

# Modern Christianity Astray From The Bible

## Popular Church Tradition Explored A Biblical inspection of popular church teachings

### INTRODUCTION

We appeal to the sincere student of the Bible to pardon the apparent abrasiveness of the title. It is a genuine proposition of critical importance. With Bible in hand we simply endeavor to scrutinize the “accepted standard” of popular traditions and teachings practiced among the many denominations of *modern Christianity*.

Our motive is not one of pride—to prevail in a doctrinal debate—but is genuinely a matter of conscience. The commandments of the Lord require proclaiming the Word to all who might hear (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:13-17; Daniel 12:1-3).

**John 4:23-24 “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”**

In no way do we question the sincerity of those who follow any particular Christian denomination. However, doctrinal error is not an acceptable substitute for worshipping God “in spirit and in truth.” It is not of our own desire to draw out false practices of any particular Christian sect. However, the warnings foretold in God’s Word have made the conflict unavoidable.

**2 Timothy 4:2-4 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”**

**2 Peter 2:1 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them”**

**Acts 20:29-30 “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”**

**1 John 4:1 “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits (i.e. teaching) whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”**

Although sad, it is encouraging to realize the decline of Christianity was predicted—or prophesied—by the Bible. It is also reassuring to remember that sincere students of the Word of God have always scrutinized doctrine presented to them by others. Those living in Berea were endorsed because they even inspected the preaching of apostles!

**Acts 17:10-11** “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were *more noble* than those in Thessalonica, *in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*”

The Lord Jesus Christ invited men to inspect his own teaching—

**John 5:39** “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*”

If the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles were not to be received without a full Scriptural investigation, it cannot be objectionable for us to determine if the various teachings and traditions of modern Christianity are well-founded in the Holy Oracles.

**Isaiah 8:20** “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*”

We recognize that we are also subject to the same examination. Only a personal study of the Bible will determine if we or anyone else is speaking according to the Scriptures.

**2 Timothy 2:15** “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*”

**2 Timothy 3:15-17** “*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*”

Since the Holy Scriptures are able to make any among us wise unto salvation, our full confidence must be placed upon the Word of God, alone. The apostle Paul emphasized this in writing to his brethren in Corinth:

**1 Corinthians 2:1-5** “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*”

It should be the purpose of all who converse about the Bible to draw attention and authority to the Word, not themselves. This was the practice of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

**Acts 17:2** “*And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures*”

**Acts 26:22** “*Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come*”

**Acts 28:23** “There came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, *persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening*”

**Luke 24:44-45** “And (Jesus) said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you... *which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*”

By these examples it is evident that the Scriptures *alone* were used to persuade men and women of God’s testimony to mankind.

With this background, we want to demonstrate how error has prevailed in the creeds and traditions of modern Christianity in the most fundamental of doctrines.

*All quotes taken from the King James Version (Authorized Version) of the Bible, unless otherwise indicated. We use this version because it is the oldest “standard” and most referenced version available. We do this to be acquitted of any accusation that we might be manipulating the text to reach a false conclusion.*

## **INFANT BAPTISM**

The importance of baptism cannot be underestimated, for it is a matter of eternal life.

**Mark 16:16** “He that believeth *and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*”

In simple language, this Bible states that baptism is essential for salvation.

**John 3:3** “Jesus answered and said unto (Nicodemus), Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*”

**1 Peter 3:20-21** “The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, *eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*”

Knowing the importance of baptism we advance our investigation to consider *who* is baptized, *how* they are baptized, and *what* baptism represents. Once again, the Bible provides a very clear answer:

**Luke 3:21-23** “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized... *And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph*”

The Lord Jesus Christ himself was “about 30 years old” when he was baptized. This reference sets the standard of *who* was baptized in Scripture.

**Acts 2:37-41** “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized*”

In agreement with our introductory quote—“he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16)—it appears evident from the above reference that a requirement for baptism was “belief” in what was preached. The response was repentance “for the remission of sins.” Biblically and logically, this could only apply to adults.

**Matthew 3:5-6** “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins”

It is self-evident that infants cannot confess and repent of sins. In fact, there is not a single instance of infant baptism (sprinkling) in the Bible. Theologians from many denominations have been compelled to admit this fact.

