

## *Paul and Erosions of Doctrine*

I know that the Apostle Paul cried quite often about what happened to him before he became a Christian, how he persecuted the church. No doubt he confessed his sins, God forgave his sins, God forgot his sins; but to a certain extent--at least in Paul's memories--the load was still on his back. Let us be careful here--this matter is very practical for daily Christian and church life--there is no need for Paul or us to carry around any "care" of any kind, including past weights and sins. The Apostle Peter made that clear.

**"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (I Peter 5:6,7)**

However, in spite of forgiveness; in spite of God's forgetfulness; in spite of the getting of Paul's cares off his back, something remained in his memory and on his back related to his persecution of the church. I don't think we have all the answers, but we do not it clearly remained. Paul wrote that he was not any worthy to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the church of God. Of course, we did know that part of the problem was because Christians had difficulties initially accepting Paul as an Apostle. Some were afraid of him because they knew as Saul how he had dragged Christians into prison. Remember Ananias when God told him to go talk to Saul, "Lord, I've heard about this man, and how much harm he has caused the saints in Jerusalem." (Acts 9:13)

Even though God forgives our past sins and forgets them, casting them as far as the east is from the west and promising to remember them no more, I think there are certain inevitable laws that exist here on earth such as the law of gravity, the law of supply and demand, the law of inertia, and the law of sowing and reaping. We simply continue to reap certain consequences of our past here on earth and in the history of earth. And no matter how much we cast our cares on Christ, realizing the assurance of forgiveness and forgetfulness, the memories even if in our subconscious remain. Listen to it straight from one of Paul's letters.

**“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (I Corinthians 15:9,10)**

When we consider doctrine, alias the teachings of the Bible, and especially as related to our past and present weights or sins, we need something of the attitude of the Apostle Paul as reflected in I Corinthians 15:9,10.

1. By the grace of God, past and present I am what I am.

This assumes that he has confessed his sins, asked and received forgiveness and God's forgetfulness.

2. Considering himself the least in his group, the least of the Apostles, only made Paul work even harder to prove that the grace of God toward him was not wasted.

He worked harder than all the others. Even there, he pauses to acknowledge that in the work it was not really him, but the grace of God that was working in him.

**2-1: Doctrine, often a Tight Shoe that Crimps our Style.**

Now, I have mentioned all this in order to say that doctrine is often a “Tight Shoe” that puts a crimp in our walking and living style, especially that doctrine that I discuss now that seems to have become a major problem for us in the more recent years. It is by no means a new problem as I can recall it from the 1960's in Tucumcari, FBC, and Portales at Emmanuel Baptist Church as well as other places. Which doctrinal problem am I speaking of? **That of, marriage, divorce, and the biblical requirements for pastors and deacons.** In particular we think of two scriptures in I Timothy 3:2 and 3:12.

**“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...” (I Timothy 3:2)**

**“Let deacons be the husbands of one wife...” (I Timothy 3:12)**

Now, before we proceed on the “Tight Shoe” of this doctrine, realizing that our nation is approaching the point where over 50% of marriages end in divorce and knowing that some of our most respected and active churchmembers have been

divorced as well as close loved ones; and at the same time knowing that we must hold high the standard of marriage from our Creator from the beginning, in spite of the allowance in the time of Moses of a writ of divorcement because of the hardness of the peoples heart, we must preach, teach, and write the whole counsel of God, being concerned quite often about the totality of doctrine, You know what our most important concern must be: **the erosion of our endurance for sound doctrine.** This matter of marriage and divorce in general and specifically as related to the qualifications for pastors and deacons is just one example of the battles that we must fight today and in the future of the soundness of doctrine. As the Apostle Paul wrote in II Timothy 4:3,4.

**“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (II Timothy 4:3,4)**

Wow! I will come back to this latter as a main point; but before I pass on I want to ask you the question, “Are we there already?” Have we significantly eroded our endurance for sound doctrine, and do we continue to significantly erode that endurance. Do we often find what we want in the Bible instead of an exegesis of what is really in there? And do we go looking for teachers that will tell us what we want to hear? Clarence W. Kerr writes in GOD’S PATTERN FOR THE HOME.

