

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## IF YOU SAY BRETHREN IN ERROR ARE THE ONLY KIND...

by Lee Moses

Excuses, excuses. Some make excuses for themselves, some make excuses for others, and some make excuses for what they do with others. As it has of late become increasingly in vogue to disregard God's boundaries of fellowship, all sorts of excuses have been made to justify arbitrarily extended boundaries. One arbitrarily extending preacher, anticipating the response he knew would come to his removal of God's ancient landmarks, said, "And if somebody says, 'Well, he's a brother in error,' you tell him, 'Do we have any other kind?'" But are brethren in error the only kind of brethren there are? Statements have implications, and we need to consider the implications of such a statement. If you say brethren in error are the only kind . . .

### YOU SAY REPENTANCE IS UNIMPORTANT

During His earthly ministry, Christ preached, "*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 4:17). As He entrusted the Great Commission to His apostles (and subsequently to the church), He said, "*Thus it is written . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:46-47). Christ viewed repentance as demanded by the nearness of the kingdom, and as pivotal to the Gospel which was to be proclaimed among all nations.

However, if brethren in error are the only kind, then what does one repent **from** and **into**? There would be

no appreciable difference before or after "conversion," because there really would be no conversion at all. Yet the Scriptures say, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Does this sound like there is no appreciable difference before or after conversion? Again,

*That ye **put off** concerning the **former** conversation the **old** man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be **renewed** in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the **new** man, which **after God** is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Ephesians 4:22-24, emphases LM).

Conversion is not fictitious, and repentance is prerequisite to any conversion.

And as Christians go through life, not only do they confess their sins, but they also repent of them. As Peter rebuked the former sorcerer Simon, "*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*" (Acts 8:22). Regarding the church of Christ at Corinth, Paul rejoiced,

*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of*

*yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter* (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Of course the Christian is thoroughly dependent upon the grace of God for forgiveness, but before that forgiveness can be received, there must be an appreciable change of mind which will lead to an approved course of action. Error must be rejected and left behind.

### YOU SAY ERROR IS INCONSEQUENTIAL

The reason that error must be rejected and left behind is because error is **serious**. The Hebrew word for "sin" (*ḥata'*) carries with it the concept of "missing the mark." So "error" (when regarding Biblical truth) and "sin" are basically synonymous. Anyone who has ever read the Bible knows that God does not take sin lightly—He **loathes** it (Genesis 6:5-7; 1 Kings 14:22; Psalm 5:4-5). It matters not if the religious world may not see error as serious; as Jesus said, "*That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*" (Luke 16:15).

But what message is sent when one says, "Brethren in error are the only kind"? The message is clearly sent, "Do not worry about error." Accepting error could hardly be called "*the love of the truth*" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The psalmist exclaimed, "*Through thy precepts I*

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get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104). Because he appreciated the value of God’s truth, he hated every false way—love of the truth **demands** hating every false way.

There is only one true church, one true Lord, one true faith, and one true baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5). All others are false; they are erroneous; they are **lies**. For one to say error is inconsequential makes him a liar. Those who do not receive the love of the truth, and instead choose to believe a lie, cannot be saved; but will perish (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Excluded from the heavenly city will be “*dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*” (Revelation 22:15, emphasis LM). To say error has consequences would be a grave understatement.

**YOU SAY GOD IS UNJUST**

In Romans 2, Paul makes a marvelous argument for the justice of God. Many of the Jews scorned the

Gentiles as condemned reprobates, all the while believing that they themselves would be able to skate through God’s judgment based on their birthright (verses 1-3). Paul repudiated such thinking. He said that “*there is no respect of persons with God*” (verse 11) and that “*we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things*” (verse 2). How could God judge impartially and according to truth? Because He “*will render to every man according to his deeds*” (verse 6, emphasis LM). If God justified some and condemned others with no consideration for their conduct, He would not be just. If God were to disregard error, He would not be just.