**Acts 22:16** “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”

**Acts 8:12** “When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”

Only those capable of comprehending what was preached “believed” and were “baptized,” which involved “men and women.”

**Acts 8:36-38** “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest, And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him”

This reference testifies that belief was necessary before baptism. Furthermore, the Scriptural method of baptism required a full immersion into water, and not sprinkling of drops of water on the forehead of an infant. Baptism means “to cover wholly, to immerse.”

**Matthew 3:16** “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him”

Baptized in the Jordan River (Mat. 3:13), Jesus came “up out of the water.” Of course, this involved an adult man and not an infant with sprinkled drops of ceremonial water upon the forehead.

**John 3:23** “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized”

The reason for full immersion is because of the teaching associated with the act.

**Romans 6:3-6 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”**

Baptism is an act of identifying with the Lord Jesus Christ: believers symbolically going to the grave (as Christ did literally) to put to death the behavior of the “old man,” that a “new man” would arise out of the waters and walk in a newness of life. This is a beautiful principle that is impossible for infants to appreciate.

**Colossians 2:12 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead”**

**Ephesians 4:22-24 “Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.**

**Mark 8:34 “And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”**

**2 Corinthians 5:15 “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”**

The fact that the Bible never instructs us to sprinkle infants as a form of baptism is openly admitted by many theologians.

- **“It is not by any means easy to prove the doctrine of Infant Baptism if you are basing your argument on the Bible only, without any appeal to tradition”—Catholic Book Enthusiasm, page 134 (Monsignor Knox)**

Knox is a well-known Catholic writer who states that “infant baptism” is more of a church “tradition” than Bible teaching. In fact, Catholic Church Law requires parents to have their infants “baptized or sprinkled” within a few weeks of birth.

However, the practice of infant baptism is not exclusive to the Catholic Church. A large percentage of Protestant denominations also sprinkle infants as a form of baptism. *Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians... etc.* and even certain divisions of the *Baptists* follow the practice established by the Catholic Church.

For parents concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children the Bible encourages father and mother to educate them in the Word of God, that they would embrace its teachings when they become adults (Eph 6:4; Pro 22:6; Deu 11:19).

Why would the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, for example, uphold a tradition they themselves admit is not founded in the Bible? Because they believe the authority of the church and its traditions extend beyond the Holy Scriptures.

- **“There are certain truths which Christ and the Apostles taught which are not recorded in the Scriptures, but which are embodied in the life, practice and ministry of the Church in her written and unwritten traditions, which supplement the Biblical record.”—Catholic Book *Faith of Millions*, page 186 (J. O’Brien)**

Here we have come to an unavoidable conflict in our consideration. A reader of the Bible holding the Scriptures as the only authority cannot endorse the above statement. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

**2Timothy 3:13-17 “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”**

That “*modern Christianity is astray from the Bible*” appears to be undeniable. However, this has been a problem in every generation. Two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the religious leaders of his day:

**Mark 7:6-8 “He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do” (Colossians 2:22)**

While the Catholic Church admits certain traditions, like infant baptism, are not rooted in the Bible, there are a few particular verses sometimes cited by Catholic and Protestant denominations to support the concept of infant baptism. They are as follows:

**“And when (Lydia) was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house”—Acts 16:15**

**“And he (the keeper of the prison) took them (Paul and his company) the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his”—Acts 16:33**

**“And I (Paul) baptized also the household of Stephanas”—1Corinthians 1:16**

Most denominations concede these references are a vague inference of their tradition, a closer inspect reveal that none of these quotations mention anything about infants being baptized. Rather, the baptized only refer to adults: Lydia, the prison guard, and Stephanas. Since the practice of infant baptism is nowhere directly stated in the Bible, the suggestion

that it is here implied seems dishonest. Furthermore, the last reference (1Cor 1:16) mentions the baptism of “the household of Stephanas.” This can only refer to mature adults, as a later reference states:

**“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know *the house of Stephanas*, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to *the ministry of the saints*,)”—  
1Corinthians 16:15.**

Unquestionably, infants cannot “minister” to the saints (other believers).

