

SPECIAL BIBLE EDUCATION
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
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Hosted by: Missionary Bill Hardecker

HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD
2Cor. 4:2

By



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Lecture on Handling the Word of God 2 Corinthians 4:2

1. God used human spoken languages¹ to record His words.
 - a. It needs to be understood.
 - b. It is within human ability to understand. Man has the duty to discover its meaning.
 - c. But the process of understanding must be within the Divine author's guidance.
 - d. The divine author intended the written words to be understood.
 - e. Examples are as ff;
 - e.1. Moses used Aramaic (Gen. 31:47, two words *Jegarsahadutha*, heap of witness); Jeremiah too (10:11); Daniel in 2:4-7:28; and Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26).
 - e.2. Mark uniquely used Aramaic words in his narrative and always provided a meaning in Greek. These are 5:41 (*Talitha cumi*, means Damsel arise); 7:34 (*Ephphatha*, means Be opened); and 14:36 (*Abba*, means Father). Other Aramaic terms he used are found in 7:11 (*Corban*, a gift); and 15:34 (*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?).² Incidentally, his method provides a biblical basis for translation work (i.e., *transliteration*).
2. Sound³ interpretation is the basis of sound doctrine and practice.
 - a. Errors emanate from failure to soundly interpret Scriptures.
 - b. Consider the following;
 - b.1. Ecclesiastes 7:16, cited as basis for moderation; and
 - b.2. Isaiah 3:12, cited as basis for age and gender of rulership.⁴
 - c. Religious cults fell into this fallacy as expressed in various errors namely;
 - c.1. 1 Cor. 15:29, Mormonism on proxy baptism;
 - c.2. Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16, on baptismal regeneration;
 - c.3. Acts 20:24, on the true gospel (See Article 5.4); and
 - c.4. Rom. 11:13 and 2Tim. 1:11, Paul as apostle of the Gentiles made him (*and his epistles*) exclusive to Gentile churches.

¹ God used Hebrew for the entire OT except for a portion of Daniel's (2:4-7:28) where Aramaic ("Syriack" is from אַרַמִּיָּת 'Aramiyth) was used as the commercial language common to people in the region. As to the NT Scriptures, God used the well-known Greek language to record it.

² Raquintan, Jed, *An Exegesis of the Book of Mark*. CBMS 1Q 2022-23, p. 4.

³ This pertains to the inspired hermeneutical principles of interpretation as revealed in Scriptures as well as those regarded as commonly used in the treatment of literature.

⁴ Isaiah described the evidences of apostasy in Judah. They had incompetent (as children or youthful) rulers due to age. They were Joash (2 Kgs. 11:21), Josiah (2 Kgs. 22:1) who were both children and the last 4 kings were all in early twenties (2 Kgs. 23:31[23], 36[25]; 24:8[18], 18[21]). As to female rulers, Israel had Deborah (Judges 4-5) who excelled the apostate men. Though women should take care of the home and not serve as rulers as implied in Deut. 17 yet in apostate times, God allows this to embarrass the men who should be leading and directing. Further, consider that they were in a monarchy system and not in democracy. However, home and church godly leadership and governance clearly belongs to the godly men.

d. Even Christians fell into the same trap.

d.1. Consider 1 Cor. 12:13, teaching on Spirit baptism as referring to “salvation experience that puts one into the *universal body church*. Thus, Corinth church cannot be an exclusive color (Jews or Gentiles) type of church.

d.2. Consider the misuse of John’s gospel in support of false teaching – believe or faith alone is the requisite for salvation. See Article 4.

d.3. Others are found in articles on the Illustrations section.

3. Clarify confusion between meaning (interpretation) and application of Scripture.

a. Before one may apply the truth of Scripture, he must first discover that single meaning of the text. Context must be respected to arrive at sound exegesis.

b. Likewise, he needs to understand⁵ the text as if he is in the environment of the writer and the original reader(s) of the text.

b.1. Context affects the text;

b.2. Historical milieu affects the meaning of text; and

b.3. Cultural norms may influence the meaning of text.

c. This procedural principle must never be perverted⁶ by quick application without considering the textual/contextual/historical (and theological) meaning.

d. Example:

d.1. Matthew 19:9 – used as provision for divorce alongside 1 Cor. 7:12, 15. This position also cites Deut. 24:1-4. However, some factors must be given due course such as the Matthean audience, the Hebraistic wedding cultural meaning of “fornication,” the Christological answers in 19:4-8 affirming permanency of Genesis 2 and understanding the context of “divorce” in Moses’ era, and the context of Pauline passage.

4. Heed the biblical injunction to sound doctrine.

a. Results from sound interpretation of context and words and eventual application.

b. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and 2 Tim. 3:10, 14, the missionary church planter reminds the reader-protégé to not allow others to teach “other doctrine”. This doctrine contrasts or inconsistent with Pauline teaching received by Timothy. Paul assumed Timothy knew well his doctrine and practice that he can impart it to his disciples too. Further, the premise of Pauline doctrine is “sound.”

