

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Acts 2:38

Most people who have studied Acts 2:38 know that the meaning of the word "for" is the most debated question about the verse. Many efforts have been made to show what "for" means. The Greek word *eis* which is the word translated "for" has been defined from the lexicons. Many illustrations have been used to get the point across. This study will simply be one more attempt to show in a simple way what the verse means. According to the King James Version, the verse reads, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Since it is really the matter of baptism that causes all the difficulty, why not just take it out of the verse. The passage would then read, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now the question is why repent? The answer — "for the remission of sins." Does this mean that one should repent because his sins have been forgiven or in order that his sins may be forgiven?

Maybe you have not thought about repentance and salvation much. Therefore, look at it like this: are you saved with repentance or without it? Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." (Luke 13:3.) This verse shows that one cannot be saved until he repents. Now we

can answer our question: "Should one repent because his sins have already been forgiven or in order that they might be forgiven?" Clearly one must repent in order to obtain the remission of sins. "For" means "in order to obtain."

Substitute this definition in the place of "for" and we have the statement, "Then Peter said unto them. Repent every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ in order to obtain the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This definition is the true meaning of the word "for" as it stands in relationship to repentance and remission of sins. Now we point out that "for" occurs only once in the verse and can therefore have only one meaning in the particular use made of it. We have already agreed it means "in order to obtain." Let us draw an imaginary box around the expression so that we will obviously not alter the definition when we put baptism back in the verse. (You do remember it is supposed to be there.) Now the verse says, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ in order to obtain the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

By the same process of reasoning we can experimentally leave out "repent," and we would have "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ in order to obtain the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." You see, the definition of "for" is the same for repentance and baptism.

One may reject the plain teaching of Acts 2:38, but he cannot say it was too hard to understand. The passage is not difficult to understand, but people find it hard to accept because of what they have been told by preachers sworn to uphold their particular doctrine regardless of what the scriptures plainly teach.

Good friend, my hope is that you will take your Bible, study Acts 2:38 with your own eyes and obey it, casting away denominational prejudices. Remember that only you will give an account for the way you treated God's word. If you merely take someone else's word for a thing, you have just

casually delivered your soul to somebody else's care. Think soberly on these things.

— Bob Waldron

Youth Ministers

The May issue of The Christian Chronicle [April, 2001 – GFS] carried an interview with LaGard Smith, now "Scholar in Residence for Christian Studies" at David Lipscomb University in Nashville. One item caught my attention. Smith was asked what he would say if he had the undivided attention of every member of churches of Christ for 10 minutes. Included in his answer:

". . . I would call on the church to abandon youth ministries, which have toppled the spiritual hierarchy. Throughout Scripture, spiritual leadership is not only male, but it's elder. It's the wisdom of the years that leads and nurtures younger generations."

Abandon youth ministries. This is not the cry of some old fogey ultra-conservative who resists change at every turn. It is the counsel of one who is seeing among his peers the ripe fruit of an ill-advised tree.

Youth ministries typically feature two things: abundant recreational activities and shallow, entertaining instruction. What happens when teens who are accustomed to such things become adults? Will they immediately consider themselves too old for church-sponsored recreation, or suddenly insist on more sober worship and meatier preaching? Of course not. As a result, today's "adult church" has in many cases become just a slightly toned-down version of yesterday's "youth church."

The Bible, of course, knows nothing of youth ministries, youth church, or church-sponsored recreation for any age. And it emphatically warns against ear-tickling preaching (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

This warning is timely. In recent years, increasing numbers of congregations which have stood opposed to institutionalism and church-sponsored recreation (things readily accepted by Smith's associates) are beginning to dabble in youth ministries. We don't call them that, of course, and in most cases we have not yet crossed the line into unauthorized activities. But the trend is cause for concern.

Special meetings for young people call for certain speakers, those whose presentations are more entertaining. The truth is slightly repackaged - less Bible reading and exposition, more stories and humor, and lessons that are mostly application with content limited to "relevant" (daily living) themes. Parents provide ample food and entertainment.

