

# Expository Files, 12.9

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*Edited by Jon W. Quinn & Warren E. Berkley*

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*Front Page*

*Incredible Arkansas Bats*  
*Warren E. Berkley*

For a few days this summer I enjoyed a trip of a lifetime with my seven year old grandson. We spent three days at Devil's Den State Park in northwest Arkansas. We hiked six of the mountain trails, did a little boating and explored a cave. It was a great experience both of us will never forget. We are already making plans for future trips into the mountains. The caves of Devil's Den have become the home of several species of bats. One evening we attended a presentation by a Park Ranger. We heard him explain the basics, inform us about the various species in the area, dispel popular myths and explain some of the habits of these amazing flying mammals. Here are two examples of facts we learned from Ranger Harry.

**Bats have a valuable device in their system called Echolocation.** Bats can see, but they are nocturnal. They sleep during the day (protecting them from natural predators), then come out at night to feed. Bats send out sound waves. When the sound hits an object and the echo returns, in their interpretation of the return signal, they are able to locate the insect that will become their meal! This is called Echolocation. The bat can use this system, not only to find the insect, but also to learn the size, shape and texture of the meal. Most bats use echolocation to navigate in the dark and select an insect from the available "menu." Early in the evening, you may be able to see the bats (flying in their typical zigzag pattern, finding and eating insects), but you will not be able to hear the sounds they emit. To detect these bat sounds,

you can purchase an Echolocation Detection Device (for a couple of hundreds dollars). These devices were invented to pick up the special frequencies of particular bats, and “translate” them into sounds audible to humans. Ranger Harry had one. At about 8:50, he turned it on. We were able to “hear” the bats within range using their sophisticated Echolocation systems to pick insects for their evening meal. I read more about this after our trip:

*“Echolocation is a method of sensory perception by which certain animals orient themselves to their surroundings, detect obstacles, communicate with others, and find food. In echolocation a series of short, high-pitched sounds are emitted by an animal. These sounds travel out away from the animal and then bounce off objects and surfaces in the animal's path creating an echo. The echo returns to the animal, giving it a sense about what is in its path. A bat can determine an object's size, shape, direction, distance, and motion. This echolocation system is so accurate that bats can detect insects the size of gnats and objects as fine as a human hair. **Scientists would like to know more about how bats use echolocation so they can help blind people detect objects with sound.**” { <http://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/bats/echo.html>}*

**Maternal Instinct.** Bats generally roost together in large numbers, packing their babies in tight spaces (cool and dark). The female produces a single offspring, called “pups.” In certain areas where bats find habitation, cave wall space is carpeted with bat pups. Born without fur, the babies pack closely together in densities of up to 500 per square foot to share body heat and stay warm. Mothers usually roost together in another part of the cave, each returning to nurse her baby several times a day. For many years, it was generally believed that mothers probably fed any young they found. However, modern studies demonstrate that each mother actually locates her own baby through a sophisticated recognition system involving scent and call. This is amazing when you consider, they must find their young amidst thousands or millions of other active mothers and babies.

If you have occasion to experience bats in some educational setting with your children or grandchildren, you have an awe-inspiring opportunity. Read to them from Genesis chapter one. Never miss a chance to praise the creative power of God. Never miss a chance to point out the huge deficiency in the human theories of evolution (unintelligent design). The bats, the caves, the mountains, the weather, the people – all testimony that “all things were

made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made," (Jno. 1:3).

Resources:

<http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/park.asp?id=4>

For further study; to help your children and grandchildren write a report on this – visit <http://www.incrediblebats.com/finger/index.html>

***The Limited Power Of The Wicked***  
***(Matthew 10:28)***  
***By Warren E. Berkley***

*"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," (Matt.10:28).*

These words are found in the Lord's instructions to the Twelve as He sent them out on the "limited commission," (Matt. 10). He spoke to them frankly about the hostility they would encounter as they spoke the truth of the coming kingdom. They would be opposed by religious leaders (v.17), by governmental leaders (v.18), by family (v.21), and would be "hated by all" for His name's sake (v.22). Yet, the Twelve would be able to rise above any hesitation or fear of opposition and give the message free course. Jesus said to them, "do not fear," and gave them the groundwork of this confidence. This text is another reason for courage: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

There is something worse than physical death. There is a natural dread of death we should not necessarily feel guilty about. To some extent each of us feel this fright. Most surveys or polls that inquire about common human fears show this widespread fright of death. Jesus wanted His men to know, there is something worse than physical death. That is the eternal destruction of "both soul and body in hell." Being "cast out into outerdarkness," where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is an outcome far worse than physical death. A suitable paraphrase might be: Don't worry! The only thing the persecutors can do is kill you!