5. Avoid misunderstanding the written word of God – weakness of some Christian groups.

⁵ The process of understanding could be complicated by three factors, namely; distance (milieu of text - 1st century and present interpreter setting - 21st century), differences in culture, and sinful religious biases.

⁶ The normal process is to discover the meaning of the text, then to apply it to oneself (the exegete), and to others.

- a. Eph. 4:14, men can engage in “sleight⁷ and cunning craftiness”⁸ to form doctrine and easily influenced unstable ones.
 - b. 2 Pet. 1:20, self or private interpretation (i.e., peculiar to oneself and inconsistent to entire Scriptures) is prohibited.
6. Answer the dishonesty in handling the written word of God.
- a. 2Cor.4:2, various areas of prohibition about interpretation are given; a carnal practice affects interpretation; moral consciousness on the truth under study.
 - “in craftiness” Greek noun πανουργία which means trickery/deceit, cf. 11:3; Eph. 4:14.
 - “handling deceitfully” Greek present participle δολοῦντες means a continuing falsification or adulteration of God’s word.
 - b. 1Cor.5:6, an error may adulterate entire system of belief.⁹
 - c. Silence of Scriptures if used as justification of certain position and or practice may lead to inconsistency with clear biblical teaching or practice.¹⁰
7. Man’s nobility is dependent upon devotion to study the written revelation.
- a. See Acts 17:11
 - b. Note the word “noble”, from Greek adjective εὐγενής *eugenes* which means nobleman, of the best race and familial origin; a person of high status. It describes the Bereans due to their devotion to search the written word (OT Scriptures). Study needs sound interpretation that requires time and dedication.
 - c. It is used in Luke 19:12 and in 1 Corinthians 1:26 which pertains to social status.
 - d. Thus, a believer’s social status rests upon his condition or level of accuracy in understanding Scriptures. Comparatively, a biblicist could be found wanting when contrasted with the unbelievers’ dedication and giving of time in their pursuits of biblical themes.
8. The saved are commanded to study the written word of God.
- a. See 2 Timothy 2:15.
 - b. “Study,” it is from Greek imperative root verb σπουδάζω which means a divine command to study the Scriptures with diligence (Heb. 4:11 “labor,” an exertion of great effort), and with haste, urgency, making every effort [to accomplish something] (2Tim. 4:9).

⁷ “sleight” from Greek *κωβεία* literally means dice-playing known for cheating or trickery.

⁸ “cunning craftiness” from Greek *πανουργία* means deceit as used in 2Cor. 4:2 (referring to handling of texts) and 11:3 (subtily – referring to Satan’s approach to Eve).

⁹ See 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15 where Paul warned Thessalonica against moral deviation and urged separation from them in the area of eschatology. This is hardly observed now! Likewise, an error in any area will affect one’s exegesis in another area of study, cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-21. The quality of work will certainly be affected.

¹⁰ Christ and Pauline absence of comments on slavery as commonly practiced in the NT leads to conclusion that Christians should not engage in criticism of non-spiritual matters. Is this really scriptural? An OT theology of prophets – particularly the issues they exposed in writings reveal to the contrary. A thorough exploration on John the Baptist and Christological messages seems to support the OT theology. Likewise, the book of Acts disclosed the dissenting and non-conformist position and practice of early churches in Jerusalem and other places on secular governmental dictates.

c. This study is aimed at increasing accuracy in interpretation. Note the word “rightly divide,” from Greek present participle ὀρθοτομέω *orthotomeo* which means to continue cutting Scriptures aright or straight in order to teach truth correctly. It also means to handle Scriptures with finesse. Not many could do this due to either laziness, lack of study skills in the words of God, or misplaced ministry time allotment.¹¹

d. This study results in not being ashamed before God and men. Further this truth evokes recognition and acceptance by these two.

¹¹ Misuse of time (or laziness, 2Tim. 2:3-4) which God owns is sin. Laboring in the written word involves wholistic energy exertion in which few excellently pass due to endurance.

Raquantan, Jed. *CBMS Special Lecture 2022*, p. 3-4. Skills in the word is acquired either by formal goading of the teacher (2 Tim. 2:5) or by continual pursuits of the student to imitate the teacher though without or less direction.

Ephesians 4:11-16, requires ministers (pastors, missionaries, and teachers) of the word to decide on sound ministry time allotment that conforms to biblical expectations as one who handles and dispenses God’s word in a path that leads to nobility (Ac. 17:11) and not baseness. Some have been inundated with fundamentalism baggage of “big-church movement” that the ministries have been disgraced with wrong pursuits in the process.

