

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## ARE WE DRIFTING?

by Kent Bailey

As an important admonition, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews stated:

*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and the every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will? (Hebrews 2:1-4).*

Indeed, we must pay careful attention to the New Testament of Christ. The inspired writer is not concerned with theological abstractions nor with delving into impenetrable mysteries. He seeks to remind his readers and himself of those fundamental concepts of those things that they have heard, read, and believed. God's truth deserves the most earnest heed that one can give. The word of God is of great consequence. Such constitutes matters of eternal life, or eternal death.

The key word for our consideration in the text is found in Hebrews 2:1. It is the term *slip*, translated

from the Koine Greek word *pararreo*. This term as translated *slip* is often used to refer to that which slips or drifts away. It is used in such contexts as one describing a ring slipping off the finger, or an idea that slips from the mind. The literal definition of the term means to *flow by* or to *flow past* and seems to be a reference to the sense of a boat adrift.

The late J.D. Tant (1861-1941), a very capable and faithful preacher and debater of years gone by, would often conclude both his sermons and articles with the phrase, “Brethren, we’re drifting.” Brother Tant was a native of Paulding County Georgia. He, along with his family moved to Texas in 1875. After a few years as a Methodist preacher, Tant renounced Methodism in 1881 and was baptized into Christ in 1884. It was during this time that digression and liberalism were introduced into churches of Christ in Texas. Many of his friends became caught up in this movement and ended up in the Christian Church apostasy. Brother Tant noted the slow drift that took brethren away from the truth and into error.

Beginning in the 1970s, religious error made deep inroads into churches of Christ. Brethren were caught up in the drifting currents and compromise, liberalism, and worldliness. Today we are witnesses of the current apostasy that has caused many to depart from the faith. Are you drifting and would you know it if you were?

**It is crucial that we understand**

**certain specifics regarding drifting.** Drifting requires no effort. When one ceases to oar the boat it will begin to drift. The same will happen to Christians individually and local churches collectively. We must give the more earnest heed.

It is often an unconscious process. In a boat or airplane, gravitational forces cause movement that is unnoticed. The same is true for Christians and local churches regarding drifting. Many drift into doctrinal error and sin before they are even aware of what is going on. One never drifts upstream or against the tide. Due to this truth, we must work diligently not to drift. Faithfulness to Christ is comparable to rowing upstream (2 Peter 1:5; 3:18).

The speed downstream always increases. When one hears the sound of a waterfall, it is already too late! The further we drift from the truth the less we care what we do.

All drifting is dangerous to others (Ephesians 4:14; 6:4). It will end in a shipwrecked faith (Hebrews 2:1-3).

**Common signs of drifting.** There are common signs for which to be on guard that will assist us in preventing drifting. We must not allow ourselves to have a diminishing desire to study the scriptures and pray (Psalms 1:1-3). We must be careful not to allow ourselves to be removed from the fellowship of those faithful (Psalms 122:1; Romans 14:9; Hebrews 13:3; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians

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15:33). We must not permit ourselves to lose the desire to present and defend the gospel of Christ (Acts 8:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). We need to take great care not to become overly interested in the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Timothy 3:4).

**Remedies that will destroy drifting.** We need to be diligent in our rowing uphill (2 Peter 1:5,10). Let us determine **NOW** never to retire from serving the Christ (2 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:12-15). We must keep on guard for undercurrents that will drag us down (1 Peter 2:11; Galatians 5:16-18). Expect to go against the tide (Matthew 7:13-14). Develop a strong anchorage (Colossians 2:6-7; Ephesians 4:14-15; Hebrews 6:18-19; Ephesians 3:16-18).

**Concluding thoughts.** Are we drifting? Those who are in the most danger of drifting away from God and truth are those who think that such cannot happen to them. When

one arrives at that point of thinking, he is in a danger zone. Drifting can happen to any of us—even those who are strong! Let us truly strive to remember that God has not given us salvation only to possess it. God saves us to enable us to become the very best Christians that we possibly can become.

In becoming such we will ensure ourselves eternal life in Heaven as well as point the way of truth to those with whom we have a proper influence.

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**PLACING MEMBERSHIP**

by Lee Moses

Sometimes questions arise as to whether it is Scripturally necessary, or even Scripturally **permissible**, to “place membership” with a congregation. A modern brother or sister may raise the objection, “I’m a member of the church of Christ, and that’s good enough for me.” What this person means is, “I am a member of the universal church of Christ, but I have no interest in serving in a local congregation.”

Others seem to believe that placing membership is a denominational concept, rather than a Scriptural concept. However, the term simply means to identify oneself with a local congregation with which he was not previously identified. This is done when a Christian has to leave his former congregation, either due to moving or similar circumstances, or due to doctrinal or practical error that has overtaken one’s former congregation. Please consider a few reasons why it is both Scripturally permis-

sible and Scripturally necessary to place membership with a faithful church of Christ after leaving another.

