

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
 HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

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## “To Whom Shall We Go?”

**IN JOHN 6:63 JESUS SAID,** “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Upon hearing this teaching, many of his disciples, taking his word literally and thinking it too hard, went back and walked no more with him. This caused Jesus to ask the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” In answer to Christ’s question Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:53-68).

This passage of scripture clearly shows the *possibility of apostasy*. Disciples who had followed Christ did turn back, and the question which Christ asked shows that even the apostles could turn away. If there was no possibility of the apostles turning away, Christ’s question to them would have been foolish. Paul uses a number of expressions which show that one can be in the faith and then turn from it. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times *some shall depart from the faith ...*” (1 Timothy 4:1). Speaking of certain younger widows he said, “Having damnation, because they have *cast off their first faith*”

(1 Timothy 5:12). Not only does this passage show that one’s faith can be cast off, but also that the result of doing so is damnation.

As the passage in John 6 shows the possibility of apostasy, it further depicts *man’s need of guidance*. Peter’s question sets forth this need — “Lord, to whom shall we go?” As a young man ascending the throne of Israel, Solomon felt this need. He said, “I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in” (1 Kings 3:7). Jeremiah said, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). Indeed, as little children we need

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## SHALL WE GO?

guidance through this life. We have never passed this way before.

### **“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”**

There are many possibilities. The greater part of the world's population are in heathenism. We could go to them and their leaders. But the dumb idol, being the product of man's hands, cannot be his savior. Communism still controls the minds of many. Though it tries to persuade men that their lot in life would be better under it, it does not propose to meet man's spiritual needs, or to offer anything beyond this life. Infidelity and irreligion seem to be popular concepts today, but the denial of God identifies one as a fool. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 53:1). The origin and precise order of the universe cannot be reasonably explained without recognizing supreme creative and directing power. Infidelity and irreligion have never offered anything constructive to man.

Some feel that they have found the answer in some of the current

movements of today. Yet in their free love, their filth, their drugs indulgence, and their denial of honest toil they break all the great principles of right conduct upon which the individual must depend for happiness, and society must depend for endurance. Others seem to think the answer is to be found in anarchy, in arson, in destruction of anything and every thing that is the target of their hate. In the destruction of others, such a course ultimately destroys itself and its advocates.

### **“THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE”**

Indeed, the lowly fisherman gave the right and true answer. The words which Christ spoke are spirit and life (John 6:63). He said that he spoke not from himself, “but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Christ spoke the word of the Father, and the Father's word is truth. In his prayer to the Father Christ said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). It is by this truth that men are made free from the bondage of sin. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus so lived in harmony with God's truth that he could say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The eternal God would have us hear his Son. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). Moses prophesied that all must hear him, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your

brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22,23). Christ's mother gave the servants good advice at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, when she said, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

### **WHAT DOES HE SAY?**

With all authority in heaven and on earth he set forth the specific requirements for man's salvation from sin. He told his disciples to go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, make disciples of every nation. Those who heard were to believe, were to repent, and were to be baptized in order to be saved (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46,47; Mark 16:15,16.) When the disciples of Christ carried out this commission, as recorded in the book of Acts, again and again they set forth these requirements to their hearers; and when sinners responded to the preaching, invariably they believed the truth, they repented of their sins, and they were baptized in the name of the Lord for the remission of their sins (Acts 2;8;9;10;11;16;18;22;26).

Christ said that those who were made disciples, those who were baptized, were also to be taught “to observe all things whatsoever I command you” (Matthew 28:20). Thus, the New Testament contains the things Christ has commanded his disciples, things concerning the personal conduct of his people, things concerning worship, “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). — BN

# Authority in the Lord's Church

**THE WORD "CHURCH"** is commonly used in two senses in the New Testament with reference to the people of God. It is used to denote the universal body of Christ, the aggregate body of the redeemed with Christ as head. It is also used to denote a local congregation of Christians, who function as a unit in carrying out certain duties the Lord requires them to perform collectively. The universal church has no earthly organization but is composed of individual Christians, while local congregations are organized as independent churches according to the order prescribed in the New Testament. Christians are governed by divine authority both in their relation to Christ as individual Christians and in their relation to Him as congregations of Christians. All members of the Lord's church, both individually and members of congregations must recognize and follow divine authority.

1. *Christians must recognize the source of divine authority.* Of course God is the ultimate source of all authority. Authority simply means the power of rule or government, or the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed. No one who believes in God can deny that such power belongs to God. God's will through the ages has been made known in various ways (Hebrews 1:1,2). He spoke to Noah directly; He spoke to Jacob in visions; He spoke to Israel through Moses and the prophets. But God now speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ. During this age all authority has been given by the Father to Christ (Matthew 28:18).

