

GOSPEL GUIDE

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

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Noah's Salvation 1

I. Noah was saved by grace.

"AND GOD SAW that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5-8).

Because of the wickedness of man God could have utterly destroyed the whole human race, but in this wicked generation there was one man who was "just," "perfect," (upright), and who "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). This was the man who "found grace" in the eyes of the Lord," and who was saved from the destructive flood.

Noah was saved by the grace of God, but he was not saved by "grace only." Had he been saved by the grace of God only, there would have been nothing for him to do in regard to his salvation; but God gave him something to do in or-

der to be saved. God gave him the responsibility of building the ark according to exact specifications (Genesis 6). Though he was saved by the grace of God, he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Hebrews 11:7). God further gave to him the responsibility of preaching to the people of his day, and this he did, for Peter calls him "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). He found favor in the Sight of God, and enjoyed God's grace because he did what God told him to do—he "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).

Today man is saved by grace, and if it were not for the grace of

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NOAH'S SALVATION 1

God, there would be no hope for man lost and dying in sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). "By grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2:5). But God's word does not say that we are saved by "grace only." Noah, who found favor in the sight of God, had to prepare the ark in order to be saved by grace. In like manner, to be recipients of God's grace today we must be submissive to his will. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we *should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11,12). We are saved by the gospel, "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). But what the gospel is said to do, grace is also said to do. We stand in grace—"this grace wherein ye stand" (Romans 5:2). But we also stand in the gospel—"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel... wherein ye stand" (1 Corinthians 15:1). We are saved

by grace—"by grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2:5). But we are saved by the gospel—"I declare unto you the gospel...by which also ye are saved" (1 Corinthians 15:1,2). The message of salvation is called "the word of the gospel" (Acts 15:7). But it is also called "the word of grace" (Acts 20:32). Therefore, when one is saved by grace, he is saved by the tender mercy of God upon his obedience to the gospel of Christ.

II. Noah was saved by faith.

"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" (Hebrews 11:7). But Noah was not saved by "faith only," not by mental assent to the reality and power of God. Because of the kind of man he was before the flood—"just," "perfect," "walked with God"—it is evident that his faith was more than a passive trust. When he was saved from the flood by faith, he was saved because he demonstrated his faith in obedience. He did what God told him to do; he "prepared an ark."

Today man is saved by faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). But we are not saved by faith only. In Romans 5:1 Paul says that we are justified by faith, but in verse 9 he says that we are justified by the blood of Christ. In Romans

3:24 he says that we are justified by grace. In Romans 8:24 he says that we are saved by hope. In Titus 3:5 he says that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 15:1,2 he says that we are saved by the gospel. Peter says that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21). The only time "faith only" is used in the scriptures James says that we are not justified by "faith only" (James 2:24). We are saved by faith, by grace, by the blood, by hope, by baptism, when we demonstrate that faith by obeying the gospel, God's power to save (Romans 1:16).

III. Noah was saved by water.

"When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:20). The Genesis record explains how Noah, and the seven others, were saved by water—"And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth" (Genesis 7: 17). The water of the flood that destroyed the wicked became the means of deliverance of Noah from the wicked world.

Man is saved by water, not by water alone, as if there were saving power in water. He is saved by obedience to the gospel, which requires water baptism (Acts 10:47,48). Concerning the salvation of Noah, Peter said, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water, the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:20,21). As Noah was saved by water, "the like figure" (the anti-type), even baptism now

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saves us. In this passage the word "figure" is translated from the word from which we get our word "antitype." "Anti" means "against." Anti-

type is that which is placed against the type. The water of the flood is the type. Baptism is the antitype. Noah was saved by the type—the water of the flood. We are saved by the antitype—baptism.

Noah was saved by grace, by faith, by water through his obedience to God. In like manner today man is saved by grace and by faith, and by water in his obedience to the gospel (Romans 1:16). — *BN*

Fellowship in the Gospel

THE APOSTLE PAUL was thankful that the Philippian church had fellowship with him in the gospel. (Philippians 1:4,5). This, undoubtedly, referred to the Philippian church sending monetary support to Paul while he did the preaching in other places. (Philippians 4:15,16). This sharing and receiving was called fellowship. Thus, they jointly shared and participated in preaching the gospel. The Philippian church had done this from the beginning— either from the beginning of the church or from the beginning of Paul's labors when he went forth from them. It is a fact that each Christian must tell the story of Jesus wherever he goes as best he can. At the same time, there is such a thing as the church having fellowship with another as that one gives his time to preaching. It is this fellowship in preaching which we study in this lesson.