“Decade by decade the problem of divorce becomes more and more acute. It is hard for us to realize that a century ago divorce was well nigh unheard of in this country. We are not saying that there were not marriage problems, but few of them reached the courts of the law. Now our divorce rate vies with death as a dissolver of the marriage relationship. If the rate keeps on increasing as it has, it will not be long until each license for a new marriage is counter-balanced by a certificate of divorce for the legal dissolution of another. The problem is more acute in Christian America than in many pagan lands.”

### 2-2: Marriage, Divorce, and Qualifications of Leaders.

What do reliable commentators say on this Doctrine of Marriage, Divorce, and Qualifications for Pastors and Deacons? Okay, enough meddling, let us get into some comments for respected commentators. And I remind you, don't change horses in mid-stream. Don't change you reliable commentators when there is a possibility that you have encountered a doctrine that is a tight shoe on your feet. Now for me, the most reliable of all commentators is Dr. B. H. Carroll. Dr. Carroll was the founder of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth where he established a seminary that would teach all the way through the Bible. Many of you know that Commentaries on those lectures have been written, published, and re-printed as AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

1. Dr. Carroll, as a high school friend of mine presently teaching at Southwestern reminded me, is part of our Christian and Baptist heritage. Here is Dr. Carroll on I Timothy 3:3 and I Timothy 3:12.

“First, ‘the husband of one wife.’ Does that mean that he must be the husband of a wife--is that what it means? In other words, that an unmarried man ought not to be a pastor?...We had an old deacon once that put his foot right on it that it meant: ‘I am willing to give that young preacher a place, I am willing to recognize him and even ordain him to special mission stations to preach, but no unmarried man can be pastor of this church.”

And continuing about deacons Carroll writes.

“The deacon. So far as moral qualifications go, there is little difference between the qualifications of preacher and deacon.”

2. How about Barclay and his commentaries, I know many of you like him.

“The Christian leader must have been married only once. The Greek literally means that he must be ‘the husband one wife.’ Some take this to mean that the Christian leader must be a married man, and it is possible that the phrase could mean that...But in this context here we can be quite certain that the phrase mean that the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity. In later days the APOSTOLIC CANONS laid it down: ‘He who is involved in two marriages, after his baptism, or he who has taken a concubine, cannot be an episkopos, a bishop.”

3. How about your pastor as a Bible commentator?

He has labored as your overseer or pastor for 15 years, through the hard times and the easy. You listen to him teach and preach every Sunday and more. Why should you suddenly stop listening to him because you feel a tightness in your shoes? I don’t understand why any active member of this church, even if honestly persuaded of another interpretation can not say to the pastor, “I don’t agree on this matter, but I am willing to go along with your leadership.”

### **2-3: What Can Happen if We Erode our Tolerance of Sound Doctrine.**

Now, let me come to the main point of the message (chapter), and that is some of the dangers of tampering with this doctrine or any other doctrines of the Bible.

1. It can hamper Friendship with Jesus.

Recall how that Jesus in John 14-16 in some of the most significant and last teachings to the Apostles emphasized how that He wanted them to pass from being servants, who did not know the will of the Master, to being friends who knew the plan of the Creator. And Jesus told what the qualifications are for being a “Friend”. Parenthetically, you know if I had to make a choice between being a pastor, a deacon, or a Friend of Jesus, I think I would chose being a friend of Jesus. For one

thing Friendship with Jesus which comes from love and keeping the commandments or teachings of Jesus, gives great boldness on the day of judgment.

It is true that those that inherit the office of the deacon also inherit "great boldness in the faith", but I think I would prefer boldness on the day of judgment. Just think about the matter of memories, sins, weights and the judgment day. The Bible tells us "it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment". We are told in the book of Revelation that all the books of our works are going to be opened on the day of judgment, the recorded memories of all that we have done. And the world will be judged out of those books. But don't fear! There is another book, the book of life, and if our names are written in book because of our faith in Jesus, the previous books will be set aside and the book of life with our name in it will be the only book that gives us basis for boldness on the day of judgement.

**"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:14)**

**"Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make OUR home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words..." (John 14:23,24)**

2. Eroding our tolerance for sound doctrine can deny our heritage in the New Testament Church, in Church History, in Baptist faith and beliefs, and in the Southern Baptist Convention.