He alone is the Ruler, the Lawgiver and the Judge in reference to

the will of God. (Luke 1:31-33; James 4:12; Acts 10:42). His reign began when He ascended to God's right hand following His death and resurrection (Acts 2:30-33). His reign will continue until the kingdom is delivered up to the Father at the last day (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Christ's authority has been executed upon earth through His chosen apostles. To them He said, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall all sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). The authority of the apostles to make known, to bind and loose, the will of Christ on earth would be concurrent with the

reign of Christ and would be over the twelve tribes of Israel, which is spiritual Zion, the church (Romans 2:28,29). Christ's will, made known by His apostles, was revealed and confirmed in them by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; Mark 16:20). It is complete in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Thus, the New Testament is the only source of authority in the Lord's church.

2. *Christians must act by this divine authority.* The Lord's church, both individual members and congregations, must act in religion exclusively by Christ's authority as made known by His apostles and contained in its fulness in the New Testament. (1 Peter 4: 11; Colossians 3:17). We are expressly forbidden to act without divine authority (2 John 9).1 Corinthians 4:6). All that we do in the worship and service of God must be authorized by the Scriptures for they furnish us completely "unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:17). There are three ways to determine what Christ's will is, or what He authorizes for us, in the New Testament. (1) His will is found in direct statements or commands. For instance, concerning the Lord's Supper He says, "This do in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24,25). (2) His will is demonstrated by apostolic examples. Paul says, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which so walk so as ye have us for an example" (Philippians 3:17). We learn by apostolic example that the Lord's Supper was observed by early Christians upon the first day

## A WORTHY WORD

"GIVE" — God has set the example. He has given His Son to pay the penalty for our sins. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

What can we give God? *Our thanks!* "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" (Psalms 107:1). We can give Him our heart (our love). "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26). There is blessing in giving. "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35). It could be more blessed because it means one has something to give. It could be more blessed because it means the giver is God-like in his readiness to give.

There is a return in giving. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

## AUTHORITY

of the week (Acts 20:7). (3) His will is sometimes understood from a necessary implication of the Scriptures. A thing may not be specifically stated but inferred from the facts presented. The fact that the disciples at Troas observed the Lord's Supper, came together for that purpose, upon the first day of the week implies a weekly practice, just as "Remember the sabbath" implied a weekly practice.

Authority may be general or specific in nature. General authority includes all that falls within the scope of the thing authorized, even though details may not be mentioned. Specific authority includes only the authorization for what is specified of a class or kind. For example, God's instructions to Noah include both kinds of authority. The command to build "an ark" is specific as to *what* was to be built. Noah was to build an ark, not a tower. Furthermore, he was to build it with a specific kind of wood, namely, "gopher wood." Since this command was specific no other kind of wood was allowed by divine authority. Yet, the command to Noah to build an ark was general as to *manner* and *method*. Nothing is said regarding the place, the tools, the working hours, etc. These things, while not mentioned, are simply expedients in carrying out the thing commanded.

The Lord's commission to the apostles in Mark 16:15,16 is specific as to *what* they were to preach, but it is generic as to *how* they were to travel in going forth to preach the gospel. The Lord's Supper is specific as to the day of observance, but it is generic as to the hour on the Lord's

Day when saints assemble to observe it. Baptism is specific as to the action performed and the purpose of it, but it is generic as to the place where it is performed, whether in salt water or fresh, whether in an artificial pool or a running stream.

3. *Christians, and others, often act in such a way as to make void the authority of Christ.* This can be done in various ways. Paul condemned the brethren in Galatia for returning to the Mosaic law: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Human rules, laws and traditions in religion render our worship and service "vain" (Matthew 15: 8,9). Latter-day revelations, whether in the form of a Book of Mormon or a speaking in tongues, violate the Lord's command to contend for the once delivered faith (Jude 3). Following men rather than the New Testament is condemned, regardless of whether the men we follow are learned men or whether they are the majority who hold to a particular view (1 Corinthians 4:6). We also make void the authority of Christ in our lives when we refuse to respect the silence of the Scriptures, that is, by doing in religion that which is not authorized by His will as revealed therein (2 John 9).

The New Testament is the only standard of authority in the Lord's church. We who are members of that spiritual body that stands in a saved relationship to Christ are bound to do all that His revealed will requires of us and we are forbidden to do any thing in the way of religious worship and service which He has not authorized. — *Earl Kimbrough*

# Calling on the Name of the Lord

**“... AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS** that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call” (Joel 2:32).

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:10-13).