Furthermore, how could God make the demands that He does if one can never be more than a “brother or sister in error”? He says, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (2 Corinthians 6:17). But if one can only be a brother or sister in error, no one can really “come out from among them,” no one can really “be separate,” no one can really stop “touching the unclean thing.” Such demands would not be just if we could not meet them.

**YOU SAY GOD’S FAVOR IS UNATTAINABLE**

If it is impossible to be any kind of Christian than one in error, no one can ever be in favor with God. Fellowship with God would be impossible, as one cannot be **in Christ** and **in error** at the same time. The apostle John uses the picture of light to signify truth and darkness to signify error:

*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,*

*and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* (1 John 1:5-7).

If one remains “in darkness,” he can have no fellowship or favor with God.

Uzzah was a “brother in error.” He was only one of many involved in transporting the Ark of the Covenant by means of a cart, instead of having the descendants of Kohath bear it on their shoulders with the staves (2 Samuel 6:3; compare with Numbers 4:15). Then Uzzah would put forth his hand to steady the Ark, when even the Kohathites were forbidden from touching the ark itself (Numbers 4:15, 19-20). Just an oversight, right? How favorably did God view Uzzah’s continued error? “*And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God*” (2 Samuel 6:6-7, emphasis LM).

While we are certainly privileged to stand on glory’s side of the cross, nothing has changed regarding God’s disposition toward error. If one cannot remove himself from error, he cannot find the favor of God. Peter wrote, “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness*” (2 Peter 3:17). However, one can **remain steadfast** and **not be led away** with the **error** of the wicked. And one who **is** led away with error can return back to the favor of God: James wrote, “*Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*” (James 5:20, emphases LM).

There is obviously no flawless human being on earth. However,

Christians are presented “*without fault before the throne of God*” (Revelation 14:5). Is it only at the Judgment that the Lord can deem a Christian a “*good and faithful servant*”? Do we have peace with God while on earth, or do we remain at enmity? Are we absolved from our sins each first day of the week, only to begin to stockpile them throughout the rest of the week? No, Christians have true peace with God. They have removed themselves from error, and their errors have been removed from them, so that they can stand completely justified before God—free from all error (Romans 5:1-2).

Everybody has his faults. However, where it pertains to Biblical truth, the Christian determines to keep himself from error. If a “brother” has always been in error, he has never been in Christ. Let us realize the grave consequences of the statement, “Brethren in error are the only kind.”

## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

by Boyd Morgan  
(Deceased, From **FCGN**  
November 1953)

“The only difference between the church of Christ and the Christian Church is instrumental music” is one of the sad statements that we so often hear today, and is sometimes made by church members.

We have many friends in the Christian Church whom we would welcome with open arms should they lay down their sectarian practices. We ever plead for them to return to the first love.

Many and varied are the differences, and it is a saddening thing to see the break ever widening. The name “Christian” is for individual members and not for the church. Christ is the head of the church, and His church is named after Him, not

after the membership. It remains for children to wear the family name rather than the family being named after the children. It is erroneous to say, “Since we are Christians we will have ‘Christian churches.’” The gospel nowhere speaks of congregations as Christian churches. Truly the church is made up of Christians the same as a material house might be made up of bricks but the name is not “Christian church”. The name denotes ownership and the church of our Lord is referred to as the “church of the firstborn” and the “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). Though we are children of God, we yet would not call His church “Children’s church.”

We appeal to the Christian Church to give proper honor to Jesus Christ through his body. In the split between the Christian Church and the church of Christ a great brotherhood was divided, and today there stands this division which is as displeasing to God as division was when Paul wrote the first chapter of Corinthians.

Christ’s church was established in the city of Jerusalem 33 A.D. in fulfillment of the prophecies of God. The Christian Church is modern, originating in an innovation at St. Louis, MO less than a century ago. The church of Christ would welcome the return of this brotherhood which drifted from them, and has never ceased to pray for scriptural unity. As always, the basis of unity must be the word of God, and this continues to be our plea, as it has ever been to a divided religious world. We must ever speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent. God’s word must be kept and preached in its purity: His silence must not be imposed upon.