I can recall at Quachita Baptist University in 1961 when writing a senior research paper. I asked the Professor, Dr. Blackmon, if I could write on "Baptist Distinctives". I took a step back and thought to myself, "you old reprobate", when his reply was "Is there any such thing?" But you know after over 40 years in the ministry as both a military chaplain, a pastor of churches, and a Bible professor he had a point, that on the practical level in talking to members of different denominations on doctrine it is quite often hard to tell the difference. And if this was true in 1961, with the trend obvious of erosion of tolerance for sound doctrine, what must be the situation in this day and time. You know that I have interim pastored approximately 16 churches in New Mexico from the size of Yeso Baptist Church, twice, to the size of First Baptist Church of Tucumcari, also twice; and I use to have the habit as a young man--don't worry, I don't do that anymore--of asking people in the congregation on Sunday night to list 10 major doctrines of the Bible. What I was looking for was the great truths on God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation on the cross, heaven, hell, the second coming, the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, and so on; but what did I get: go to Sunday School, go to worship, tithe, be on time--all good practices but hardly major doctrines of the Bible. We can allow tolerance for sound doctrine to erode by (1) negligence, (2) ignorance, or (3) just plain purpose or desire.

(1). Neglect of the Bible.

We just do not study the Bible itself as much as we ought to. As Dr. Wolber use to say, "Study your Bibles, they will shed a lot of light on the commentaries." Large corporations are now telling their employees that whereas the reading level of the average American a few years ago was sixth grade, now it is the third grade; and that is the reason that you see USA TODAY written for a third grade reader level. That is also the reason we enjoy it so much. Now, do you think that this obvious lack of reading and reading skills does not affect also Christians reading of the Bible. Certainly it does.

(2). Ignorance of the Bible.

How many times have we heard things like a old farmer outside Hot Springs, Arkansas tell me. It is in the Bible that "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink". I don't know where, but it is in there. The problem is that we do not take the effort to check of understanding of the Bible by reading and re-reading it. By looking it for ourselves.

(3). Desire to erode sound doctrine.

We hate to think it but some are in the category of the seared conscience of the Bible, who simply desire to distort, mis-interpret and mis-apply the teachings of the Bible. It was also the Apostle Paul who warned about this group of eroders. Isn't it amazing that this is also in I Timothy, I Timothy 4:1,2.

**"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron..." (I Timothy 4:1,2)**

Obviously this seared conscience is related to doctrine--in this case the doctrine of demons. In conclusion we will look at some doctrines from demons such as the doctrines of Balaam, of the Nicolaitines, and of the Prophetess Jezebel.

3. Eroding our endurance of sound doctrine can put us in the category of those that desire to hear something new, seeking after other teachers. Boy, that scripture in II Timothy 4:3,4 should get our attention lest there be any hint that we may be doing the same thing. Here is a point by point summary of II Timothy 4:3,4 of the "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God": (1). The time must come, or is already here, but God forbid that we are a part of it, when Christians and churches will have no, zero, endurance for sound doctrine; (2). At that time, or at this time, how then will Christians or churchmembers make decisions about what doctrines are valid. The answer is there! "according to their own desires". What they want to believe because of a life style, or preference, they will come to believe; (3). Their ears itch, and this is rather difficult. You would think that the itch or hitch is in the conscience or in the heart or even in the mind. But since it follows the desire for different doctrine, we can conclude that there is an immedi-

ate link between the emotions, that is the desires for different doctrines, and the itch in the ear. (I wonder if tight shoes can cause an itch in the ears!) But it is a line of continuity: the emotions and the itchy ears lead to the next step; (4). They will heap up teachers that say what they want said. They won't find just one, but call them, and elect them, and seek the preaching and teaching of preachers and pastors of a similar low tolerance for sound doctrine.

4. Eroding our tolerance for sound doctrine can indicate that concretely we do not care that much for the Inspiration of Scriptures.