To people with a limited earthly perspective, this sounds crazy. To people with no sense of the divine, this doesn't make any sense. To those who shun the fear of the Lord; to those who do not have the good and honest heart, this is regarded as ridiculous.

But to people who are convinced that this life isn't all there is, this is a statement that elicits the greatest kind of courage and generates well-founded hope. The body is a small matter in comparison to the soul. Physical death is a reality, but not the final reality. There is something after death, good or bad, but eternal.

Persecutors may kill the Lord's disciples, but these enemies can go no further. Cancer may rob you of your brief bodily existence, but cannot take from you eternal fellowship with God. An accident may cause your sudden death, but those in Christ discover gain in death (Phil. 1:21). No power can pluck you out of the hand of God if you are determined to stay there! "Unless the soul consents to its own injury, it cannot be harmed."

Faith with all its' activity and prayer with all its' power can put us in position to so enjoy the grace of God in Christ, the fear of death is reduced and anticipation of heaven keeps us secure. Let us know, the power of the wicked is limited. We can, therefore, preach the gospel without fear. We can stand for truth; live the truth; speak the truth, knowing we shall be "saved from wrath through Him," (Rom. 5:9).

### **"The Old Man and the New"**

***Richard Thetford***

In Colossians 3:9-10 the apostle Paul mentions the "old self" and the "new self" as he writes *"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."* He says that the old self has been put aside. Why would one want to put aside the old self, or old man? We are taught to put aside our old self because it is being corrupted. *"if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,"* (Eph 4:21-22). We can see that once we have been taught about Jesus Christ that we should want to do away with our old self that is full of sin, corrupted with the lusts and deceit of this world. We can

further see that we can put off this old self by having it crucified with Jesus Christ. As he was crucified on the cross so that we may have forgiveness of sins, in like manner, our old self is nailed to that cross so that we will not walk in an unrighteous manner afterward. Paul says *"knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"* (Rom 6:6). We also put off this old self by regeneration in accordance with Galatians 3:26 and Ephesians 4:23-24.

We have learned that the old man is one that is full of sin and worldliness. But what is the new man? The new man is the one that is full of the righteousness and holiness of God! *"and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth"* (Eph 4:24). Also if you go back to the beginning of this article and read the text you'll notice that this new man is one that is renewed according to the image of God (Col 3:10).

Once one has decided to put on the new man (and this can only be done through baptism (Gal 3:27), and put off the old, then there are things that must follow after doing so. One cannot expect to go to heaven by accepting Jesus Christ and then quit trying to live the Christian life. There are several things that the new Christian must strive to do everyday to live a life for Jesus. It starts by speaking the truth about Jesus. We should feel so good about Him, that we would WANT to tell others about the wonderful happiness that we have found in Jesus. We should want to tell our neighbors about Him. *"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another"* (Eph 4:25). In the past we might have gotten angry and sinned, but now the new man understands the righteousness of God and when one gets angry they will *"sin not"* as it states in Eph 4:26. We would be moved to do good works accompanied with good speech, while at the same time striving daily to resist the devil and all his temptations (Eph 4:27-29). This will be a struggle for the new babe in Christ but it can be done. Remember, God will not allow you to be tempted greater than you can endure (1 Cor 10:13). A new man will be moved to practice kindness to others. *"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"* (Eph 4:32). Knowing that Christ died for us, forgiving us of all our sins, we should likewise be quick to forgive others in like-manner. When the old self has been put away, the new Christian will strive to have compassion on others (Col 3:12), and be long-suffering towards others (Col 3:13). The

new man stands out because he has learned to put on love. *"And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity"*. (Col 3:14).

