

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THE BLUEPRINTS FOR APOSTASY

Steven Yeatts

Larry Rogers does not really have any new ideas for "his" church. It is just a hodgepodge of recycled apostasy that has already been used in many areas to deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18).

The Highland Church of Christ in Columbia, Tennessee, recently lost their preacher, **Larry Rogers**. He did not leave because of failing health, or being fired, or desiring a secular career. He left to begin a new congregation, the **Maury Hills Church of Christ**. This congregation now meets in the former First Baptist Church Building on West 8th Street in Columbia, Tennessee. I obtained a copy of the master plan Larry Rogers has in mind for this new work via a sister in Christ who lives in the Columbia, Tennessee area. The title reads — **"Maury Hills Church of Christ — A Dynamic Vision for Maury County."** The appropriate heading should have read — **"The Blueprints for Apostasy."**

THE "UNITY IN DIVERSITY" MISSION STATEMENT

The blueprints for the Maury Hills church begin with the following mission statement — **"To rejoice in the unifying diversity of God's grace, seeking to glorify Him in all things."** The forked-tongued doublespeak, **"unifying diversity,"** is a troubling phrase because the mantra (formula) of the change agents throughout the years has always been some sort of self-enlightened statement such as "unity in diversi-

ty" or something similar. The statement itself, even if it were harmless, has an agenda behind it that is dangerous and is damaging to the true unity taught in the New Testament (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:4-6).

Rogers outlines the **Purposes** of the Maury Hills Church as follows: 1) to pray, 2) To exist in diverse unity, 3) To evangelize the lost world, 4) To serve and worship God with simplicity, 5) To develop a dynamic youth program which is "in touch," 6) To be available for broken families, especially single Moms, 7) To spread love and joy throughout the community, 8) To be a "spiritual hospital" where broken lives are mended, 9) To live and teach the compassion and new beginning of Jesus, 10) To do a few ministries very well instead of several ministries poorly. On face value these purposes (goals) may seem to be noble ones, short of that red flag phrase in purpose number two — diverse unity, so what is the problem?

PROGRESSIVE AND DIGRESSIVE WORSHIP

Under the heading of **Worship**, Rogers stresses the need for *"less formal structure, seeker-oriented, upbeat and positive."* Also Rogers cites the need to *"Incorporate healthy emotion and encourage open sharing."* Additionally, Rogers indicates that wor-

ship should *"Focus primarily on AM worship, with options for PM worship/fellowship."* Again, the red flags start waving. Less formal structure, seeker-oriented, upbeat and positive are vague intentions indeed, but it is certainly clear from what follows that such intentions are reprehensible when it comes to Rogers' desire to abandon the purity of the New Testament church for which our Saviour died.

Under the heading of **Youth Program**, Rogers indicates that this will be *"the most emphasized ministry for the new church."* Again this goal is not without some level of merit, considering the needs for providing supplemental spiritual instruction in the church to bolster what children are receiving in the home, or in fact, to give some children the spiritual instruction that is totally lacking in the home (Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Rogers additionally mandates that the Maury Hills youth will *"attend Winterfest and other impacting youth functions."* That Winterfest and such like affect our youth is not an understatement. The serious issue is how the children are affected, and in regard to the doctrine of the New Testament our children are most adversely affected at

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Blueprint For Apostasy...



Editorial...

What Pleases The Lord?

QUESTION:

"I listened to some of the messages delivered at the lectureship hosted by your group. I am truly amazed at how little teaching takes place on how to live a life — be better at relationship. Is there any life in your faith?"

ANSWER:

It appears you fail to see that every Word of God and every teaching of God's Word helps people at what you call "relationship." Knowing the Word and obeying the Word is about "relationship." The Word of God is about how we relate to God, brethren and even our fellow man. Every sermon preached from the inspired Word, regardless of its subject, helps people live so as to be pleasing to God. That includes not only doing "right things" but avoiding doing "wrong things." We "know" God when we "obey" his commandments (1 John 2:3).