Our adherence to sound doctrine, even when the shoe is tight and hurts, really proves how much we believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures as the Word of God. We hear a lot in this day and time about "fundamentalists" and about being "conservative" on the Bible; and many give it lip service; but how do they stand on issues like this about marriage, divorce, and the qualifications of pastors and deacons. This is the proof of the pudding. This tells how much we believe the Bible is the Word of God!

5. Such erosion of endurance from sound doctrine can put us in the category of the less desirable church examples of Revelation 2 and 3.

There were more churches in Asia Minor than the seven listed, but these were typical of all the churches in Asia Minor and typical of our churches today. If we erode our endurance for sound doctrine, we can place ourselves in the category of the five out of seven that were on the verge of having their pastor removed by Christ and having the churches place in the church (candlestick) removed.

(1). The church at Ephesus had left their first love even though there were many good things to say about, and recall that a loss of love can also mean a loss in the Friendship of Jesus. They did have enough endurance for sound doctrine to hate the doctrine and deeds of the Nicolaitans, a heresy of doctrine related to Christian behavior and to church leadership. Jesus threatens that if they do not repent to come and remove their candlestick, their place among the other churches.

(2). There were a lot of good things to say about the church at Pergamum, but there was among the minority a doctrinal problem, called the doctrine of Balaam, Balaam being the prophet of the Old Testament who showed for profit how Balak could seduce the children of Israel to go after other gods and to sexual immorality. And the second doctrinal problem was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. If the church had voted on these two doctrines, it appears that the majority would have suppressed the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Of course, in this church Christ promised to distinguish between the majority of sound doctrine and the minority, saying that He would fight against them with His Words.

(3). Likewise Thyatira had a doctrinal problem: Jezebel, as she called herself, a prophetess as she called herself, was being allowed to teach unsound doctrine in the

church. There, Jezebel was playing the role in the church that Balam played for Balak, misleading the church in false worship and sexual immorality. Again this must have been a minority that had lost this endurance for sound doctrine, because Christ threatened only the prophetess and the few who supported her, to the rest of the church (Revelation 2:24) that did not have this doctrine He would put on them no other burden.

(4). What can we say about the church at Sardis? Wow, there were in trouble! They had a name, a reputation in the community and possibly even in the association, state, and convention; but they were dead. It sounds like the attendance was good, which within itself can keep the spirits up; but that the doctrine was bad. It definitely looks like if that church had voted the majority would have voted in terms of holding on their reputation, ignoring the call to repentance from Christ and the call to hold fast to the sound doctrines which they had heard. Why do we conclude that? Because it said that there were a few, obviously a minority, that had not defiled their garments.

(5). The problem in the church at Laodicea was that they were neither hot nor cold, either a love problem or a doctrinal problem, or both. It is obvious that they were proud of their accomplishments, saying they were rich, that they needed nothing and nobody. It is hard to know how the vote would have gone in that church!

6. The Erosion of Sound Doctrine can be an assist to the way Satan works.

Boy, how hard Satan tries. He was gullible enough to believe that he could erode Jesus's confidence in the sound doctrines of God during the temptation in the wilderness. He even quoted Scriptures out of context.

(1). The Doctrine of the Priority of Word of God over physical well-being. Satan told Jesus prove that the are the Son of God by turning these rocks to stone. Jesus was out there to fast for 40 days and nights, and in doing so to concentrate on the Word of God. You remember Jesus famous reply, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

(2). The Doctrine on the testing of God. Satan said, "It is written in the Scriptures that the Son of God has been given angels to care for Him, if you are the Son of God throw yourself down from the temple to prove that you will be rescued and that you are the Son of God. (Matthew 4:5-7)

(3). The Doctrine of Worship of God over Satan. The last temptation, Satan took Jesus to a high place--here you see some of the power of Satan--and said "all that you see I will give you if you will worship me". The supreme affront to God is to worship Satan. Jesus replied quickly, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.: (Matthew 4:10)



In short, if Satan were at work in your church today, he would not deny truth per se; for that is too obvious. What he would do would be to quote scripture out of context and mis-apply it! And don't you think that any place that the work of God has been going on steadily for 15 years, that Satan is going to neglect it. The prince of this world, who is a lion that goes about seeking whom he can chew on, maim and destroy, will be active where Jesus is, where the work of God is going on. It simply remains for Christians who can discern the spirits to figure out where Satan is working!

