

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

SHIBBOLETHS

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

In the book of Judges we read that the Gileadites were in the process of destroying the Ephraimites. It was not easy to discern who the Ephraimites were by sight, so a means of positive identification was needed. By asking them to say the word "shibboleth" they could be easily identified because the dialect which was spoken by the Ephraimites caused them to pronounce the word as "sibboleth".(see Judges 12:6) Thus they were identified by their speech habits. Today there are cliche's and catchphrases which are in use by many "Christians" that also have an identifying effect. If one is to be accepted in today's mainstream "Christianity" one is expected to use these "shibboleths". In traveling about I am astounded by the virtual explosion in the use of signs in front of church meeting houses to capture peoples attention with catchy slogans and trendy sayings. I even find some of them amusing and informative, but for the most part the message is extremely shallow and man centered. Now we certainly find nothing wrong with proclaiming the gospel even if it be on a lighted sign, but we are troubled at the trend of substituting cliche's for truth. It seems difficult for some to grasp the fact that the word of GOD itself is sufficient to accomplish whatever task the LORD requires. With these thoughts in mind I want to present several "shibboleths" that are commonly used among many. My purpose is not just to be critical but stems out of a conviction that we should examine all things we say about the gospel in light of what the scripture says about the gospel. We have all probably used these cliche's but are they an accurate representation of what the scripture says and means?

1. Give your heart to Jesus. Now this comes as close to having a scriptural foundation as any of the catchphrases we will look at, for the scripture does say "*My son give me thine heart*" (Prov.23:26). But the LORD is speaking to those who are already HIS children, for they alone are HIS sons (see Jn.1:12;8:42-45; Rom.8:14). The only thing that is in the heart of man in his natural state is wickedness and sin, (see Gen.6:5; Mt.13:15) and the LORD has plainly stated that sin is the very thing which has separated us from HIM. (see Isa.59:2) When the scripture speaks of the heart it has reference to the innermost desires and intentions of men and the LORD indicated that it was the seat and fountain of mans sin.(see Mk.7:21; Mt.12:34) No where in any of the preaching of the gospel by the LORD or his disciples does anyone ask men to give the LORD their hearts. The heart of man needs to be changed by a work of saving grace, not presented as some offering on an altar of sacrifice.

2. The plan of salvation. This is a cliche which has deep roots in the mechanism of "soul winning". The common mindset is that GOD has laid out this wonderful plan for men to obtain salvation by following a few simple steps. A plan represents an unfinished project. One of the underlying errors of the idea of a "plan" of salvation is that GOD has a part and man has a part in

it and together salvation becomes a reality. Man doesn't need a plan, he needs a solution. The preaching of the gospel is about that solution; the finished work of CHRIST. (see Heb. 9:12; 5:9; Gal.3:13). As CHRIST is exalted in that proclamation, HE will draw men to HIMSELF (see Jn.6:44;12:32). Preaching the gospel is not trying to get men to acknowledge something or do something, its about glorifying the ONE who has done everything necessary for the redemption of HIS people (see Mt.1:21;Rev.1:5). Whenever the gospel is preached in the scriptures no mention is made of a plan for men to follow but the declaration of CHRIST as LORD and REDEEMER is made plain. None of the apostles ever asked men if they wanted to be saved, but when the gospel was preached in the power of the HOLY GHOST, those whom the LORD awakened asked the apostles what to do.(see Acts 2:37;9:6;16:29-31)

3. He (or I) got saved. We hear this so often that few people ever stop to even think about it. No one in the scripture ever refers to having been brought to a saving knowledge of the LORD JESUS CHRIST by such terminology. In fact the concept of "getting saved" is foreign to the Holy Writ. This "shibboleth" conveys the erroneous notion that salvation is something man can obtain by his own power or in his own time and often in the minds of the deluded that it is something he can lose by the same. The scripture refers to salvation as something we have been appointed to receive (see I Th.5:9), something we have been given (see Tit.3:5;Eph.2:8), and something that we shall have in the future (see Rom.5:9-10;13:11). But it nowhere refers to salvation as something man gets.

4. Make HIM LORD of your life. One thing that we are certain of is that HE is the LORD of our lives with or without our permission. Nowhere in the scripture is there the faintest notion of man's ability to install HIM as, or prevent HIM from, being LORD. *"For it is GOD which worketh in you both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure."* (Phil. 2:13)

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