It is obvious that some things from God's Word are needed before other things. It depends on the individual and their condition. That's why we read of some being told to "believe" (Acts 16:31), while others were told to "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). EVERY WORD of God is important, not just some parts of it. If we concentrate 99% of our efforts on those who use drugs and alcohol, have depression or guilty of crimes, then we lose those who need teaching on other things. Also, a part of the great commission is to continue to teach those who have "obeyed" the Gospel (Matt. 28:20). Brethren need to know "how to live" so as to please God. They need to know how to "worship." They need to know how to "grow" and "develop" as a faithful servant of the Lord. They must progress beyond the "first principles" (Heb. 5:12-14). If every soul is not presented with the pure, unadulterated Gospel of Christ, then we are not being balanced. No one is to be left

out or neglected.

It appears that your biggest problem is that you cannot endure "sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). You want to focus on what is identified as the "social gospel" instead of the "Gospel of salvation." Man's social ills and hurts may be helped and men may feel good about themselves, but their soul is ignored. The only right way to help social problems is to help the soul. When people learn the saving Gospel, obey from the heart the saving Gospel, then and only then are their hurts healed. Many in Isaiah's day begged the prophets to preach "smooth things," not "right things" (Isa. 30:10). They wanted to hear "deceits" — how good things were, not how bad things were. It's so sad that many today have never learned any different.

You mentioned to me that you felt that God may be using you to help me, could it be the other way around? I'm certainly willing to learn and do better when I am wrong, I assume you feel the same way. If you can overcome what YOU want and feel that OTHERS want, and turn your heart to what the LORD wants, you will be a giant step ahead. OUR feelings, likes and dislikes, and what we think God would like, get in our way of really loving the Lord. We can't love the Lord without honoring/obeying his word (John 14:15; 15:14).

QUESTION:

Why do you spend so much time trying to keep the Word pure? Jesus told us what was MOST important. Loving God by loving our neighbor sums up the whole law.

ANSWER:

You're assuming that 100% of our time is spent in "contending for the faith" (Jude 3 — which we are certainly commanded to do). When, where, how are you obeying this command? It doesn't appear to me you

are obeying it at all. I like the way we're obeying it better than the way you are not obeying it. Also, for your information, *Seek the Old Paths* is only a part of our work. We have a weekly church bulletin (devoted to evangelism), weekly newspaper article, daily radio program, and two TV programs that air three times a week. In "*Seek the Old Paths*" you see only one area of our work. Why would you ASSUME that is all we do? While the wall of Jerusalem was being rebuilt, the saints of God worked with "one hand" in building the wall and held a weapon in the "other hand" to defend it (Neh. 4:16-18). Have you ever read this passage? We ought to do as they did (cf. Rom. 15:4).

When was the last time you heard a sermon or preached a sermon on Nadab and Abihu's strange fire (Lev. 10:1-2), Noah and the ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14) or David and his new cart (2 Sam. 6:3)? Sentiments like yours love the "smooth things" while ignoring the "right things." Jesus made it plain to take care of BOTH the "*anise and cummin*" and the "*weightier matters of the law*" (Matt. 23:23). Neither can be omitted! He also made clear to not only take care of the "beam" in your own eye, but to also take care of the "speck" in your brother's eye (Matt. 7:5). Why do you want to do one and not the other? I know it's unpleasant, distasteful, and hard. I too had much rather avoid it and pretend it doesn't exist, but, my desire is to please the Father and do his will, not my will. So, since God said "*contend for the faith*" (Jude 3), "*reprove, rebuke, exhort*" (2 Tim. 4:2), "*mark them that cause divisions*" (Rom. 16:17), "*expose them*" (Eph. 5:11), "*them that sin, rebuke before all*" (1 Tim. 5:20), "*instructing those that oppose themselves*" (2 Tim. 2:25), "*rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith*" (Titus 1:13), "*rebuke with all authority*" (Titus 2:15), deliver "*the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27), preaching Christ "*warning every man*" (Col. 1:28), "*warn the unruly*" (1 Thess. 5:14), "*take heed to thyself and the doctrine*" (1 Thess. 4:16), who am I to dismiss these things? I will be held accountable if I disobey the Lord. How many times does the Lord have to tell you to do something before you do it? How can you ignore

these verses? Teach me how to avoid them or get around them like you do. This is not an easy job! It's hard enough to "call a spade a spade" and "tell it like it is" in "contending for the faith." And, while a few are willing to be out on the battle lines doing the Lord's precious work, many weak and disparaging brethren are harping, crying, complaining, whining, ridiculing, belittling, mocking, scorning, sneering, humiliating, and showing disdain and contempt toward them. However, this is nothing new. The Lord himself received it all. The prophets understood it. This is the way it has always been. But woe unto those who do not hold up their hands (cf. Exodus 17:12) and support the preaching of the Gospel (2 Tim. 4:10,16).

