

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 ETHICS OF THE BIBLE

Jimmy W. Bates

There is a general decline among many in the Biblical principles of morality, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, respect, being responsible, etc.

There is a great need today for people to get back to the "Ethics of the Bible;" that is, the standard of human conduct and morality set forth in the Bible. What are the principles and commands of the Bible as to our personal and business dealings with one another? This study will deal with the Biblical principles of Honesty, Integrity, Truthfulness, Employer-employee relations and responsibilities, conduct and respect toward our neighbors and civic responsibilities.

It is evident that our society, in general, has abandoned the ethics of the Bible and has accepted humanistic philosophies that are contrary to God's Will. The philosophy of Humanism is having a great influence upon the ethical and moral standard of our society today. Humanism rejects God and all the super-natural characteristics associated with God and asserts that man is the supreme being in the universe. Humanists "affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics are autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction." Or, in other words, God's standard of morality and ethics is rejected, and each individual conducts himself by his own standard of ethics and morality; that there is no set standard, that ethics is "situational," determined by the situation in which one finds himself.

We're reminded of the moral decline of God's people in the time of the Judges when it is said that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). It's not difficult to see the decline and degradation of morals and ethical conduct of our society because of the influence of the humanistic philosophy. There is a general decline among many in the Biblical principles of morality, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, respect, being responsible, etc.; while crime, violence, vandalism, disrespect, dishonesty, immorality, irresponsibility, etc. is escalating.

Let's look at the Ethics of the Bible and see how God expects us to conduct ourselves toward one another. These principles are set forth in the following passages.

Matthew 22:37-40, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." We must begin with supreme love for God and love for our fellow man. If we begin with these, then the other commands of Bible ethics will follow.

Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the

prophets." We often call this verse the "Golden Rule." This rule should be applied in all our relationships with one another. It would eliminate many of the problems we face; racially, socially, economically, and spiritually.

Ephesians 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

God demands that we be honest and truthful in our personal and business dealings with one another. II Corinthians 8:21, "Providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Romans 12:17, "...provide things honest in the sight of all men." Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Hebrews 13:18, "Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." Ephesians 4:25, "Wherefore putting

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THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

L. O. Sanderson

Recently a radio speaker argued that what many people overlooked was that the Bible did not produce the church, but rather the church produced the Bible. Maybe we have been overlooking this *doctrine of man* too much. The idea of course is not a new one. It has been written and spoken by Catholic leaders for many years. Really, the doctrine is vital to the continuance of the institution which they foster. If the Bible produced the church, then the church and its members would have to submit to the Bible and its teaching rather than to the church. If the church produced the Bible, then the same church which produced the teaching could alter or revoke its work. Some religious organizations, therefore, which elect to legislate their own regulations, prefer to believe that the church produced the Bible.

The idea that the church produced the Bible, or even the New Testament, in the sense of originating it, which is the only sense in which the idea would be of much value, is not only false and a sect-sponsored doctrine, but it is also a gross misrepresentation of and reflection on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as the divinity of the Scriptures. If the church existed before the Word, then the church might have, though not necessarily, produced it; but before the church was, the Word existed. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). But the church was not in existence then. Anything, therefore, that came before, could not be produced by something later.

The church was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and it was only "at hand" in the days of John and Christ. John was not even in the kingdom (Matt. 11:11). The church was still in the future when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ (Matt. 16:18). The kingdom, or church, had not yet appeared when Christ ascended (Acts 1:6). It was,

however, in existence at the time of Acts 2:47, for God added to it; and the church at Jerusalem was scattered abroad, according to Acts 8:1. Now, if the church did not exist at the time of Acts 1:6, and did exist at the time of Acts 2:47, then some time in between, the church had its beginning.

According to divine prophecy, Jerusalem was to be the place of beginning, and the Law was to go forth from that city (Isa. 2:2,3; Luke 24:46-49). The Holy Spirit was to come at the time (Acts 1:8) and a special power was to come also (Mark 9:1). All of this was to happen during the lifetime of some who were standing there (Matt. 16:28). In view of these facts, with consideration also that it must needs be between Acts 1:6 and 2:47, there is but one place and time that it could begin — on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, a record of which we find in Acts 2. That was Jerusalem. The disciples were waiting there until the power came. The Spirit came. The power came. There the Gospel plan of salvation was first preached, right after that the Lord added to the church (verse 47). The church at Jerusalem became the first church — the only church that had the right to be referred to as the first church.