(1) In the New Testament, each first-century Christian is understood to be a member of a particular congregation. The New Testament does speak of the universal church of Christ, into which the Lord adds the saved when they are baptized (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23). However, far and away the New Testament most often uses “church” to refer to the local congregation (Acts 14:27; 20:17; Romans 16:1, 23a). Paul wrote “*to the saints which are at Ephesus*” (Ephesians 1:1). Here it is expressed that he wrote to “saints,” or Christians—but were they not saints who were members of the local **church** at Ephesus? He wrote “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1 Corinthians 1:2). “*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Whether Paul addressed “the **saints** at (whatever location)” or “the **church** at (whatever location),” he was addressing the same group.

(2) Members are responsible to function within the body (Romans 12:5; 1 Cor. 12; Ephesians 4:16), and the body functions within each local congregation. There is no larger organizational structure of the church (compare with Philippians 1:1). If we do not function within a local church, we do not function within the church at all.

(3) Christians have the responsibility to submit to a local eldership (or men’s business meeting, where congregations do not have qualified

men), while each eldership has the responsibility to oversee the flock they are among (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). If one never submits to an eldership, he never complies with his responsibility to submit to an eldership, and he hinders elders from performing their responsibility to oversee the flock.

(4) After Saul was converted and returned to Jerusalem, he knew he had to identify himself with the congregation there. This is why *“he assayed to join himself to the disciples”* there (Acts 9:26). There is no difference between this and what is sometimes called “placing membership.” If Saul saw the need to identify himself with a faithful congregation where he was living, why would we not have the same need?

If one lives in an area where there are no faithful congregations, placing membership is obviously not an option. In such instances, one should again do what the first-century Christians did, and establish congregations in those areas (compare with Acts 8:4ff; 11:19-21).

Otherwise, placing membership is both Scripturally permissible and Scripturally necessary.

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## GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY

By Roelf L. Ruffner

*“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (I Cor.6:20).

In our efforts to dwell upon our duties to our Savior as Christians we often forget our body. When Jesus died on the cross for my sins He not only laid claim to my spirit but my body as well. **I am to be His servant: spirit, mind and body.**

Yet that isn’t the way it usually works. We love Jesus and our neighbor. We worship God “in spirit and in truth” (Jn.4:24). We don’t drink alcohol, use illegal drugs, dance, fornicate, dress immodestly, or do anything that will bring reproach upon our Master and His bride – the church of Christ. But in other ways we neglect our bodies, *“the temple of the Holy Spirit”* (I Cor.6:19).

This principle came home to me about six years ago. While moving boxes I almost ruptured two discs in my lower back. My doctor said that they could heal, if I took care. For eight months I did not drive a car or do several other activities. To avoid future back surgery he said I should also lose weight, taking some pressure off that injury. I began to give this serious thought. I have always had a weight problem and have lost (and found!) hundreds of pounds in my life.

I thought, “Should my weight loss be for spiritual reasons not just health and appearance concerns? **Was I glorifying my Savior by ignoring my weight?**” When the world sees me digging my own grave with a knife and fork, what does it say about my discipleship? *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rom.12:1).

It grieves me to see otherwise faithful Christians who do not practice self control (cf. 2 Pet.1:5-8). They continue to smoke, chew and dip tobacco in spite of the many dangers to their health. They overeat, disregarding their doctor’s warnings about heart problems, high blood pressure and high blood sugar. I know many are quietly fighting this battle and I am thankful for their vigilance. But others are apathetic and seem to have a secret death wish.

We must always seek to look at things the way our Father in Heaven does. For example, our neighbor borrows our automobile for a few days. After a period of time he returns it with a flat tire, a burned out engine, stains all over the upholstery, and a broken headlight. He then pushes it into our driveway and thanks us profusely for its use. We are upset and disappointed. Perhaps this is the way God feels when we do not take care of His present to us – our bodies.

At the end of time will we present Him a legacy of a battered body which did not glorify God? Or will we have a history of a body worn out in use to His service? **The choice is ours to make each day.** *“...as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death”* (Phi.1:20).

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## WE DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

by Ibrahim Karioki

If each grain of sand were to say,  
“One grain does not make a mountain!”  
There would be no land!

If each drop of water were to say,  
“One drop does not make an ocean!”  
There would be no sea!

If each note of music were to say,  
“One note does not make a symphony!”  
There would be no melody!

If each word were to say,  
“One word does not make a library!”  
There would be no book!

If each brick were to say,  
“One brick does not make a wall!”  
There would be no house!

If each seed were to say,  
 "One seed does not make a field!"  
 There would be no harvest!

If each of us were to say,  
 "One person does not make a  
 difference!"  
 There would never be love and  
 peace on earth!

But you and I do make a difference!  
 We were chosen, by God, to spread  
 the Gospel news!

Even if one will be saved,  
 "It will have been worth it!"

God bless us in His service.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We make it a policy only to publish material in the *Fulton County Gospel News* from brethren in whom we have the utmost doctrinal confidence. Even if a particular article may be doctrinally correct, we will not publish it unless we are acquainted with where the author stands on other matters. We do this to avoid endorsing a false teacher, even if he stands with the Bible on the matter about which he is writing (2 John 9-11). On this occasion, I must confess that I do not know the author personally or where he stands on doctrinal matters. However, this piece makes its Scriptural point so simply and effectively; I felt I had to make an exception. I hope you find it as edifying as I did.

**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP  
 - COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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