QUESTION:

I do feel like I'm "contending for the faith" when I oppose someone with harsh attitudes. Was it not religious people that Jesus found so "unGodlike?" People that spent all their time splitting hairs.

ANSWER:

How can you "judge my attitude." You don't know my attitude. You can't see my heart, my expression(s), tone of voice, intent, etc. etc. Your judgment is misplaced. I have never been harsh, hateful, rude, or ugly with you or anyone else. My motivation is love, nothing more. I don't

know where you think I have a harsh attitude.

The only thing I see is that you can't stand sound doctrine. When the Truth is presented, you think the one teaching it has a bad attitude. Did the Lord have a harsh attitude in Matthew 23 when he repeatedly called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, and pronounced woe upon them? What was the Lord's attitude when he called them "blind guides" and "fools and blind?" Did he need to be rebuked for having such an attitude? Did John have a harsh attitude and need correcting when he called some that came to his baptism "serpents" and "vipers?" Did Paul have a bad attitude when he called Elymas a "child of the devil" (Acts 13:10)? These are pretty stiff and harsh words. Should they all be rebuked? Since I've never used words like Jesus, John and Paul, does that mean my attitude is better than theirs? Of course not!

Even if I did have a bad and harsh attitude, consider this... Paul talked about some who preached Christ with wrong motives and attitudes (Phil. 1:15-18), but he rejoiced that the truth was preached just the same. It wasn't "what" they preached that was wrong, it was "why" they preached that was wrong. They preached the truth, but with impure motives. They preached out of envy, strife, contention. But, what they preached was accurate, true, the

Gospel. Paul was certainly not commending their motive and attitude, but he did commend the truth they preached.

Is it simply the approach, manner, method, or technique I use that you don't like? Or, is there something deeper? How many ways can you tell people what is right and what is wrong? How many ways can you tell people they are in sin and need to repent? I've heard it said for years that through the 50s and 60s the Lord's church was the fastest growing church in America. Isn't it interesting that during these years so much of the preaching was "hell fire and brimstone" type preaching? That debates were being conducted right and left? That preachers were not afraid to stand in the pulpit and preach about the distinctiveness of the church and the condemnation of denominationalism? They preached that salvation was exclusively in the Lord's church and no where else? So many are afraid today to preach these things and so many others don't preach it because they don't believe it! Many even believe that people in the denominations are saved! How far removed from the Holy Scriptures! If people in all denominations are saved, then Jesus has reneged on what he said (Mark 16:16). If people in all denominations are saved, then they are saved outside the church Jesus bled and died for (Acts 2:41,47; Eph. 5:23).

Blueprint For Apostasy...

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events such as Winterfest. Jeff Walling, a prominent change agent, and previous Winterfest speaker is one whose acerbic (sarcastic) attacks against the Lord's church are well documented. Walling was a regular speaker on the now defunct Jubilee. Walling used the Jubilee forum as a platform to spew forth his viciously irreverent rhetoric and denigration of the pattern of worship for the New Testament church. Winterfest (as exposed in *S.T.O.P.* in previous articles) is a hot-bed of apostasy and digression that any spiritually wise parent would be sure to keep from influencing their children.

The Maury Hills Church of

Christ is not following a new set of blueprints to be sure. This model has been followed before and the "deifying" of the more prominent change agents (i.e. Jeff Walling, John Mark Hicks, Rubel Shelly, et al) is always a major part of the plan when following the blueprints for apostasy.

