

Foundational Teachings



Offenses

—by Charles P. Schmitt,
D.Min., D.D.

Offenses are one of the main tools the enemy uses to tear down the work of God.

The words offense, offend, and offended appear almost 80 times in the KJV Bible. In the Old Testament the word means “stumbling,” and in the New Testament the word means “a stumbling block.” One of the primary Greek words translated “offense” is skandalon, from which we get our English word scandalize.

The dictionary defines offend in this way: “to cause resentment, anger, displeasure; to hurt another’s feelings, causing them to feel resentful, angry, displeased, insulted, wounded, and affronted.” To be offended is “the condition of feeling hurt, resentful, angry, slighted, or insulted.”

Jesus told us that offenses would be a particular snare for the saints in these last days—“Then shall many be offended ... and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:10, KJV). Offense is one of the most powerful tools that Satan has in his tool kit, and he seeks constantly to use it to tear down the work of God in our own individual souls, in our families, and in the Body of Christ as a whole. We can get offended with our mates, with our friends, with other saints, with the leadership, and even with God!

How to Handle Offenses

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he was concerned “that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11). The KJV translates that last phrase as “we are not ignorant of his devices.” O, may that holy wisdom be ours, that we might not be ignorant of Satan’s devices—one of these main devices being “offenses.” Several things will help us in this.

Always, we must guard ourselves carefully so that we do not take another’s offense. Taking another’s offense can happen when we sympathetically try to help and comfort someone we care for when they are hurt, and as a result we become offended and wounded

and hurt over what seemed to have happened to them. And as we take up their offense Satan finds a way to undermine our own souls! Wise saints will never take up another’s offense. They will guard their own hearts carefully, so that they do not lose their ability to be objective and to deal objectively with the problems at hand. The greatest service we can render to anyone we love and care for is to help them work through their offenses by addressing those hurts redemptively. And we cannot do that if we have allowed ourselves to become hurt and resentful in the process. We then only become contributors to their undoing—and to our own!

The godly way to handle offenses is, first of all, to recognize that whatever may have been said or done, whether actual or only perceived, whatever may be our issues of pain, we are responsible to keep our own hearts pure before God! Self-pity, hurt, and resentment are always sinful! Gossip, evil speaking, “sharing” an evil report, even under the guise of sharing the matter for “prayer,” is always sinful! And so we must deal with our own hearts in repentance, so that these attitudes do not destroy us and any others we may affect. The unfortunate thing is that saints often choose to remain in self-pity and hurt and resentment, and the work of God is blocked in them and through them, and others are dragged down as well. But we must be brave enough to deal with our own sinful responses in repentance and confession before God.

Secondly, we must make a determined choice to forgive. Usually when we have been offended, issues get blown out of proportion—“he said ... she said ... they did...” It is easy to put the worst construction on the things that have hurt us. Well, starting from that “worst-case scenario,” we must choose to forgive, for if we do not choose to forgive others their grievous transgressions against us neither will our heavenly Father forgive our grievous transgressions against Him! (Matthew 18:21–35).

If we feel we “simply cannot forgive,” we must call out to the Lord to pour His grace into our hearts that we will be able to forgive. And we will know that we have truly forgiven someone when we no longer hold resentment in our hearts against them, when we can look at them straight in the eye and know we have forgiven them. Reconciliation comes when we are no longer “counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The third step in crushing the enemy

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The Two Most Important Questions

—by Dotty E. Schmitt

Consider two of the most important questions you will ever be asked. Specifically, they are two very penetrating questions asked by Jesus Himself. The first one is found in Matthew 16:13 when Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do people say that I am?” The disciples gave Him different opinions, and then Jesus zeroed in on them in verse 15: “But what about you? Who do you say that I am?” This is the most important question that we will ever be asked. And our answer will determine both the blessedness of our earthly life as well as our eternal destiny!

In this extraordinary exchange between Jesus and His disciples it was Peter who very emphatically declared: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (verse 16). What an amazing, life-changing declaration. Peter would never again be the same!

