:00-8:45 a.m., conducted by Forest Hill. Our next service will be Sunday, May 28.

AREA-WIDE SINGINGS

Washington Avenue Church of Christ, Jonesboro, AR, Friday, May 5, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Stanton Church of Christ, Stanton TN, Friday, May 12, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

INFORMATION LINE: 901-531-8849

HEARTS AND HANDS

TEAM "C" (Danny Braddock) will meet Sunday, May 7 after the morning service in the MSOP breakroom for a covered dish luncheon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LADIES' & MEN'S CLASSES will resume in the Fall.

SHOES FOR HAITI Parkway Village congregation has asked us to help by collecting gently worn shoes for the people of Haiti. Please NO open-toed shoes & NO ladies' shoes with heels. You may place these in the ladies classroom.

COUPLES BABY SHOWER honoring David & Nicole Stafford, Saturday, May 6 at 10:00 am. in the Fellowship Hall. It's a boy. They are registered at Walmart.

ATTENTION LADIES We will be assembling evangelism bags Sunday, May 7, 12:30-1:30. Please bring a bag of hard candy.

REDBIRDS GAME Saturday, May 13, beginning at 6:35 and closing with fireworks. The JCs will sit on the left bluff. You may purchase your tickets online or at the gate.

2017 VBS June 5, 6 & 7. Theme: ***We Believe Because of Cause and Effect.*** Please see the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board.

ATTENTION ALL 2017 GRADUATES

Please send your photos to the church office for the upcoming bulletin graduate page. You may email them to: office@foresthilcofc.org or bring a photo to be scanned.

Check out the new Forest Hill website!
foresthilcofc.org

Last week's solution:

Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. Luke 17:3-4

CORNERSTONE

Replace each letter with a different letter to reveal the scripture.

ORK XQ JMD MDXGDL VQ MVTM XPRGD JMD DXKJM,
 QR TKDXJ VQ MVQ SDKUB JRCXKZ JMDS JMXJ ODXK
 MVS. XQ OXK XQ JMD DXQJ VQ OKRS JMD CDQJ, QR
 OXK MXJM MD KDSRGDZ RAK JKXLQTKDQQVRLQ
 OKRS AQ. IVYD XQ X OXJMDK WVJVDJM MVQ
 UMVIZKDL, QR JMD IRKZ WVJVDJM JMDS JMXJ ODXK
 MVS.

T = G Solution next week O = F

The Conversion of Simon the Sorcerer (continued from page 2)

complete a renovation, that old mental habits are eradicated, never to exert their influence again, then Simon was not a genuine convert. But if, as both Scripture and experience teach, the turning of a sinner to God is simply the triumph of conscience and the better feelings over the passions, while the latter still exist in a latent state, ready to spring into activity on the approach of temptation . . ." (McGarvey), then Simon was a genuine convert.

Second, God's law of pardon for one who sins after conversion is clearly revealed—"repent and pray." John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Christians must daily "repent," "confess," and "pray."

Third, miraculous power was imparted by the laying on of apostles' hands (Acts 6:6, 7; Acts 19:1-6). Previous to the arrival of Peter and John in Samaria none of the Samaritans had miraculous power. "What they did when they arrived in Samaria was certainly the object for which they went. But the chief thing which they did was to confer the Holy Spirit; hence, this was the chief object of their visit" (McGarvey). If Philip could have conferred this power, then the chief object of the apostles' visit was useless.

Fourth, we need to learn from Simon to be on guard where we are weakest. Some things might not really be a temptation to you, but they might give me a great problem; some might give you a great problem that wouldn't bother me (cf James 1:13-15; 1 Cor. 10:12; 9:27).

Fifth, Simon and the Samaritans were honest enough to reject what they had believed for years, when real evidence convinced them. Jacob believed for twenty-two years that Joseph was dead, but overwhelming evidence convinced him that he had been wrong, and he changed (Gen. 37:29-36; 45:25-28). We need to always be open-minded and examine all teachings in the light of God's word, and change when there is a need (John 17:17; 8:32; Acts 17:11).

Sixth, if Philip baptized one that later fell short, then we should not be discouraged if some of our converts do the same. It is our responsibility to teach people and then leave the results to God (Mat. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:1-6).

Are you a Christian? If not, why not follow Simon's example and become a Christian today!

(from *Gospel Advocate*, August 6, 1981)

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