In Own Ranks

The church may have fellowship with one who preaches the gospel in her own ranks. This is done by the church supplying the wages of a preacher as he gives his time to preaching the gospel in connection with the local church. This is evident in Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 9:11-14. A gospel meeting is an example of this. That which is

sometimes called a located preacher is an example of this. This is the most common way the church has fellowship in the preaching of the gospel today.

Sending A Preacher

A church may also have fellowship in the gospel by sending a preacher (not funds) to another church. "Then tidings of these things came

unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: And they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch ..." (Acts 11:22,23). This is a common practice today with New Testament example behind it.

Supplying Monetary Support For A Preacher

A church may have fellowship in the gospel by furnishing monetary support for a preacher as he preaches in another place or places. "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Philippians 4:15,16). This practice is widespread among churches and preachers today.

Fellowship With Other Churches

A church may have fellowship with another church or with other churches in the gospel by two or more churches going together to supply the needs of a preacher in another place or places. At one time, the apostle Paul was the preacher in such an arrangement. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of

“MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS” 1

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts ...,” says the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).

Naaman the leper is an example of the truthfulness of this statement (2 Kings 5). This man learned that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure him of his leprosy. Naaman with his horses and chariot went and stood at the door of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.” But Naaman became furious. He **thought**, the prophet would come out to him and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy. Naaman considered the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel. He could wash in them and be clean? He turned away in a rage. Those under his authority persuaded him to do as the prophet said. He was a leper until he dipped the seventh time in the Jordan. Then his flesh became as the flesh of a little child. Had he stubbornly followed **his thoughts** he would have suffered horrible, incurable leprosy until he died.

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them to do you service” (2 Corinthians 11:8). We observe again that this is a widespread practice among true churches today. The church, where this writer preaches, sends approximately six thousand dollars each month away from home to preachers in various places. At the same time, practically all of these preachers receive a part of their wages from other churches. Thus, there is fellowship between some churches and among some churches in the preaching of the gospel as they each send wages to the man who is doing the preaching.

Beyond The Pattern

These scriptures constitute the pattern for fellowship in the gospel. This is adequate for nearly any situation imaginable. Sometimes zeal outreaches this pattern and

arrangements are made which are without New Testament authority. Sometimes organizations are formed to implement fellowship in the gospel such as a missionary society which becomes a separate gospel preaching organization fully equipped to act on its own. Sometimes this zeal will cause one church to be set up as the supervising, receiving, and disbursing church for some work. In this they act as a funnel through which other churches pour their funds. This is sometimes called a sponsoring church. The reason we do not quote a verse to show authority for such things is that there is no such verse to quote. This is sad. Nevertheless, let us not be discouraged. Let us continue to have fellowship in the gospel working within the pattern as found in the New Testament.

— Curtis E. Flatt

Misleading Statements

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD is filled with stereotyped expressions. These are so often repeated that they come to be accepted as true whether or not they are. Such expressions may contain elements of truth but they are essentially untrue. Or else they may be true on the surface but misapplied. In either case they are misleading statements. Here are three that are perhaps most often heard.

1. “One church is just as good as another.” This is used to prove that all churches are acceptable with God. But this is not the teaching of the Bible. “Except the Lord build the

house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1). A church founded by uninspired men this side of the first century A. D. is not “just as good” as the church founded by

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Christ (Matthew 16:18). Christ's church was purchased with *His own blood* (Acts 20:28). It has Christ as its one and only *head* (Ephesians 1:22,23). It consists of those who have been saved from sin (Ephesians 5:23). How could a church founded by men in opposition to the Lord's church be "as good as" the Lord's church?

2. "There are good people in all churches." This is another expression that is often repeated to show that God approves of all churches. The statement itself is true, but the conclusion drawn from it is false. There are good moral people in all churches, but this does not prove that all churches are acceptable with God. A little reasoning shows the fallacy of this conclusion. If there are *good people* in all churches, there are also *bad people* in all churches. If the good people in all churches proves that God accepts all churches, then the bad people in all churches would prove that

He accepts none of them. Such reasoning cancels itself out! It really proves nothing! There are also good people who are not members of any church. Does this prove that *no* is as good as *any* church? The fact that there are good people in all churches proves nothing about the importance of the Lord's church. The importance of the Lord's church is revealed by the Scriptures.

3. "The church does not save one." This is also a true statement that is usually employed to prove the church is non-essential or that one church is just as good as another. It is used to prove that the church has nothing to do with salvation, that one can be saved *out* of the church as well as *in* it. Certainly the church does not save. God saves! But the church is composed of the saved. The church is the *relationship* in which the saved stand before God. It is in the church, the spiritual body of Christ, where men are *reconciled* to God (Ephesians 2:13-16; 1:22,23). The church is composed of those who have been saved by

the *blood of Christ* (Acts 20:28). So to speak of salvation apart from the church of Christ is to speak of salvation apart from the *blood of Christ*, or apart from *reconciliation to God*. The church does not save, but it is in and through the church that men are saved.

