

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 19, No. 2

February 2008

REACHING THE POINT OF NO RETURN

Lloyd Gale

The idea that members of the Lord's church can and should engage in joint prayer with those who openly oppose the Lord's church is absurd. I hope that no one would claim today that Lipscomb University is affiliated with the church of Christ.

When an aircraft flies from San Francisco to Hawaii there is a half way point that is known as the point of no return (in case a problem arises). In Matthew 15:13-14, Jesus stated: *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* When Jesus said let them alone, was he saying they had reached the point of no return?

In the *Faith and Values* section of the Nashville, Tennessee newspaper, an article appears authored by Florence Carnicelli Johns. It seems she had attended a gathering at Centre Pro Unione in the heart of central Rome. The gathering was for a course in Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue taught by Friars and Sisters of the Franciscans of the Atonement. It was their mission to promote Christian unity and inter-religious dialogue.

"It was the Jubilee year 2000, and Rome was resonating with the energy that accompanies the art of Italian celebration." Florence Johns wrote.

"During the course of study, I became aware of the week of prayer for Christian unity, which is an expression of the ecumenical movement — a movement among Chris-

tians to heal the divisions within the Church, to encourage Christians everywhere to better understand and reflect the implications of one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

At this place I would like to pause and attempt to digest what this lady has advocated up to this point. Later, I will reveal how this movement has involved certain members of the church of Christ.

The word "ecumenical" means world-wide in scope. "Ecumenism" is a humanly devised religious movement in an attempt to unite the various creeds and doctrines of men or if not to unite to establish a union of such. It is in effect, a new religion which may at this present time be energized by the world-wide threat of the Islamic religion (Moslims). However, it has been accurately stated that two wrongs do not make a right.

It should be quite obvious to any honest and impartial observer that the participants in this new religion do not comprehend the difference between union and unity. To my knowledge, not one of the participants is willing to forsake their man made creeds or doctrines. Who, for even a moment, would believe that the "Friars and Sisters of the Franciscans of the Atonement", are willing to give up their human creed and loyalty to the Pope for unity? They

have no intention of abandoning their man-made doctrine.

The entire effort is an exercise in futility, a waste of time and effort, but if the man-established religions desire to so waste their resources, it is alright with me. However, when some who claim to be members of the church that Jesus established become involved; it becomes my concern.

When such a hodgepodge of religious groups gather together to pray for "Christian unity", don't you think that the first thing they need to do is to define who is a Christian and what are God's requirements for one to be able to honestly wear that noble name? Does it not reveal their lack of knowledge and respect for the one whose name they claim to wear? It is true that Jesus prayed for unity, but not union. His prayer was for unity among those who are members of His church — but neither unity or union among all of the counterfeit churches established by men. It does not require an intellectual genius to learn just how many churches Jesus established. Jesus said (based upon the truth that was expressed by Peter that He is the Christ the Son of the living God) that he would build

(Continued on page 11)

Point Of No Return...



Guest Editorial

NOT A "CHRISTIAN" SCHOOL

As many of you know, I get asked almost every weekend about our "Christian" schools by anxious parents who are about to send their children off to college. They want to know which ones are still faithfully teaching the Truth. My standard response lately has been: "I'm not sure of any that are not compromising in some areas, and as such, it is vitally important to make sure your children have a strong foundation for their faith beforehand. I would select a school that is strong in the area they want to major in and alert them that they will be surrounded by wolves."

Want an example of wolves in sheep's clothing? **Randy Lowry**, president of **Lipscomb University** was heralded as the guest preacher for a "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" (Jan. 19-25, 2008) at Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville (Tuesday of that week). [Read the announcement here: <http://outand-aboutnewspaper.com/article.php?id=2265>. **And, if the announcement itself were not enough, the news-clip appeared in "Tennessee's Best GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) Source for News."** Nice! Here's another account from The Tennessean: www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080119/NEWS06/801190336. The announcement says, "Dr. Randy Lowry, president of Lipscomb University, will preach, and a choir of singers from all the sponsoring congregations will offer special music."