For those who may desire to know the differences, some vital contrasts are here shown:

Churches of Christ: Scriptural name (Romans 16:16).

Christian Church: Unscriptural name.

Churches of Christ: Scriptural

organization (Philippians 1:1).

Christian Church: Unscriptural organization – boards, circles, machinery, societies, aids.

Churches of Christ: Scriptural giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Christian Church: Unscriptural money schemes, dinners, etc.

Churches of Christ: Scriptural song service (Colossians 3:16).

Christian Church: Unscriptural music in worship, sing and play.

Church of Christ: Uncompromising attitude toward false doctrine (Ephesians 5:11).

Christian Church: Compromising and cooperative attitude toward denominations (2 John 11).

Church of Christ: Scriptural adherence to New Testament identity of the church in name, creed, terms of salvation, worship, and work.

Christian Church: Soft pedaling of the identity, name, creed, doctrine and other New Testament principles.

Church of Christ: Women in their scriptural work.

Christian Church: Women leadership, preachers, and rulers.

Church of Christ: Elders and overseers (Acts 20:28).

Christian Church: Board and majority rule.

Church of Christ: Preachers and evangelists (Acts 21:8).

Christian Church: Preachers, “pastors,” and “reverends”.

Church of Christ: Observes first day of the week as the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10).

Christian Church: Observes also in many instances pre-Easter, Easter, Maundy Thursday, candlelight communion, Children’s day, Mother’s day, Father’s day, etc.

Church of Christ: Worships in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Christian Church: Sometimes leave both spirit and the truth, substituting them with modern inventions to “get the crowds” and to entertain.

These differences are pointed out in love and friendship, openly; as the

rift is open, and it is hoped that someday the wound may be healed by the return of the Christian Church. It may be argued that the Christian Church is progressive, but the scriptures read *“Whosoever goeth onward (American Standard Version) and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God”* (2 John 9). It may be argued that it is “broad,” hence fellowships denominationalism. Again we read 2 John 11: *“He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* Think of fellowshiping the program of denominational names and organization; the program of Baptist “closed communion,” “once in grace always in grace,” the program of Methodist “sprinkling” and “infant membership”; “faith only” in most denominations; of “direct operation of the Holy Spirit” among “Holiness” people; of “getting religion and joining the church of your choice”; of “being saved out of the church.” Picture Paul exchanging pulpits with Ananias the high priest; of Stephen being the “guest pastor” at the Sanhedrin; or the Epicureans having “charge” of the service of the church at Antioch of Jerusalem. Imagine the Methodist preacher hurrying from a “sprinkling” program to “supply” while the Christian “pastor” is away, or the Lutheran clergyman coming immediately from his mass of consubstantiation to “bring the message” at the Christian Church, or the “holiness” preacher who comes from a ranting “divine healing” or “Holy Spirit baptism” service to try to preach a gospel sermon to the Christian Church.

It is wrong to fellowship denominations; to say they have not the right name, creed, or terms of salvation, or right baptism; and then to criticize the church of Christ for refusing to “cooperate” with or fellowship error (I admire the man who stands firm on his convictions and am persuaded that the world does). It is unfair to refuse to expose error in people who have been led

astray and to refuse to teach the truth. The Christian Church is unfair to itself because every innovation it introduces drives its more spiritually-minded members elsewhere. It weakens its fortifications and surrenders its plea. It has borrowed the denominational phraseology until it has lost much of the ring of the “oracles of God.”

To our friends who teach and practice the gospel plan of salvation we plead: Repent—turn back; confess your errors; remove your innovations; remove the name Christian Church; reorganize scripturally; and seek the old paths and worship God as a loyal congregation refusing to join hands with sectarianism and compromise. Fellowship your so-called “conservative brethren” by refusing to sacrifice the height of the ideals of the New Testament church, the depth of its purity and the mission it must perform.

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### GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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