In each of these statements there is an element of truth. The last two in fact are true, but are used to draw a false conclusion by misapplication. A man-made church is not just as good as the church Christ purchased with His own blood. There are good moral people in all churches, but it takes more than moral goodness for one to be saved; and only the saved are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). The church does not of itself save, but it is the body composed of those who are in a saved relationship in Christ. Truth cannot be established by often repeated stereotyped expressions. Truth can be established only by the Scriptures (John 17:17). — Earl Kimbrough

The Standard of Moses and His Regard for It

THE OLD TESTAMENT was written for our learning and admonition (Romans 15:4), and the things that happened to the people who lived then happened by way of example for us (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Moses was an extraordinary man. His life was of the highest caliber. Through him God wrought many great things. Moses led the people out of Egypt, and through

him God gave His law to Israel. Anyone should be interested, therefore, in the standard of Moses because of the impact of that standard upon him and the accomplishments of

his life because he followed that standard.

Moses went up into mount Sinai and the record says, "And Jehovah spake unto Moses" (Exodus 25:1). In Exodus 30 and 31 we find that "Jehovah spake unto Moses" six times. Furthermore, God said, "According to all that I show thee, the *pattern* of the tabernacle, and the *pattern* of all the furniture

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“For My thoughts are not your thoughts...says the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).

There are many examples showing that man’s thoughts too often clash with God’s thoughts. On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance, said, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, **‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’**” (Acts 2:36-38). This was God’s thought, for Peter was speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

At this passage there are millions whose thought clashes with God’s thought. Their thought is, “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **not** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit.” Whose thought is truth?

STANDARD OF MOSES

thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:9). Again He said, “And see that thou make them after their *pattern*, which hath been showed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40). It is clear from these verses that the standard which Moses followed was God’s word.

It is very easy to claim a standard and then make a mockery of your claim by not following it. How may we know Moses’ attitude toward his standard? One’s attitude toward a standard can always be determined by his response to that standard. Moses, for example, was told to construct the tabernacle of shittim or acacia wood. It was to have hangings made of linen, goats’ hair, rams’ skin dyed red, and badger skins (seal or porpoise skins, according to the American Standard Version text and marginal reading). The tabernacle was to be built by certain specifications. Moses built the tabernacle, not a pyramid. He built it of acacia wood, not oak, and in Exodus 39 and 40, in which a summary of the completed work is given and the tabernacle is set up, the expression, “as Jehovah commanded Moses,” or its equivalent, is found eighteen times. Moses made the tabernacle as God specified it should be made.

Why did Moses’ attitude determine his particular response? First of all, he believed in what God said. Whatever God said was right. He trusted God and felt no need or desire to do differently from what God said. Secondly, he respected God’s word. Moses feared God. He believed God was the creator, and

El Shaddai, the Almighty God. Moses feared to change God’s word; so he obeyed exactly as God had said. Third, he considered God’s word as positive authority. God told Moses what to do. He did not tell him what not to do, but what He told Moses was sufficient. Moses was not constantly seeking to avoid obedience, so he was content to obey God.

As it was in Moses’ day, there are many standards today that one can choose to follow. Some will choose traditions. Others will follow a way of their own or of some other man. The standard that all should choose is God’s word. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). For reliable guidance man must turn to God.

When, however, we say, “God’s word is my standard,” there is still the question, “What is *my* attitude toward God’s word?” Unfortunately men’s attitudes are as diverse as their standards are. There are those who claim to accept God’s word which says there is one body or one church (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22,23). They may have the attitude, though, that there is not enough difference between the various churches to matter. Going back to Moses, we would remind you of the time he was told to speak to the rock in order to bring water forth for the Israelites (Numbers 20:1-13). In anger he smote the rock. God allowed the water to come forth, but He punished Moses for his transgression. What difference did it make whether Moses spake to the rock or smote it? God said to do one; He said nothing about doing the other. Though Moses *usually* followed

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God's word, this was one time he did not, and he suffered the consequences.

Sometimes people will say, "It doesn't matter which church." Would it have mattered to GOD whether Moses built a tabernacle or a covered wagon? Moses thought so. It also matters what church we are members of. John said, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). If there are *false* prophets, there are also *false* churches, churches that have been

established by false prophets. As we are to "prove the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1), so we must prove (examine from the scriptures) the church we are a member of or in which we are contemplating membership.