There is a big difference between the old man of the world and the new man of God. Which are you? Have you put away that old man? If not, you need to get into Christ and enjoy the wonderful blessings of being a Christian!

### ***Giving Account of Every Careless Word***

***(Matthew 12:36-37)***

***By Jon W. Quinn***

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:36-37).

Well, that's not good. How many careless words have I spoken in my lifetime. Dozens? Hundreds? Thousands? Maybe I talk too much.

A "careless word" in this context is a word spoken rashly or carelessly without thought as to whether it is pleasing to the Lord or not. It may have been spoken in anger, or excitement, or exasperation, or under pressure, or in ignorance. The Scriptures warn, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20).

So, there have been many such words come from our mouths in a lifetime, and Jesus says that they each one will be considered at the judgment and we will either be justified by them or condemned by them. Well, the gospel is not "good news" for nothing. It is the answer to our dilemma. It is what is going to get us out of this mess we got ourselves into.

### **The Accumulation of Character**

Why is God so particular about every minute thing we may have ever uttered? There are probably many reasons, including His absolute righteous holiness. But there is also the fact that each day, with each decision and each action, we are molding a character. We have free will and we are responsible for the decisions we make, and therefore responsible for the characters we develop in making our decisions. How many careless words must we utter before it becomes a habit and a character trait?

A distressful circumstance can be handled with grace and wisdom, or mishandled by engaging in intemperate or extreme behavior. And how we handle a major crises often depends on how we have handled the little ones. The Lord expects us to build strong characters, and permitting “careless words” or “little faults” to rule our days does not do it.

A good illustration of this is the way Saul and David each handled crises. Saul carelessly disobeyed the Lord's commandment concerning sacrifice, and for that he was to lose his kingdom. The Bible says, “Samuel said to Saul, 'You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.'” (1 Samuel 13:13,14).

But Saul evidently still does not make the connection between his carelessness and his losing his kingdom. Instead, he blames David, the man God chooses to replace Saul, for his troubles. During the remainder of Saul's life, he would spend much energy in trying to kill David, continuing to exercise carelessness with respect to his life and decisions. David, however would exercise great caution in his decisions, wisely seeking to make them out of respect for God and His will. Though Saul was trying to kill David, when David had opportunity to kill Saul, he would not because God had made Saul king. God would give the kingdom to David on His terms. David would wait for that. As David said to Saul, "Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD'S anointed.'" (1 Samuel 24:10).

The contrast between Saul's carelessness and David's high regard for the Lord's will is very stark. It was true then, and is true today, that judgment will consist of reaping what we have sown: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:7-8). Do not be careless in how you handle the word of God!

## **All Is Not Lost**

Well, what do we do? There are untold awkward moments in each of our lives where we uttered a careless word that we ought not to have spoken, or done some “small” thing that wasn't exactly proper. At the judgment, am I going to hear recited all those things I have ever done, most of which I have probably forgotten about a long time ago? Will I be held accountable and condemned by every one of them?

Yes.

Or no.

It depends.

“Yes” if I must face the consequences of the choices and decisions I have made as I developed a character that was prone to carelessness with respect to God and His will, not considering obeying Him as Lord as a very high priority in my life. The outcome of those things is eternal, spiritual death. “Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.” (Romans 6:21)

But perhaps you are more interested in the “no” side of the question. Yes, we can avoid the disastrous, eternal outcome of those things. There is a way to avoid having to give an account for any and every careless word we have ever uttered. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23). This is what the sixth chapter of Romans is all about. It is about overcoming sin. It is about being buried with Christ when we are baptized into His death. It is about coming up from baptism to walk in newness of life. It is about dying to sin and living unto righteousness. It is about obeying God from the heart.

Our sins, including “every careless word” are taken away by Christ. They are 'washed away" (Acts 22:16) and “forgiven” (Acts 2:38). It is by obedient faith in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross that we receive this hope. “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and



the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-26). Or, as David put it, and as the New Testament quotes: "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." (Romans 4:7,8).

And that is why the gospel is “good news”.

***The Unfathomable Power of God***  
***(Ephesians 3:20-21)***  
***By Carey Dillinger***

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)

If we outline Paul’s letter to the Ephesians very broadly it consists of two parts as described by Paul in Eph. 2:10:

\*\*\* **Christian Doctrine: Chapters 1-3**, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” Here Paul describes spiritual blessings that accrue to us in Christ.

