

RED OAK CHURCH OF CHRIST

# ***THE GUIDELINE***

*Psalm 31:3*

## **THE EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS DIVISION**

**A**t one time several years ago, I was in possession of a book (I had borrowed it), the title of which I cannot clearly remember. While I do not remember all the details of that great little book, I can remember the main points which I wish to share with you now. It was about a young girl named Alice (I think her name was part of the title) who was being raised by parents who belonged to the Methodist sect. As she grew older her parents began to encourage her to; “get the spirit, get saved and baptized. Alice begin to read her Bible and quickly realized that something just did not add up! She read where Peter said; *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 ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* (Acts 2:38) And where Paul was told; *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* (Acts 22:16) This, of course, clashed with what she was being told. She also noticed there was no mention of the Methodist church to be found in the scripture. Alice went to her mother and asked why the Methodist was not in the Bible and why they taught something different from the Bible on how to be saved. Her mother could only tell her that was just the way it was and that she would understand by and by. This answer was not good enough for Alice so she decided to ask her “Pastor” the next meeting day. Sunday came and Alice’s family all attended service at the local Methodist church. It was a memorable service in that a few responded to the altar call and “got the Spirit” and were “saved” at the mourner’s bench, but the event troubled Alice because she found no such actions practiced in New Testament. She approached the preacher and asked him the same questions she had previously asked her mother. The preacher being a little more able to explain said; “Well dear, what you have read is simply one way to be saved. We practice another way, and the Methodists are simply one of many branches on the vine.” This seemed to make sense to Alice, and it appeased her for the moment and decided that maybe she just needed to study a little more. That night as she lay in bed she opened her Bible and was shocked to find these words, *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism,* (Ephesians 4:1–5) This left Alice in a state of total confusion, sending her on a spiritual journey that perhaps many who are reading this can relate to. She visited all of the different denominations in her little community asking the same questions she asked her mother and her “Pastor”, but each time she would get answers on how one should be saved, all differing from each other and especially differing from her Bible- God’s book. The book ends with Alice finally coming in contact with a gospel preacher and she obeys the gospel and becomes a Christian just like she found in the New Testament.

I do not know if that little book about Alice was fact or fiction, but I can tell you that it is true to life today in our jumbled up religious world. I do, however, know of a book that *is* a true life story of a newlywed couple going through an almost identical situation very close to my hometown. The title of the book is *Muscle and Shovel*, and I highly recommend it to anyone who wishes to learn about how people truly struggle because of all the different(thousands)religious sects today. Notice what one man said on the back cover of the book; “This story provoked me on spiritual levels I didn’t know existed! Everyone who reads this story should be prepared to “fight or flee”- *Muscle and Shovel* is one of those rare books that will raise your blood pressure. You’ll either give it to everyone you know or put it into a shredder -there’s no middle ground. This book might turn the religious world on its ears -Name withheld by request (Baptist minister of 18 years, Nashville, TN). Go to our web site and learn how to get a **free** copy of this great book and other **free** material as well.

The above are only two examples of how religious division creates much confusion, but in these two illustrations there were happy endings. The people involved eventually found the truth and became Christians, but this is not how it always turns out. More often, people who find themselves in these religious quagmires never find the truth and

wind up staying in error all their life. Some people will simply throw up their hands in disgust and decide nothing is good in religion and never seek out the truth. Others will decide to believe their “Pastor”, never question their parents or family members, or ask anything about “their church”. This is exactly what the devil desires, because if you go down either of these paths he has you right where he wants you- lost.

There is another effect that all of this division has on people. Some will simply conclude that all religious bodies are the same. Yes, they all teach different things and participate in different worship practices, and all have different names, but they are all the same! When you break this notion down to its basic premise, it simply means there are saved individuals in all of these religious sects. Ah, the devil wins again.

Let us now see what the Bible says about division. God knew that men would come along and try and change things in his divine plan for man’s salvation. In fact it started very early in the creation of man with Cain (Genesis 4). In the New Testament we have several warnings about false teachers and dividers; *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.* (1 Timothy 4:1–3) *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 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.* (Acts 20:28–30) *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) We can plainly see that God knew(knows) about religious division coming to the one church and the horrific effect it would have on the world.

There is good news! There is an answer to all these religious woes; *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;* (Philippians 1:27) There are those of us in the one church that you read about in the Bible still standing together and striving to teach and preach only what you read of in the New Testament. This is the only way we will ever come to unity that God demands. John says; *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* (John 8:32 ,17:17) Perhaps you have found yourself searching for answers-**Bible answers**. We would love to study with you! We want to help eliminate all religious division and the only way we can accomplish that is to go back to the Bible, speak where it speaks, be silent where it is silent and worship the way it instructs us. Then and only then will we have unity as God would have it! †

James Cossey

CONTACT INFORMATION:

RED OAK CHURCH OF CHRIST

P.O. BOX 143

MANCHESTER, TN 37349

PHONE:

JAMES COSSEY: 931-247-0172

RED OAK CHURCH OF CHRIST: 931-247-0249

EMAIL: [redoakchurchofchristtn@gmail.com](mailto:redoakchurchofchristtn@gmail.com)

WEBSITE: [www.redoakcoc.org](http://www.redoakcoc.org)



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