Those who know me well know I am not a watchdog or an alarmist. Having been wrongly "written up" myself by brotherhood watchdogs in the past for things that I did not do, I wanted to make sure I got my facts straight in this instance. So I made two calls: 1) Randy Lowry's office; and 2) Second Presbyterian church. "Jennifer" in Randy's office verified that he did in fact preach there. And the secretary at Second Presbyterian

verified it as well (going so far as to emailing me a copy of the program). He and those "special choirs" joined hands and prayed for Christian unity.

Friends, I feel strongly that we should strive for Christian unity. But these people Randy fellowshiped with are NOT NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS! Do we need to teach the lost? DEFINITELY! I try hard to do this every week! One of the reasons we started "Think" was to evangelize the lost. But I don't do so by reaching out in fellowship and praying for unity with them. I try hard to teach them the TRUTH about what it means to be a New Testament Christian! The article says this special day is "urging all Christians" to join Christ in praying "that they may all be one." Before they can be one they must put on Christ in baptism. **Have we completely forgotten the uniqueness of the one true church? Part of the reason the church is in the position it is today is because several generations have slowly embraced the idea that the church of Christ is simply just another denomination. IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THAT MENTALITY!**

Like it or not, his position as president puts Lowry in the spotlight. He is the highest representative for that school. And as such, his actions speak loudly for the entire university. If this is the direction he has chosen to take the school, that is his choice. He has that right. But we also have the right to write off Lipscomb University as a "Christian" school. I, as a New Testament Christian, don't have to support him (or the school) and I strongly urge you to consider doing likewise. **Isn't it time we either take our schools back or write them off completely (and financially!).** If you know of board members, please call them — today — and ask them to bring

things back to the Old Paths! Hold the board accountable. If Lipscomb wants to wear the name Christian, then it must be willing to make that distinction through its actions and not name only. **Randy, I for one am holding you to a higher standard.** What's your response?

Sincerely, in Him,

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P.S. Please feel free to pass this along to your friends.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Harley & Norma Bonham	\$50
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Ruby York.....	\$180
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Central C/C, Denison, TX	\$20
Allenhurst C/C, Allenhurst, GA	\$150
Beginning Balance	\$13,963.35
Contributions.....	\$ 1,915.00
Debits	
Postage	\$1,536.65
Paper.....	\$87.50
Supplies	\$311.18
Ending Balance	\$13,943.02

Point of No Return...

(Continued from page 9)

His church — church, singular (Matt. 16:15-18). That is exactly what He did.

Just how is it possible for one to be a Christian who does not believe, teach or submit to the Lord's instructions (commandments) of what one must do in order to have their sins forgiven? Ask that question to the denominations seeking union and one will receive a number of different and conflicting answers, none of which are true. Men do greatly err when they come to believe they can write their own creeds, establish their own churches and expect God to accept them on their own terms. Jeremiah 10:23 says, "*O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*"

We also note that the week of prayer included the admonition for Christians everywhere to better understand and reflect the implications of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." None of which the groups under consideration agree upon. Some groups believe in the "trinity" i.e. the Godhead which consists of three persons. Others believe God is one person. None of them evidently believe in "*one faith*" due to the fact that they all hold to diverse faiths — doctrines. Then there is the matter of *one baptism*. Some would maintain that it is Holy Spirit baptism. There are those who disagree on water baptism. Some teach that it is not at all essential to salvation. Some would sprinkle a few drops of water on a protesting infant and call it baptism, some would pour a cup of water on a person and call it baptism, while others would insist upon emersion while at the same denying that it is necessary. It is also noticed that the lady did not mention that the verse preceding Ephesians 4:5 states that there is *one body* which is defined in Ephesians 1:22-23 as the church. Why leave out the fact that Christ established but one church?

EVENT SET FOR TUESDAY

Florence Johns noted that in 2007, Nashville celebrated its first week of Prayer for Christian unity. It

was pointed out in a previous article (STOP, Oct/2007) that two **David Lipscomb** professors actively participated in that meeting and taught false doctrine while present. Now we come to the second annual celebration to be held at the Presbyterian church on Belmont Boulevard with more than 12 churches participating.