\*\*\* **Christian Morality: Chapter 4-6**, “... which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Paul then closes the letter by showing that such spiritual wealth must be applied.

In this article we will attempt to show that Eph. 3:20-21 is the passage that acts as the hub of the entire Ephesian letter. Without an omnipotent God, there would be no doctrine or morality worth following and there would be no reason for mankind to unite under Christ.

**The Doxology - Introduction**

The doxology of 3:20-21 acts as the conclusion of not only the prayer of 3:14-19, but also of the first three chapters. It serves as an introduction to the last three chapters as well.

By examining the prayer and then taking a look at the broader context we can come to understand that Paul realized that unity among believers takes divine intervention. Man will not be able to understand God's limitless power because man has a limited mind. So powerful is our God that even mortal enemies (such as the Jews and the Gentiles of Paul's time) can become united in Christ Jesus.

Note: "Doxology" is not a Biblical word, but it describes a particular type of phrase or sentence that frequently occurs in the Bible. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary a doxology is "an expression of praise to God." Many of us are familiar with T. Ken and G. Franc's "Doxology," which is often sung as a closing hymn:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!"

### **The Conclusion of the Prayer**

Eph. 3:14-19: For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (NKJV)

It is the love for one another as members of the family of God that Paul is stressing in this prayer. It is his wish that each Christian possess this kind of love along with adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, inheritance and all the other God-given spiritual blessings. "It is in the context of loving relationships within the church [emphasis mine, cd] that we experience through one another, the depths of God's love. It is in this context that we grow to the fullness of Christ. All this is possible only because God is 'able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...'" (Larry Richards, The Teacher's Commentary, p. 920.)

“Rooted and grounded in love...” This phrase calls on us as Christians to make a devotional study of the love of Christ, thus filling us with the fervent desire to spread the Gospel ourselves. (This is regardless of the fact that this love has no limits and therefore is beyond our total comprehension.) This is how sinners will be won and the Godhood glorified. (William Hendrickson, New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, p. 178)

### **Broadening the Context**

Eph. 3:8-12: To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.(NKJV)

The fellowship of the mystery is the key here. The fact that once mortal enemies (Jew and Gentile) would become united in one spiritual body via the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ would be a hard pill for either side to swallow. This union is according to the wisdom of God (vv. 1-13). Beyond God’s wisdom, He also displays His love in sending Christ to save the world. As already mentioned this love entails His love for us, His love for His Son, the Son’s love for us and His Father, and our love for the Father, the Son and each other.

**Eph. 4:1-4:** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (NKJV)

Now Paul segues between the doctrinal portion of his letter and the application by once again emphasizing the unity that must exist in the church among its diverse members. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, male and female, bound and free, must all come together under one flag –

the cross of Christ! Man would deem this an impossibility, but all things are possible through an application of God's wisdom because His power is limitless.

### **The Doxology – Conclusion**

In spite of the fact that Paul had asked much of God in his prayer, in spite of the seeming impossibility of uniting all mankind under one spiritual banner, Paul concludes the prayer with a statement that the commentators call a "super-superlative." Paul (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) coined the compound word "exceedingly, abundantly, above" to express God's capacity to transcend all that we ask or think. (F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 70.)

Although Paul has asked much, God can and is willing to grant more. In order to appreciate Paul's super-superlative Hendrickson suggests the following should be noted concerning Paul's reasoning: "a) God is able to do all we ask him to do; b) He is even able to do all that we dare not ask but merely imagine; c) He can do more than this; d) far more; e) very far more!" God is well deserving of the "glory in the church" based on His power (1:19; 2:20), wisdom (3:10), mercy (2:4), love (2:4), grace (2:5-8), and so forth – manifested in the church which is the body of Christ (the exalted head). (Hendrickson, p. 175.)

Notice the four individuals (or group of individuals) referred to in the doxology: 1) God, 2) individual Christians, 3) the church, and 4) Jesus Christ. God's wisdom (including His plan for the salvation of mankind) requires the participation of all parties involved. While most of those claiming to be Christians have no problem with three out of the four of these participants, many have been willing to sell the importance of the church short.

