

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Is Denominationalism Necessary?

By Micky Galloway

Modern denominationalism is generally accepted but wholly unjustified. The Scriptures teach that there is one body (Eph. 4:4) and that the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Our study will prove that denominationalism is unjustified because it is unnecessary. When we speak out against denominationalism, we have reference to the system (its principles, organization, aims, etc.), and certainly not to persons who are in it. It must be remembered, though, that if the system is wrong, it is wrong to be a part of it. Much time, money, work, and interest are freely exercised in denominational efforts. All of these could far better be spent in promoting Bible unity because denominationalism is utterly useless and defenseless.

**Is denominationalism necessary to be a Christian?** The possibility of being a Christian depends upon the existence of the seed of the kingdom which is the word of God (Lk. 8:11). This is the teaching of Christ (2 Jn. 9); the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16); the truth of God (Jn. 17:17). The existence of the seed of the kingdom does not depend upon denominationalism, because it existed long before modern denominations, and would continue to exist if every denomination ceased to exist (1 Pet. 1:25). The actuality of being a Christian depends upon the propagation and acceptance of the seed, the word of God.

**Is the proclamation of the word dependent upon any one denomination?** If so, which one? If any one denomination ceased to exist today, would the privilege of being a Christian cease? The answer is obviously NO! Multiply this by ten. If ten denominations became extinct tomorrow, would it cease to be possible to be just a Christian? NO! Then why not the whole of denominationalism? It must be obvious that much that is taught by denominations is not the truth, because truth is not contradictory. The very existence of denominationalism is evidence of contradictory teachings and practices.

Is it possible for one to examine various doctrines and to accept the true ones and reject false ones? If one accepted only the truths and rejected the errors that are preached, what denomination would he belong to? He would be a member of no denomination, but he would be a Christian! Isn't that simple? Must I accept denominational error to be a Christian?

Denominationalism, then, is not necessary to be a Christian. People were becoming Christians long before the first denomination was started. Paul and Peter were Christians, but they were not a part of any denomination. If there were Christians 2000 years ago, but no Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, etc., why can't it be true today? It can! Every truth can be preached and all of it practiced if every denomination ceased to exist tomorrow. If these truths were taught and practiced we would be only Christians. The Bible only makes Christians only!

**Is denominationalism necessary for any spiritual blessing?** Spiritual blessings are as necessary to the spirit as physical blessings are to the body. We receive many spiritual blessings. We receive: forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), salvation (Eph. 2:8), we become: children of God (1 Jn. 3:1f), Christians (1 Pet. 4:16). Denominationalism is not necessary for the enjoyment of a single spiritual blessing. When one joins a denomination, does he receive: forgiveness, salvation, or does he become a child of God, a Christian? Is he united with Christ and put into covenant relationship with God as a result of joining a denomination? No one will affirm this. In the denominational world all of these are taught as prerequisites to membership in the denomination? If one may enjoy all spiritual blessings outside of denominations, then why have denominations?

**However membership in the Lord's church IS necessary for these spiritual blessings!** Only those in the Lord's church have been redeemed by blood (Acts 20:28). Only those in the Lord's body (cf. Col. 1:18) are saved (Eph. 5:23). Only those in the Lord's church are in God's family (1 Tim. 3:15). Only those in the Lord's church are *“in Christ”* (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27). Only those in the Lord's body are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16). If all these spiritual blessings were enjoyed before denominations, then denominations are not necessary.

**Is denominationalism necessary for the Christian to work and worship?** Christians must work (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thess. 1:2f; Gal. 6:10) and worship God (Jn. 4:24; Phil. 3:3; Rev. 22:9), if they find favor with God. Did Christians work for Christ and worship God before the existence of denominations? Certainly! If they could 2000 years ago, why

can't they now? Saved people in the New Testament did not join denominations. What work or act of worship does a denomination do that is authorized of God that one undenominational Christian or a group of undenominational Christians cannot do?

The Lord's church however, is the place for Christian work for it is His vineyard (1 Cor. 3:9). The Lord's church is the place for Christian worship for it is His temple (Eph. 2:21). But we can work and worship in the Lord's church without ever belonging to a denomination. Indeed, the Christians of the first century did!

There is all the difference in the world between denominational Christians who make up denominational churches and first-century, undenominational Christians who belong to the Lord's church. The essentiality of membership in the Lord's church is taught throughout the New Testament, while the essentiality of denominational churches cannot be upheld successfully in the light of God's word. It is my prayer that honest people in denominations who have never seen undenominational Christianity practiced may see it, appreciate it and accept it. – *Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin*, December 1, 2002. ■

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## Your Speech Betrayeth You

Paul Stringer

When the Savior stood before Caiaphas, the High Priest, Peter waited outside the palace. When a young woman approached him and said, *"Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee,"* he denied it. Another came with the same observation and he denied it with an oath. Then others that stood by said to Peter, *"Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee,"* and he began to curse and swear, saying he did not know Jesus (Matt. 26:69ff).

Peter's identity was confirmed by the way he spoke. Because of the way he pronounced his words – by his accent – those he was with knew he was from Galilee.

By our speech today, people can tell a lot about us, not just in a physical sense, but spiritually as well. Our speech can betray us. We may tell people we are Christians and citizens of God's kingdom, but our words will let them know where we are really from. We can be identified by our:

**Filthy Speaking.** Christians are urged to put away, among other things, *"filthy communication out of your mouth"* (Col. 3:8). A filthy mouth reveals a filthy mind, *"...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (Matt. 12:34). We may claim to be Christians, but if we tell dirty jokes and if we constantly use obscene "bathroom" words, our speech betrays us and our true identity is made known. The true Christian will think on things that are pure (Phil. 4:8) and season his speech with salt (Col. 4:6).

**Lying.** If we say we are Christians and do not always tell the truth, our speech betrays us. A lying tongue is an abomination in God's sight (Prov. 6:16-19). We cannot say we are of Christ if we tell lies, for the devil is a liar and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). *"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor"* (Eph. 4:25). A child of God is to so speak and so do that he can be relied upon in every way.

**Murmurings and Complaining.** Paul admonishes us not to murmur as did the Children of Israel when they wandered in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10). A Christian should rejoice in his relationship with his Heavenly Father. *"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"* (Phil. 4:4). The complainer lets everyone know his true identity.

**Boasting.** *"So the tongue also is a little member and boasteth great things"* (Jas. 3:5). Bragging is contrary to Christianity and James says it is evil; but it is especially sad for one who claims to be a Christian to boast of the evil he does. When a young man brags about his illicit conquests, or a young woman shamelessly tells about going to night clubs and getting drunk, the cause of Christ is dealt a critical blow. *"But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil"* (Jas. 4:16).

**Using the Lord's Name in Vain.** *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"* (Ex. 20:7). There are many things worthy of honor and respect. We honor the name of our parents and resent anyone's speaking of them disrespectfully. We respect the flag and are filled with indignation when men regard it lightly. How much more should we regard the name of the Lord our God with reverence and awe. One who uses it in any disrespectful and irreverent way, identifies himself as one who does not honor his Heavenly Father. – *Knowlwood church of Christ Bulletin*, November 11, 2018. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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