The theme for 2008 is "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:12-17). It is duly noted among those verses that we are encouraged to "comfort the feebleminded." Now the grand announcement.

RANDY LOWERY, PRESIDENT OF LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY, WILL DELIVER THE MESSAGE.

I do not know Randy Lowery and have no personal dislike for him. The fact is, I have never heard anything from him or about him and I am well read among brotherhood matters and a long time student of the scriptures. But it is obvious that no knowledgeable and faithful member of the Lord's church would be found among such a self-willed denominational people, unless it was their intention to expose and denounce every human creed and denomination.

A true man of God would have no joint-participation with those who are the enemies of God. A man who is truly interested in unity would tell all present that the only pathway to true unity is for all human creeds and doctrines to be abandoned and for the last will and testament of Jesus Christ to be the sole rule of faith and practice.

The idea that members of the Lord's church can and should engage in joint prayer with those who openly oppose the Lord's church is absurd. One must be in a covenant relationship with God if they expect their prayers to be heard and answered. A person who has not obeyed the Lord's commandments is not in a covenant relationship with the Lord. Moses might just as well have had a joint prayer for unity with the Baal worshipers. Indeed the doctrine of syncretism (the combination of different forms of belief or practice) has a firm hold on these Lipscomb professors.

How gullible the Lipscomb professors are when they think that they were invited to participate and speak

at this unholy alliance because of their wisdom or of their oratorical excellence. Their motive is to draw the Lord's church into the denominational world. They want the church of Christ to acknowledge that they too are a denomination. This, faithful Christians will never do. "*For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue*" (Prov. 5:9).

WHERE ARE THE VOICES OF THE ELDERS AND PREACHERS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE?

I have on occasion spoken to some person who supports Lipscomb University and they will in fact acknowledge that there are some bad apples at Lipscomb, but they say there are some good people there also. If there are some good people there, why are they not speaking up and out? Has the cat got their tongue? Or, if they are speaking out, why haven't we heard about it? Where are the articles they have written?

Should a person remain a member of a congregation where it is acknowledged that false doctrine is being taught or supported? Will God hold such people unaccountable. Are the only ones who are permitted to speak out those who teach that which is contrary to God's will? Why can they speak while others must remain silent? Why do elders and preachers remain silent and even recommend that the children of Christians be sent to such a school to sit at the feet of such false teachers? I have talked with more than one person who told me that their child's faith was destroyed at such schools.

Nashville Tennessee is a place that needs a restoration movement to restore pure, undenominational Christianity, in middle Tennessee. It seems that many today no longer are willing to contend for the once delivered faith. I hope that no one would claim today that Lipscomb University is affiliated with the church of Christ. Certainly not the church I read about in God's word. It is indeed time for soldiers of Christ to arise; or, have we reached the point of no return?

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ARE WE SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL?

Roger Scully

A part of Christianity that exists, which is just as important as any other, is defending the truth. One cannot read the pages of the Bible, Old Testament or New, and not clearly see this idea taught and practiced over and over again. What is sad, however, is that members of the church of Christ rarely practice this command in our day. It seems that many brethren are eager to compromise the truth instead of defend it; that many are eager to let the truth fall rather than stand and fight for it. What is the end result of this? Just look around you. Liberalism is tearing the church apart. There is not a week that passes that I do not receive a bulletin from some congregation that is advertising its singing group, gymnasium opening, monthly fellowship with denominations, children's church, etc. Where is the authority for these things (Col 3:17)? There is none, yet they are being practiced anyway. What can we do about it? Well, the only thing we can do is "fight the good fight of the faith."

We must settle in our minds intellectually that there is an objective truth. And, we must have conviction in our hearts that we have it and are willing to defend it no matter the cost. It has gone this far, and no farther!

Paul, when writing to the Philippians stated, "...because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel..." (Phil 1:7). "Defense" is translated from the word *apologia*, which means a verbal defense given by reasoned argument. "Confirmation" is translated from the word *bebaiosis*, which means to strengthen. Thus Paul was saying that the Philippians were partakers with him in giving a verbal defense from reasoned argument of Gospel truth, and were strengthening the Gospel in the process.