I will always remember when I was confronted with this same question. It was March 1951 when I answered: “You are my Lord, my Savior and my

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The Two Most Important Questions

Redeemer. You died for my sins, and rose again, and I receive You into my heart!”

My life has never been the same! How about you? Who do you say Jesus is? In every season of your life, in every need that you have, He continues to ask: Who am I to you? Am I the Living Water to quench your thirst? Am I the Living Bread to feed your hunger? Am I the Light in your darkness? Am I the Way, the Truth and the Life when you're groping to know what to do next? Am I the Good Shepherd when you feel like a lost sheep? Am I the Resurrection and the Life when you need your health and joy restored? Who do you say Jesus is?

So, the most important question Jesus will ever ask any of us to answer is “Who do you say that I am?” Once we come to know Him as our Savior, who redeems, delivers and heals us, we are then ready for His second life-changing question.

How we answer Jesus' second question will transform how we live our Christian lives. And this question never goes away. Jesus continues to ask us this question throughout our lives. We can find this piercing question in

He asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ... “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Matthew 16:13-15

John 21. After Jesus' resurrection and shortly before His ascension, He and Peter take a walk together along the shore of the Galilee. Jesus turns to Peter and asks: “Peter, do you love Me?” Now much can be said about this amazing interchange, but the essential question remains the same: Do you love Me? (To know who Jesus is, is not

at all about religion, but it is all about relationship!) Indeed, the more you get to actually know this awesome Jesus, the more you will love Him, worship Him and adore Him! It is to lovers that Jesus makes Himself known. It is to them that He unfolds the magnificence of His plans and purposes. When you are on a

journey of learning to love Jesus with all your heart, you will love what He loves, and hate what He hates, and you will discover in the words of Peter: “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8).

And so I ask you: Who do you say Jesus is, and do you love Him with all your heart? †

—adapted from two segments that aired on CBN in the summer of 2007

What the Bible Teaches about Water Baptism

—by Charles P. Schmitt

Our Lord Jesus and the apostolic writers of our New Testament had a very strong view of water baptism. In many evangelical circles today we, unfortunately, find a diminished view, reducing baptism, at times, to an optional symbol in the life of the believer. We want, however, to be faithful to the New Testament, willing to accept its teachings even when those teachings may run crosscurrent to some of our previous understandings.

The strongest and clearest words about baptism come from the lips of our Lord Jesus—“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Baptism, in and of itself, does not save, nor can it save. But faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (the main ingredient in Mark 16:16) does save; consequently a lack of faith leaves one in condemnation and

baptism is not even an issue, according to this passage. But while we state firmly that baptism, in and of itself does not save, and that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ does save, we must not remove baptism from the statement, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,” and yet remain faithful to the text. When, in faith, we go down into the waters of baptism God will meet us! Actually the first-century believers saw in baptism the way that saving faith in Christ should be expressed and celebrated, much like the “altar call” in our modern-day services, when one comes forward to express faith in our Lord Jesus.

We also note Peter's words on the Day of Pentecost—“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). As with the faith spoken of in Mark 16:16, the repentance spoken of in Acts 2:38 is what makes the

act of baptism so powerful in peoples' lives. Baptism, when there is no personal repentance and no personal faith, is lifeless. A person must be a personal responder to the Lord for baptism to be effective, for when a person goes down into the waters of baptism, expressing their repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus, God dynamically meets them, bearing witness to them that their sins have been washed away in Jesus' blood!

Paul was given a stunning word by Ananias on the day of his conversion—“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16)! We are right in believing that the water of baptism itself does not wash away sins; only the blood of Jesus can do that! But, according to this verse, when we personally respond, when we arise and are

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Firstfruits—An Offering to the Lord

—by Charles P. Schmitt

Just recently a handful of saints individually came to me with the same basic questions: “What are firstfruits, and why and how are we to bring them to the Lord?” Having never really studied the subject of “firstfruits,” I did not initially have much to say, but I did do research on the matter and these are my findings.

