

Well, I Am A Five Stepper

Scenario:

The congregation has assembled together on the first day of the week. All in attendance have heard the truth taught on many occasions. Right before the start of services in walks someone who is unfamiliar to the local saints. He identifies himself as a “preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” from Tennessee. After the conclusion of the services for the day, the man visiting is hanging around and looks as though he has something he wants to say or do.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

One of the brethren approaches the man visiting and asks him if there is something on his mind. This is when the visitor says: “It was good to be here today. I appreciate the sermon. It was full of good lessons. I do have a problem with it. At the end, there was no offering of the five steps of salvation. There was no invitation at all. That is not New Testament Gospel preaching. Ya’ll need to do a comprehensive study of the book of Acts. An invitation is a must after every sermon.”

A Later Statement Is Made:

After the one who preached the lesson explained that there are not “five steps” to salvation. He explains that there was no obvious need for an invitation due to the nature of the lesson as well as who was in attendance. The visitor then says: “Well, I am a five stepper. If you are a member of the church you have to be a five stepper. Hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized is the Gospel! All of the great preachers in the church give that invitation every time they preach. I am going to mark this congregation as one who does not teach Acts 2:38.”

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- The Lord’s body, the church assembles together in one place (**I Corinthians 11:17-20, I Corinthians 14:23, and Hebrews 10:25**) on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7** and **I Corinthians 16:1-2**).
- The indications of the language is that this congregation has been taught (cf. **Acts 20:20; 20:26-27** and **I Corinthians 4:17**). Thus, it could be assumed that there is a reasonable expectation of knowledge and spiritual maturity (**Hebrews 5:14**).
- There is authority to have “visitors” in the first day of the week assembly of the local church (**I Corinthians 14:23**).
- I would be a bit dismayed if a “preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” came into an assembly of the saints without anyone have any prior knowledge that he was coming. For one, how does he know we are faithful? Shouldn’t he have done some examination? He should have at least asked some questions of us if he has come “to worship with us” (**Psalms 26:4-5, Jeremiah 15:17, Ephesians 5:6-11, Colossians 2:4-23, I Thessalonians 5:21, I Timothy 5:22, I Timothy 6:3-5, II**

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

John 1:6-11, and **Revelation 2:14-16**). NOTE: **I worded the above as I did because a faithful evangelist is authorized to go where things are not in order if his work is to set them in order (Acts 15:1-35 and Titus 1:5). He is not authorized to just participate with unfaithful brethren in worship (as proven above). This man is not in this assembly for the purpose of teaching, he is a worship participant.*

- Subtlety should scare us (**II Corinthians 11:3**). The idea of someone lurking with something to say, but being discreet in a troubling manner should concern us (**Galatians 2:1-5** and **Jude 1:3-4**).

Regarding the Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- This man is obviously acting in a way that drew enough attention to cause a brother to approach him. He is not doing what Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos (**Acts 18:24-28**). He is not doing what an evangelist would do if said evangelist had spiritual concerns about brethren (**I Timothy 1:3-7**, **II Timothy 4:1-5**, and **Titus 2:15**). He is being sneaky, which is of great concern (**II Peter 2:1-3**).
- Then, the dishonesty gets put on full display. The old “butter them up” garbage starts (**Psalms 12:1-2**, **Psalms 55:21**, **Proverbs 26:24-26**, **Proverbs 29:5**, and **Romans 16:17-18**). How was it “good to be here” and the sermon was “full of good lessons” if it was “not New Testament Gospel preaching?” Wouldn’t that make that lesson accursed (**Galatians 1:6-9**)? If it was not “New Testament Gospel preaching” why did he not stand to correct it or up and leave (**Colossians 1:28-29**, **Proverbs 14:7**, and **I Timothy 6:3-5**)? If he were a faithful man of God wouldn’t he have a more zealous reaction (**John 2:13-17**)?
- Where, in the book of Acts, is a full sermon recorded? Even in **Acts 2**, which was not an assembly of the church, we do not have a full record of what was preached (**Acts 2:40**). Where, in the book of Acts, are the words of a sermon recorded that was preached in the assembly of the saints on the first day of the week? This guy is ignorant and is twisting the Scriptures (**II Peter 3:15-17**).
- I am not saying an “invitation” is wrong. However, it is a tradition. A faithful preacher of the Gospel teaches what is needed (**Jude 1:3**). Since all in attendance had heard the truth many times, why would they need to be told what to do concerning initial obedience to the Gospel?