The church at Jerusalem did not produce the Word. The Word produced the church. That was natural, even in the midst of the supernatural events. The seed, the Word of God, was sown and the seed brought forth fruit. After that, God set them in the church (I Cor. 12:28). Peter, standing up with the eleven and guided by the Holy Spirit, preached the Gospel to all gathered there (Acts 2:14-36), and that as a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, which had long since been in existence. Those who obeyed the Word (Acts 2:37-39) were added to the church (verse 47). Peter did not produce those words — the Holy Spirit gave utterance to them. The Spirit brought to his remembrance what he had already heard

the Lord say. Peter could not be faithful and teach otherwise (Matt. 28:20), and the words of Jesus had been spoken long before the church began. Even Christ, the head of the church, did not speak his own words, but the Will of the Father (John 14:24-26). Peter did not produce his sermon; he reproduced the Will of the Father which came to him through Jesus Christ and the Old Testament Scriptures, and he was kept from error by the Holy Spirit. So the Word confirmed by Peter became the means of establishing the first church, the church at Jerusalem, and every congregation established and every Christian made thereafter was made in exactly the same manner. Some planted, some watered, but God gave the increase (I Cor. 3:6,7).

The Old Testament, which foretold the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, was a thing of the past when the church began. The church could not have had a part in producing those Scriptures. Every word spoken by Christ had already been uttered when the church was born. The church did not produce the words of Christ. Peter was guided by the Holy Spirit, the administrator of the New Testament, in all that he said and wrote. Paul conferred not with flesh and blood, nor with the other apostles concerning his teaching or writing (Gal. 1:16,17). His message was delivered directly to him (I Cor. 15:3). And certainly, the church had no part in the production of the words of these men. Luke wrote what "Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), which was done and taught before the church began. John wrote concerning the things which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, many of which things were not written (John 20:30). Mark wrote the "beginning of the gospel" (Mark 1:1), not the beginning of the church. Thus in no sense did the church produce anything about the divine Will of God.

Yes, individual members of the body of Christ were the instruments

of God by which the Word was made known. God has always used men through whom to speak to people. Moses was the mouthpiece of God in giving the Law. God's Word produced the Jewish religion in that way. The nation of the Jews did not produce the Law. The Father in heaven sent his Son to the earth to establish Christianity, but the church did not produce the Son nor the Word of God which he came to speak. A secretary writes a letter for her employer, but she does not produce or originate the content of that letter any more than some other typist who might copy it. The agent at the depot writes a train order, but that does not mean that he produces it. It has a source of origin,

the dispatcher. The Lord used men to prepare his Will, but it did not originate with those men. If the church produced the Word, the Holy Spirit was useless. If the church could have produced the Word, it seems peculiar that so few men were given the special divine power necessary to the writing of the New Testament. It just goes right back to sowing the seed, and that produces the results.

But if you could prove that the church did produce the New Testament, it would be of no help to Catholics. Their church began a long time after the New Testament appeared. The Jews would have to be credited with the work, and not the Romans. And even in the copies of

the originals and the translations from them, the Catholic Church would be left out; the Greeks and others would be credited with that work. And, besides, the church of the New Testament, whether it produced the Word or the Word produced the church, claims the reigning Christ as its head, and not some human being in Rome.

The seed, the Word of God, is sown — the church results. The church must continue to obey that Word. It dare not *add to* or *take away*. Certainly it cannot write a new Bible.

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Bible Ethics...

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away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another." Colossians 3:9, "Lie not one to another..." Proverbs 6:16,17, God hates "a lying tongue" (cf. Rev. 21:8). James 5:12, "...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay..." In other words, mean what you say and do what you say.

Let us be individuals of integrity that others may have confidence in us, knowing that we will deal honestly and truthfully with them. Psalm 25:21, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee." Proverbs 11:3, "The integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." It is sad that so many in our society have abandoned the Bible ethics of honesty, integrity, and truthfulness in their personal and business dealings with their fellow man!

God demands that we treat one another with respect and that we respect the property of one another. Romans 12:10, "...in honor preferring one another." Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better that themselves." Romans 13:9,10, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if

there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Ephesians 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

If more people observed and obeyed the Bible ethic of respect for others and the property of others, we would have much less crime, violence, vandalism, stealing, and the like.

