

The Blood of Christ, Fellowship and Condemning Others
(The Foundation of Fellowship)

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Introduction: Should churches of Christ exist?

- A. Why not simply attend the local church closest to you? Why are you attending here?
 - 1. When I speak of the “church of Christ” I am referring to those that follow Jesus as their Lord and chief shepherd. (Mt 16:18; 1 Pt 5:4)
 - 2. Are we seeking only follow the voice of the Lord? (Jn 10:1-5)
- B. The Lord knew that we would have to make these decisions. (Mt 15:12-14)
 - 1. There were many groups in Jesus’ day. Which ones did He become a part of?
 - 2. This truth is a very difficult one for the young and inexperienced. We do not want to be viewed as condemning others or looking down on them.

I. Why do local churches change?

- A. Local churches are also moving in a direction spiritually. Consider the seven churches the Lord examined in Asia. (Rev 2-3)
 - 1. The Lord wants us to also examine the direction of the local church we are a part of! On what basis do we do that? (Ex. Decisions made after my baptism)
 - 2. Does the local church I am part of stand upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets? Churches can change drastically over time. (Eph 2:20)
- B. There is a great responsibility placed upon elders and upon parents!
 - 1. We often fail in teaching the next generation. (Judges 2:10; 1 Tim 4:1)
 - 2. Consistently the first step away from this foundation is a compromised fellowship. When a group is moving in a direction it can be hard to resist.
 - 3. The church will be destroyed when distinctive teaching stops. (1 Cor 3:11-14)
 - 4. The desire to put human relationships above God is powerful. (Gal 1:10)

II. The Lord demands that we make decisions on fellowship

- A. How can we keep the unity of the Spirit in a local church. (Eph 4:1-3; 1 Cor 10)
 - 1. We often will struggle to resolve differences in our understanding of God’s word and at the same time struggle to keep the right attitudes towards brethren.
 - 2. During these times of struggle real Christian maturity can be seen! (Col 2:2-3)
- B. Our relationship with God is the foundation of our fellowship. (1 Jn 1:3, 7)
 - 1. I should see my brethren as I see the blood of Christ. (Rom 14:15; 15:1-2)
 - 2. How can we seek doctrinal unity and still have unity in the blood of Christ?
 - 3. What we do collectively is crucial. All play a part in this! (Phil 4:15-16 ASV)
- C. Local churches can lose their fellowship with God. (Rev 2:15, 20; 5; 2 Jn 9)
 - 1. There are times where a brother is to be publicly marked. (1 Cor 5:6)
 - 2. There are those that we would not allow into a position to teach! (2 Cor 11:2-4)
 - 3. As we use careful judgement in this, we can make the wrong decision! (Saul)
 - 4. Must I have perfect knowledge before acting? (Can I know some things!)

III. Fellowship and water baptism

- A. Why have differences on water baptism historically demanded a separation of fellowship?

1. Jesus placed baptism as a foundational doctrine for all Christians. (Eph 4:4-6)
2. Fellowship with Christ and His blood occur at baptism. (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:26-27)
- B. Consider the persecution of the Anabaptist during the Reformation movement.
 1. Should only believers be baptized? (Mk 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-38)
 2. The Bible teaches that baptism is an immersion. (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12)
 3. These truths if accepted would create great political and social upheaval. Many lost their lives in proclaiming this truth. They had to be quite or be cast out.
 4. Could both views be equally taught and believed in a common fellowship? Only if both views were regarded as unimportant and discardable. (Ex. Student leaving)

IV. How should we apply God's teaching on baptism?

- A. We will seek to have every person find and receive this one baptism.
 1. Baptism is the final step to find forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16)
 2. When Jesus is preached then men would naturally seek this baptism! (Acts 8:35-36)
 3. If there is not clear, repeated, consistent teaching over time then many may give in to compromise. (Ex. Preacher refused to talk about baptism in Jn 3.. "too divisive.")
- B. Consider some questions each of us should ask about our baptism.
 1. When were you saved by the blood of Christ? 2. How old were you? 3. How long after your salvation were you baptized? 4. For what purpose were you baptized? 5. How long after your request to be baptized were you actually baptized? 6. What did you confess before you were baptized?
 1. Paul did this very thing! (Acts 19:1-5)
 2. The promise given on Pentecost could be understood by all! (Acts 2:38)
 3. The men Paul met were sincerely baptized but they lacked important teaching.
 4. Should I press another about their beliefs on this subject? (My example in college)

IV. How can the next generation be given this precious promise?

- A. God's way will provide for each succeeding generation. (Acts 2:38-39)
 1. This dedication does not come from a lukewarm faith. (1 Tim 4:15-16; 2 Tim 2:2)
 2. Do we not realize that our children will see the difference between conviction and convenience? Can we accept in fellowship someone that does not teach this?
- B. A commitment to faithfully teach without compromise will result in a proper fellowship!
 1. What will be the future of the churches in this area? Consider the churches of Judea.
 2. How can the next generation find faith and a good conscience? (Ex. Evangelism) (1 Tim 1:3-5, 18-19; 4:1-2, 6-7, 13; 2 Tim 2:2)
- C. A failed fellowship will result in assimilation with the world.
 1. What will happen if you joined a local denomination and tried to teach the gospel?
 2. You may be tolerated if only give financial support to those who differ with you, if you receive those taught contrary to what you believe, and accept preachers and literature that teaches contrary to you believe be used. Also, you must be silent!
 3. Could you accept those conditions and be taken seriously by anyone? A separation of fellowship is demanded! (Rev 12:11)
 4. Consider the danger of assimilation. Consider the "Confederados."
 5. The *Confederados* also have an annual festival, called the *Festa Confederada*...
The festival is marked by Confederate flags, Confederate uniforms....