REACHING OUT TO THE "POSTMODERN" CHURCH

Under the aegis (protection) of Outreach, Rogers proposes a "30-minute weekly television program (taped at the Madison Church of Christ studios)." It should not be surprising that the Madison Church would extend the right hand of fellowship to such an effort, they [the Madison church] of "raising their arms and clapping during songs"

infamy as noted in the Summer of 2001 in Nashville's newspaper, *The Tennessean*. One wonders if the Maury Hills church will also follow the example of the Madison church in regard to having "lead singers" being placed at microphones, as also chronicled in the same *Tennessean* article. Under the somewhat miscellaneous heading, **Other Matters**, Rogers lists some of his "heroes" when it comes to the "postmodern" church of Christ. One of his suggestions is that the Maury Hills church "send a team of men to visit other churches from which ideas can come (i.e. Twickenham-Huntsville, Richland Hills-Ft. Worth, and Highland-Memphis). The Twickenham church rings a bell. They are the pioneers (at least among the churches of Christ) of the "Andy Griffith" approach to

worship that the change agent churches have openly embraced and utilized. Also listed as a goal is a “visit with Dr. John Mark Hicks of Lipscomb who has been involved in church planting.” It is true that Hicks has been involved in church planting — he has been very instrumental in planting the type of church that Rogers is planting — the change-agent church, which is really a community church, masquerading as a congregation of the Lord’s people.

Larry Rogers does not really have any new ideas for “his” church. It is just a hodgepodge of recycled apostasy that has already been used in many areas to deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18). His post-modern prescription for spirituality is nothing more than a dead run towards denominationalism. His unconscionable audacity in outlining his apostasy for all to see is just another indicator of the seared conscience of one who blatantly departs from the faith (1 Tim. 3:1-2). If his blueprints ended there it would be evidence enough to mark Larry Rogers as a schismatic and dangerous brother, but there is more.

PESSIMISTIC POSTULATIONS

Under the title “**The following are reasons that I am pessimistic about the future for Highland Church of Christ,**” Rogers assaults the “marriage/divorce position” of the elders at Highland from whence he departed. While not straightforwardly stating his own “position” regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, the strong implication is that the words of our Saviour in Matthew chapters 5 and 19 will not be the standard observed. Creating a loophole around our Saviour’s standard for marriage, divorce, and remarriage is consistently one of the benchmarks of the change-agent churches.

In point number four under his reasons for pessimism, Rogers wrote, “Some 50% of the membership (probably a majority) has been brain-washed with legalistic theology for their entire lives, and convinced that it must be predominate. They are not going to change their view of salvific judgmentalism. These are people who are not open to new thoughts or who study for themselves (although they are great people). They have not been

required to sit through hundreds of hours of graduate work. This does not mean that they are bad people, but they are just firmly convinced that their beliefs are right. They are comfortable with biblical illiteracy.”

Point number ten from the list of pessimisms is that “*It is obvious that most of our people do not want a contemporary praise service. They feel more comfortable in a 1950s-style service and this is only going to bring more decline.*”

DECRYING THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Rogers goes on to disparage the elders because they “*believe that the church of Christ is absolutely ‘The Only Church’ to the extent of condemning all others who do not subscribe to their beliefs, practices (i.e. worship music, marriage/divorce, Holy Spirit, and church membership are Heaven & Hell issues).*” Rogers continues to pontificate, “*This fundamental, self-defeating belief is at the root of every single decision. In their view, there is no room for gray issues or diverse unity. Although I try to appreciate their sincerity, I believe that taking the elders’ position will bring condemnation from God. For me this is a matter of serious concern for my soul’s salvation. It is wholly theological!*”

BIBLICALLY ILLITERATE INDEED!

It is noteworthy that throughout this discourse by one who decries “*biblical illiteracy*” on the part of some members of the Lord’s church, not one shred of Scriptural authorization is offered to support his accusations, beliefs, and apostasy. These blueprints for apostasy have the Devil himself as the architectural designer. The foundation for the Maury Hills church most assuredly is not “*built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*” (Eph. 2:20). The foundation for the Maury Hills church is the ever-shifting sand built upon by headstrong men who hear the sayings of Christ and refuse to do them (Matt. 7:26). Indeed, as Jesus said, “*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up*” (Matt. 15:13). Sadly, though, before being extirpated by the God of

heaven, churches such as the Maury Hills church will have already led precious souls into the same ditch that the blind, yet self-proclaimed enlightened leaders have dug for themselves and their followers.