God demands mutual respect, fairness and responsibility in employer-employee relationships. Read Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22 and 4:1. The principles set forth here with reference to the master/servant relationships would apply to employer/employee relationships. Employees are to give an honest day's work as if we were working for the Lord. Employers are to give their employees that which is just and equal in the sight of God with whom there is no respect of persons. Such is the application of Matthew 7:12. The problems between employers and employees would be eliminated if both followed Bible ethics.

God demands that we assume civic responsibilities — that we be law-abiding citizens. Romans 13:1-7, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are

ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." As long as civil law does not go contrary to God's law, we have a God-given responsibility to obey and uphold civil law, including the paying of taxes.

As a society of people, let us get back to following Bible ethics (God's standard of conduct and morality). The well-being of our nation depends upon it. Proverbs 14:34, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*" The eternal destiny of our soul depends upon it (II Cor. 5:10).

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JESUS' PRAYER FOR UNITY

Roger D. Campbell

On more than one occasion, Jesus taught His disciples about how to pray (Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-13). In addition, we often read of the Master praying, sometimes when He was alone, and other times when His followers were with Him. Prayer was, indeed, very much a part of Jesus' earthly sojourn and teaching.

The longest recorded prayer of Jesus is found in John 17. That chapter records the prayer that Jesus prayed just after He had instructed His apostles about the coming Comforter or Holy Spirit (John 14-16), and just before He went with the eleven to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was taken into custody (John 18). With the exception of the first part of verse one, the entirety of John 17 (26 verses in all) is a record of words which Jesus spoke to His heavenly Father.

In that notable prayer, sometimes called "The Lord's Prayer," Jesus spoke to the Father about three main matters which can basically be identified in the following manner. First, He prayed for His relationship with the Father, that the Son might be glorified (17:1-5). Next, He prayed for His special servants, the apostles (17:6-19). Finally, He prayed for the oneness or unity of those who would believe on Him (17:20-26).

The portion of Jesus' prayer to which we now direct our attention is the content of verses 20-23. There it is written, *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."*

What is the major thrust of this part of Jesus' prayer? It is His petition for *unity* or *oneness* among those

that will believe on Him. What can we learn about this unity or oneness? In Jesus' words we see —

1) The Lord's **DESIRE** for oneness. For whom is Jesus praying in this section? No longer for His apostles, but for those that would believe on Him through the word of the apostles. How can we be certain that Jesus really does desire oneness for such believers? Look at how His thought is repeated: "That they all may be one ... that they may be one ... that they may be made perfect in one" (17:21,22,23). The emphasis is not difficult to grasp: Jesus longs for unity. Any person or group of people that opposes true unity in the spiritual realm is against the expressed will of the Christ! If our King is "for" unity, then we must give all diligence to carry out the Bible's instruction "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

2) The **EXAMPLE** of oneness. It is none other than the oneness of the Father and the Son. Jesus twice referred to His unity with the Father as the model for true oneness in the spiritual realm: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...that they may be one, even as we are one" (17:21,22). Could there be a better example?

3) The **BENEFIT** of oneness. What possible good could come about as a result of Jesus' followers being united? Hear Him: "...that the world may believe that thou hast sent me...that the world my know that thou has sent me..." (17:21,23). The unity of God's people can be a strong force for evangelism. Why? Because it is appealing to right-thinking people and can stir them to seriously consider checking out what is so special about Christianity. When they investigate the Gospel with an honest and good heart, then they, too, will be moved to believe and obey it. Yes, unity is a definite plus for the Cause of the Christ. Division and strife, on the other hand, can turn people off and hinder them from having interest in the Gospel. With that mindset, they will remain lost.

4) The **MEANS** of oneness. There it is in verse 20: "through their word." How would people become believers in the Christ? Through the message of the apostles. Remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; cf. John 20:30,31). "The apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) is the same as the teaching of the Christ. The apostles are not the source of the Word or Doctrine, but rather are simply its messengers. Through them the Holy Spirit gave "all truth" to the world (John 16:13). So, how do people become believers in the Christ? Through the Word. How are people sanctified to the Lord?" Same answer, through the Word (17:17). And, how do we remain in fellowship with God? By abiding in that same Word (II John 9), ever walking in the light (I John 1:7). Thus, fellowship with God is achieved by obeying the Word; then that fellowship is maintained, as is unity among the saints, by abiding in His soul-saving Word. It is not mysterious or beyond our comprehension.