The word firstfruits means “the first or earliest fruits” of the harvest. The Hebrew words are *bikkur*, *reshith*. According to Nehemiah 12:44, it seems clear that firstfruits were something apart from tithes—“men were appointed to be in charge of ... the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes.” I also noted that the Lord’s expectations in Scripture were clear: “Bring the best of the firstfruits ... to the house of the LORD your God” (Exodus 23:19). On this passage the NIV footnotes read: “The offering of firstfruits was an acknowledgement that the harvest was from the Lord and belonged wholly to Him.” “The firstfruits ... are a sacred offering to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:10). And promises were given for this obedience: “The best of all the firstfruits” were to be presented, “so that a blessing may rest on your household” (Ezekiel 44:30). This is reiterated in Proverbs 3:9–10: “Honor the LORD ... with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over [burst, KJV] with new wine.” Firstfruits were consequently considered a holy responsibility of God’s people. “We assume responsibility for

bringing to the house of the LORD ... the firstfruits...” (Nehemiah 10:35).

Firstfruits were passed on from the Lord as a special blessing for those who served in the Lord’s house: “This is the share due the priests from the people ... the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, for the LORD your God has chosen them ... to stand and minister in the LORD’S name always” (Deuteronomy 18:3–5).

In the presentation of their firstfruits, the people of God were even given a presentation speech to deliver—“I declare today to the LORD God that ... I bring the firstfruits ... that You, O LORD, have given me.” They were then told: “place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before Him. And you ... shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household” (Deuteronomy 26:3, 10–11).

The message of “firstfruits,” in the words of A. R. Fausset in his Bible Encyclopedia is that “the whole ... was consecrated to God by the consecration of the firstfruits....” This is apparently what Paul meant in Romans 11:16—“If the ... firstfruits [are] holy, then the whole batch is holy....”

In all of this, a question naturally arises: How much then should be given as “firstfruits” from any new business venture, or from any unexpected blessing we receive? In Leviticus 23:9–11, on this one occasion, a single sheaf of barley was considered a “firstfruits.” William

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Offenses

under our feet is that we must then go to the offending brother or sister. “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you ... but if he will not listen, take one or two others along...” (Matthew 18:15–16). Sometimes, and maybe even many times, we will be amazed as we go to find that the offense was not intended; it was a word or an action thoughtlessly done, rather than maliciously done. But as we humbly talk things out, humbly sharing our perceptions on how certain things affected us, we will then be able to come to reconciliation and mutual forgiveness and a better under-

standing with the one who has hurt us. Often we can do this one-on-one; sometimes we will need a third party to help bring clarity. And we need to know how Satan hates it when reconciliation happens! But, as we obey our Master’s command to “go” to our brother or sister, the Lord will honor our going and Satan will be defeated, and his evil plans will be brought to nothing, and the work of God will be furthered in our own hearts and in His Church and in a lost world! And we will indeed find ourselves as a vital and functional part of the great final move of the Holy Spirit in harvesting the earth! †

Write the Vision and Make It Plain

—by Charles P. Schmitt

The prophet Habakkuk was given a prophetic vision from the Lord! The essence of that vision was found in these words: “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (2:14). Habakkuk apparently had a vision of the great last days revival and of the global impact of that mighty outpouring. Consequently, the Lord had told him: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (2:2–3).

Those are encouraging words for us, because we believe we are living in the days of the fulfillment of Habakkuk’s vision. That vision had caused Habakkuk to pray: “O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known...” (3:2). And we are presently seeing the fulfillment of that prayer! God is reviving His work! God is filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord! Amen!

Vision is essential. Vision helps identify who we are and tells us where we are going, and even births the strategies on how to get there. “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint...” (Proverbs 29:18). Vision is essential. †

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(Habakkuk 3:2)*

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What the Bible Teaches about Water Baptism

baptized, calling on the saving name of Jesus, God will meet us in our baptism as He washes away our sins in the blood of Jesus! This may well be what the author of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote: “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [with the blood of Jesus] to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). As to the mode of baptism, it is important to note here that though our hearts are sprinkled with Jesus’ blood, our bodies are washed with pure water. This is our spiritual mikvah, our holy bath, the washing of our bodies in the obedience of baptism, our hearts having been sprinkled with Jesus’ blood (see Hebrews 12:24).

