

He is a foolish physician, and a most unfaithful friend — who will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. In the same way, we are cruel wretches to our friends — if we will rather allow them to go quietly to Hell — than anger them, or hazard our friendship with them. —Richard Baxter

Nothing shall be lost — which is done for God or in obedience to Him. —John Owen

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM
AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

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4. Q. What is the word of God?

A. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, and the only certain rule of faith and obedience (2 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 2:20).

5. Q. May all men make use of the holy scriptures?

A. All men are not only permitted, but commanded and exhorted to read, hear, and understand the holy scriptures (John 5:38; John 17:17,18; Rev.1:3; Acts 8:30).

6. Q. What things are chiefly contained in the holy scriptures?

A. The holy scriptures chiefly contain what man ought to believe concerning God, and what duty God requireth of man (2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15,16).

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Sunday Morning 11:00 AM

Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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VAIN WORSHIP

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Mark 7:6-7

We are often confronted with scripture that causes some serious personal searching. How sad, indeed, to be found sincerely pursuing a way that has no basis in the Bible and the commandments of our Lord in particular. While men are given to tolerance God is not. People seem to pride themselves in the ability to overlook differences as long as they perceive that there is sincerity and honesty. In effect, they transfer such values to the operations of God and fall into the snare the Lord described through the Psalmist: *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Psalms 50:21.* This was the great error of the Pharisees, then and now. They were zealous of their religion and they thought it to be worship. It was, however, religious endeavor emerging from fallen men and is far from the true worship of God. It certainly did not and does not meet the standard set by our Lord in declaring: *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24.*

It would seem that, as we follow many scriptural narratives, that underlying all that is approved of God, is the true worship of God. As we read of the early converts after Pentecost we

find them gladly receiving the word, steadfastly continuing in the Apostles' doctrine, and were daily with one accord in the Temple and going from house to house, and were about their activities with gladness and singleness of heart. The effect was finding favor with all the people as the Lord added to the church (Acts 2:41-47). It is unthinkable that they engaged in planning programs for promotion of the church or resorted to anything other than what is described. Their worship was apparent to all including saved and unsaved folk. This pattern of devout attendance to the Word of God and the Gospel was continued during the times described in the Book of the Acts. Such is the nature of true worship. There is no necessity to defend or explain it. It is the voice of the Spirit of God speaking His truth eloquently through His people and many were drawn to it. God's methodology is clear: *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:18.*

There is a conspicuous absence, throughout the scriptures of any specific methodology beyond the mandate to faithfully preach the Word and to render obedience in the manner therein described. All that is done is to be done in such a way that all attention is directed to the Lord as the gracious provider and enabler. It is not a matter of form; it is rather a matter of substance. And so, Christ and the Word must be central in all that we do. We are warned in such

passages as this to be careful that long held traditions and opinions are not construed as the teaching of the Word of God. Whether by statement or implication, additions to the Word of God are soundly condemned.

The argument might be made that no one is insisting upon ceremonial washings and other traditions that our Lord called out. The truly offensive thing was that they thought that by their attendance to these things they followed the divine will and purpose. Had they done these things as a matter of attending to health and welfare there would have been no problem. It was that they had developed a system of religion that promoted pride and self-aggrandizement to the point they had become oppressors rather than guides. The weightier things such as declaring the Messiah, faith and love of the brethren were completely missed.

When religious errors of this kind are called out and identified, pride adopts a different course. Subtleness has from the beginning been the vehicle of deception. The Pharisees were self-assured and blatant in declaring their own worth. Their tendency was to look down on those considered unworthy. Today, the method is to act in a way of acceptance of biblical truth while inserting enough error to render it vain worship. Such things as altar calls or invitations are considered essential. I was once challenged by a young man who had been so influenced to

believe invitations necessary. He accosted me in the vestibule after the service saying "if you had given an invitation my friend would have been saved." Such thought suggests trust in something not found in the early church. They preached the Word in season and out. They worshiped as they preached. The glory of God was their motive. The cross of Christ was their hope. The sovereignty of God was not compromised. They adhered faithfully to the Scripture without additions or suppositions. Their worship was not in vain. Their burden for souls was ordered before the Lord and many who heard them cried "sirs what must I do to be saved."

The Lord's assessment was "in vain do they worship me." His reference was to Isaiah 29:13. The report of their false worship also identified the underlying reason. They had left the essential teaching of the Word of God and become dependent on traditional methods. Early on in my ministry I encountered some who, upon having some questionable practices in the church challenged replied, "this is the way we have always done it and that they didn't care what the Bible said." I credit them with honesty; many just continue confidently in their deception. They honor Him with their lips while their heart is in their proud religion. May Christ ever be the desire of our hearts and in the center of all we do or say! *bhs*

"Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing" (James 3:16).

False wisdom ruins lives.

Renowned eighteenth-century theologian Jonathan Edwards said the following about the effect of the Fall on man:

Sin, like some powerful astringent, contracted his soul to the very small dimensions of selfishness; and God was forsaken, and fellow-creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself, and became totally governed by narrow and selfish principles and

feelings. Self-love became absolute master of his soul, and the more noble and spiritual principles of his being took wings and flew away.

Edwards's analysis certainly agrees with what James is saying: man is self-centered (cf. James 3:14, 16). Where self-centeredness exists, there will be negative results. One such result is "disorder" (v. 16). The term refers to disorder that comes out of instability and chaos. Earthly wisdom will never produce harmony or love because it's proud and self-indulgent. It destroys intimacy, love, unity, and fellowship, and in its place brings discord and chaos. You can see the result of earthly wisdom all over our world today. Anger, bitterness, lawsuits, and divorces are just part of the legacy.

"Every evil thing" also results from earthly wisdom (v. 16). The phrase speaks of something worthless or vile. Greek scholar R.C. Trench said it contemplates evil, "not so much that either of active or passive malignity, but rather of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain ever coming forth from it." The Greek word translated "thing" implies that false wisdom produces nothing of any practical value. At its best it produces worthless things; at its worst it produces vile things.

Which kind of life do you prefer? One that is characterized by love and unity, or by instability and chaos? A life with fulfillment and meaning, or with emptiness? If you want a life that satisfies and has eternal value, choose divine wisdom!

Thank God for giving you His Word so you can know how to live wisely and avoid the negative results of man's wisdom. —John MacArthur

THE PROGRAM

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. —Matthew 18:20 Now, I freely admit that it is impossible to hold a Christian service without an agenda. If order is to be maintained, an order of service must exist somewhere. If two songs are to be sung, someone must know which one is to be sung first, and whether this knowledge is only in someone's head or has been reduced to paper there is indeed a "program," however we may dislike to call it that. The point we make here is that in our times the program has been substituted for the Presence. The program rather than the Lord of glory is the center of attraction. So the most popular gospel church in any city is likely to be the one that offers the most interesting program; that is, the church that can present the most and best features for the enjoyment of the public.... We'll do our churches a lot of good if we each one seek to cultivate the blessed Presence in our services. If we make Christ the supreme and constant object of devotion the program will take its place as a gentle aid to order in the public worship of God. If we fail to do this the program will finally obscure the Light entirely. And no church can afford that. Lord, I pray that Christ might always be the center of our worship—never the program. Amen. —A. W. Tozer

"Genuine repentance involves four things: (1) spiritual enlightenment and remembering whence you have fallen; (2) confessing, grieving over, and forsaking sin; (3) bowing under sin's just judgment, which is death, and (4) falling upon Christ for mercy." —Joel Beeke