The “diverse unity” proposition asserted by Larry Rogers is the same tired attempt to include everyone (regardless of their beliefs) under the same religious umbrella. It is clear that is what Rogers believes based upon his mockery of the elders for claiming that only members of the church of Christ will indeed be saved. Rogers’ attacks are not accusations against personalities, but are flagrant denunciations of the doctrine of the New Testament. Larry Rogers’ “**Dynamic Vision**” is nothing more than the “**Damnable Vice**” of ecumenicism.

PUBLIC DOCUMENTATION MERITS PUBLIC EVALUATION

The documentation for the “Blueprints for Apostasy” by Larry Rogers was not obtained via some clandestine operation. If one impugns this writer’s (Steve Yeatts’) integrity or understanding of what he read, please contact me and I will send you a copy of these “blueprints” for your own digestion, or indigestion, whichever comes first. The church of our Lord is the glorious blood-bought institution of the saved (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; 20:28; Eph. 5:23-25; Col. 1:13-18). The doctrine of Christ will unify all who submit themselves in humble obedience to God’s plan, but false teachers who proliferate their “*damnable heresies*” will indeed “*bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (2 Peter 2:1). It is also true that “*many shall follow their pernicious ways,*” thereby causing “*the way of truth to be evil spoken of*” (2 Peter 2:2). It is because of the eternal seriousness of such apostasy that we expose premeditated error such as the blueprints for the Maury Hills Church of Christ. We pray that souls will search the Scriptures daily to find that the premise for the church of the change-agents is devoid of Scriptural authority (Matt. 16:18; Acts 17:11).

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SALVATION-RELATED WORKS

Dustin Fortin

Though many have tried, no one can or will succeed in denying the connection between salvation and works.

Denominationalists among us avoid the idea that salvation involves works as they would avoid the bubonic plague. The efforts to offer salvation minus works stem from a gross misunderstanding of Ephesians 2:8,9 which states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Far too many have been led away from a correct understanding of these words by listening to the anti-work rhetoric of men who have left the old paths.

BOTH BELIEF AND REPENTANCE ARE WORKS

Legion is the number of those who will claim that people need no works to be saved, yet the very ones opposed to salvation-related works will staunchly insist that one must believe in order to be saved. Claiming that works are not necessary for salvation while insisting that salvation is awarded to those who simply believe shows not only a lack of understanding of Bible works but also ignorance of Jesus’ clear teaching. Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him who he hath sent” (John 6:29). The phrase (“this is the work of God”) has, of course, led many to suggest that causing souls to believe in Christ is the work which God is supposed to do and not the work that man is supposed to do. To suggest that belief is God’s work, however, will not do. Jesus spoke the words of John 6:29 to those who wanted to “work the works of God” (John 6:28). No one is to imagine that Jesus’ hearers on this occasion desired to do the works that God was supposed to do! Jesus’ hearers simply wanted to engage in godly works thereby drawing closer to the Father, and Jesus said that belief in Him was one such godly work.

There are also many who teach that works do not save while insisting that those who will be saved

must repent. This, too, is evidence that the one suggesting such is unfamiliar with the Bible. Jonah 3:10 undeniably states that repentance is a work: “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way [This is repentance!]; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Repentance is a work. Repentance must precede the salvation of one’s soul (Acts 2:38). Therefore, repentance is a salvation-related work. The one who denies the place of works in salvation while requiring repentance on the part of the sinner is unknowingly affirming the need for works in order to be saved.

EARLY EPHESIAN ACTIONS DEMONSTRATE SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

On his third missionary journey (which likely took place from A.D. 53-57), Paul visited magnificent centers of trade, communication, transportation, art and science. The city of Ephesus possessed all such greatness plus it was the home of the Temple of Diana. What Ephesus lacked at the time of Paul’s visit, however, was the Gospel. Paul preached the truth of the Gospel in its simplicity and power. This Gospel changed the life and message of Apollos of Ephesus, and it changed the lives of other Ephesians as well. “When they [the Ephesians] heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

The actions of these Ephesians are significant because Paul would later (around A.D. 62) write a letter to these people and affirm that “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). For this statement, however, to be considered without the knowledge of earlier actions of the Ephesians would be gross neglect. The earlier actions of the Ephesians (their baptism) seem a splendid commentary on Ephesians 2:8. God’s

grace offers salvation (Titus 2:11), and in that sense we are saved by grace. Yet, it is a person’s faith, properly conjoined with works (James 2:17), that accepts God’s gracious offer of salvation. Thus, man is saved by grace through faith.