The Church is important and Paul paints us a glorious picture of it in the Ephesian letter.

"This world is not what it was meant to be; it is torn in sunder by opposing forces and by hatred and strife. Nation is against nation, man is against man, class is against class. Within a man's own self the fight rages between the evil and the good. It is God's design that all men... should become one in Christ. To achieve this end Christ needs the Church to go out and tell men of

His love and of His mercy. And the Church cannot do that until its members, joined together in fellowship, experience the limitless love of Christ.” (William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 133.)

Those that are looking for an eternal home with the all-powerful God must be prepared to offer an eternity of doxologies. As so aptly put by hymnist John Newton in verse four of *Amazing Grace*:

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise  
Than when we first begun.”

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Topic Page

## **Local Church Autonomy and Exposing Error** **Matthew Allen**

When speaking of the church, we refer to it in either the local or universal sense. From looking at the biblical record, we find that local churches were organized to be independent from each other (1 Peter 5:1-3), answering only to Jesus, the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). In passages where the universal church is under discussion (Ephesians 5:23-27), scripture is silent concerning any formal organization. The Lord’s church has been organized without earthly headquarters and bureaucracies. Jesus is the head of the church and elders in local congregations answer directly to Him.

While “autonomy” is not mentioned in either testament, the principle is understood. Autonomy is defined as *the power or right of self-government*. In writing on the concept of autonomy Robert L. McDonald has written: “when the word autonomy is used with reference to the church of our Lord, it should be understood that each church has the divine right to govern itself.” In the New Testament we find:

Autonomy is not violated by teaching the truth whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself.

*Autonomous congregations supporting the preaching of the gospel. Philippi, (Philippians 4:15-18), Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:8), and Jerusalem (Acts 11:22) are good examples.*

*Autonomous congregations providing benevolence for its needy. The Jerusalem church is an example. See Acts 2 and 4.*

*Autonomous congregations selecting their own elders, deacons, servants, and messengers. For example, in Acts 14:23 Luke says they appointed elders in every church. Epaphroditus was a servant of the church in Philippi ministering to Paul. (Philippians 2:25-30)*

We may properly conclude that each local church did its own work, under the oversight of local elders, without outside interference or control.

Over the last decade and a half, there has been much written on the subject of autonomy and exposing error. Some believe that since congregations are autonomous, the only criticism they receive should be from members within. Others maintain that preachers should have full reign in exposing error wherever and whenever they see it. Can preachers expose error in congregations in which they are *not* a member? Within scripture, we find Paul warning the Colossians of false teachers *in general* (Colossians 2:4, 8). We know he was not a member of the church of Colosse when writing these words. We also observe Paul rebuking the Galatians for allowing Judaizing teachers to advance their error within the congregations of Galatia, even though not a member in any of these congregations (Galatians 1:6-9; 5:4). The conduct of the false teachers was well documented and they had publicly slandered the motives, character, and teaching of Paul. He had the right to directly respond to their charges, and did so effectively. Those who teach publicly may expect to be criticized publicly if their teaching does not align itself with truth.

These passages prove that church autonomy is not violated by teaching the truth whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Truth should not be harnessed. But, while preachers have the right to expose error, it does not give them the right to make blanket assumptions and accusations, judging motives and creating suspicion and fear about brethren they do not know. I recently read about an article where a preacher referred to “*churches of Christ*” that decided to *abolish the evening service*. In his

*If one reads something, or hears someone speculating about another preacher or congregation do not Christian principles teach that we assume the best and not the worst out of our brethren?*

writing, the preacher asked *what reason would justify such a decision?* And by the usage of quotation marks around “churches of Christ” he questioned the faithfulness of churches who made that decision. He then concluded his remarks with the short sentence, *Brethren, we are drifting.* Nevermind the fact that each local, independent, autonomous congregation can be presented with unique reasons and circumstances for determining the number of times they meet on the Lord’s Day. (A good example would be a congregation in a remote area where brethren are forced to drive many miles to worship.) Meeting more than once on Sunday is a matter of judgment. And, the congregation who decided to meet only once on the Lord’s day should not be forced to justify to the entire brotherhood as to the reasons behind their decision. Remember, we are autonomous!