7. Erosion of sound doctrine is an assault on the character of God.

We often say and pray--and certainly it is true--that God forgives us when we confess our sins because it is recorded in the Bible; but ultimately the real reason is because it is based on the character of God. It is the character of God that wants to forgive sins when they are confessed. And you can say the same of any doctrine in the Bible. All the principles, doctrines, teachings, and instructions of the Bible are based on the character of God: that is the reason we call it the Word of God or the Book of God. It reflects what God is and what God wants us to be. Now when we in any way malign, distort, or erode the doctrines of the Bible we are making an assault on the character of God. God can certainly withstand the assault, but can we?

8. Erosion of sound doctrine is an attack on the Bible as the Word of God.

Here is where we prove how deeply and sincerely we believe the Bible to be the Word of God. Do we believe it is inspired only in the sense of many books like Robert Browning or the poets are inspired, or do we really believe that **it is divine in origin, absolute in authority, and sufficient in its message?**

**“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17)**

Notice that if the first given reason for the existence of the Bible is heed, “for sound doctrine”, some of the others will follow like reproof and correction will not be needed, and the righteousness and Christian maturity will follow behind sound doctrine.

9. Erosion of sound doctrine indicate superficiality, instability in the faith, and immaturity.

When a church changes its mind because of the practices of the people or because of the pressures of the world in the American Society, they start fitting into the category of those that are blown back and forth by every wind of doctrine.

“...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive...” (Ephesians 4:14)

You can quickly see what the opposite of this erosion of sound doctrine is, in what precedes 4:14. The very purpose that God sent pastors, teachers, apostles, and evangelists is for the work of the ministry--in which each member has a part--for the building up of the body of Christ, and to promote unity among all Christians.

10. Erosion of sound doctrine isolate a church from church history, Baptist History, and the heritage of the Southern Baptist Convention; and at the same time it puts us more in the mainstream of American Society where now over 50% of all marriages end in divorce. You just cannot get away from the conclusion that all we trust as commentators, preachers, and statements of faith in church and Baptist history lead us to the sound doctrine of marriage for life and pastors and deacons as the husband of one wife, notwithstanding any teacher or preacher of itchy ears that we might dig up to justify our lives and desires.

11. Erosion of sound doctrine is an affront to and grieves the Holy Spirit who came to take the place of Jesus on earth, reproving the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Where you can see that affront to the Holy Spirit most obviously is in the matter of righteousness. I am not talking about the legally declared and external righteousness of Jesus with which we are cloaked through justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but in the actual outworking of righteousness, or right doing, in our lives that is the natural consequences of the inworking of the Holy Spirit. It is ordinarily called sanctification, the process by which the Holy Spirit increases the actual righteousness in our lives.

### 2-4: “The Office Should Seek the Man, not the Man the Office.”

When Paul wrote that he was not worthy to be an Apostle but by the grace of God that is exactly what he was, he was saying in another way what I read from B. H. Carroll, “The Office should seek the man, not the man the office.” Paul did not seek to be an Apostle. The only thing he was seeking was to do the service of God, and he thought by persecuting Christians he was doing exactly that. Jesus on the road to Damascus struck him down, spoke to him, caused him to temporarily be blind until Ananias came to talk to him; and then let Paul know that he was a chosen vessel to deliver His message.

1. Paul practiced what he cautioned over Christians on the attitude about yourself in the church, writing for each member not to think more highly of themselves than they should.

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly that he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:3)

We need to be able to see ourselves in the eternal perspective of God's truth and timeline. All of this truth and doctrine in the Bible existed long before we were born. We have, by the grace of God, inherited the Word of God from over two thousand years of writing, interpretation, teaching, and preaching. We are inheritors of Church History, Baptist History, and the History of the Southern Baptist Conventions. Primarily, we are Creators and re-creations of God. It is nothing personal, and it should not be taken personal, if doctrine is a tight shoe that we must wear; for it existed long before we were on the face of this earth!