## **Misconception of the Phrase**

Many in the denominational world have decided that man has nothing to do to be saved, for there is nothing that he can do that will save him. They have, therefore, compounded their error by concluding that man need only to believe and call on the Lord for the salvation spoken of in the Word of the Lord. While we agree that there is nothing that man can do that will save (of itself), we must deny that there is nothing for man to do; for there is too much clear emphasis in the inspired Word upon doing and man’s part in salvation to disregard

in order to conclude that the Lord requires only believing and calling, as most people define the words. In order to determine what man must do to be saved, and likewise to learn what believing and calling mean, we must turn to God’s divine revelation. The passages cited and quoted in the beginning paragraphs of this article have been given to facilitate our study. They deal with calling, and some of them show a connection to faith. Let us see what they teach.

## **Uses of the Term**

Since the first passage, that in Joel, is used by Peter on the birthday of

the church in Acts 2 to explain the events of the day of Pentecost, we can conserve space by looking to Peter’s use of Joel’s passage. After the false charge of drunkenness had been made by some of the unbelieving Jews assembled in Jerusalem, Peter cleared the apostles of the charge by his reference to Joel’s prophecy of the very events that had prompted the charge — namely, the speaking in other languages by the apostles. The unlearned tongues spoken by the apostles were the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the Lord as He had foretold in Joel 2:28-32. Furthermore, by Peter’s use of Joel, the apostle was saying that the day of salvation’s being available to all men — “whosoever shall call” — had begun. No more would God’s dealings be limited to the descendants of Jacob. In addition to his declaration of salvation for any, Peter also established in general terms the conditions upon which that salvation could be enjoyed — call on the name of the Lord. As we continue to read the record of the events of that day, however, we are surprised to learn that when the disbelievers became persuaded of the sonship of Jesus whom they had crucified and likewise convicted of their sins in thus rejecting the Son of God, they did not merely cry out for the Lord to save them on the basis of their newly developed faith; instead they asked for information, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Note also that Peter

## ANOTHER WORTHY WORD

*"FORGIVE"* —God has set the example. "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (Psalms 86:5). Jeremiah prophesied of a New Covenant which God would make with the people, in which He promised, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). Hebrews 8:7-13 shows that this prophecy of the New Covenant is fulfilled in the gospel of Christ.

As God forgives, He expects His people to forgive. "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (Luke 17:3,4). God would have His people remember His readiness to forgive as an example for them. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31,32).

## CALLING

did not tell them just to call on the Lord, or just ask the Lord to save them then and there. He told them in clear words what to do, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ..." Now when Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized, did he become confused and forget that he had already told them to call on the name of the Lord? No, for he was speaking as the Spirit gave him utterance (Acts 2:4). Are the two sets of instruction inconsistent or contradictory? Again we answer no, for the Spirit does not give conflicting testimony. Calling on the name of the Lord, as Peter first spoke in verse 21, involves requesting the Lord, on the basis of his authority, to do what He promised to do — save. As Peter later instructed, repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ involves doing what the Lord requires, by His authority. In both cases Peter was actually saying the same thing. We might say that in the latter set of instructions he was simply clarifying or explaining what calling on the name of the Lord involved.

Further evidence along this line is found in the instruction given by Ananias to Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16. He told the penitent Saul to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. The addition of the phrase "calling on the name of the Lord," shows that by Saul's doing what the authority of Jesus Christ required the sinner would be calling upon or requesting the

Lord to fulfill his promise to save him from his sins. One who is unwilling to do as the Lord teaches or who has not done it is in no position to call upon the Lord for salvation. He needs first to obey the Lord's will and then he will be calling upon the name of the Lord—recognizing His authority and upon the basis of it appealing to the Lord.

The final passage used at the outset of the article also stresses calling on the name of the Lord, but as the consequence of previous actions. The commissioning of the Lord's apostles, the proclamation of the Word, the hearing and the believing of people must precede calling upon the name of the Lord in God's scheme of redemption. How could one intelligently appeal to the Lord for salvation through obedience in ignorance? How could one who had barely heard the Word of God and thus was not fully persuaded of the authority of Jesus Christ call on the name of the Lord? He could not! Yet, so often denominational preachers try to get people just to believe and call on the name of the Lord before they have been taught even as much as what to do to be saved.

"Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

— Bobby Graham

# Stumbling in One Point

**ONE NEED NOT BREAK** every law of God to be a transgressor. The full force of law stands behind each statute. James said, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” (James 2:10,11).

Adam and Eve broke one law of God, but because of that one transgression they lost their paradise and brought great woe upon themselves. (Gen. 2:3). Moses deviated from God’s instruction on one occasion, but that was enough to keep him from bringing the children of Israel into the promised land. (Numbers 20; Deuteronomy 34). At the city of Jericho, Achan broke one law of God, and as a result was destroyed. (Joshua 6; 7).