Peter is clear in 1 Peter 3:21 to see in the overflowing waters of the flood in Noah’s day a picture of “baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge (response) of a good conscience toward God.” We must take careful note of what it is that saves us—the response of a good conscience toward God! And that clean conscience comes only through repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which brings about the inward sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (see 1 Peter 1:2). This is what we are testifying to and celebrating in baptism.

Paul in Colossians 2:11–12 speaks of our being spiritually “circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature . . . having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God . . .” The mode of baptism is clear; it is by being “buried” (which refers to immersion). The necessity of a personal response in baptism is also clear; our “putting off the sinful nature” is our expression of repentance and “your faith in the power of God” is our expression of believing. A repentant, believing person going down into the waters of baptism will be met by God!

Paul, likewise, in Romans 6:3–4 speaks of the powerful work that God does in baptism: “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were, therefore, buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Wonderful work of God’s grace!

In Titus 3:5–6, Paul may have had these very thoughts in mind when he wrote: “He saved us not because of righteous things we

had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.” This may also be what our Savior had in mind when He told Nicodemus that a man must be “born of water and the Spirit” to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5).

All of this may actually leave us with some very practical questions. “Do we still need to be baptized in water if we know that we have repented and believed and been forgiven and even been filled with the Holy Spirit?” All of these statements were apparently true for those in Cornelius’ household, yet Peter said: “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be

baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47–48)! We must be willing to do the same!

Also, “What do we do with our past christening as an infant, or with a prior baptism as a young person (which really

did not change anything in our lives)?” Well, when Paul found the disciples at Ephesus in that very condition, he baptized them (again!) “into the name of the Lord Jesus,” and then “when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:5–6). I encourage you to follow in the steps of these Ephesians!

And finally, “What about the thief on the cross? If baptism is really so important, how do we understand his conversion without it?” There are extreme cases where people give their hearts to Jesus as they are dying—people dying on the battlefield, people dying on beds of sickness, the thief on the cross. There is simply no way in which these could be baptized in water. But the Lord only holds us responsible for what we can do. In repenting and in believing they did what they could. They could not, however, be baptized. And I believe Jesus received them simply on the basis of their repentance and their faith in Him!

But probably all of us who are reading these words are able to “rise up and be baptized.” And the Lord expects this obedience as an expression of our repentance and faith. How about you? Have you, in repentance and faith, been buried in baptism with Christ into His death that you might rise to walk in newness of life? I ask you, in Jesus’ name, to do exactly that! Amen! †

*“He saved us not because of
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but because of His mercy...”
(Titus 3:5–6)*

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Firstfruits— An Offering to the Lord

Smith in his Bible Dictionary accurately comments, “No exact quantity was commanded, but [unlike the tithe, which was specifically 10 percent] it was left to the spiritual and moral sense of each individual.” The Jewish Talmud did, however, rush in to give legal guidelines—a “60th as the least to be given . . . a 30th or 40th as a liberal offering.” But the Lord actually left the amount of the firstfruits offering, as with all free-will offerings, up to the giver. Though firstfruits were expected, the size of the gift would be another “lover’s offering,” coming out of the largess of the giver’s heart!

Finally, I noted that people were also considered “firstfruits.” A first-born son, dedicated to the Lord’s service, was considered a “firstfruits” to the Lord (Exodus 34:19). Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called “the firstfruits” of a whole harvest of believers to follow (1 Corinthians 15:23). The first converts in New Testament apostolic outreaches were called “firstfruits” (see Romans 16:5, KJV; 1 Corinthians 16:15, KJV). James 1:18 also, interestingly, refers to believers themselves as “a kind of firstfruits” of God’s whole creation, and Revelation 14:4 refers to undefiled, bridal saints as “firstfruits to God and the Lamb.”