2. Pride is what can serve to mislead us on doctrine.

What Paul was talking about when he said that he was not worthy to be an apostle was humility and pride: what he was talking about in urging Christians to think soberly of themselves was pride and humility. Pride is the internal enemy that can mislead us to do what we desire or want to do on the matters of doctrine. It is true that we live in a changing world. Each decade now we seem to live in a new world of technology and information explosion. Our friends change, we lose many of them to death. Our environments change; but we must remember that in a world where truly there is a social evolution, God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever more. And there are certain things that God hates or despises: those things do not change. At the head of the list is pride, or a proud look.

(1). **"Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; the one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure." (Psalm 101:5)**

(2). **"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (I Corinthians 10:12)**

(3). **"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)**

(4). **"These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness that speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:16-19)**

Notice how connected the proud look at the beginning with the sowing discord among brethren in the church at the end are and with the matter of the erosion of sound doctrine!

3. We can easily put ourselves in the category of the religious leaders of the time of Christ who had substituted the commandments of men for the doctrines of God. It was on the very issue of marriage and divorce where Jesus condemned the Pharisees, Sadducees, and their historical traditions of the world of putting the commandments of men in the place of the doctrines of God.

**“The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him. And He answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.’ And in the house His disciples asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”** (Mark 10:2-12)

God does the joining; and no matter how we may desire or rationalize or seek other teachers, God intended that there be no separation of what He joined together.

#### **2-5: Creations, Christians, and Christian Leaders.**

We naturally expect a progressive of expectations from God as history developed from all humanity to Christians to Christian leadership. You would think normally that the requirements, standards, or expectations from God would become more stringent.

##### 1. God’s expectations for all Humanity.

As far as we can tell, since before Moses recorded it in the Pentateuch, there were only two requirements that God placed on all humanity, before the recorded of the written law. It was word of mouth or custom and tradition that carried those two requirements forward until Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

(1). Both requirements were given by God so close together that it is almost difficult to tell which was first; however it appears at least the germ of the first great expectation for humanity is given first.

**“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”** (Genesis 1:27)

The full explanation of all the implications comes later in the recorded Word.

**“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”** (Genesis 2:24)

In a few paragraphs we will find that Jesus amplified on this, re-enforced it, laying the requirements once again on the chosen people of God and Christians in particular in spite of the lapse on the requirements by the nation of Israel as Moses for generations allowed a “writ of divorcement”. Surely the standard that Christ and God placed on Christians had to be greater than that on all humanity. However,

first and briefly, let us look at the other great expectation that God placed on all humanity, a commission for dominion over all the universe.

(2). Second Great Commission to all Humanity.

This great expectation follows immediately behind the first. In fact, in the next verse.

**“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thin that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)**

J. Clyde Turner in THESE THINGS WE BELIEVE calls man (man in the generic sense of male and female) the “crown of Creation. Notice that immediately after the first great expectation from God in Genesis 1:17--the joining by God of the man as a male and female--the record states that “God blessed them”. Do you think this is incidental? Don't you think that somehow the blessings of God on societies of history in their efforts to have dominion over all creation is contingent of how well they live up to the first great expectation. Look at the United States for example: no other country on the face of the earth in inventions and creative efforts has extended humanity's dominion of the earth as has the United States, and in such a shorter period of time; and surely we must see the connection to the Christian heritage and roots (biblical foundations) where the marriage vows were honored--up until recent history where over 50% of marriages end in divorce--in respect to the great expectation of God.

2. Jesus in His teachings on earth re-enforced the original expectation of God, and surely we will find for the chosen people of God and for Christians in particular a greater expectation from God about marriage than on all humanity. Indeed as we have read the history of the chosen nation of Israel, often the prophets would warn them against polygamist marriages; and what distinguished the people of God from the heathen (Gentiles) around them was often God's great expectations for marriage. Moses at one historical point did allow a “writ of divorcement” because the people out of their own desires were bugging him out of a hardness of heart. {NOTE: I would caution you to see that this was probably due to a majority vote or will from the nation of Israel.}

(1). The Writ of Divorcement Under Moses.

**“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if**

the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

How Moses must have traveled before the law was passed to allow for these divorces, and how that the people must have murmured. You can see the "hardness of heart" in the indifference to the feelings of the wife who is flippantly given a piece of paper and passed around the land from one household to another.