5) The **IMPORTANCE** of unity. This is seen when one considers the time element of this prayer. Jesus offered it on the night of His betrayal. His crucifixion was only hours away, and what was it that was on the Lord's mind and lips? Unity. As we noted in our first point above, Jesus strongly desired this unity. Would that not also show its great importance?!

6) The **POSSIBILITY** of oneness. Some have concluded that it simply is not possible for spiritual unity to exist. They point to the vast divisions in the religious world, the division among those that believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and even the division that exists in the Lord's church. Such absence of unity cannot be denied. Yet, the lack of the unity for which the Christ prayed, by no means warrants the conclusion that it is not possible to achieve and maintain true unity. If our Lord prayed for it, then it must be possible! Otherwise, His words about oneness offer only a false hope. If the Lord wants us to pray in harmony with the will

of God (I John 5:14), then surely He Himself would not pray for something (unity) that is contrary to the Father's will. If we or others are not scripturally united in our efforts to serve Jesus, such is not the Lord's fault, nor does our division prove that His prayer for unity was fantasy and cannot be fulfilled.

How wonderful is the thought that Jesus prayed for you and me on the night of His betrayal, when He was moving ever closer to the time that He would drink the ultimate cup of suffering. His prayer for unity, recorded in John 17:20-23, clearly shows the desire, example, benefit, means, importance, and possibility of unity.

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TEN RULES FOR IMPROVING ATTITUDES IN THE CHURCH

Tell yourself over and over that since you are not perfect, you would not fit into a "perfect" congregation if one existed.

Instead of picking out the worldly members to point to, select the sincere, dedicated, spiritual members, and thank God for them.

If you are old, treat the young with the consideration you desired as a young person. If you are young, treat adults with the respect you will want when you are mature.

When you are tempted to criticize others, be sure to pray earnestly for them first. This may not change them, but it will do wonders for your attitude.

When you see a work neglected, instead of being critical, offer to help.

Never blame others for your own failures. Every individual can be faithful to God in spite of the bad examples and discouraging attitudes of others.

Remind yourself every day that the only way you can improve the world or the church is to begin with self.

Consciously look for the good qualities in each brother and sister in Christ; make a mental note of the good points each possesses.

Constantly strive to increase your circle of associates in the church. Try to do something for each.

Every congregation has problems. Constantly ask yourself, "Am I a part of the problem, a part of the solution, or merely a critical spectator?"

—Banner of Truth

WILL THERE BE GOOD PEOPLE IN HELL?

Ron Boatwright

Many times we hear people say or read in an obituary that, "My mother was a good person and she went home to be with her Lord in heaven." If the individual had not obeyed the Gospel and/or was not a faithful member of the Lord's one true church, this is only wishful thinking. The individual may have been a "good person," but being a good person is not the only requirement for one to go to heaven. We read in II Thessalonians 1:7-9, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Even though one is a good person, if he has not obeyed "the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," he will be eternally lost in hell. Also, notice that those who do not know God will also be lost in hell. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). To not know God is to not keep his commandments. Those who do not know God include those who once obeyed the Gospel but fell away and quit keeping his commandments. We cannot be good enough, on our own, to go to heaven. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). It is our sins that separate us from God (Isa. 59:2).

One must obey *what* God says, *how* God says, and for *the reason* God says if he is to go to heaven and avoid hell. One must not obey any of the many different plans of salvation which men have devised. One of man's plans says that all you have to do to be saved and go to heaven is to "accept Jesus as your personal Saviour" and say the "sinner's prayer." Then a week or so later they baptize the individual into their denomination, but not for the forgiveness of sins so he can be saved because they say he is already saved. Since one was not baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) so he can be saved (Mark 16:16), he still has every sin he has ever committed and is still lost, even though he may be a "good person." I cannot think of a more flagrant crime against both God and man than to teach lost sinners, who want to be saved, something different than what God says in the Bible. Man's plans will only lead one into hell.

For one to be saved and to go to heaven, Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). One has to have help to misunderstand this. What does the Lord do with those who are saved according to his plan? Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Then Jesus says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). So we see from the Bible that those who die and have not obeyed the Gospel of Christ, even though they are a "good person," will not be in heaven, but in hell. Also, we see from the Bible that even though one has obeyed the Gospel but forsakes the assemblies of the church (Heb. 10:25-26) and was not faithful until death, even though he was otherwise a "good person," he will also be in hell.