ILLUSTRATIONS¹² ON MISHANDLING THE WORD OF GOD

Article 1: August 2022 Newsletter The False Teaching of “No Water Baptism” By Pastor JBR

Recently, someone attempted to introduce false teaching in this church. The potential original carrier of it, who was a former member, tried to inject it with the pastor early this year. But he repudiated it without arguing. Then, the proponent of error changed strategy by influencing former friends or contacts in the church. Few months later, the pastor discovered that a fellowshipping pastor was targeted also but the latter rejected it amid all the “courtships” to provide a venue for promotion of false teaching. Having changed strategy, the proponent of error began to influence indirectly the soft or “problematic church members” with whom he has connection.

A month ago, this church expelled three adult members for publicly opposing pastoral teaching and falsely accusing the church pastor before other members. And in the process of investigation to corroborate the grounds of discipline the pastor unearthed the errors of “hyper/ultra/mid-dispensationalism” as a potential influence that destroyed the expelled members. The former member and his expelled cohorts used subtlety in the “marketing” of their errors even to members in good standing. Thus, the pastor, is writing this short article to debunk one of the errors they are promoting. More of their errors will be discussed in the future issues.

In history there was a religious movement called as “hyper-ultra-mid dispensationalism” movement. Another recent group who subscribed to this false theology is called as “free grace/grace movement.” I lumped them into one as “hyper/ultra and mid” as they differ in some views. E. W. Bullinger (1837-1913), a Protestant Anglican minister and scholar was the pioneer of this view. Modern followers differ in some points with him whether in ultra-camp or mid-camp, and the free-grace camp.

I will discuss briefly in this article one of their false teachings – there is no need of water baptism in this “dispensation” of the “church age.”

J. C. O’Hair (1899-1958), an American pastor, who stood for “mid-dispensationalism” said about this church ordinance, *therefore, it is my firm conviction that no servant of the Lord has the right to demand for membership in his assembly, if he calls that assembly the Bible Church, a religious ceremony not required by the Lord for membership in the Lord’s Body.* (<https://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/bullingerism-or-ultradispensationalism/>).

O’Hair regards water baptism as “not required by the Lord” and concluded that church membership is a mere “religious ceremony” hence, not significant but an added burden to the “Christian.” This is a horrendous denial of clear scriptural teaching.

Let me now discuss what the Bible says on water baptism.

First, O’Hair spiritualized the water baptism by claiming it to be part of sign gifts during Acts period and acted as judge by segregating the events of Acts from the rest of Scriptures. He refused to receive the evidences in this book and tried to compartmentalize it to escape from the evidences of water baptism practices. Hence, he views the baptism of John the Baptist not the same as that which Christ did (John 4:2) and which He commanded His church (Matthew 28:18-20).

¹² *Trailblazers*, August 2022- January 2023 issues. A monthly newsletter of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Quezon City.

Second, O'Hair and other proponents regard the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 as the baptism into the body of Christ at salvation (*this espouses universal church*). This is another spiritualization or perversion of the text. 2 Corinthians 4:2 warns against this practice.

Third, God's word must be received when heard from reading, teaching, and preaching as shown by the passages. Look how the early believers behaved to the word of God in John 17:8; Acts 2:41; 7:38; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11 (*they received the word and searched all available scriptures*); Galatians 1:9; Philippians 4:9; Colossians 2:6; 4:10; 1Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13; Hebrews 7:11; and Revelation 1:3. Instead of receiving the word these deceived teachers judged them as non-normative or "not belonging to the church age." More so, they judged which Scriptures to receive and which ones should be relegated to the past!

Fourth, if we follow their view, Christ's water baptism would mean as God's way of putting Him into the body of Christ after he gets saved (does He need to be saved?) or, as the Protestant believed, it was part of OT cleansing.

Fifth, they refused to accept the evidences of water baptism which Paul practiced (1Corinthians 1:12-17) and to which he himself submitted to (Acts 9:18-19) as commanded in Acts 2:38 (*be baptized*). Hence, they categorized the Corinthians letters, other NT writers, and other Pauline non-prison epistles as NOT normative for the present church. They also reject the teaching of water baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:18 which pertains to membership (the word "member/s – used 10x in this passage alone). Water baptism places the believer into the local church membership. The text says that Paul "baptized them," if we follow their false teaching then it will mean that Paul put them into the body of Christ at salvation! This is ridiculous! More so, they spiritualize the "body" in this passage by saying it refers to the "universal body of Christ – the Church." This is another fallacy which will be discussed in the future. Thus, they wrongly segregated Pauline preaching from his writings and worst they even segregated some of his writings as normative for the church today and others are not. This last error is worse than the error of evangelicalism and fundamentalism on handling the book of Acts and Pauline non-prison epistles as non-normative for the church today!

