

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- BELIEVE – ACTS 16:31
- REPENT – ACTS 17:30; LUKE 13:3
- CONFESS – ROMANS 10:10; I TIMOTHY 6:12
- BE BAPTIZED – ACTS 2:38; MARK 16:16
- BE FAITHFUL – REVELATION 2:10

PRAYER LIST:

North Ridgeville Church of Christ
36364 Chestnut Ridge Road
North Ridgeville, OH 44039

www.nrcoc.net

Times for Meeting

Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Study (all ages)
10:30 AM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study (all ages)

Elders

Bruce Dean
Mark Ullman

Evangelist

Steven Wallace

THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

February 26, 2023

“UNNECESSARY INFERENCES”

David Weeks

In human speech, there is something called “*inference*.” This refers to a thing that is taught without being *directly stated*. A writer or speaker *implies* a thing and a reader or hearer *infers* it. In the context of Bible authority, there are “*necessary inferences*.” These are conclusions one must reach in order to properly understand God’s word.

Inferences are so natural that we rarely think about them. Suppose, for example, that you read in the newspaper that the president of the United States traveled to Europe. The article might not specify how he got to Europe, so you conclude that he traveled aboard *Air Force One*. The writer didn’t have to include the detail about the presidential plane. You know the president didn’t swim the Atlantic, nor did he sail by ship. You put all things together and infer correctly that he traveled on the presidential plane.

The Bible is filled with “*necessary inferences*” of this kind. Matthew 3:16, for example, says that Jesus “*came up out of the water*” after He was baptized. You infer that Jesus first descended into the water, do you not? It is as plainly taught

as if the text said it. Here is another: Jesus said that God is the God of the living, not the dead (Matthew 22:31-34). That means *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, who died centuries earlier, still live. This is the conclusion the text is forcing you to reach.

Another great example of a necessary inference is found in Acts 8:35-36. Philip *“preached Jesus”* to the Ethiopian eunuch. When they came to some water, the eunuch demanded baptism. We are forced to conclude that preaching Jesus includes preaching baptism. We do not need the full text of Philip’s sermon in the chariot, Luke’s narrative implies that it included baptism. Why else would the eunuch have insisted on being immersed?

Unfortunately, however, people sometimes read the Bible carelessly, and they make **“unnecessary” inferences** about important scriptures. Due to religious bias or careless study habits, people often conclude things about Bible verses that the writer never implied.

For example, liberal brethren read James 1:27 and infer that: *“...visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction”* means the church should build children’s homes. Brethren, James teaches no such thing in this verse! He didn’t even hint at church support of social programs. Every pro-noun in the context refers to the individual disciple and his duty to God (see: vs. 23-26). In these verses, James uses words like **“anyone,” “he,” “his,”** and **“himself.”** The context has nothing to do with the church at all. This is what disciples should do as part of their loyalty to God.

Liberals follow a similar path with Galatians 6:10. They infer that the command to: *“...let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith,”* means the “social gospel” is a work of the church. Nothing of the sort is taught in this text. In context, Paul is talking about **“a man”** (vs. 1), **“you**

who are spiritual” (vs. 1b), and how **“anyone who thinks himself to be spiritual” can be self-deceived** (vs. 3). **“Each one”** must examine **“his own work”** because **“each one shall bear his own load”** (vs. 4). Then, *“whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (vs. 7). In this context the “us” who must not grow weary is a reference to individual disciples, not the church (vs. 9). Nothing in this text forces nor suggests the conclusion that the church must render aid to unbelievers through church funded agencies. This is an unnecessary inference that brethren continue to make in error to this day.

Paul said Bible students must *“give diligence”* to *“rightly divide the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). Carelessly reading the Bible and throwing out hastily conceived assertions is not the way to rightly divide it. Unfortunately, many people read the Bible with less attention to sense and syntax than they do in their private communication. If someone puts words in your mouth you might bristle and snap: *“Listen to what I’m saying, not what you wish I’d said!”* Yet, when many folks read the Bible, they put words into God’s mouth which He never said. They make inferences that the inspired writers never implied.

When you study the Bible, be careful to observe the rules of language, context, word meanings, as well as good old common sense. Solomon was absolutely right, study is hard work (Ecclesiastes 12:12)!

(adapted)

Sentence Sermons

“Many people borrow trouble and return it with interest.”

“Since your life is your message, what message are you sending?”