

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
The Messenger is published weekly by the South Florida Ave. Church of Christ meeting at 1807 South Florida Ave - Lakeland, FL 33803 Vol. 70 No. 016 04-18-17

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

True or False Statements Calvinists Do Not Want to Answer

Brian R. Kenyon

The recent church marquee's emphasis on Calvinism was actually motivated from our Fall Gospel meeting with Stephen Rogers. One of his lessons, "Helping People Realize They Can and Must Choose to Obey God," was geared toward understanding Calvinism in order to be more effective personal workers. The marquee messages ran a few months after that (at the first available six-consecutive-week slot). Our marquee messages are usually posted on FaceBook with an invitation to attend church services. These particular messages received much feedback, positive and negative. In follow-up discussions with Calvinists, the following True or False questions were asked but remain unanswered.

True or False: Humans are free-moral beings.

The answer to this question, of course, is **TRUE**. God created human beings with the ability to reason and to choose. Even after Adam's sin, human beings still had (and have) the ability to choose. God, through Moses, gave His people a choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:19). Joshua confirmed choice when he said: "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). The New Testament encourages choice today by appealing to Moses' "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25).

However, given the doctrine of "total heredity depravity," the Calvinist would have to say false to the statement, "Humans are free moral beings." That is, the Calvinist's doctrine teaches that humans are so depraved on account of Adam's transgression, they do not have the capacity to choose anything good! Such a doctrine removes human free will, and makes humans mere robots, genetically programmed by Adam's DNA. Think of the implications of such a doctrine. If humans have no choice, why should they be held responsible for anything they do? If the murderer truly has no choice but to murder, why do humans even have a criminal justice system? Imagine a Calvinist telling her supervisor at work that she could not help but to steal the equipment because she is so depraved from Adam's sin? Would that help her keep her job? Why would a Calvinist accept the idea that humans have no free-will in spiritual matters but not in everyday life?

True or False: Humans can choose to follow God or not to follow God.

The obvious answer is **TRUE**. Again, humans are not robots, programmed from Adam's DNA. If humans cannot choose, why would God warn them: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The very fact we can be "deceived" is proof positive that our following God is a choice! Given the "total heredity depravity" doctrine, though, the Calvinist would have to say false to the statement: "Humans can choose to follow God or not to follow God." Think of the implications of that doctrine on the justice of God! Again, according to them, humans can never choose correctly, which is why their doctrine requires an "unconditional election" and "irresistible grace" about which there is nothing a person can do against it. There is no such thing as free-will if Calvinism is to be consistently applied.

True or False: God offers salvation to all human beings who are lost in sin.

This, obviously, is a **TRUE** statement. Jesus invited everyone when He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). The last chapter of the Bible also contains a universal invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). "All" means "all" and "whoever" means "whoever," unless something in their respective contexts demand otherwise. No such contextual limitations keep "all" and "whosoever" from being universal in scope. Any one who desires to know and obey God can be saved because His invitation to salvation is for everyone (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Of course, given the doctrine of "unconditional election" because humans are too "totally depraved" to choose anything good, like the Lord's invitation, the Calvinist would have to answer false to the statement, "God offers salvation to all human beings who are lost in sin." The Calvinist's doctrine will not allow him to accept the Bible's "all" or "whosoever." Instead, he must limit the scope of God's offer, not because of something demanded by the context, but simply because of the assumption that Calvinism's doctrines are true.

True or False: There is nothing God requires of lost-in-sin human beings to receive His salvation.

The answer to this statement is obviously **FALSE**. God does require something of humanity in order to receive His free offer of salvation. Paul said, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). "Grace" is God's part; "faith" is the human response. God has done His part by sending Jesus to die for the sins of humanity (Jn. 3:16). God continues to do His part by encouraging humanity through His written word (Jn. 16:7-13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17). Preacher's in the past used to illustrate this well by offering anyone in the assembly a five dollar bill. Whoever wanted the five dollar bill would just need to get up and take it off the table. The fact that someone would have to walk to the front and pick it up from the table did not mean he earned it or even deserved it. It was still a free gift. So also is salvation. Because God has told us how to receive His free gift does not mean that we are "earning" it just because we follow God's instructions for receiving it (cf. Titus 2:11-14).

True or False: Lost-in-sin human beings will receive eternal damnation in hell.

The obvious answer to this is **TRUE**. Although the "everlasting fire" was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41), Jesus said that when He comes at the end of time, "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Mt. 25:31-46). The only option the Calvinist would have to falsify "Lost-in-sin human beings will receive eternal damnation" would be to claim universalism (everyone will be saved), which cannot be Biblically substantiated. Because the Calvinist believes in "total hereditary depravity," he would have to say that stillborn babies and infants who dies are eternally lost in hell.