Sixth, they only follow Pauline ways and selected only the prison epistles as for the "church" or assembly or fellowship today. They felt so "qualified" to judge some of Pauline epistles as not for church today while others are. Peter's writings (2 Peter 3:16 "all scriptures) affirmed the existence and relevance of ALL of Pauline writings for Peter's audience who were either believers or churches in a certain region (1 Peter 1:1). Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works*. Paul said "all" scripture – which means all of the books of the Bible. While these deceived teachers believed in inspiration yet they reject some of Pauline epistles as normative for the church today. Consequently, they will reject the teachings of Christ in the gospel of Matthew such as the practice of church discipline in Matthew 18:15-20; probably, they will allow divorce among themselves even if Matthew teaches it in 19:3-9; some of them reject the ordinance of Lord's Supper as it was for the Hebrews in Matthew 26; further, they will reject tithing as taught in 23:23 for all these were for the Hebrews and not for the church! Since the church is under grace and tithing is under the Law then it should not be practiced as the "hyper-ultra-mid" say. Consistent indeed, but consistently wrong. Historically, no water baptism and no church membership are not Baptist! The deceived ones left Baptist position and certainly, they will move to interdenominational group (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

If we follow the error - “no water baptism” then we will diminish the teachings of Christ and Paul. We will also render some of Pauline writings as irrelevant for the church today. No doubt they reject Corinthians epistles as “for the church today” as it is very clear on water baptism for membership.

“Hyper-ultra-mid” position is the result of over systematization (human logic of system prevails) of passages or compartmentalization (human judgment of selectivity) of passages and doctrines instead of following the progress of truth from biblical-theological method.

Beloved CBC members, be warned from this error – concocted by human scholars who overly judged some Scriptures as not normative for the church today but consistent in their constructed theological premises making their judgment superior over what was written!

Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 that some will stop enduring sound doctrine.... Then turn away from the truth and be turned to fables (man-made doctrine). The deceived and expelled members have turned away from the truth and not us (CBC). They are creepily attempting to influence you into their errors. But our God is faithful who will protect and preserve the teachable and humble members. Their false teaching has been unearthed and soon they shall be destroyed (2 Tim. 3: 4-14). Again, the word of God on apostasy is being fulfilled right before our very eyes, brethren. Be strong and have faith on all of God’s word as we shall triumph over.

Article 2: September Newsletter
The False Teaching of “no Local Church”
By Pastor JBR

Last month issue, I wrote about the error of “hyper-grace” movement which says that there is no need for water baptism. Some truths were shown from the Bible that this teaching is false. This movement spiritualizes the texts on water baptism and wrongly categorized it as part of “sign gifts.” Violating proper exegesis, it spiritualizes Ephesians 4:5 “one baptism” as the person’s entrance into the “body of Christ” at salvation. While the group accepts Corinthian epistles as Pauline yet they reclassify 1Cor. 1:12-17 practice of water baptism as non-normative for today! More so, while they use Acts passages on salvation yet they refuse to use the same on water baptism as practiced by early churches. This is exegetical escapism! As we continue to expose the errors of this so-called “Christian” group, I am discussing another false teaching – “no local church” in this “dispensation.”

In the writings of one of their proponents, Justin Johnson’s “church” website named as Grace Ambassadors Bible Fellowship, their doctrinal statement states, *each saved person today is a part of the Body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit despite their denominational or organizational affiliation. The church is not a building, but is each member of his body individually and collectively* (Doctrinal Statement letter m, p. 4). Categorically, either they have no position on local church as they view the only church is the body of Christ or that a church is only a (universal) body of Christ. Thus, they imply that there is no such thing as “local church.” You can see it in their “church” name that they avoid to use the term church. Whenever they use the term, it is only for distinction as a religious organization.

The following are biblical truths debunking this false teaching that the church in the NT is the body of Christ and that there is no local church.

First, they give a different meaning to the term “body of Christ” used in 1Cor. 12:13 and Col. 1:18. Both terms refer to their respective churches located at Corinth and Colossae as indicated in 1 Cor. 1:2 and Col. 1:2.

In 1Cor. 1:2, the Corinth members were baptized (immersed) into one body (Corinth church) not by the Holy Spirit but in (by) one spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the doer of the baptizing act. This last is the error of this group as well as by many Protestants including the “hyper-grace.” Roman Catholicism began this error then the Protestants (Anglicans, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and others) sustained it. Both evangelicalism and some sectors in fundamentalism embraced this error too. They assigned to the term “body of Christ” as the only “church.” From this error will emanate other errors.

Second, the term “church” when used singularly as in Ephesians 1:22-23 refers to a local church and in plural refers to churches in various locations as in Acts 9:31; 15:41; and 16:5. Churches were never lumped into one singular unit in the NT. Thus, applying it in Col. 1:18, the body (of Christ) is called as the church, the head of which is Christ, being singular means the local church in Colossae. Note also that Ephesians is a Pauline epistle.