One will also often hear it said that "the church doesn't matter anyhow. What is important is living right." We may reflect on Moses again profitably. He lived a righteous life. Moses was an example of godliness. When he did disobey God in the matter of the rock, did his good life cover up his transgres-

sion? No. Nothing but the blood of Christ covers transgressions. Neither will a good life compensate for one's affiliation with a church which is not in harmony with God's pattern.

Let us remember that Moses' attitude involved *faith* in what God said, *respect* for what God said, and *satisfaction* with what God said. The cultivation of these things will promote a godly attitude on our part and will produce the fruits of righteousness in our lives as they did in that of Moses.

— Robert E. Waldron

Passing Responsibility

A COMMON AND DANGEROUS SIN is refusing to accept responsibility for one's own mistakes.

I. *Some blame others for their mistakes and make others responsible for their own wrongs.* Adam blamed Eve, and indirectly blamed God for his sin. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:12). Aaron blamed the people for his sin when he made the molten calf. "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." (Exodus 32: 22). King Saul blamed the people for his disobedience in sparing the animals and King Agag, when God had commanded him to destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions. He said, "For the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God" (1 Samuel 15:15).

Today sometimes the alien sinner blames his continued disobedience on hypocrites in the church. He may say, "I know I am better than they are." The fellow who can hide behind a hypo-

cite is small indeed. Instead of picking out a reprobate as a standard of comparison, why not pick out Christ as the true example? Sometimes unfaithful members of the church blame their disinterest on other members of the church. "They are not friendly." "I was sick, and they did not send me cards and flowers." Sometimes husband and wife blame each other for their domestic troubles. "I know that I have done wrong, but she is just as much to blame as I am."

II. *Some blame a busy life for their spiritual failures.* They are too busy to read and study the word of God, too busy to attend the services and worship God, too busy to visit the sick, the fatherless, and widows. Parents become involved in many activities and are too busy to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But some day there will not be any business to look after. There will be only one

event to require our time, and that will be the judgment. If we have been too busy to put the kingdom first, it will be too late then. (Matthew 6:33).

III. *Some blame circumstances of life for their spiritual failures.* Jesus told of a certain man who made a great supper and bade many, but those bidden made excuses. The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." (Luke 14:15-24.) Various circumstances prevented their accepting the invitation. Human nature continues the same, for some today cannot attend the services because of circumstances. Some say that they do not attend today because they were made to go when they were young. It may then be supposed that they do not wash behind their ears now because they were made to do so when they were young. They do not use the multiplication table now because they were

THE INVESTMENT WITH THE GREATEST RETURN

(Matthew 19:27-29)

What is this investment? Peter said, "We have left all and followed You." From the standpoint of a stock market investment this would not be wise, for there is always the risk of total loss.

How did Peter's investment turn out? He was given opportunity to be with the noblest character whose presence ever graced the earth—Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of man. He would be given the opportunity to know intimately the One who would give His life's blood for his cleansing from all sin. He would have the high privilege of sitting at the feet of the world's greatest Teacher to learn the gospel, man's only hope of eternal salvation. He would receive a hundredfold in blessings in this life and inherit eternal life in the paradise of God. He along with the other apostles would occupy twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel—rising from the status of a poor fisherman to that of eternal royalty.

Peter made the wisest investment, with the greatest return one can make—the return being eternal citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. **Everyone should make this investment!**

RESPONSIBILITY

made to do so when they were young. Some may not attend because they do not have suitable clothing. Yet their clothing does not seem to keep them from other activities and other places.

IV. *There are certain consequences of not accepting responsibility for our own mistakes.* (1) We become liars in misrepresenting and placing the blame where it does not belong. And liars are an abomination in the sight of God. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8). (2) We prove ourselves cowards by allowing the innocent to be blamed for our wrongs. (3) We become blind to our shortcomings and therefore think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. (Romans 12:3). (4) We become guilty of unfairly judging others and prove ourselves to be hypocrites (Matthew 7:1-5). (5) We condemn ourselves by making excuses for our wrongs instead of correcting them (Luke 14:15-24).

Instead of making excuses for ourselves and passing the responsibility for our failures on to others, we must have integrity and courage enough to recognize, admit, and repent of our wrongs. If one has not obeyed the gospel, no excuse can take the place of obedience. He must believe in Christ with all his heart. (John 8:24). He must repent of his sins. (Luke 13:3.) He must confess his faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32,33). He must be baptized for the remission of his sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38) If one has obeyed the gospel at some time and yet has substituted excuses for obedience as a child of God, he must repent and confess his sin to God. (Acts 8:22). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 8,9).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). — BN

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