**Luke 18:15-17 “And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”**

When reading and studying the Bible we must be truthful with the context. In the above reference it is evident it is not intended to support infant baptism. Jesus Christ is clearly drawing the principle of humility from the “little children,” as the previous parable indicates (Luke 18:10-14). See also: Mat 18:1-5.

- Personal research will confirm that many Protestant reformers concluded that Scriptural baptism was, in fact, a full immersion in water involving only adults (Martin Luther, John Calvin... etc.). Independent research of Catholic history will also reveal that ancient churches or cathedrals had large holding tanks for the purpose of full immersion of adults. The Catholic Encyclopedia is a good source, as well as others.
- **NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: “It makes little difference whether Scripture has any actual references to the practice of infant Baptism or not. Probably it can be conceded that no explicit references are to be found there.”**

While it is not our intent to focus on all of the historic aspects of infant baptism, a brief look at ancient traditions will exhibit that many pagan cultures involved ceremonies that implemented a washing or sprinkling of infants for dedication to their gods: Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Aztecs, Mayas, Hindus, and Buddhists. A reader of the Old Testament will know that pagan worship greatly influenced Israel’s drift into false worship, as well (Psa 106:34-36; Jud 10:6; 2Kin 17:8-17; 2Chr 33:1-9).

## **THE CHURCH**

Continuing our study, we propose that the common understanding and modern application of “the church” does not properly represent the Biblical definition. Generally, *modern Christianity* has divided the church into two classes: clergy and laity.

In the Holy Scriptures, the “church” is not an elaborate building adorned with expensive furniture and architecture. Rather, the “church” represents the assembly of believers gathered together. The “church”—Greek “ekklesia”—means “called out ones” and refers to

believers of the gospel and followers of Christ. The context of Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, supports this definition.

**Acts 7:38** *“This is he, that was in the church (ekklesia) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us”*

This verse provides a very good example of “the church.” In the context, it relates to the children of Israel, who after their departure from Egypt and journey toward the Land promised to Abraham. As such, they are called “the church in the wilderness.”

**Acts 2:44-47** *“And all that believed were together... Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”*

Here again, we find that the “church” or “ecclesia” represented the believers assembled together, not a building of architectural wonder like those evident among modern Christianity. As a matter of fact, early believers most often assembled together in the homes of one of their fellow-believers, not in expensive structures of wood and stone.

**Philemon 1:1-2** *“Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house”*

**1 Corinthians 16:19** *“The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house”*

**Colossians 4:15** *“Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house”*

**Romans 16:5** *“Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ”*

By simply using the Bible as its own dictionary we are able to determine that the word “church” merely represents “believers,” regardless of where they assembled.

## **SAINTS**

Similar to the word “church,” the word “saint” carries a rather sensationalized idea among modern Christianity. Within the Catholic Church, for example, references to “saints” are inappropriately applied to those who have been exalted to a superior status among believers, especially after death. This general concept has been adopted by many. In contrast, notice the use of the word in Scripture:

**Acts 9:32** *“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda”*

**Romans 16:15** *“Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them”*



**2 Corinthians 1:1** “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, *with all the saints which are in all Achaia*”

**Ephesians 1:1** “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to *the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus*”

**Philippians 1:1** “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to *all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*”

- Psalm 106:16 calls “Aaron the saint of the LORD.” Philippians 4:12 exhorts “salute every saint in Christ Jesus.”

Once again, by allowing the Bible to be self-interpreting we discover the word “saints” refers to all followers of Christ; mortal men and women. Most are well aware of how certain denominations decorate their places of worship with statues of “saints,” and even pray through them for special access to God.



## **MODERN CHURCH CLERGY**

We propose that the division between clergy and laity prevalent among *modern Christianity* has brought with it a false concept of the “body of Christ.” It is set forth that *pastors or priests* have been specially “called” to *the ministry* to become leaders in their respective denominations. Common sense demands it is against both practical and scriptural reasoning to conclude that all preachers are “called” by God, when they set forth doctrines contradicting one another. The apostles—Peter, Paul, John—all taught the same Gospel. The doctrines of these inspired men are uniform and without variance, as we have seen with the fundamental teaching of “baptism.” In contrast, *Modern Christianity* is filled with preachers claiming a personal “calling” from God, yet their denominations vary so greatly in doctrine.