How is the Gospel strengthened? The Gospel is strengthened when the truth is taught and error is exposed. Paul wrote to Titus of men who are "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circum-

cision" (1:10). Paul went on to explain that they "subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not" (v.11). This is not the means whereby the Gospel is confirmed, thus Paul said, "whose mouths must be stopped...wherefore rebuke them sharply" (vs.11,13). By stopping their mouths, which is done by giving a sharp rebuke, the Gospel is confirmed, because the truth is placed beside error, and those who are seeking truth will see it and embrace it (Matt 7:7,8).

In Philippians 1:17, Paul wrote of men who were preaching the Gospel for the right reason, knowing that Paul himself was "set for the defense of the gospel." How is it that those who loved the truth, thus preached the truth, knew that Paul was set for the defense of that same truth? They could only know it if Paul had shown this in his life, which, from the book of Acts, we know he did. Acts 13:45 records that the Jews of Antioch "spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." How did Paul respond to this? Did he say, "Can't we all just get along?" Did he say, "Well you see it your way and I see it my way, so let's agree to disagree"? NO, NO, NO. The record says, "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold" (v.46). "Waxed bold" is translated from the word *parrhesiazomai*, which means to speak with confidence and assurance. On another occasion Paul said, "hear ye my defense" (Acts 22:1).

Not only did Paul practice defending the truth, but he also instructed Timothy to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (I Tim 1:3). To "charge" means to command or to give an order. What was Timothy to command? That no other doctrine be taught. In order for Timothy to fulfill the command of Paul, he had to know what the truth was (John 8:32) and know when error was being taught. Does this sound like what many of our brethren are doing today? No, for many of our brethren today are saying things like: We cannot really know the truth. As long as we all believe in

Jesus, it doesn't matter what is being taught. If Timothy would be here today he would most certainly "charge" them to stop teaching "another gospel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-9).

Paul was not the only apostle "set for the defense of the gospel." The apostle John instructed his readers to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). And Jude wrote that Christians should "earnestly contend for the faith," which means to strongly fight for the Gospel (Jude 3).

Peter, another apostle of our Lord, instructed those to whom he wrote, by implication all of us, to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15). "Answer" does not mean to answer a question that has been asked, but it is the word *apologia*, meaning to give a verbal defense from reasoned argument. How often is this defense to be given? Always (II Tim. 4:2). To whom? Literally to every man who requires it or to anyone who challenges it. Notice carefully the context of I Peter 3. We are not speaking of people who just have some Bible questions, but of people who "speak evil of you" (v.16). Is it not time that we speak up to those who oppose the truth?

Let us be as bold as Jesus who told the Sadducees, "You do err not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). And, as Jesus warned of the false teachers of His day (Matt. 16:6-12), so must we do the same in ours. Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom 16:17). We cannot sit idly by and do otherwise. Compare II John 9-11 and Romans 1:32.

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THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

Marvin L. Weir

The apostle Paul did not waste his time, the Lord's time, or the time of those who heard him, with a social Gospel. Only the Gospel revealed by divine will has the power to save a soul from sin (Rom. 1:16). One who proclaims **another** Gospel is to be "cut off" or "accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

Please consider the following facts that the apostle Paul gives regarding the precious Gospel. To the Corinthians he said, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:1-4). Paul admonished the Roman brethren, saying, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:3-6). And again, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18).

Paul was consistent in preaching the Gospel. His previous preaching among the Corinthians was the same as what he now proclaimed. Earlier in the Corinthian letter Paul stated, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). If "the" Gospel is not

preached, then people do **not** have an opportunity to be saved.

Paul points out that the Corinthians had to receive what he proclaimed. God forces salvation on no one! Man has a role to play in his salvation. Nowhere is this made more clear than when Luke records, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). It does no good, however, to receive something **other** than the Gospel if one desires salvation.

Those receiving the Gospel message can stand upon its promises. It is a foundation that will not crumble. The blessings of God's grace are appropriated only by one's obedience to the Gospel.