“hyper-grace” movement believes in KJV Bible Version, it presupposes that they subscribed to Greek Textus Receptus. If so, they can check their NT Greek on Acts 9:31 and other passages (1Cor. 12:13 on the preposition “by”).

Third, the term “body of Christ” in Ephesians is called as the church. Look at Eph. 1:1, 22-23; 2:21; 4:16. All these references pertain to the body of saints at Ephesus – a local church. Further, Eph. 4:12 “body of Christ” refers to the context way back in Eph. 1:22-23 which is the church at Ephesus. However, this group deliberately sidestepped the phrase “at Ephesus” and the readership of the epistle in order to inject their false teaching that the body of all saved is the church. Instead of pursuing proper exegesis, they assigned different meaning to the word molding the passage in the fit of their doctrine.

Fourth, Matthew and Luke both used the term “church” to refer to local church(es). But this heretical group rejects this evidence including the direct teaching of Christ in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17(2x). Luke used the term in singular 18x in Acts (2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1-3; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22; 18:22; 20:17, 28. He used it in plural 4x in Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; and 19:37, a total of 22x. No doubt, this heretical (Tit. 3:10) group undermines both Bible books as non-normative for us today perhaps due to these evidences. But, wait, they used both the gospel of John and Acts 16:31 in their evangelism! Cults select passages that conform to their view and undermines seemingly contrarian ones.

Fifth, Christ established His first local church in Galilee as indicated in Matthew 10:1ff when He gave His initial mandate to this church. He did not re-baptize those whom John the Baptist has already immersed to constitute this local church in Galilee (John 1:35-50; 4:1-3). Then, He revised it into a final mandate after His resurrection in Matthew 28:18-20. In between these two mandates, He issued two instructions that the church must obey namely; on church discipline (Matthew 18) and on the observance of the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26).

If a church is only universal – the body of all saved in this world, then how are they going to obey Ephesians 4:15-16, “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” No doubt, they love the term “the mystery” revealed to Paul. At least when pinned on the corner and there is no way out of the text, they can always say, “well, it’s a mystery or it’s a special noun.”

Article 3: October Newsletter
The False Teaching of “no Repentance” in Salvation -part 1
By Pastor JBR

The “free-grace” or “hyper-graceism” theology claims that in salvation one has to believe only. The group rejects the need of repentance as requisite to receive salvation. They see repentance as human work of righteousness so it cannot be part of salvation. Thus, they teach that for sinner to get saved he only has to believe without repentance. With this, they cite Acts 16:31 and Johannine passages, i.e., John 3:16 and 5:24. This shall be the basis of our study exposing the error of this false teaching. Unfortunately, some independent and fundamental Baptists also take the same false position (i.e., Jack Hyles [deceased founder] of First Baptist Church, IN, USA and his disciples; James W. Knox,¹³ pastor of The Bible Baptist Church, of DeLand, FL, USA).

What are the errors of this “believe only” teaching in matter of salvation?

First, **the group is selective in the use of Scriptures which is an inconsistent and unbiblical method of study** (2 Cor. 4:2). This selectivity is seen in the following; a) they love to use Johannine passages to support “believe only” but they will not use the same author in his other writings such as the use of “repent” in Revelation 2:5 (Ephesus pastor), 2:16 (Pergamum pastor), 3:3 (Sardis pastor), and 3:19 (Laodicea pastor); b) they use John’s gospel in salvation yet they regard him as written not for the church when compared with Pauline epistles. This in spite of the fact that John’s writings were composed two decades after Paul died – making John as the last writing apostle and the final receiver of divine revelation (Rev. 22:18-19) and not Paul. Note that John wrote the Apocalypse to the seven Gentile pastors-churches of the final decade of first century; c) they regard Matthean, Markan, and Lukan writings (even Acts and other NT epistles) as for the Jews and not for the Gentiles, yet, they will not hesitate to quote from the same inspired epistles and books to support their unbiblical doctrine.

This sin of selectivity violates 2 Corinthians 4:2 and their favorite passage 2 Timothy 2:15 (“rightly dividing the word of truth”).

Second, **the group reject the teachings of John the Baptist**, the one who prepared the church Christ founded, **and the teachings of Christ Himself** as seen in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. Both “repent” were in Greek imperatives form which means a divine command to the listeners. As such the listeners are commanded to repent in order to receive the kingdom of heaven or salvation and NOT to qualify them as deserving of it. More so, it is an act to be executed by the listeners. Then, in Mark 1:14-15, after John was imprisoned by Herod, the Messiah began preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (parallel with kingdom of heaven). Note His requisites for the listeners to receive salvation – He commanded them to repent and to believe the gospel! Both verbs were in Greek present active imperative forms which indicate that the listeners are the ones who will obey or act it out. The group says – it is believed only while John the Baptist and Christ say repent and believe! Thus, the group’s position is incomplete and wrong. To justify their error, they reasoned out by saying that the two’s statement was for the Jews and not for the Gentiles. Further, they wrongly regard 1 Cor. 12:13 “baptized into one body” as referring to salvation and entrance into the universal body of Christ, yet they bypassed the phrase “whether Jews or Gentiles” which implies that in salvation there is no difference between the two. This is another selectivity to justify rejection of repentance.