Conclusion: Do you know: Ammiel? Nahbi? Geuel? ... Caleb? Joshua? (Josh 24:15)

How Far Will You Follow Another Person?

By Larry Rouse

How are you building your personal faith? Jesus exhorted us to be like the man to “who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock” because every foundation will be tested in the floods of life! **(Lk 6:48-49)** Every person has a foundation upon which they make their decisions and live their lives. Unfortunately some have not seriously looked at what is the real basis of their lives.

Satan has many “alternatives” to what he mockingly would call a “radical ultra-legalistic religion” (There are also many other labels you might insert here). Satan seeks to keep the words of God from the hearts of men. Jesus simply pointed out that the foundation that is built on Him involves serving Him as an absolute Lord and that means handling His delivered words as the only source of direction in our lives. **(Lk 6:46; Jn 17:8, 20)** Any approach that does not involve a principled, careful approach to the words of Christ is a rejection of Jesus as Lord. The approach you take towards the words of Christ is the very attitude you take towards the Lordship of Christ. “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” **(Jn 12:48)** The influence of Satan urges people to avoid what he calls “legalism” which is in fact a direct attack upon Jesus as Lord.

How Satan Uses Relationships

One of the most powerful weapons Satan has is human relationships. Jesus plainly warned any who would seek to be His disciple that he must put God first. “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” **(Lk 14:26)** I cannot think of a more difficult test than this. Abraham’s faith was great because he was willing to sacrifice his only son. This was a “flood” that tested the foundation of faith Abraham had built. The words of Jesus will lead each of us to similar conflicts. Have we built a faith that will cost us something? Is it a faith that follows God and not men? **(Gal 1:10)**

The Challenge of Choosing a Mate

Outside of the decision to become a Christian, the decision as to who you marry is one of the most important choices you will make. Do you want to go to heaven? If you are serious about that then your choice will produce a relationship where both husband and wife are “heirs together of the grace of life.” **(1 Pt 3:7)** You will find one who is a Christian and will help you go to heaven.

When one foolishly allows their hearts to become attached to one who is not a Christian, there will be a great test of faith. On one hand there is the desire to please to one you love but then there is also the direction that Jesus gives to His followers. Most who choose to marry a non-Christian fall away from the Lord.

The Power of Rationalization

It is amazing to see those who were once enlightened to justify that which cannot be justified by God’s word. I knew of a Christian woman who dated a non-Christian for many years. The young man was dedicated to a denomination that taught a gospel that was not the gospel of the Lord. She proclaimed to her closest friends and to her parents that she would not consider marrying her boyfriend until he was baptized into Christ for the remission of sins **(Acts 2:38)**. Time passed and the desire to marry increased. What kind of foundation was built in her life? Would an honest recognition of what God’s word teaches be combined with a refusal to compromise, even if it meant losing a dearly loved boyfriend?

Unfortunately, in this case, rationalization provided an “easy” solution. Just proclaim that salvation is by faith alone apart from any conditional promises (that would include confession and baptism) and presto, the young man was a Christian all along! His denomination was right all along! Now faithful Christians become despised because represent a threat to her rationalizations. She now views those who say: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (**Mark 16:16**) as legalists and also guilty of many other things she may choose to imagine. Legalism is now defined to condemn those who carefully apply God’s word. It now becomes easy to cast away like trash any relationship that stands in the way of her self-created “reality.”

It is amazing how one person’s change of loyalty can now test many other Christians. Sadly, parents can suddenly change what they claim to believe because they refuse to pay the price in losing a relationship with a child! The child is now leading the parents! The child must be justified in her actions! It now becomes easy to deny that the Bible teaches any binding law and it also easy to discard and slander faithful brethren.

Real discipleship demands a stand upon truth regardless of relationships. “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.” (**Mt 10:34-36**)

Test Your Heart to Know Who is First

A proper foundation will always direct you to the words of Christ regardless of how hard the consequences may be. Paul urged the Corinthians to ask this question and consider the consequences: “Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are disqualified.” (**2 Cor 13:5**) When human relationships tempted the Galatians to accept a false gospel and to cause them to regard Paul as an enemy (**Gal 4:16**), Paul knew the battle was to have this foundation built again in those he loved. “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” (**Gal 4:19**)

A good heart will always be willing to be tested by God’s word. Satan wishes men to rationalize and then quickly cut off all who disagree. When you compromise and make a relationship more important than God, rest assured that your relationship is about to change with the people of God. It is much “easier” in the short term to “live in the world of throw-away people” than to have your decision tested. Your new relationships will urge you to separate from Christians. “They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.” (**Gal 4:17**)

Sadly when one learns to create their own reality and live in the land of “throw-away people” there is no stopping point. It now becomes easy to go as far as agnosticism and even atheism.

Questions to consider

1. Am I willing to follow the Bible without compromise? (**Lk 6:46**)
2. Am I willing to have good hearted brethren study with me about my decisions? (**Acts 17:11**)
3. Am I making excuses for my actions by blaming my brethren of having a bad attitude? (**Rom 3:4**)
4. Am I becoming comfortable with those who “sit in the seat of the scornful”? (**Ps 1:1**)
5. Am I becoming bitter towards my brethren and even looking down on them in pride? (**James 3:14**)
6. Am I teachable? Am I willing to admit I am wrong? (**Rev 2:10**)