[1]. Even here in the case of a divorce, God does not recognize the right of the first husband to re-marry the wife he divorced.

[2]. Such an act of re-marriage, like pride and a proud look, is considered an abomination to God. You see, He sees and knows.

[3]. This is not a personal preference: the husbands and wives have an objection to society--"not cause the land to sin".

(2). Even then the law was not completely insensitive to the needs of a wife, Deuteronomy 24:5. Immediately after the giving of the law of the "writ of divorcement", consideration was given for a new wife.

**"When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken." (Deuteronomy 24:5)**

(3). How Jesus dealt with the original requirements of marriage, and surely we would expect for the chosen people of God during the life of Jesus and for Christians in particular for the expectations to be greater than those originally on all human humanity.

**"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'" (Matthew 19:3-6)**

At this time there were two groups of rabbis divided on the issue of divorce, the Shammais that advocated divorce only in cases of sexual immorality and the Hillels that allowed divorce for any trivial reason (which sounds like the United States now). Once again Kerr writes in GOD'S PATTERN FOR MARRIAGE:

“Jesus had already expressed himself briefly on this matter. We find it in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:31,32: ‘It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.”

And on fornication and adultery Kerr adequately summarizes the Bible and church history for us.

“Let us note, however, that in the Bible, the word ‘fornication’ is not used in the restricted sense that we use it. (Unlike the dictionary definition of fornication as committed by unmarried couples.) Jesus used the word ‘fornication’ twice, in the passage already quoted, and in Matthew 19:9, ‘And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.’ Quite evidently Jesus used the word ‘fornication’ in a class sense as referring to all illicit sexual intercourse, including both fornication and adultery as we understand the terms. Such is the general Biblical use of the word. It is for this reason that such modern translators of the Bible as Weymouth, Goodspeed, Moffatt, and those of the Revised Standard Version use such words as ‘unchastity’ or ‘unfaithfulness’ rather than ‘fornication’ in the translation of these verses to which we have referred.”

But Jesus goes back to God’s original and great expectation. God made a man to be male and female; they become one flesh; and the union between husband and wife takes priority over parents. Also Jesus cautions them again that no judge, or law, or society should allow a divorce on a marriage that God has joined together. Is this last part--“what therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder”--a more stringent requirement than what was originally laid down by God at Creation in Genesis. Yes, we can not find no other statement so that we appears to be a higher standard placed on man and societies.

(4). Now surely you would expect the most stringent requirement of all to be placed on Christian leaders, on pastors and deacons.

[1]. I Timothy 3:2.

**“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...”**

Blameless is certainly a highest of all expectations from God, and comparable is the “husband of one wife” Here we must consider what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well.

[2]. John 4:16-18.

**“The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.” (John 4:16-18)**

What does this mean plain and simple? It means that Christ and God do not accept any wives or husbands past the original, except in the case of sexual immorality. Does it mean that person can not be a Christian, and receive forgiveness? No, we notice that all the indications is the record of John 4 is that the woman believed, and furthermore she had a good Christian testimony in that many of the Samaritans believed because of what she told them about Jesus. You see it would not matter how we interpreted I Timothy 3:2 above, or mis-interpreted it, or the similar requirement for a deacon, the most strict standard of one wife would still be on Christian leadership. (This is a basic principle of Bible interpretation, to compare scripture with scripture in order to get the full meaning; and this is part of the reason that the Bible states that we will know of the doctrine if we do His will.)

[3]. Titus 1:6.

**“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”**

Once again blameless is right in there with the husband of one wife. Don't you see the connection that there can be no possible grounds on which a pastor or deacon can be accused as related to any doctrine. In the book *THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR*, Wayne Oates has a chapter on “The Personal Qualifications of the Pastor” in which he discusses these scriptures. By the way, Wayne Oates was years was Professor of the Psychology of Religion at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, also this book has been used at southern baptist colleges and seminaries to teach pastors and prospective pastors. Wayne Oates thoroughly discusses the three possible interpretations.

“First, polygamy and concubinage were prevalent practices in the communities of which the early churches were a part, and the writers evidently were insisting that their leaders be an example of the Christian principles of monogamic marriage.” “Secondly, this passage may be interpreted less directly to mane that the early Christians preferred a married minister to a single one.” “Thirdly, this passage may be interpreted in the light of another prevalent social problem at the time of the writing: divorce.”