I emerged from my study convinced that the “firstfruits” principle is valid for us—in all that we are, in all that we do, in the use of our time and in our finances as well. I also noted that anything taught in the Old Testament, such as worship and financial giving, that is not countermanded in the New Testament, such as blood sacrifices for atonement are, remains valid for us as New Testament believers. Consequently, the issue of worshiping and giving are among cardinal Old Testament values that have been passed on to us in the New Covenant. (Remember, initially the Old Testament was the only Bible the early Christian believers had!) Firstfruits, for the Old Testament believers and for us today, acknowledge that all that we are and all that we successfully do comes from the hand of the LORD, for “everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise Your glorious name!” (1 Chronicles 29:11–13). †

Dark Energy—An amazing discovery of nine years ago is destined to change how we look at our universe

—by Charles P. Schmitt

I was recently intrigued by a short article in the Parade section of the Washington Post (5/27/07) entitled, “The Secrets of Dark Energy,” written by astrophysicist and Yale professor Meg Urry. The discovery of “Dark Energy” only goes back to 1998 when scientists suddenly realized that “Dark Energy makes up two thirds of our universe—and we don’t know what it is!” The article explains that this energy is called “dark because we don’t directly see it. ‘Dark’ is the code for ‘we have absolutely no clue what it is!’”

The article reads, “Scientists have long recognized that the universe has been growing larger since its origin 13.7 billion years ago in an extremely rapid expansion called the ‘Big Bang.’” [Note: Many scientists who are Christians believe the “Big Bang” to be the awesome act of creation described in Genesis 1:1.] The Post article continues: “We assumed

that this expansion should be slowing down due to the pull of gravity. In 1998, however, two teams of astrophysicists discovered that the expansion is actually speeding up. They observed a mysterious form of ‘energy’ that opposes gravity and is causing the galaxies throughout the universe to move faster and faster.” The article further speaks of this as “the presence of an unexpected force of some kind” and “the presence of a previously unknown entity in the universe.”

As a Bible teacher, it is my joy to fill in these blanks—and His Name is Jesus!

A number of years ago when I was in school, the debate was over whether the universe was expanding or contracting. Since then scientists have concluded that the universe is expanding. But back then I argued on Biblical grounds that the universe is expanding—expanding to accommodate the increase of the government and of the peace of

our Lord Jesus Christ, for Isaiah 9:6-7 declares of Jesus, our “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,” that “of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” To me that necessitated an ever-expanding universe, to accommodate Jesus’ ever-increasing government and endless peace!

Colossians 1:15-17 makes some awesome statements about Jesus: “the Firstborn [Heir] over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible [things like “Dark Energy”] . . . all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together [cohere].” In His hands is that mysterious force scientists are now talking about!

What astrophysicists call “unseen” energy is simply the creative energy of our Lord Jesus *continued on page 6*

The Secret—Something New on the Horizon

—by Charles P. Schmitt

I recently read through a six-page document on the latest craze—“The Secret.” There were some helpful thoughts in the document—“everyone can release themselves from being a victim and begin to take control of their life’s destiny”; “true forgiveness is when you can say to the person who hurt you: ‘Thank you for giving me that experience’”; “she stopped complaining and began to focus on her gratitude for [her husband]”; and “concentrate on your health and wholeness every day, and you’ll attract more health and wholeness. . . .”

The alarming thing about this document, however, was that on none of its six pages was Jesus mentioned even once! Remembering Paul’s grave concern when writing to the Colossians, it became clear to me that “The Secret” was nothing more than gnostic philosophy, the very ideology that threatened to subvert the Colossians, and against which Paul wrote strongly. I was amazed to read Colossians 2:2-4 in Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*: “Have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God’s great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else.

And we’ve been shown the mystery! I’m telling you this because I don’t want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries, or ‘the Secret.’” It almost seemed Peterson was tailoring his words to this very discussion!

The Living Bible also does an impressive job on Colossians 1:27 and 2:2-3—“This is the secret: that Christ in your hearts is your only hope of glory. . . . For God’s secret plan, now at last made known, is Christ Himself. In Him lie hidden all the mighty, untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

J. B. Phillips translates Colossians 1:27 and 2:3: “And the secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come. . . . May your spiritual experience become richer as you see more and more fully God’s great secret, Christ Himself! For it is in Him, and in Him alone, that men will find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

What then is this latest craze, “The Secret?” It is simply gnostic philosophy. And what is wrong with gnostic philosophy? It is a body without life; it is a pair of lungs with no breath; it is a heart with no blood. It is a

philosophy of living, but without Christ, Himself, the secret of living and the source of life!