The apostle Paul, for example noted that he was a “called” apostle to the work set before him by God: **“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”—Romans 1:1.** However, he goes on to state that all in Christ are the same: **“Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Romans 1:6-7.**

This is consistent Bible language; Paul as a “called apostle,” (1Cor 1:1; 15:9; Gal 1:15) and saints as “called” to and for the Divine purpose (Rom 8:28-30; 9:24; 1Cor 1:1-2; 1:9; 7:17-24; Gal 1:6; Eph 4:1; 1The 2:12; 2Tim 2:9).

We would never deny that there was a very special “calling” of the apostles, which included divine revelations from God (2Cor 12:1-7; Acts 10:9-16; 18:9; 22:17-21; 23:11; Gal 1:12; 2:2), and the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles (Acts 5:12; 14:3; Rom 15:18-19; Heb 2:4). Along with such a privilege, the apostles were men who “hazarded their lives for gospel” (Acts 15:26), and were made a “spectacle unto the world” (1Cor 4:9). In fact, the apostle Paul suffered “many things for the sake” of the Gospel; including imprisonment, stoning, shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, nakedness, slander and physical infirmity (Acts 9:16; 20:22-23; 21:11; 1Cor 4:9-13; 2Cor 11:23-27; 2Tim 2:9-10; 3:10-12; 2Cor 12:7-10).

The apostles, who were “called” for a very specific purpose, did not attend theological seminaries like the clergy of today. Nor were they self-appointed. It can hardly be denied that the claim of modern-day pastors receiving “a calling” to a new church almost always involves a considerably larger salary and better career opportunity. In contrast, Paul and his companions were often “called” to enter into harsher circumstances. (Gal 6:17; 2Cor 1:5; Acts 9:23; 13:50; 14:2).

Ironically, the apostle Paul grew up with formal religious training, but “counted it loss for Christ” (Phi 3:5-7; Acts 22:3; 26:4-5)! In stark contrast to the Jewish leaders of his day, the Lord Jesus Christ said this concerning John Baptist: **“What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts”**—Luke 7:25

The apostle Paul is called a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15 cf. Acts 13:2; Rom 1:1; 11:13; 15:16; Gal 1:1, 15-16; Eph 3:7; Col 1:25; 1Tim 2:7; 2Tim 1:11). Saints are also called “vessels” who are “chosen” (John 15:16; 2Tim 2:20-21; 2Cor 4:7; 1Pet 2:9; 2The 2:13; Eph 1:1-5; Rom 16:13).

While in certain cases others assisted the apostle Paul in his travel and living expenses, he did “work with his own hands” when spending longer periods of time in any given place. Preachers of today, generally, reside in one community and collect a generous salary to manage one particular church.

In the Holy Scriptures, we do not find the paid clergy system prevalent among *modern Christianity*, nor do we find the body of believers divided into classes of “clergy” and “laity.” Here are the words of the apostle Paul:

**Acts 20:32-35 “Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”**

The inspired apostle provided for his own living. By doing so, Paul removed any suspicion of deceitful motives, which are so often the accusations against today's church clergy.

**Acts 18:1-3** *“Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila... And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers”*

Paul never intended for anyone to pay him for preaching the gospel to them.

**2 Thessalonians 3:7-10** *“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”*

Though the inspired apostle could have been justified in foregoing daily employment to further the preaching of the Gospel, Paul was careful to make himself “an example,” that he would not be “chargeable to any man.” He expands this principle in his letter to believers in Corinth:

**1 Corinthians 9:1-6, 15-18** *“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?... Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?... Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ... But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void... What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel”*

We encourage personal consideration of the entire context of 1Corinthians 9. By the verses supplied it is quite easy to conclude that the apostle used his own personal example as one who provided for his own needs that he would not “hinder the gospel of Christ.” While he notes that he could have “forbear working”, he did not use this “liberty.”