"Let no man deceive himself" (I Cor. 3:18). Let's make sure that we and our loved ones have obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and are faithfully serving him in his church. We cannot wish ourselves or our loved ones out of hell and into heaven. It will be too late then.

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UNITY, NOT DIVERSITY PREVAILED

Victor M. Eskew

Hours before His death, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for oneness among His followers. *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me”* (John 17:20-23). Five times the word “one” is used in these four verses. This oneness for which Jesus prayed was to be like the oneness that exists between Jesus and His Father. It was for oneness, not diversity that the Son of God prayed.

In the first century church, we see that unity, not diversity prevailed. The initial converts to Christianity continued “daily with one accord in the temple” (Acts 2:46). When the first persecution arose against the apostles, the church remained unified. *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul...”* (Acts 4:32). When Ananias and Sapphira were severely disciplined for lying to the Holy Spirit, unity continued to prevail among the believers. *“...And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And the believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* (Acts 5:12-14). The oneness of the Lord’s disciples continues throughout the book of Acts. The Samaritans entered the fold in Acts 8. In Acts 10, the Gentiles were added to the body of Christ. Unity, not diversity prevailed as the Gospel spread from the capital city of Jerusalem to the capital city of Rome.

This unity is a strong rebuke to our present day religious world. Those who proclaim faith in Christ are divided into hundreds, yea, thou-

sands of denominational groups. Most people today feel that this division is healthy and good for the cause of Christ. The concept of “attend the church of your choice” is one that most accept. How this idea can be proclaimed when one views the example of the first century church is beyond me. One has to be deceived by Satan or dishonest with the Biblical text to accept such a position.

Some denominational preachers and authors have seen the contrast between the church of the Bible and the denominationalism that exists in the twenty-first century. In his book, *The Acts*, Charles R. Erdman wrote: *“Luke traced its (Christianity’s) extension throughout the Empire as far as the city of Rome; he shows that it embraced representatives of many nationalities and was established in many provinces, but was always one unified body. In later days of denominational divisions and of sectarian strife there is something refreshing, inspiring, if not rebuking, in this picture of the apostolic church”* (emp. mine, vme). Mr. Erdman saw and acknowledged the truth in his statement. He knew the early church was only one body. He also admitted that this unity rebukes the denominationalism of our day. We desire that more would be as honest as Mr. Erdman.

Dear reader, unity, not diversity prevailed in apostolic times. This is what the Lord desired and is that for which He prayed. As long as the religious world remains divided, it stands in opposition to the teaching of the New Testament. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (I Cor. 1:10).

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TRUTH AND CONTROVERSY

It is a recognized fact among those who seek to follow God that truth is absolute and attainable. We do not deny this. While some would have us believe that truth is subjective and elusive, the words of Jesus that “ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” serve as our compass in these matters. In addition to truth being absolute, it is also dogmatic to the core. Two plus two equals four — there is no room for error. Sincerity of heart or honesty of motive does not annul this fact. Truth is also narrow. A college teacher writes the problem on the board. Twelve divided by two equals six. There is absolutely no room for deviation. The answer is NOT seven, nor is it five. But society does not argue, nor do they accuse the mathematician of being unloving, unkind, or bigoted.

Now we move to the “truth” that makes men free. It is not mathematical truth, nor is it scientific truth, but that which is revealed from God Almighty through holy men “moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). This truth is dogmatic to the core. It will not co-exist with error, nor can it. By its very nature it is narrow in its application. But unlike the mathematical truth that two plus two equals four, or twelve divided by two equals six, this “truth” of which we speak has eternal consequences. But how do men react when faced with this truth? Sincerity is placed above simplicity, and feelings take precedence over fact. Men become angry at the truth because it restricts their freedom to act and behave in their own chosen way. Rather than simply accept the truth and obey it, they argue with the facts presented, become agitated at the one speaking the truth, and close their ears and heart, as if their rejection of the same will annul their responsibility toward those things spoken.