Paul’s understanding of Gnosticism, according to Colossians 2:4, is “at best founded on men’s ideas . . . and disregards Christ!” And this is of paramount importance because “your own completeness is only realized in Him” (2:10, Phillips). The Living Bible translates Colossians 2:10: “You have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ.”

So I believe the issues are plain. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4). And only through Him and by Him and in Him can men and women “release themselves from being a victim and begin to take control of their life’s destiny.” And only because of Jesus living in us can we truly forgive others who have so deeply wounded us. And only when we see Christ working in our mates can we “stop complaining and begin to focus on gratitude” for them. And only as we see ourselves healthy and whole in Christ will we “attract more health and wholeness.” All because of Jesus! Wonderful Lord Jesus Christ! We bless you! Amen! †

God's Sheep Aren't Dumb

—by Charles P. Schmitt

The following is a remake of a tract written by Pastor Charles over 22 years ago just after coming out of a heavy-handed authoritarian group. These truths, which helped birth Immanuel's Church, are still precious to this very day!

What are our biblical understandings on the matter of spiritual authority, spiritual covering, and submission to leaders? We are to believe in spiritual authority—but only in the kind that girds itself with a towel and takes a basin in its hands and gets down in a servant's position to wash the feet of the Body of our Lord Jesus. We are to believe in being adequately spiritually covered—but with a covering that comes King-sized! Our great King, Jesus, is adequate to cover us in all the areas of our lives, and He often chooses to use His servants in this process. And concerning submission, we are to be submissive: husbands and wives, parents and children, sheep and pastors, reciprocally and mutually, for only a fool does not heed wise counsel. We must seek to walk in a balanced way—humbly submissive one to another, but with no one replacing Christ in another's life.

One of the bad seeds that has been sown in the Body of Christ in this area of submission to spiritual authority is the idea that God's sheep are dumb. After all, everybody knows that sheep are dumb! Isaiah has written: "All we like sheep have gone astray..." (Isaiah 53:6). Sheep are dumb, open to deception, straying, getting into messy things, wandering off into strange places! Consequently, heavy-handed ministries justify their authoritarianism in people's lives on this premise: God's sheep are dumb and, therefore, need to be controlled. Typical of that mentality

is this actual statement: "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they prepare a plan, it is God's plan. When they point the way there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith."

But one thing we need to notice in Isaiah 53:6, however, is that the verb in this verse is in the *past* tense—"All we like sheep *have gone stray*." That makes all the difference in the world. That's the way we used to be—deceived, straying, wayward, dumb. But now, Jesus tells us in John 10, something different is true of us as God's sheep. God's redeemed

sheep are the most blest and enlightened beings in the world!

Jesus categorically insists, "My sheep hear My voice ... they follow Me ... a stranger they simply will not follow..." (John 10:27, 5). Jesus declares that the sheep of God are not dumb! They are not prone to deception and to wandering! In John 10:14–15, Jesus makes a most remarkable declaration, one so wonderful in its entirety that it is a shame its flow is broken up by the verse change in the middle of it. Jesus says of us, "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me

even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father..." When one considers the depth of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and how profound is that holy knowledge each has of the other, and that this is exactly the way His own sheep know Him, from the greatest down to the least (Hebrews 8:11), we simply must conclude that His sheep are not dumb! They move in that blest "spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." They are a brilliant new species! Praise God!

Can His sheep, then, ever be deceived? Do they ever go astray? Obviously, yes. They can be deceived and go astray, but never because Jesus Himself is not enough to keep them from falling, but only because somewhere along the line there came an inward subtle refusal to cleave to Him with a true and humble heart. Then the heart is open for deception.