Then Wayne Oates gives us a good and short history of the church on this matter as well as Baptist beliefs.

“The statements of Paul in I Corinthians, chapter 7, reflect that the early churches were very tender and sensitive to the plight of people who became involved in pagan marriage prior to having become Christians.



They most certainly did not consider divorce or even remarriage as an unpardonable sin for which they would break fellowship with an individual Christian. However, the early Christians had a higher standard, and seemingly legalistic attitude about divorced persons, especially those who had remarried, becoming the shepherds of the rest of the 'flock of God'. *By their word, no divorced man who had remarried could hold such a place of responsibility.* This seems to be a harsh measure, but the study of the present-day experience of divorced men in the ministry vindicates it as the kindest measure in the long run."

[4]. I Timothy 3:8-13.

**"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."**

Wow, those are most stringent requirements on deacons; and you will notice once again the "blameless" and "husband of one wife".

5. Since this chapter is on Paul and Doctrine, we must also give Paul another say about marriage.

**"For the woman that hath a husband is bound by the law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress though she be joined to another man." (Romans 7:2,3)**

Kerr can be used again to summarize much of what Paul wrote on marriage.

"Marriage was designed of God to be a monogamous, holy institution. In I Corinthians 7:2 Paul writes of each man having 'his own wife,' and each woman having 'her own husband.' The holiness of the relationship, under God, is likened to that existing between Christ and His Church. (Ephesians 5:31,32) Christian believers are admonished to marry only believers. In I Corinthians 7:39 Paul writes of marrying 'only in the Lord.' His admonition in II Corinthians 6:14, 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers,' surely applies to marriage. Marriage is designed above all else to be a holy relationship."

2-6. "Believe" in the Letters of Paul Continued.

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### Volume 3: Believe and Be Baptized

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The numbering of these references below takes up where the believe references in the writings of Paul left off at the end of chapter 1.

8. Romans 6:8. Here is something we “believe” as disciples. We believe that we shall only live with Christ to the extent that we have also died with Christ. Of course, the died with Christ like in Galatians 2:20 is another way to say repentance or to express the one salvation of the one baptism. {NOTE: Isn't it amazing that we have so many problems related to these major doctrines of faith, believe, baptism, and salvation when the Bible is so straightforward and repeats itself so often. It is another sign of the contemporary departure of Christians and churchmembers from God, Christ, and the Bible. The Falling Away is not from church, church attendance will no doubt go up as more see end events; however the Falling Away from God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible will escalate.

9. Romans 9:33. Wow, what a statement of faith here! “Whoever” believes in Jesus will not be ashamed; God will not allow that individual to be ashamed in His presence and eternally; and this confidence--the opposite of ashamed--is based on the words and Word of God.

10. Romans 10:4. Sure, today you do not seem but a few Jews who believe in Christ. Paul says they have much religion and zeal, but they need salvation. Further they are ignorant Paul says, ignorant of God's way of acceptable righteousness through faith in Christ. Everyone who believes receives the righteousness.

11. Romans 10:9. What is necessary for the salvation of the one baptism, only. To believe in your heart the Gospel story of Jesus, that which requires the most faith is to believe that God raised Him from the dead--this is faith in God and Christ; and two to confess with your mouth that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

12. Romans 10:11 and Isaiah 28:16. How about that the “whoever believes in Christ shall not be ashamed” is a quote from long ago in the book of Isaiah, noting that faith in Christ has always been the plan of God for the one baptism of salvation.

13. Romans 10:14. Praying or calling on Jesus for salvation demands “believing” first; and “believing” demands the hearing of the Gospel of Jesus.

14. Romans 10:16. Very few Jews of Old Testament times believed the reports of the Gospel of Jesus and the Jesus of the Gospel given to them by Prophets like Isaiah.

15. Romans 13:11. Yes, even more true today than when Paul wrote: our completed salvation of glorification and heaven is much nearer now than when we first believed.

16. Romans 14:2. There are some fine points of distinction on beliefs like on the eating of certain meats and other religious practices, not on major doctrines.