¹³ Knox, James W. *A Sure Foundation*. The Bible Baptist Church, Deland, Florida, USA.

In the process of highlighting Pauline ministry, they consequently reject the two great preachers ahead of the apostle – what a great folly! John the Baptist and Christ both taught repentance (and believe) as requisite to receive salvation and undermine this clear teaching to exalt Pauline teaching.

Third, **the group ignored the evidences in the book of Acts on the need of repentance as divine requisite to receive salvation.** Both Peter (Acts 2:38; 8:22; 11:18) and Paul (Acts 17:30, 34; 19:4-5; 20:21; 26:20) taught this truth in their various preaching opportunities.

In 2:38, Peter preached to mixed peoples, not only Jews as alleged by the group as shown in Acts 2:7-11 (with 17 nationalities or people groups) and Peter addressed them clearly in verse 14 as “Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem.” Certainly, not all dwellers in that great city were Jews! But the group loved to cite only 2:22 “Ye men of Israel” at the neglect or ignoring the other verses in the same context! Thus, Peter’s mixed audience is revealed – not only Jews but also Gentiles. Repent in 2:38 is clearly commanded by the apostle as required to receive remission of sins.

In 8:22, Peter commanded Simon the sorcerer, who was apparently unconverted still, to repent that he may receive sin forgiveness. Again, repentance is a requisite to receive forgiveness of sins – which is a result of salvation.

In 11:18, Peter rehearsed his prior Caesarean (Gentile) ministry declaring the same divine requisite of repentance to receive salvation. Repentance is also required for Gentiles to receive salvation but the group rejects it. Further, note verse 21 “believed and turned,” the latter word is a synonym of repentance which means be converted or be returned (to God).

In 17:30-34, Paul declared that repentance is a divine command **to all men everywhere.** Here is Pauline teaching before the Athenians of Greece (Gentiles). Note verse 34 that they also believed. Thus, the order is clear, they were expected by the apostle to repent and to believe to receive salvation. This clearly nullifies the false claim of the group that repentance is not a requisite to receive salvation. They loved Pauline writings but they reject his inspired recorded preaching.

In 19:4, Paul recognized John’s message of repentance and believing in Christ. Further, in 20:21, Paul preached repentance (from sin) to God and faith (believing) Christ as requisites for both Jews and Gentiles to receive salvation.

In 26:20, in his explanatory message before the Jews, he recalled his message of repentance and turning to God (20:21) which he preached to all people (Jews and Gentiles) and bring evidences of repentance. Thus, he summarized his preaching and teaching before the Gentile court in Israel.

The group ignored many evidences of repentance as divine requisite to receive salvation and not only believe as they falsely claim. Thus, their claim of salvation receipt is false and incomplete having not complied with God’s inspired requisites of repentance (and faith)!

(Part 2 next issue)

Article 4: November Newsletter **The False Teaching of “no Repentance” in Salvation -part 2** **By Pastor JBR**

In part 1 issue, I wrote on the first three errors of “free-grace theology” pertaining to “believe only” as requisite to receive salvation. First, the group is selective in the use of Scriptures. Then, they reject the teachings of John the Baptist and of Christ on the need of repentance to

receive salvation. Last, they reject the evidences in the book of Acts showing the need of repentance to receive salvation.

Let me add more on these errors that “believe only for salvation” is false and unbiblical teaching in matters of salvation. This group invokes the gospel of John as the basis of this false doctrine – “believe only for salvation.” They reject “repentance” as a biblical requisite for salvation which Christ Himself taught in Mark 1:15. So, let us examine the validity of this claim.

First, though John did not use the word “repent” and used “believe” (52x), however, he used two synonyms which are related with “repent.” He used the command form of “sin no more” twice in 5:14 and 8:11. John said in Greek μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε *meketi hamartane* (5:14; 8:11) which is a strong command ordering the recipient to stop from sinning (lifestyle). Cessation from sinning lifestyle indicates a result of true repentance. When Saul got converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) thereafter, he stopped persecuting the believers and began to preach Christ. He even changed his name! Therefore, John has reason, which will be stated below, for not directly using the word “repent.” Further, the writer used the term “be converted” (12:40) which is from Greek ἐπιστρέφω *epistrepho* (passive verb; cf. 1Thes.1:9) to turn from sin [and to God] or to cause to return to God.