Regarding the Later Statement That Is Made From Our Scenario:

- The truth is, there are not “five steps to salvation” as is stated in the above. I don’t even know if you could number the “steps to salvation” if you understand that salvation is not realized until Christ comes again (**I Peter 1:3-9**). Those who were taught and baptized (**Acts 18:8**) still need to do things to be saved (**I Corinthians 15:1-4**). Furthermore, how could you box that up as one system that equally applies to all? Think about this, a husband is told to love his wife as Christ loved the church (**Ephesians 5:25**). If he fails, isn’t he lost (**I John 3:4**)? If he succeeds, isn’t that a step to salvation? Yet, does an unmarried man keep that instruction? NO! Even when it comes to what one must do to initially be saved. That cannot be taught as an equal to all. For example, how can repentance look different for most

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

people? Repentance is required initially before one is “saved” (so to speak - **Acts 3:19**). Let me illustrate this... A thief wants to obey the Gospel. He is driving a car he has stolen. He can be forgiven of his sins (**Acts 22:16, I Corinthians 6:9-11, Titus 3:3, Revelation 1:5**, etc.). However, he cannot keep the car (**Ezekiel 33:14-16, Luke 19:1-10, Acts 19:18-19, and Acts 26:18-20**). His process of repentance before conversion looks a lot different than one who has to repent of hearing the Gospel and not responding initially. He has to restore what he has taken. Think of how **Acts 19:1-7** was different than **Acts 2:1-41**. The conversion of those taught, but not fully vs. the conversion of some who had the blood of Christ on their hands. It was different. The teaching was different.

- Also, there are not just five steps to initially obeying the Gospel. I know, we have all heard hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. I have in ignorance and out of tradition said it myself many times. That is partially correct. Those are five things that need to be done (**Romans 10:14-17, Hebrews 11:6, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9-10, and Romans 6:1-6**). That’s not all though. What about understanding (**Matthew 13:19**)? What about counting the cost of discipleship (**Luke 9:57-62 and Luke 14:25-33**)? What about remembering (**I Corinthians 15:1-11**)? What about having hope (**Romans 8:24-25**)? What about loving the Lord (**Matthew 22:34-40**)? What about learning about grace (**Ephesians 2:1-10**) and continuing to learn and grow in grace (**Titus 2:11-14 and II Peter 3:18**)? More than five steps, right? More could be said too. Even when you say one has to continue faithful till the end (**Colossians 1:23**), that includes how many more things? For example, what if an able bodied Christian man refuses to work to provide for his family (**II Thessalonians 3:6-15 and I Timothy 5:8**)? So, isn’t even secular work a step to salvation? Think about the hundreds and thousands of things you could go on to name depending on how specific you get in what it is to continue faithfully to the end of one’s life.
- I wonder if the reason so many churches of Christ are in error is because of this teaching. Most I have met think they are okay in sin, which is false (**Romans 6:1-2, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, II Timothy 2:19**, etc.) as long as they have done the five steps of salvation. Many have a “once baptized always saved” mindset.
- This man is denominationally minded. The “church of Christ” cannot have it’s own doctrine and be the Lord’s church at the same time (**Hebrews 3:1-6**).
- Exalting “preachers” is wrong (**I Corinthians 1:10-17 and I Corinthians 4:1-6**).
- The final statement is just further ignorance. **Acts 2:38** has nothing to do with a congregation assembling on the first day of the week and a “invitation” being offered. If you read all of Acts chapter two there is no specified “steps to salvation” in the text. The fact is, confessing Christ is nowhere mentioned or an example cited. You have to go to other examples of conversion to find such (**Acts 8:25-39**). Additionally, **Acts 2:38** doesn’t even apply today the way in which it did in the first century. The Holy Ghost is no longer given after conversion as we see in the first century (**Acts 8:12-24 and Acts 19:1-7**; cf. **I Corinthians 12:3-13:13**). This man, like most preachers in so-called “churches of Christ”, is just a puppet repeating what he has heard. He has not done his own studies as he ought to. He is the one to be marked and avoided (**Romans 16:17-18**).