Although we make no personal accusations or assaults, certainly the modern (un-inspired) clergy should follow the example of Paul, especially in the face of so much widespread criticism and skepticism. The paid clergy of today have found themselves the center of legal investigations, media exposure, and the brunt of many jokes because of their refusal to extend the Word of God freely to all.

**2 Corinthians 12:17-18** *“Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?”*

Neither Paul and those that traveled with him nor those who were sent by him sought to make “gain” of believers. In fact, on the few occasions when some brethren offered financial support of Paul, notice the apostle’s words:

**Philippians 4:15-17** “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, *no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only, For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account*”

In this reference, Paul says that only the Philippian believers helped support him in his work, but not because the Apostle requested it. In fact, Paul said it “showed generosity” on their part, and for that reason, he rejoiced.

The apostle Peter strongly warns against material gain for preaching the Gospel.

**1 Peter 5:1-3** “The elders which are among you I exhort... *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*”

Because of the tendencies for money to corrupt—even in the case of good intentions—this is very wise counsel to follow (Acts 16:19-25; 2Peter 2:15).

**Titus 1:7-11** “For a bishop (overseer) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre... *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake*”

We all know too well the tendency for “filthy lucre” to influence one’s teaching. We are provided with such an example in the false prophet Baalim. “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness”— (2Pet. 2:13-16 cf. Jude 1:11; Num. 22).

- In the New Testament there is no “tithe” collected to maintain the lifestyle of an appointed “minister.” Rather, there are collections for the “poor” (Rom 15:26; 1Cor 16:1-3; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-36; 2Cor 9”1-15; Heb 6:10; Philemon 1:7; 1Tim 6:18-19; Gal 2:9-10). 2Cor 8:1-6; 2Cor 11:7-9
- It is evident that certain individuals assisted the temporal needs and travel of Christ and the inspired apostles: “ministered unto him of their substance” (Luke 8:3). Often, assisting in their travel and lodging (Acts 15:1-3; 16:15; Rom 15:23-25; 1Cor 15:5-7).

**1 Timothy 3:1-3 “A bishop (overseer) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre.; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous”**

This is a good example for all to follow, as it removes suspicion of one teaching things incorrectly for “material gain.” This same chapter goes on to talk about another issue of concern:

**1 Timothy 3:4-12 “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)... Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without, Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless, Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well”**

Besides the need for one to be innocent of the greed for filthy lucre, the Scriptures require a teacher to “first be proved” in their personal lives before they take on the duty of leading the church. This is not the practice among Christendom today. After attending a theological institute, young men and women search for employment within their denomination, long before they are “first proved” to lead faithful families.

In the body of Christ, all members are considered alike in standing before God.

**Matthew 23:8 “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren (see Mark 10:42-44)”**

**1 Corinthians 12:13-14 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free... For the body is not one member, but many... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”**

The church-body is made up of “many members” with all members in need of one another, and only Christ is Head.

**Ephesians 5:23-27 “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the solitary “head” of the “church,” because no other man gave his life for believers. The “church” is subject to Christ and none other.

A continual growing trend in *modern Christianity* is the practice of women preachers. Although seemingly harmless, the Bible states rather clearly that women are not to assume the forefront roll in public instruction.

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35** *“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak... And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church”*

**1 Timothy 2:11-13** *“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve”*

While the subjects we have addressed present a contradiction between the Bible and *modern Christian* practice, we must remember the Scriptures predicted that the time would come when many would depart from the true faith.

**Jude 1:3** *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”*

Some will concede the doctrines we have considered are accurate, but inconsequential. They believe it's not important to follow accurate Bible teaching as long as you love God in your heart. However, consider the consequences if all doctrines—*such as baptism*—are changed to satisfy the trends of modern Christianity. Soon there will be no truth and nothing would remain but the traditions and superstitions of men. Ultimately, the purpose of the Bible is to save men from sin (1Tim 1:15). Consider the catastrophic results if a pharmacist presumptuously modified prescriptions written by a physician intended to cure a serious disease. How much more critical is it to maintain the doctrines contained in the Bible? For this reason strong warnings are issued against those who alter the Word of God:

**Revelation 22:18-19** *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”*

This same warning is repeated in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).