

3. Universalism Fails to Recognize the Authority Granted to the Church.

Most of Universalism will teach that the only authority to be possessed by any organized group of worshippers is confined to the Bible itself. This statement may not hold true for all of Universalism but most would admit that this is their chosen view on authority. This statement presents that any group who follows the teachings of the scriptures are automatically authorized to perform their work. In this there is an obvious ignorance of the Lord's statement referring to the longevity of His Church. He stated that the very gates of Hell would never prevail against His Church, Matt. 16:18. So then, His Church has remained in existence ever since He set it into action. The many failures of Universalism has caused it to either ignore or deny this fact to be true.

The Lord gave His organized body authority to carry out the great commission. Some may claim that a wide diversity of people have been effective in leading lost souls to saving grace and that this success proves them to have part in the Church. This work of leading lost souls to saving grace is only a third of the work laid out in the great commission. All who have found grace by faith are admonished to beckon the lost to the waters of salvation. Notice this teaching: (Rev 22:17) *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Pay attention that all who have heard the Lord are instructed to invite the lost to the waters of salvation. But those who hear are separated from the Bride in this verse. The Bride is the Church. She is not only to invite all to the waters of salvation, but she is to baptize, then teach the baptized to observe all that the Lord has commanded, Matt. 28:18-10.

In Matthew 16:16-19, the Lord told His Church that He would give it the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. A very important statement is made in the 19th verse of this chapter. It will be given here for consideration.

(Mat 16:19) *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

In this verse it is noted that the Lord told the Church that whatsoever it bound on Earth would be bound in Heaven while whatsoever it loosed on Earth would be loosed in Heaven. This is very important for consideration. It is particularly hard on Universalism.

This will become very obvious when the next verse that teaches this binding and loosing principle is presented. Let us consider that verse in this place:

(Mat 18:17-18) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. {18} Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

If there was any doubt before that this binding and loosing principle was directed to the work of the Church, there should be none now. Here it is plain that the Lord is telling the Church to count certain ones as heathen and publicans if they refused to hear it. A further investigation of this chapter would reveal that the one to be considered as a heathen was a brother who offended another brother and refused to repent of his deeds. Now let us consider the principle of Universalism in light of these facts. Universalism states that when a person is born-again they are in the Church at that time. Then the Lord directs the Church to loose certain types of brethren from it. What would Universalism suggest just happened to that “loosed” member’s salvation? This is something to consider isn’t it? Remember that the Bible teaches once born again, always born again. One wonders if Universalism makes this allowance?

The authority of the Church is discovered in the binding and loosing ability given to it by the Lord. The disorderly brother, mentioned in Matthew chapter 18, was loosed by the authority given to the Church. Just as keys are used to lock and unlock a door, the Lord’s Church is authorized to bind or loose a person from its membership. This Church action performed on Earth directly affects Church membership in Heaven. Remember that the Lord said, whatsoever it bound on Earth would be bound in Heaven. Universalism normally jokes about this Bible teaching regarding the authority the Lord gave to His Church. Though Universalism jokes, it is plain that the Lord is very serious about this matter.

In 1st Corinthians chapter five, we find another situation where the authority of the Church is being mentioned. Consider verses four, five and thirteen of this chapter.

(1 Cor 5:4-5) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, {5} To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

(1 Cor 5:13) But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

The fifth chapter of 1st Corinthians is dealing with one who is an open fornicator. This person's fornication was common knowledge. In verse four, the Church at Corinth was charged to gather together and with the power of the Lord to put that wicked person away from it. Here the word "power" also means authority. We see the power, or authority, of a Church being used to loose a member from it. Do we conclude that this person was loosed from the new birth or from the Church? If the new birth puts a person into the Church, this loosing would necessarily remove the person's new birth. Thankfully, the Bible teaches that a person who is born-again may enter into the Church by being bound to it through baptism. If a member becomes unrepentant in an error such as fornication, the Church must then use its authority to loose that member from it. This being so, the person remains a child of God though outside of the Church. Conclusively, a person doesn't become a member of the Church when they are born again.