Brothers and sisters, let us not permit the thief of John 10:10 to steal from us Jesus' blest assurance; let us not allow our confidence in Him to be taken from us. We are the sheep of His pasture! And Jesus has the greatest confidence in His sovereign work within us! And so should we! Amen! †

*But now, Jesus tells us
in John 10, something
different is true of us
as God's sheep.
God's redeemed sheep
are the most blest and
enlightened beings in
the world!*

continued from page 5

Dark Energy

Christ! What scientists refer to as "an unexpected force," "a previously unknown entity," is nothing other than the sovereign power of our Sovereign Lord! Hebrews 1:3 tells us that our Lord Jesus "sustains all things by His powerful word!" In order to facilitate the expansion of His Sovereign Government and the increase of His Reconciling Peace (Colossians 1:20), our Lord Jesus (in the words of the Washington Post) provides that "mysterious form of 'energy' that opposes gravity and is causing the galaxies throughout the universe to move faster and faster," thus expanding the universe.

Paul speaks of the Father's grand purpose in all of this, that in the fullness of times He might "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

J. B. Phillips so beautifully translates the next two verses (1:11, 12) in this way: "And here is the staggering thing—that in all which will one day belong to Him we have been promised a share, since we were long ago destined for this by the One who achieves His purposes by His sovereign will, so that we ... may bring praise to His glory!" So, what scientists are uncovering in these days is simply something more of Jesus' creative power and more of our vast inheritance in Christ Jesus our Lord! What a joy to belong to Him and to share with Him in His ever-increasing government over the whole universe! Amen! †

Your Personal Pentecost

—by Charles P. Schmitt

Do you sense a need in your life for a closer walk with the Lord? Have you tried to lead a life that would be pleasing to God and failed? Have you yearned to have the power to be a better witness? Have you at times become dismayed when reading the Bible, wishing you could understand it better?

If your answer to these questions is “yes,” there is good news for you. The key to these desires is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is the overflowing of the Holy Spirit into, upon, and out from the believer. It leads to a full, rewarding life in Jesus Christ.

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:37–39, NIV). It is important for us to focus on these five great words—*thirsty, come, drink, believes, and flow.*

1. **Thirsty**—Thirst shows a state of need, of needing something that one does not yet

fully have. Do you have a thirst for a deeper life in the Lord? For a closer walk with Him? For a boldness to serve Him?

2. **Come to Me**—We must always come to Jesus for the fulfillment of all our needs. He alone is the One who gives to us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Are you prepared to come to Jesus for the fullness of His Spirit?
3. **Drink**—This is an act of receiving. Even as we drink a glass of water or breathe in a breath of fresh air, so we are simply to receive from Jesus the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even as we first trusted Jesus to freely forgive us all of our sins, so we now trust Him to freely fill us with all of His fullness!
4. **Believe**—Believing in the Lord is simply taking Him at His Word. He will always fulfill His promises to us. This confident expectation is called “faith.” Release your faith in this very promise! Believe His Word! He will fill you now!
5. **Flow**—The promise of Jesus is that “streams of living water will flow from within” us. In this assurance of faith, we are to step out in our devotional life, in our personal life, in our life of witness in the world, and believe that Jesus Christ will flow through us today in a miraculous way by the power of His Holy Spirit!

Some Thoughts on Speaking in Other Tongues

Prayer is one of the main purposes of speaking in other tongues. When we pray in our known language, we limit our prayers to our knowledge. Yet God has made provision for us to pray with His knowledge!

His Holy Spirit abides in our spirit, and gives us a prayer language. Paul says, “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful” (1 Corinthians 14:14, NAS). Isn’t it beautiful that we now can worship God “in spirit and in truth”?

To receive the gift of tongues from God requires two things: faith and action. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance” (Acts 2:4, NAS). Note that they did the speaking while the Spirit gave the language or words.

So by faith you must, by an act of your will, open your mouth and speak whatever words He gives you. As you continue to release this prayer language, it will become fluent.

You should exercise this gift daily in your private devotions and prayer to the Lord. Ask and it shall be given to you! Amen! †

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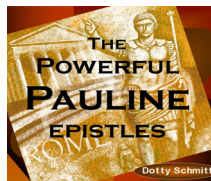


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