Preaching the truth does not excuse a person from common courtesy. Jesus said, *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* (Matthew 7:12 ESV). Later Jesus would teach that brotherly love is an identifying mark of the Christian. *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:34-35 ESV). Paul wrote that we should *let our love be genuine* and to *love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor* (Romans 12:9-10 ESV). If one reads something, or hears someone speculating about another preacher or congregation do not Christian principles teach that we assume the best and not the worst out of our brethren? *Is that not the honorable thing to do?* Do not Christian principles teach that we attempt communication with the other party *before* we address an issue publicly? There can always be misunderstandings. Things may not be as they seem. But yet in case after case we hear of those who launch out in accusing others of error, when no direct communication has been made to find out otherwise. When godly principles are ignored and accusations are made it amounts to little more than *evil suspicions* (1 Timothy 6:4). Having evil suspicions involves the impugning of motives. This person wants nothing good to come out of the other person, and only expects and hopes for the worst. In his comments on this verse Hendrickson says, *all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.* In this case, brethren are turned into adversaries and every

action is suspect. It is imagined that there is something behind every move of the person and/or congregation. Such an attitude is dangerous because it is contagious. This is why it is forthrightly condemned. When motives and intentions are judged without investigation, reputations of good brethren and churches are damaged. These attitudes may be more prevalent than we'd like to admit. We must always apply Romans 12:9-10 in our attitude.

How can we correct the problem? Here are four simple suggestions:

1. **Open up the lines of communication.** Are there not principles we can apply from Matthew 18:15-17? Giving the benefit of the doubt involves talking about the situation and not assuming anything. When these situations arise we must remember we are working with Christians! They are brethren!
2. **Once communication has taken place, accept what they say.** Our word is to be our bond (Matthew 5:37). If others are relating false information – tell the truth and exhort them to correct their story. It is not our place to judge motives! (Matthew 7:1-2) Judgment can be made on deeds and attitudes expressed (John 7:24).
3. **We must learn to keep our mouths shut.** *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger* (James 1:19 ESV). The temptation to talk negatively about someone else can be great. It is easier to be negative than positive. And yes, it can take effort to see positive, but it is absolutely necessary if we wish to glorify God. The last thing we need to do is to be the talebearer of something that is fabricated, exaggerated, or embellished.
4. **Put forgiveness into action.** *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* (Ephesians 4:31-32 ESV.) I am convinced that this passage is not practiced as much as it should, and it is to our detriment. Imagine how much more vibrant, joyful, and unified the church would be if we fully embraced and practiced what is contained in these verses.



We are reaching a critical point within the church today. Great damage is being done, young Christians are being discouraged, and souls are in danger. We need to take the microscope off of each other and once again turn our focus onto the lost. We must slow down and stand down on the desire to ramp up the suspicion about good men and congregations who work in their respective areas. We need to once again renew our commitment to work together with one another when opportunities present themselves. *We be brethren!*

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***The Plan of Salvation***  
***By Jon W. Quinn***

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**Plan #1**

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ACTS 2:38)

**Plan #2**

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

*The Sinner's Prayer:*

*"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."*

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown

to us in the Bible.

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**Jon W. Quinn**

### *He Arose*

The first day of the week, or Sunday, is an important day to the Christian. The church had its beginning on the day of Pentecost, which always fell upon a Sunday (Acts 2:1-47). The congregations continued to meet together and worship on the first day of the week in accordance with the instructions given to them from God through the apostles (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2). It is upon this day that early disciples remembered the Lord's sacrifice for their sins by partaking of the Lord's supper together. It is also true that the Lord arose from the grave early on Sunday morning.

The fact that we serve a risen Lord is what makes our faith valid. It is rather easy for skeptics today to deny the resurrection of Jesus - all it takes is words. But the eyewitnesses who lived then all affirm the fact and were willing to die teaching others about the One who lives again. Not just one or two - but many eyewitnesses. They saw, they told others, and many died refusing to recant what they had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears. One of them wrote and put it this way: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the word of life." (1 John 1:1).

The significance of all this is that one day by the same power that Jesus was raised from the dead, we shall also be called to rise and enter into eternity. The empty tomb of Jesus assures us there will be such a day!