The Gospel is the only saving power available to those lost in their sins. All above the age of accountability are lost (Rom. 3:10,23). The fruit of sin brings forth spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). Listen to the writer of Hebrews as he says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**" (Heb. 5:8-9, emph. MLW). Promoting and providing for "fun and games" may draw a crowd and pack the pews, but this worldly approach will not save a single soul!

Those who obey the Gospel must continue to "hold fast the word" throughout their lives. Notice the conditional "if." **If** a New Testament Christian chooses to live according to God's law, he can expect to be saved. If not, he can expect to be lost. The "once-saved, always-saved" theory is **not** taught in the Bible. This false doctrine comes from the wishful thinking of man! The following Scriptures teach one can fall from a saved state and lose his soul (I Cor. 10:12; I Tim. 3:6-7; 4:1; II Peter 3:17). The writer of Hebrews clearly states, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). Brethren and friends, one can-

not fall from somewhere he has never been!

One can believe in vain. Just believing will not get the job done! The demons even believe and tremble, but who will argue that they will be saved (James 2:19)? Belief not properly acted upon is in vain. **Christ died for our sins and was buried and rose again the third day.** The Lord's burial was prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures (Isa. 53:9; Psa. 16:10). His resurrection was taught and known in the first century (Matt. 12:40; 27:63).

All sacred and divine matters are to be "according to the scriptures." One will notice this phrase is used twice in verses three and four of I Corinthians 15. All religion is in vain if it is not "according to the scriptures." The creeds of men may please those who want to worship as they please, but such creeds **never** please God.

Search the Scriptures and learn the facts of the Gospel. Obey the Gospel, grow in God's Word, and live the Christian life!

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USA IN CRISIS

Facing the upcoming election this fall, saints every where need to pray. Pray fervently. Pray constantly. Pray that God will raise up a leader who will steer this country to moral decency. It's not too late. The candidates names are not written in stone. Pray for a man who strongly supports the home, family and traditional values according to God's word. One who will not endorse the slaughter of more than a million infants each year. Proverbs 14:34 proclaims, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Without truth and justice, there's no place to go but down — down in the depths of ruin and destruction. God is in control. He rules in the kingdoms of men. Pray, Pray, PRAY! I Tim. 2:1-2; I Peter 2:13-14

— Editor

MAX LUCADO AND JOHN 3:16

Charles Blair

I received a booklet of some sort in the mail the other day. It was by Max Lucado and it was entitled, *"The 3:16 Promise."* The material in his book related to the events of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus found in John 3. It was one of the worse handlings I have ever read about John 3:16. His writing ability goes without question. He spends very little time with the Scriptures and a good deal of time working his imagination. Here is an example of his "thinking."

He references the birth of Jesus in this manner. "He's been to Bethlehem, wearing barn rags and hearing sheep crunch, suckling milk and shivering against the cold. All of the divinity content to cocoon itself in an eight-pound body and to sleep on a cow's supper." Is not that information really great? How does Mr. Lucado know it was "cold?" How does he know the Christ child was eight pounds? Oh, that is what we call poetic license, preacher. Does it not occur to Mr. Lucado that God chose not to tell us information about the physical description of His Son? I understand the principle of "poetic license," but when your speculation clearly goes beyond what is revealed, you are preaching yourself and not the Lord.

He begins the second chapter by talking about the planet Pluto and how it was downgraded to a number instead of a name. Once more he returns to his "poetic license." He writes this. "Pluto was not happy. I caught up with the dissed sky traveler at a popular constellation hangout, The Night Sky Lounge." His colorful language aside, why would he use an illustration about something taking place in a lounge? There may be one out there somewhere folks, but I have never heard a liberal take a stand against drinking. Maybe you have heard of one, but it has not been my experience. Why would a "Christian" resort to such things? A lounge ought to be as foreign to our language as it is to our actions.

His writing skills, in terms of the words used, border on vulgarity. He speaks about Mary the mother of

Jesus in this manner. "Compare our love with God's? Look at the round belly of the pregnant peasant girl in Bethlehem." Why resort to such a description? The liberal mindset mounts the pulpit with the intent to shock his audience and he chooses the language that accomplishes said purpose. Once more the interest is not in declaring the truth of God, but rather the praise of men (John 12:43). Excuse me, Mr. Lucado, I do not need your language to shock my sensibilities. I have no wish to be so shocked. Why can't our desire be to learn more about God? There is nothing in this kind of language that builds my faith.