There may be a recognizable difference in the moral magnitude of sins. Failing to assemble to worship may not be looked upon as so grievous a sin as murder. The law of the land recognizes the great wrong of murder, whereas the law of the land allows one to forsake worship with impunity. But so far as the law of God is concerned, forsaking the assembly is sin, and murder is sin. There is no difference in the guilt of sin. James said that one may keep

the whole law, and yet when he stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all. One who breaks God’s law at any point does not have the right attitude toward God or his law. The man who breaks God’s law at any point does so because he is concerned about doing his will rather than God’s. It may be his will to break the law at what he considers some insignificant and inconsequential point, but with such an attitude he would also disobey God’s law at any point he so desired. Thus, though he breaks the law at one point, he is guilty of the whole law.

Failure to recognize this principle may be the cause of many sins today. The devil no doubt will lead far greater numbers to destruction by tempting to “little sins” than to great, shocking sins. But the truth remains, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4.) — *BN*

## Some Simple Lessons from Psalm 26

**IN MANY RESPECTS** the Psalms occupy a unique place among the books of the Bible. The content and mode of expression are largely devotional, extolling the greatness and goodness of God. The reader is made aware of his continual need of God’s help and guidance. Those who sorrow and are fainthearted find strength and encouragement to continue the battles of life. The value of the Psalms is seen in the extensive use Jesus made of them in his public and private ministry.

The central theme of this Psalm is David’s deep desire to have the approval of God. While seeking God’s approval, David manifests a degree of humility and submission to God’s will that are unsurpassed in his other Psalms.

Space forbids an extensive review of the Psalm in its entirety. However, it is hoped that a brief study will reveal some simple, yet practical lessons for all in this age.

One of the principal lessons in the Psalm is David’s plea to God for a rigid and thorough examination of the deepest recesses of his heart. His

## “ONLY IN THE LORD”

A Christian who is a widow may marry again, but there is a restriction — “only in the Lord.” “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39). Paul believed that he represented the will of God in this matter. “But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment — and I think I also have the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 7:40).

Who is in the Lord, one whom a Christian widow may marry? Paul also gives answer to this question: “Or do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death” — no more, no fewer. (Romans 6:3). “For **as many of you as were baptized into Christ** have put on Christ” — no more, no fewer (Galatians 3:27).

It is reasonable that if the widow, perhaps an older and more experienced woman, is placed under this restriction, it would be well for any woman (or man) to marry “only in the Lord.”

## PSALM 26

plea, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart,” has a note of extreme urgency. He desires to be brought face to face with his sins in order that he might be right with God. David recognizes the grave danger of self-appraisal that so often leads to self-deception. He wants the inner workings of his heart laid bare that he may see himself as he is. David understands well that the key to a pure life is a pure heart. (Proverbs 23:7; 4:23; Matthew 5:8). Painful as this examination may be, it prepares the heart and life for the final day of reckoning.

David’s intense desire to be examined grows out of his deep trust in God and his word. He knows that the judge of all the earth would do right, rendering only righteous judgment (Genesis 18:25; Psalm. 96:13). Such trust would render him firm and secure and he “would not slide.” Such trust in God, his goodness and eternal verity, is a secure foundation of a stable life and a guaranteed backsliding preventive. No one backslides until he has lost his trust in God.

One of the principal factors that marked the life of David was his appreciation and regard for truth. “I have walked in thy truth” indicates knowledge and practice of the truth. Only the wise seek and follow the truth, letting it guide every step (Psalm 119:11;

2 Corinthians 5:7). Truth is powerful. (John 8:32). When one walks by faith in the light of God’s word, he is walking with God (1 John 1:7; Genesis 5:24).

David understood well the powerful influence of companions and associates, and he refused to sit with the wicked. Solomon joins with David’s conviction when he says, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.” (Prov. 13:20.) Since friends are chosen deliberately, David refused to “go in with dissemblers (liars)”, and “hated the congregation of evil doers.” Hundreds of years later, Paul declared, “Evil companionships corrupt good morals.” David sought the company of those who feared God and kept his word. (Psa. 119:63.)

Finally, David delighted in the worship of God. He was glad when the time came to go “up to the house of the Lord,” because God was the Creator of the earth and all things therein. (Psa. 122:1; 95:1-7.) David was eager to praise God because of his unbounded mercy. (Psa. 86:12.) David’s great desire to worship God sprang out of the knowledge he had of God and the reverence he had for his holy name. So has it ever been. Only those who truly know God delight to worship and praise him. Learning to worship and praise God in this life prepares one to worship him in eternity.

— Lindsay A. Allen

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