Since the truth and only the truth will set me free, it would seem that all men, everywhere, would have such a disposition as to receive the truth at all costs. May we be like the Bereans who were more “noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

—Tom Wacaster

ALWAYS ABOUNDING

Marvin L. Weir

It has always amazed me that so many profess to read and study their Bible and yet believe that salvation is unconditional. Far too many people (including many brethren) have bought into the devil's doctrine of salvation by "faith and grace only." One must have faith to become a child of God and it is only by the grace of God that such is possible. Without faith and God's grace, one cannot successfully live the Christian life. God has always set forth conditions for one to comply with in order to be a recipient of His grace. Even God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is a case in point. The Scriptures reveal, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience...he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

The apostle Paul rebuked the Galatian brethren in saying, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). One can move away from God's grace after having Scripturally received it. This point is made absolutely clear when Paul tells the Roman brethren, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein" (Rom. 6:1-2)? One should then not be surprised that Paul would plead with the Corinthian brethren, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). Let us learn several lessons from this passage of Scripture.

First, Paul is speaking only to members of the Lord's church (New Testament Christians). The Corinthians that Paul addresses are his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. A non-Christian may be kind and do many good deeds but his labor is in vain. Jesus' words are still true today: "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)! One

who seeks to worship God but has not obeyed the Gospel, worships in vain (cf. Matt. 15:7-9). One must be a member of the Lord's church to lay up treasures in Heaven (cf. Matt. 6:19-20).

Second, Christians are to be steadfast and unmoveable in sacred matters. The "hope of salvation" (I Thess. 5:8) is rooted and grounded in the precious Gospel (Col. 1:5). There is only one legitimate "hope" (Eph. 4:4) and all people are "called" (II Thess. 2:14) and "saved" (Rom. 1:16) by the Gospel. But one can drift and move away from the Gospel — his only hope! Paul warns his Colossian brethren, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven..." (Col. 1:23).

The Gospel does not change or move. Neither God nor Christ changes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). It is men who seek to change the Gospel to please themselves and others! The words that Christ spake are the words that will judge each of us in the Day of Judgment (John 12:48).

A faithful child of God will absolutely refuse to move away from the Lord's commands. It is sad that many brethren who knew "the way of righteousness" have turned back (moved away) from God's Holy Word (II Peter 2:20-22). As Paul said of some brethren, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). One cannot move away from God's truth and expect to go to Heaven!

Third, a Christian will abound in the work of the kingdom. This is not one doing only what is necessary to get by, but one goes beyond and richly abounds (overflows) in his work for the Lord. One will also notice that he must "abound" in the "work of the Lord." To "abound" in the work of

men that follow man-made creeds will doom one to failure!

Fourth, it can only be said of labor for the Lord that it is not in vain. The wise man declared, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14). And again, "I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 4:4). All we do in this world will one day be left to someone else, and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish (cf. Eccl. 2:18-19). Thus, let us abound in the Lord's work, lay up our treasures in Heaven, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

