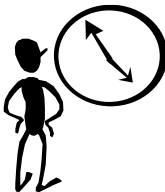


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### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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## The Freedom to Choose

By Jefferson David Tant

The freedom to choose is among the many blessings we have in this world. That freedom is found only in living beings, whether animals or humans. I have an automobile that is very useful to me, but it is a robot. It can only do what I choose, such as turning left or stopping at a red light. I am thankful to have it, but it doesn't even know who I am.

When God created living beings, He gave us the right to choose. We see this very early in the Garden of Eden in Genesis when Satan confronted Adam and Eve concerning whether or not to eat the forbidden fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

We know that Satan tempted Adam and Eve, and they chose to believe his lie and suffered the consequences, and all humanity has suffered the same fate of death in succeeding generations.

Throughout recorded Biblical history, we read of choices being made, some good and some bad. As Joshua is coming to the end of his leadership over Israel, he gave them a challenge: "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Through the centuries, there were times when Israel used their freedom to make wrong choices. Isaiah referred to such a time: "I will destine you for the sword, And all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight" (Isaiah 6:12).

Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu. *“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD”* (Leviticus 10:1-2).

So, what were these two men doing? They were worshipping God. But there was a problem. They offered “strange fire.” They must have thought that fire is fire, so what’s the difference? The difference was that they substituted what seemed good to them rather than what God had said was good in His mind. They had the choice to do what seemed good to them, but it was not good to God. Doesn’t what Nadab and Abihu did correspond to what is often done today in the worship of God? It may seem good to men, but how can we know if it is good in God’s mind? We can only know by looking to see what God has said in His Word.

Yes, God has given us the right to choose, but choices come with results, and wrong choices do not bring good results, as Israel learned time after time, as well as Nadab and Abihu.

Now, what about the age in which we live, the “Christian” age? Do we still have choices? Who can deny it? We still have free will; thus, we can listen to God, who has spoken to us through His Word, the Bible, or we have the freedom to listen to Satan if we so desire.

Many people I talk with today claim they believe in God and are Christians. Yet many seem to ignore some things God has said to us through His word, the New Testament. I have had conversations with those who believe in God and may lead good lives but feel no need to “go to church” to assemble with Christians to worship God.

But note what God’s Word says in Hebrews 10:23-26: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”*

What sin is mentioned in the passage? Failing to assemble in church meetings. We know assembling was a regular practice of the early church, as they met on the first day of the week (which we call Sunday) to partake of the Lord’s Supper, to be taught, to encourage one another, etc.

Note two passages that mention the day we call Sunday. Acts 20:7: *“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.”* I Corinthians 16:2: *“On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.”* To “break bread”

refers to partaking in the Lord's Supper, commemorating Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Another common practice among many is calling those who serve a church "Father." That is a religious title and is mentioned in the Bible. "*Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven*" (Matthew 23:9). This is not referring to one's father in the flesh but to a religious title given to a church leader. Anyone can choose to do this, but that doesn't guarantee that God will approve of it.

Other passages reveal God's Will for us that many so-called "Christians" choose to ignore. But note what Christ said about what God has revealed to us and is recorded in the written Word: "*But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'*" (Matthew 4:4).

Given that passage, which commands can we rightfully ignore?

We could go on for some pages mentioning those who choose not to follow God's teaching on the necessity of baptism, choosing to practice sprinkling or pouring water instead of the Bible's clear teaching that baptism is by immersion in water, etc.

So, the question is: With your freedom of choice, who do you choose to follow, the Word of God that leads to eternal life or the deceptions of Satan that lead to the eternal fires of hell? God has given you the right to choose.

## Should We Follow the Majority?

By Jefferson David Tant

The title presents an interesting question. Following the majority is a common practice in our everyday lives. When elections are held, whether for the President of the United States or for our High School Student Body President, the "majority" always wins. In a presidential election, I may vote for the losing candidate, but then I accept the vote and continue to live and serve in the nation under the leadership of the person I didn't vote for.

So, if "majority rule" is the accepted standard in our nation, is that the "accepted" rule in our service to God in His church and His kingdom? It seems that is common thinking in our time. I read in the newspapers the church conventions that various denominations have from time to time, and changes in practice or changes in the creeds are offered. A vote of the delegates decides on a practice's reception or denial. I believe my readers would agree that this is a common practice.

God's Word has some advice about following the majority, following the masses. Note Exodus 23:2, "*You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice*"

Through the centuries, it is evident that the masses, the majority, have not followed after God. Oh, some claimed allegiance to God, but in examining their lives, it is apparent that they were following God in name only.

Consider the subject of baptism. A very large number of churches do not follow the Bible teaching on this. The Bible teaches the necessity of baptism. Note the Apostle Peter's words to the household of Cornelius: "*And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days*" (Acts 10:48).

By whose authority did Peter command this baptism? Note Christ's words to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" Thus, what Peter commanded was what was taught by Jesus Christ.

All Bible scholars familiar with the New Testament's original Greek language will agree that the Greek word "baptize" can be correctly translated as "dip, submerge, immerse." Let's look at what the "majority" practices today concerning baptism. Some denominations, including the Salvation Army and the Christian Science Church, do not practice baptism in any form. And many denominations do not practice the Bible's mode of immersion but rather sprinkle or pour water. These include the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, etc.

As for various church leaders, God's Word teaches that bishops or elders must be married and have children. "*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; {of good...: or, modest} Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity*" (I Timothy 3:2-4 KJV) Notice that these leaders must be married and have obedient children. That's how they prove their leadership qualities. How many churches allow single men in these leadership positions? The Catholic Church forbids married men to be in positions of authority. The Bible says otherwise.

As to women pastors, many denominations are also going against God's Word in this matter. God has given us this exhortation: "*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet..*" (I Timothy 2:12). God has other important roles for women to fill, but being "in the pulpit" is not one of them.

Much more could be written, but this has been written to encourage the readers to consider whether it is better to follow the doctrines of men or the Word of God. And just who is behind the "doctrines of men?" Is it not Satan, whose mission is to deceive? And what better way to deceive people than by pretending to lead men to God, but instead leads them to follow the multitude? He still deceives people today, even as he deceived Adam and Eve.

Consider Christ's words in Matthew 22:14: "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*"

*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and*

*the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves'* (Matthew 7:13-15).

And who are these “false prophets?” Are they not those who stand in church pulpits and teach something different than what God’s Word says? But they can make it sound good.

Dear Readers, please understand that Satan is still at work today, even as he was long ago in the Garden of Eden. Beware, lest you follow the multitude rather than the Word of God.

## Salvation

By Gardner Hall

A contradiction? Two salvations?

Ephesians 2:8 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” The Ephesians were already saved in the first century.

Romans 3:11 – “For now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.” Salvation is something the Romans were approaching but didn’t yet have.

So, is salvation something we have now, or is it something we receive in the future? The correct answer is “yes.” Both are true.

Illustration: A ship sinks in the ocean. Some passengers get into a lifeboat and say, “We’re saved. We’re in the lifeboat.” However, they must stay in the lifeboat to receive their ultimate salvation. Then a rescue ship arrives, and they say again, “we’re saved.” In the same way, we are saved from spiritual shipwreck when we get into the spiritual lifeboat, which represents Christ. However, we must stay in the lifeboat, in Christ, until we can be in our “ultimate rescue ship” for eternity.

So, in that sense there are two salvations – Present salvation in Christ, and future salvation in eternity. (Illustration from Sewell Hall.)



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**“How many prayers can God listen to at once?”**