John’s numerous uses of “believe” falls in the second requisite of Christ’s salvation teaching stated in Mark 1:15. But, this does not negate the emphasis of other gospel account writers on repentance as the first requisite of salvation. What this group did is to select only the second requisite, undermined the first, and relegated it wrongly as to the Jews thereby mishandling the scriptures. Thus, it is an exegetical fallacy to say that John did not use “repent.” And it is a display of either ignorance or deliberate selectivity (2Cor. 4:2).

Second, John implied repentance by citation of three passages in the book namely; a) 3:19-21, man loved evil or darkness indicating he needs to repent from it; b) 10:26-28, true sheep who “believed” Him will keep on hearing and following Him and His word (“voice”); following implies leaving all or repenting from sins (cf. Matthew 4:19; 8:19-22; 9:9; Luke 5:27-28); c) 12:24-26, man has to change life focus and service in order to follow Him.

Third, John, having written the gospel account sometime 85-90 AD, when all apostles were dead, focused not only on proving the deity of the Messiah but he demonstrated the evidences of true salvation with the use of the following truths; love light, come to light (3:19-20), obey the Son (3:36), practice truth (3:21), true worship in spirit and in truth (4:23-24), honor God (5:23-24), do good deeds (5:29), eat His body and blood (6:48-66), love God (8:42), follow Jesus (10:26-28), and keep (preserve) His commandments (14:15). Likewise, he emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit (16:8-11) of convicting people of sins (which leads to repentance) and coming to believe in Him. Thus, the Spirit regenerates him (3:3-7).

Thus, the above claim of the group is at least a misreading and at most a misinterpretation of the gospel account. With the use of original language, the claim is shown as false teaching. And the methodology used in doctrinal construction is no different from the religious cults thereby producing false teaching either ignorantly or deliberately. The verse they always invoke 2 Tim. 2:15, they themselves violated it. They did it by injecting themselves as the “divider” of scriptures when they should be allowing the scriptures to speak for itself.

Article 5: December Newsletter
False Requisites of Salvation and Defective Gospel
By Pastor JBR

“Hyper-Graceism” defines the “gospel” as follows *Our Gospel - Salvation is by the grace of God through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through his death and blood on the cross in our place he commended his love and justice to justify mankind. Through his resurrection he saves us from eternal damnation and gives the hope of redemption and a present salvation. Faith in what Jesus has done on the cross for us ensures our salvation today in the dispensation of grace. Other ages offered distinctly different objects of faith for salvation as according to God’s purpose and programs.* [emphasis mine] (https://graceambassadors.com/doc/GABF_StatementOfFaith.pdf. Doctrinal Statement, letter f.i., p.2)

Error: Faith alone in Christ is salvation. Repentance is excluded as it is viewed as human work. Hyper-Graceism selects passages to support this position and exclude contrarian verses. Thus, they named the true gospel is the “gospel of the grace of God” anything apart from this phrase is not true.

Rebuttal: While faith (believing/trusting) in Christ is true but to make it exclusive is wrong as Paul himself taught that repentance and believing are both requisites to receive salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. Likewise, Christ and other apostles taught this same truth.

Evidences of biblical position – repentance (and believing) as requisite (s) of salvation are as ff;

1. Markan evidences, 1:14-15 [Gospel=Gospel of Christ or Gospel of KOG]

- a. Gospel (of the KOG or *Kingdom of God*) is the gospel Christ and John preached.
- b. Requisites for the gospel is twofold repent and believe. Both are commanded.
- c. Mk. 13:10, Christ predicted this same gospel to be preached to all nations prior to His return. Cf. Mark’s uses of “this gospel” in 1:1, 14, 15; 14:9.
- d. Mk. 16:15, Christ issued the final mandate to the Galilee church with the same gospel.
- e. Rev. 14:6, John revealed in his vision this same gospel shall be preached globally during the Tribulation.
- f. Some distinguished the gospel into 4 types namely; the gospel of KOG (2Sam. 7:16), the gospel of GOG/C, the everlasting gospel, and “my gospel/Pauline gospel.” But Pauline gospel is no different from the gospel of Christ which He preached and which He commanded His church to preach as well. (Evidences in Mark 1:1, 14, 15, and in Matthew 24:14; 26:13)

2. Lukan evidences

This group uses Luke’s writing where he once used the phrase “gospel of grace” in Ac. 20:24 to base their gospel title or name. However, they reject Luke’s gospel account where he cited repentance (Lk. 13:3, 5; 16:30; 17:3-4) as requisite of salvation else one is eternally condemned as well as in his sequel writing in the book of Acts (17:30; 19:4; 20:21; and 26:20).