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Jesus Christ! I studied your web site, and I am deeply inspired with all of the teachings. This is such a wonderful studies you have arranged for all the nations, in the long run of your service for the nations of the all the world. I am from Islamic Republic of Pakistan where it is difficult to have Radio and TV channel for preaching purposes. As the religious extremists and fanatics are very active they would not allow us to do that here; the Satan has real strong hold over everything. We humbly request you to expand your outreach your program in Urdu and Punjabi and other Pakistani languages so that Urdu and Punjabi and other Pakistan languages speaking may listen your message particularly in Pakistan and generally in the world. Urdu and Punjabi are the languages spoken and understood by more than one sixth of the total population of the world. Urdu is spoken in Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Afghanistan and also in Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran and others. I would ask you to pray and share it among the brethren there. I would offer my services for being translator, recorder and distribution. I pray that God may bless you to take a good decision. May His perfect will be done! Grace and Peace be with you all brethren" **...Pakistan.** "Thank you" **...Benjamin Richardson, Duluth, GA.** "A friend shared one copy of STOP. I enjoyed it so much" **...Gregory Vaughn, Hundsonville, MI.** "Thank you for the publication for our local congregation" **...Sharon Higginson.** "Thank you so very much" **...Michelle Butler, Lebanon, TN.** "I just want to tell you how much we enjoy the *Seek The Old Paths*. We love reading them and so sorry that so many are going down the wrong path. Just keep up the good work" **...the Johnson's, Troup, TX.** "I want to know if you will send me copies of your publications. We have not found a faithful congregation yet who is following the old paths" **...Judy Reid, Vineland, NJ.** "Thank you so much" **...Michael Estey, Tuscumbia, AL.** "Please change my address. I want to make sure I do not lose your publication when we move" **...Jerry Pence, King, NC.** "I have read with profit STOP for many years. The latest issue (Nov/07) included. I appreciate your reprinting Bro. Thomas Eaves, Sr.'s article(s) "I Want To Be More Like Jesus In Preaching And Teaching" **...Ed Allard, Jr., Monticello, GA.** "Thanks for continuing to send us *Seek The Old Paths*" **...Roger Campbell, Cleveland, TN.** "Just a note to say that I am receiving the publication and enjoy it very much and would like to request it to be sent to a sister in Christ who is a very Christian lady and would like to receive it. Thanks and may God bless you in your work" **...Ronald D. McConkey.** "Please remove my name from your mailing list. Thank you" **...Lee Williams, Lansing, MI.** "We just received our November issue of STOP. Thank you so much for answering our request to send your wonderful publication to our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. We hope each can benefit from the truth of the Gospel as you proclaim God's word each month. May God's blessings continue to flow to you and through you" **...Chattanooga, TN.** "Another year has come and gone. When I reflect back, it seems my efforts for the Lord's sake has been so little. I'm just grateful for his servants such as you who continue to enlighten the world of the Truth by such a fine publication as STOP" **...Ernest Armstrong, Pecos, TX.** "Remove my name from your mail list" **...Allen Colser, Kosciusko, MS.** "We have been receiving a bundle of 10 copies of STOP addressed to the Island church of Christ in Anacortes, Washington. This congregation has now been dissolved and we ask that you please discontinue sending to us" **...Bill Williams, East Wenatchee, WA.** "God be with you. Go with God" **...David Narmore, Florence, AL.** "Thank you for standing up for the truth. We need more people like you" **...Wanda Clements, Sun City, AZ.** "I've received STOP for over two years and I have read them over and over from time to time and shared them with my family and friends. In reading some of the older ones, I found the front page of the May/2003 issue titled A Love Letter to Non-Christian Friends and Family and I would like to have one or two to hand out. Keep up the good work. I enjoy them all" **...Johnnie Jackson, Monticello, GA.** "My wife and I appreciate the scriptural articles" **...Mark & Sandra Ryan, Evans, GA.** "Appreciate STOP very much" **...Robert Price,**

"I get STOP and it is wonderful and very sound. Thank you very much" **...Michelle Butler, Lebanon, TN.** "A friend gave me a copy of your Sep/07 issue. I found it very uplifting. Please put me on your mailing list. Thank you" **...Betty Colvin, Hermitage, AR.** "Thank you" **...Julian Santellan, Zeeland, MI.** "Greetings in the name of the Lord

Jacksonville, FL. "Thank you for *Seek The Old Paths*. It is wonderful reading and insightful! I have enjoyed them immensely. I wish to add two individuals to your mailing who would like to receive them. Thank you again for a wonderful publication" **...Richard Harris, Anderson, AL.** "A small contribution to help. Your STOP paper is indeed inspiring and true, greatly needed to spread the true gospel. Thank you for sending it to me. Keep up the true work of God" **...Helan F. Huddleston, Louisville, KY.** "Please use this small donation to continue your work. Thank you for your efforts to uphold the truth and to expose false teachers. God bless you in your work" **...Jerry Duke, El Paso, TX.** "Do we let people among whom we circulate know that we wear the name of Christ? Do we so wear that worthy name as to let them know we are not ashamed of it? Do we so wear that name as to honor and glorify Christ? The apostle Paul was a man who was not ashamed to preach the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:14-16). They chained Paul as if he was some sort of criminal. But they could not chain the word of God (II Tim. 2:1-13). People who are afraid and ashamed to speak the truth and defend the faith need to enter their quiet dark closet and ask the Lord for help (Jude 3). It is God's will that all people be saved (I Tim. 2:3-4; II Peter 3:9). There are still people who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). We need to be sure that our faith and love are shown in practical ways, not merely to be seen of men, but to be enjoyed and appreciated by people and rewarded by the Lord (Matt. 6:1-4). Let us be observant of God's inspired word (II Tim. 3:16-17). What a great joy to hear, read and study the word of God (Rom. 10:17; 15:4; II Tim. 2:15). Thank God for men like those who write for *Seek The Old Paths* publication" **...Gene & Audrey Pegg, McMinnville, TN.** "My father, C. Ray Miller, passed from this life on Dec. 3, 2007. Please remove his name from your mailing list" **...Robin Miller.** [NOTE: we are saddened for your loss. God bless you — editor]

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End 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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