WORK RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE ACCEPTED BY GOD

Peter, preaching to the household of Cornelius, stated: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35). Cornelius was ready to hear all things God commanded Peter to preach (Acts 10:33). Peter’s God-given message involved the necessity of works in order to enjoy eternal acceptance by the Father. Peter gives two requirements to being accepted by God. The first requirement is reverence (or fear), and the second is working righteousness. The words of the Psalmist shed much light on Peter’s sermon to Cornelius. Psalm 119:172 states: “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.” There can be no doubt that Peter instructed the eager household of the first Gentile converts that God accepts those who work His commandments. Later in the account, Peter “commanded them [the household of Cornelius] to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). The conversion of Cornelius is indeed an example of salvation-related works.

Though many have tried, no one can or will succeed in denying the connection between salvation and works. The evidence is too clear and abundant to allow the objective Bible student to come away with any conclusion other than there are works that must be done on the part of the sinner who will be saved by God.

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A POLITICAL BROTHERHOOD

Dan Goddard

***Confrontation, not smokescreens, is what we need in the church.
Action, not false moderation, is the cure for the ills of political atmosphere.
A “stiffening of the vertebrae” would do some more good
than all the books and degrees they can carry. Let these moral cowards
call the rest of us radicals, bigots, narrow-minded, etc....
Let the politically minded perish if they refuse to repent,
but let them not drag the rest of us to hell with them.***

An atmosphere resembling at times the political arena at its rawest, seems to pervade the thinking of many of us today. Some younger preachers, frustrated to the point of despair of the political situations they face, often become bitter and angry toward the church. Not a few of the “older” ones have experienced something of the same attitude. A few have concluded that the church is merely a “denomination” as a result of too many sad experiences along this line. Such a conclusion is but the result of judgment from human experience — and too limited an experience at that. On the other hand, if we allow some to have their way, they will drag the church down to the denominational level.

One of the fundamental causes of the present situation is a lack of faith. Faith produces conviction and conviction breeds courage. Find a lack of courage and you will find a corresponding lack of faith. For too many years we have concentrated on dragging people into the baptistry rather than converting them. Consequently, multitudes (and not a few of these have become what they call “preachers” and “elders”) do not have the faith, conviction, and the ensuing courage that faithfulness demands. We have become so obsessed with “numbers” in the church we have forgotten that God must “add” every individual to the church before that one has his name in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Our chief purpose in the church often seems to have a supercharged program (mention “program” around a group of brethren and observe the ears “perk-up”) which will fill the building without due concern about

changing people’s lives. Some of the preaching the crowds get in a “packed” building is designed to produce a sensation only on the pleasure nerves and therefore, the sinner leaves a sinner — whether wet or dry depends on how many death-bed tales are spun by the speaker.

That political sentiments prevail is self-evident, 1) when people are more concerned about how one feels toward a certain school than about one’s faith in God; 2) when people are willing and ready to join a faction because of personality attraction; 3) when convenience rules the actions rather than convictions; 4) when Christians’ (elders and preachers not excluded) affirmations depend on “who” they are with; 5) when men are more concerned about the praise of men than about praise toward God; 6) when those known to be reprobate toward the truth are praised by those claiming to be faithful but who need a “favor” from the reprobate; 7) when choices are made which are known to be detrimental to the cause of truth but will momentarily gain an advantage, and 8) when those who are known to speak from both sides of their mouth are placed in positions of trust and leadership. We know it is political sentiment — mixed perhaps with ignorance, but no less political.

If there was ever a time when men needed courage, it is now. I claim no exclusive franchise on courage and intelligence — many have been the times when I’ve needed much more of each — but I have taken positions and held them until proven wrong without regard to who stood on the other side. At times, perhaps we should have spoken sooner; at other times maybe the tongue was

too ready, but in either instance, poor judgment was caused by ignorance, and not the loss of courage. For all the years I have been a Christian, I have firmly believed every moral coward will spend eternity in hell; consequently, we have little respect for such.