3. Pauline statements in Acts

- a. Acts 19:4, Paul recognized John’s message of repentance and believing in Christ;

b. Acts 20:21, Paul preached repentance (from sin) to God and faith (believing in) Christ as requisites for both Jews and Gentiles; In 17:30, repentance of all men particularly the Athenians (of Greece) is divinely commanded. The Hyper-Graceism cites Ac. 20:24 to emphasize the gospel of the grace of God but they ignored Ac. 20:21, which belongs to the same context, that provides the requisites of repentance and faith to receive salvation.

c. Acts 26:20, Paul recalled his message of repentance and turning to God (Ac. 20:21) which he preached to all people (Jews and Gentiles) and bring evidences of repentance. Cf. Luke 3:8-14, John the Baptist's requisites agree with Paul's preaching and summary before the courts.

4. The True name or Title of the Gospel: Is it "the gospel of grace" as this group asserts?

a. An article posted by this group in social media "Paul as the messenger today" (8/29/22 as forwarded by a church member) says that the gospel Paul preached was the "gospel of grace." They cite not only Ac. 20:24 but also cited Romans 15:15-16. However, a close reading of the text reveals no such title even if you read through verse 20. So how did the writer come up with such title. It is a work of manipulative art of words to arrive at his desired name or title. He mixed up "the grace" (in v. 15) and "the gospel" (in v. 20). And, he mixed up the words to construct a new phrase – designating the "true title or name of the gospel"!

b. In the entire NT the word "gospel" is used 101x, of these 75 were Pauline and 26 non-Pauline. The alleged title "gospel of grace of God" is the groups' alleged true gospel name. Of Pauline usages of the title (75x), the "gospel of grace of God" (1x), "gospel of Christ/His Son/God" is 21x, the "gospel of peace" is 2x, and the "GOSPEL" is used 51x. Thus, their claim of the true title of the gospel and the rest as false is based on single use overruling the other 100 times usages. The group wants to make a difference by assigning the gospel with a new title and silencing the 100 other usages of which the common denominator is "the gospel." This explains why some professed believers are deceived by this manipulation of the biblical text and injustice to the inspired text by assigning a concept which is absent from the text. In their desire to be unique and get a hearing if not following (which is a typical cultic strategy) they perverted the text to come up with a "new doctrine" which is nothing but heresy (Titus 3:10-11).

Thus, there are two requisites for a sinner to receive the gift of salvation – repentance from sin (toward God) and faith or believing in Christ as one who paid for our sins and is able to save us from Hell. The true gospel one is to believe and receive is called as "The Gospel of Christ or of God" or just "The Gospel."

Article 6: January 2023 Newsletter
The Error of Rejecting the Authority of Gospel Accounts
By Pastor JBR

In prior issue, we learned that the false religious movement known as *Hyper-Graceism* strongly denies the necessity of repentance as biblical requisite for salvation. Also, they seemed to espouse a different gospel which they called as *the gospel of the grace of God* thereby excluding all other gospels apart from that assigned title phrase.

However, by examining the writings of their so-called only recognized apostle for the Gentiles – apostle Paul, we found out that he taught repentance as requisite for salvation NOT only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles (Acts 17:30, note his audience were Greeks- Athenians). Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul called the gospel as “the gospel” (v. 1).

For this month’s issue, I want to show you how they pervert God’s word. They acknowledged the gospel accounts (Matthew-John) as inspired but they regard them as irrelevant or inapplicable to Gentile churches today (as they were only for the Hebrews then). Thus, making these 4 inspired and preserved books irrelevant for churches today. With this belief some of them affirmed only the Pauline epistles as normative for Gentilic Christians today!

With this position and practice, four potential errors are created. More than that, some of them heavily quotes John as basis of their “only believe” requisite for salvation doctrine (see prior articles). It causes one to wonder that they regard John’s gospel as for the Hebrews yet they used it to support doctrine they like and teach it to Gentiles. That is a kind of inconsistent manipulation!

First, to ignore the three witnesses of Scriptures (Jn. 5:39-47) is an exegetical and theological fallacy (repent/ance-23x). Besides, it is inconsistent to use John’s gospel when this group regards him as the apostle to the Hebrews and only Paul is to Gentiles.

Second, Christ issued a warning against rejecting the testimonies of those who saw the evidences of His resurrection (Mk. 16:14). Likewise, to reject the written testimonies/teachings (of Scriptures) of Matthew-John and focused only on Pauline warrants Christ’s rebuke.

Third, Selecting and arguing from absence of word in Scriptures making them fit to one’s systematized theological system (i.e., “hyper-graceism”) is scriptural dishonesty (2Cor. 4:2). For instance, did Christ use the word “grace” in His teaching ministry? Then, His gospel was not of grace but of works due to silence/absence?

Fourth, the apostle to the Gentiles himself recognized the authority and applicability of all Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15-17) which includes the OT Scriptures in completing the believer including the pastor in all areas of righteousness.

This false group pontificates only the 13 Pauline epistles as authoritative for the churches thereby rejecting the relevance and authority of the other 14 NT books. They even failed to determine the authorship of epistle to the Hebrews consequently making their claim further wanting.