Let me now move from his language problem and focus in on the major difficulty that he possesses. He asserts that we all live our lives in quiet desperation. He explains that we have disguised longings for Eden. How does he validate such a contention? He cites what someone once said. Here it is. "The man who knocks on the door of a brothel is seeking God." The Lord said we are to seek the kingdom of God first and all its righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Am I to believe that when a individual knocks on the door of a brothel, he is really seeking God? What a demented view of the holy God who created everything.

Mr. Lucado explains the wonder of being born again. "Don't miss the invisible, inward miracle triggered by belief." Peter states that we purify our hearts through obeying the truth (I Peter 1:22). That is not a miracle on the inside or outside. It is man making the proper response to the will of God (Matt. 7:21). He then explains about getting into Christ. "Say yes to him. Your prayer needs no eloquence, just honesty." Dear Mr. Lucado, give me one example of where anyone ever BECAME a Christian through the avenue of prayer!

I have purposely avoided using the term "brother" in this article. I have no spiritual "kinship" with anyone who promotes such a perverted Gospel to a lost and dying world.

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IS UNITY POSSIBLE?

David A. Bass

Shortly before our Lord was arrested and led away to Pilate, he prayed, *"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"* (John 17:20,21). Throughout this prayer we see the theme of oneness or unity among believers!

In the book of Acts we find that Jesus' prayer had been answered because the early Christians were united! Shortly after the establishment of the Lord's church (Acts 2) we read, *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart"* (Acts 2:46). We further read about the early Christians, *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul"* (Acts 4:32).

Several years later when divisions sprang up in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote, *"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).

The religious world is making a mockery of Jesus and the unity for which he prayed. Everyone is claiming to follow Jesus and the Bible, yet they all teach different doctrines and believe different things. Even though there is widespread disagreements and contradictions, they all claim to be following the Bible. Does this sound like the unity for which Jesus prayed? Remember, one of the purposes of unity is "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Many honest and sincere people become confused and some even disgusted with religion because of the division. This division is causing some to completely turn away from Jesus and the Bible and

as a result, they will suffer eternally in a devil's hell!

Is unity possible among believers? Some say no. But, if unity among believers is not possible, then Jesus' prayer was deceptive and hypocritical. If unity among believers is not possible, then the Bible is wrong and therefore not reliable. If Jesus' prayer for unity is impossible to achieve or merely a hoax, then we cannot place our confidence in any-

thing that Jesus said or that is found in the Bible!

Unity is possible if we are willing to return to God's word and reject **ALL** human creeds, confessions, disciplines and manuals. We must also reject the traditions and commandments of men (Matt. 15:3-9) and obey the teaching of the Bible. Unity can only be achieved if we will lay aside our prejudices, opinions and traditions and study the Bible with an

open mind. We must return to a "thus saith the Lord" and "it is written." We will have to stop trying to win popularity contests and be more concerned about being pleasing to our heavenly Father.

Let's study the Bible. Obey what God says so that we may live in harmony in this life and in heaven in the hereafter.

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"SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE"

James E. Farley

We often see these words on church bulletins. It is an effort, no doubt, for congregations to let those who visit them know that the motive behind what they will hear on the Lord's Day is love. This is good and right, for we should have love as our motive for teaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are to be seen as people who love!

There are three good points in this short phrase from Ephesians 4:15.

1) **The truth must be spoken.**

Our religion is a taught religion (John 6:44-45). People must hear the Word taught in order to have faith in God and in Jesus the Christ (Rom. 10:17; Acts 4:4; Acts 18:8). Therefore we are commissioned, "Go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16-15). The early Christians did just that (Acts 8:4-5), and within a thirty year period "every creature which is under heaven" heard the Word (Col. 1:23). We still have the great obligation of taking the Word of God to a lost and dying world. God still has preaching as His plan for saving those who will believe (I Cor. 1:18-21). When you investigate a faithful congregation of the churches of Christ, you will find a people who are dedicated to taking the Word to the world.