Do not misunderstand. No one opposes occasional sermons targeted at a particular segment of the audience, nor do we underestimate the value of young Christians getting together. However, when meetings for young people consistently take on a more entertaining air, when the add-on recreation becomes expected, when we advertise it along with the worship (even though it is not paid for from the church's treasury), and when brethren begin to say that we may lose our young people without such events, we have gone farther than we think down the wrong path.

– Frank Himmel

Editor's Note: Interestingly, in the interview with Mr. Smith, he also made this timely observation:

“... we have a youth culture that is driving the church. The youth culture is not driven by issues of truth, but issues of the heart. And the heart is just volatile. [Jeremiah 17:9 – GFS] A younger generation does not perceive authority in the same way previous generations have. And in the absence of that collective understanding of biblical divine authority, every man is his own law.” [Jeremiah 10:23 – GFS]

I AM NOT ASHAMED!

Among the many things that Paul wrote to the saints at Rome is the statement: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.) This is but one of the many passages written by this inspired man that testifies to the fact that he was unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many are the times when he exhibited his stand for the truth against error, even in the face of much opposition and persecution.

This great apostle should be an example to us, not only in this, but in other things as well in his faithful and consecrated service in the Master's kingdom. One should be "ashamed to be afraid," and "afraid to be ashamed" of the gospel of the Son of God; yet such seems to be the case with many in the world today, and not a few in the church of our Lord. The many schemes, campaigns and promotions to draw the crowd, instead of the simple and powerful message of Christ, the gospel, proves that some have lost respect for the gospel and its power. Paul's love for the truth and the souls of men led him to be not ashamed or afraid of the "power of God to save." And, so it should be with men today, and so it is with all who have the proper love and respect for the truth and the souls of men and women. This love will prompt men to stand for the truth at every opportunity, and will cause them always to appeal to truth, not to human prejudice and the devices of men. They will also welcome the opportunity to defend the truth which they proclaim. Truth has nothing to fear, is aggressive and unrelenting, and those who hold to the truth for the love of the truth, have no fear of that which they have embraced. "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:21.) Thus, where there is any difference, doubt, or question, truth will deal with it openly instead of trying to conceal it. The very fact that folks try to conceal, or keep a thing quiet, is evidence that they are in doubt about the matter for which they claim to stand, and are afraid it will not stand the test of the Scriptures.

When a man's aim is to know and abide in truth, he is willing to hear any truth, and is also willing to have his teaching examined and discussed publicly and openly. This is so, for if he does not have all the truth, he wants to have all the truth, and desires that everyone else have all the truth; for he knows that only the truth, yet all the truth, is the only thing that will make men free from sin. Our Lord said, "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reprov'd." (John 3:20.) This is the reason that some fear investigation and refuse to defend their cause, even claiming not to believe in debates, or public discussions, even those of honorable nature. When you find this to be true, you can know that such are afraid of their position, their teaching; they cannot afford to have the light of truth turned upon their teaching and practice. All should become suspicious of those who so act, and should investigate the word of God so as to know the truth that makes one free from sin.

It is truly worth repeating that truth has nothing to fear, and those who refuse open study and discussion of any teaching, especially when they claim to preach the gospel, are by their actions saying they are either ashamed or afraid of the gospel. If not, then why not? Are you ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Remember, it is the power of God to save, and thus the only means by which one can be saved from sin. Then, are you willing to learn the truth? You can by investigating the word of God, by studying His teaching therein. In fact, you can have all the truth anyone else can have on every religious subject; you have access to the same Bible in which it is to be found. Why not then resolve to study it, learn the truth, obey it, and stand for that which is the will of God? Be neither afraid nor ashamed of the gospel, God's truth, for it will stand forever. (1 Pet. 1:25.)

- Eugene Crawley

> "Hypocrites do the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery!" - Matthew Henry
(1662-1714)

- > "Without genuine love for God and others, righteousness deteriorates into self-righteousness!"
 - > "Heaven: don't miss it for the world!"
 - > "Selfishness makes Christianity a burden; love makes it a delight!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Jesus: Friend of Sinners!*" (Text: Luke 7:36-50); Sunday evening: "*Precious Promises!*" (2 Pet. 1:1-4).