Conclusion

When Calvinism is examined and applied, it emerges as a very strange and irrational conglomerate of doctrines that eliminate any part human response for salvation. Calvinism is illogical, unfulfilling, and contrary to reality. There is no way such confusion can be from God (1 Cor. 14:33). Why not just accept the Bible's total teaching? Peter's God-inspired instruction is still true, "Repent, and ... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). ♥ *Brian*

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Duane Nelson is home and doing some better. Jim Turner has an infection again and the doctor has ordered him to rest. Continue to keep in prayer Ginny Hamby, Kenny French, JoAnn Hoback, Sharon Washington, and Margaret Coone.

Relatives: Tonya Mathis, Sarah Blevins, Owen Lewis, Bobby Cole, Preston Craft and Evie McCormack.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler and Duane Nelson.

Others: Joyce Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner, Elizabeth Tubbs, Robin Pack and Jack Pinckert.

Upcoming Events

Saturday April 22nd: Youth Seminar hosted by the Kissimmee church of Christ from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. See Hiram or Brian if you can attend.

May 5th-7th: Weeki Wachee Youth Retreat. Please see flyer and slide for more information.

Sunday May 7th: Fellowship In-Service before evening service at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday May 7th: Florida School of Preaching Graduation. There will be a fellowship meal following the evening service. There will be two graduates, please bring enough food for visitors.

Sympathy

Barbara Whitlow-Ellerbe, the daughter of the late Lester and Jewel Whitlow, passed away on March 31st from Alzheimer's. A memorial service will be held in Mechanicsville, VA on May 13th. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to The Alzheimer's Association. Please keep this family in prayer during this difficult time.

Visitors

Chip Bolding, Hank & Patti Bolding, Cherry Freeman, Jane Jessee, Allen & Virginia Rupert, Judy Stidham, Wayne Wright, Stephanie Asher, Mary Moore, Tiffany Hash & Megan and Sam.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

April

Stacey Paulin..... **Table** Josh Estridge
Fred Rapley **Assist** David Anderson

Sunday, April 23, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Kyle Williams
Prayer..... Paul Romine

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Jimmy Sweeney
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Matt Willcut
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer David Deal

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tyler Anderson

Greeters Darlene T./ Brenda M.
Att. Cards..... Paul and Ian
Open & Close Building..... David Anderson

Wed. April 26, 2017

Song Leader Jim Turner
Opening Prayer Jimmy Sweeney
Closing Prayer Jeff Bingle

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, April 30, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class David Williams
Prayer..... Ken Walker

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Jimmy Sweeney
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Charles Paulin
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Bobby Simpson

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer Bobby Sheumaker
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Casey Paulin

Greeters Tyler & Jessica Anderson
Att. Cards..... Willcut boy's
Open & Close Building..... David Anderson

Wed. May 3, 2017

Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Closing Prayer Kenny French

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Mar. 26	\$5,396.66
Apr. 02.....	\$5,970.10
Apr. 09.....	\$5,764.00
Apr. 16.....	\$5,435.00
Contribution Average	\$5,441.35
2016 Weekly Budget	\$4,716.51



Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (6th Street) and Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

“May the [Jesus] Force Be with You”

At the same time and place of the Lads to Leaders convention in Orlando this past weekend, there was also a Star Wars convention. It was kind of interesting to see how so many people of all ages take very seriously the Star Wars franchise. There were people dressed in costumes from Darth Vader to funky looking aliens with lobe-like appendages attached to their heads (as seen in planetary barroom scenes) and a host of other characters in between. There were even 50 to 60 year old men dressed in elaborate Star Wars costumes. In the midst of all this, I thought how ironic it is that most people in present American culture are much more accepting of Star Wars fanatics than Jesus fanatics. That is, people think it is alright to take off work, go “all out” to dress like a Star Wars character, cling to the latest movie trailer, and spend the day philosophizing about the possible back stories of minor characters from the movies. Yet, some of these same people think a person who attends church services more than once a week is completely nuts! Jesus urged us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Paul said he was “crucified with Christ,” yet “Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). He also acknowledged, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Jesus should be our number one goal, thrill, and occupation. This is not to say we cannot have *(continued below)*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .



Pray for our YES II campaign to Penonome, Panama, July 1-9, 2017. Thirteen of our young people and their chaperones are planning to go. If you would like to help by contributing funds, see the elders.

(continued from above) hobbies and/or ways to unwind, but if we think the people who want to be totally immersed in Jesus are the weirdo fanatics and the Star Wars (or any other secularly based) fanatics are okay, something is wrong! Let us not be ashamed to “go all in” for Jesus! ❤️ *Brian*

Save the Date Nov. 12-15, 2017
Our Next Gospel Meeting
with Steve Higginbotham

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD
—Matthew 5:14

Save the Date
Oct. 7, 2017
Ladies Day @ SFA
with Kathy Pollard
“Falling in Love
with Your Bible”

Weeki Wachee Youth Retreat
May 5th - 7th
be
BRAVE
➡️
BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.
DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED.
FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU
WHEREVER YOU GO.
JOSHUA 1:1