Politically-minded cowards nearly always prefer to: 1) work in the dark; 2) under the cover of false charges; 3) behind subtle (or otherwise) innuendos; 4) by the use of half-truths; or, 5) in the midst of a crowd of like-minded and similar-spirited persons who will help them do their “dirty work.” These deserve no respect, but only the severest discipline which might help them straighten their sorry lives out and get them right with the Lord whom they piously profess to love and serve but are actually traitors to Him who gave His life for us all.

Confrontation, not smokescreens, is what we need in the church. Action, not false moderation, is the cure for the ills of political atmosphere. A “stiffening of the vertebrae” would do some more good than all the books and degrees they can carry. Let these moral cowards call the rest of us radicals, bigots, narrow-minded, etc. Let the political atmosphere die an ignoble death. Let the politically minded perish if they refuse to repent, but let them not drag the rest of us to hell with them.

Love, yes; unity, certainly; moderation in the Biblical sense, most assuredly; respect for brethren, necessarily so; reverence for truth, above all, and more also; but politics in the brotherhood never!

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STANDING FAST IN THE FAITH

Darryl Harrison

To say that the world in which we live is divided religiously is certainly an understatement. Any seeker of religion will have no problem finding a church or doctrine which suits his own tastes. Just like the local buffet restaurant, many selections are available, but all honest persons yearning for the truth must question this present arrangement. Is it God's will that people be divided over the most crucial of subjects? The Philippian jailer asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" That question is still being asked today, but unfortunately Bible answers are not being given. False doctrines relative to the plan of salvation abound and the Lord's church must equip itself to fight these errors tooth and nail.

The apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 16:13, "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong.*" Every word in this powerful verse rings out with the concept of war and spiritual conflict. Paul, in essence, was calling the church at Corinth to arms. The New Testament church today must also heed this militant call to war. The line of demarcation has been drawn and the enemy has been identified, but the fact of the matter is that many pulpits throughout the land have imposed a self-restricting ban on doctrinal preaching for fear of offending the masses (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Weak elderships are retreating instead of preparing the flock for a protracted confrontation with the wicked adversary of God's people — none other than Satan. Peter describes him "*as a roaring lion*" (1 Peter 5:8) of whom Paul said "*we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Cor. 2:11). The church has an obligation before God and man to stand for the truth by which we shall gain the ultimate victory.

Concerning the doctrine of Christ, that is, the inspired teaching of the New Testament (Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9), we should uncompromisingly promote and defend it. The beloved John wrote so forcefully in 2 John 9, "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son.*" Keep in mind that John was known as the apostle of love and wrote much on the subject in his epistles. It is therefore not unloving or unkind to expose false teaching and those who propagate it! In fact, it is the most loving thing any faithful Christian can do for his fellow man. There is a current trend in the religious world and also in the church to tone down this blessed doctrine. The preaching which characterized the first century church was plain, bold and loving. The Gospel which filled the streets of Jerusalem and caused men to be "*pricked in their heart*" (Acts 2:37) is the same Gospel that will save men today (Rom. 1:16).

Considering the fact that we have the responsibility to stand for and defend the Gospel, there is an inevitable conclusion that will be drawn. When the doctrine of Christ is presented as it should be, then conflict is to be expected. Darkness hates light (John 3:20). In the same sense, error does not like to be exposed by the light of truth. If the church never faces any attack from the world, particularly the denominational world, then that is a good sign that we are not standing as firmly as we should. Whatever happened to the kind of preaching and Christian living that caused the church to grow in the first century? This was a time when God's people loved God and man more than their own lives (Acts 20:24). They unhesitatingly drew the "sword of the Spirit" and met in battle the foes of the Gospel of Christ.

The church of the 21st century must return to the divine pattern of evangelism in order to be pleasing to God. We must be convinced the only answers that are sufficient in matters of religious doctrine are Bible answers! Will we not hearken unto the commands of the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10) and faithfully execute our mission so that souls may be won back from the devil's grip and that God may be glorified? May each and every member of the body of Christ heed the personal admonition to "*earnestly contend for the faith*" (Jude 3).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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