2) **That which is to be spoken is "the truth" — "the Gospel of Christ."** It is the truth that will set men free (John 8:31-32). In that context it is obvious that "the truth" is the Word of God (compare John 17:17). Paul called it "...the word of the truth of the gospel" in Colossians 1:5. It is God's power to save mankind for it reveals God's righteousness — God's

right ways (Rom. 1:17). We are instructed in God's righteousness through the verbally inspired Word given by God's marvelous grace (II Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). It must be spoken, preached, taught to every nation (Matt. 28:18-20). The unbelieving Philippian jailer asked what he must do and was told to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). But the Bible does not stop there. The next two verses state, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized; he and all his straightway." The Word of God must be spoken! Churches of Christ believe that the Word must be sowed as seed in this world (Luke 8:11; cf. Matt. 15:13).

3) **Here is the motivation, we must love God, Jesus, the Word, the church of Christ and the souls of all men everywhere.** Too many people have a wrong idea about real Bible love. As one has put it, "They seem to think love is a feeling they feel when they begin to feel like they have never felt before." When people have the idea that love is some kind of feel-good emotion, you often hear them criticize sound preachers and Bible teachers for being "too harsh." We hear them say things like: "You need more of the spirit of Christ. You talk about hell too much, and this does not show forth the loving spirit that Jesus had." But friends, real love always will sound out a warning of danger. The Word teaches, "open rebuke is better than secret love" (Prov. 27:5). No. We do not ever want to be mean-spirited,

but we must sound out warnings about the danger of folks being lost when they will not abide in Christ's doctrine (II John 9-11).

God loves us (John 3:16), but He certainly warns of danger (Ezek. 3:17-21; Acts 18:6; Acts 20:26-31). God will not accept our claim that we love others, if we do not warn others of hell. Jesus gave **STRONG** warnings of danger! Someone has suggested that Jesus spoke 13 times more about hell than about heaven. Does this suggest that our Lord was unloving? Read Matthew 13:41-50, 15:7-14, 23:33 and Mark 9:43-44. Did Jesus express a wrong spirit here? To those who were blinded by the world's riches, Jesus taught about Lazarus and the rich man. Strong warning! Wrong spirit? **NO!** The God of love has placed into our hands His revealed mind, the Holy Bible. In the Bible we read such passages as II Thessalonians 1:7-10, Revelation 20:15 and 21:8. These things are not pleasant, but people need to face the facts! There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun!

Churches of Christ are resolved to keep preaching the Truth on these matters by speaking the truth in love. We will do it "in season and out of season...reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). We fully realize that some won't like it, but we must do it anyway! Compare Galatians 4:16. Love sounds out a warning of danger (II Cor. 5:10-11).

Friends, let us know how we may help you in your obedience to the Lord. We are here to serve you.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"This is a representative from the ??? Church of Christ in ??? Alabama. I would like for you all to discontinue sending us the *Seek The Old Paths* paper. If you could, don't send any more to our congregation. We appreciate it and hope that you all can have a more concentrated effort seeking the lost right around in your community. So thank you"

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liness out of the church so many are trying to introduce into it. Your mail, January through October issues, will be enjoyed by all (once I've finished reading them myself and make photo copies for the brethren). Getting older, it is very apparent how much we older folks have to teach our younger generation, for they are the ones we are passing the baton to as we step back to let them take over. This reminded me of an article I wrote years ago I've included here. *Dear friend, like an agin' gunfighter in an old western town, the times when we have to lay our years of experience, our cloak of responsibility, our five star badge of courage upon younger shoulders will come. And so it was with Elijah. Walking across the newly ploughed clumps of freshly turned earth sticking to the soles of his feet, he places his cloak of responsibility upon the younger shoulders of Elisha, I Kings 19:19. And, O' fathers, how deeply in your hearts do you feel the yearning to see your sons follow in your footsteps in the way of the Lord! And O' Mothers, how often have you felt the pains of anguish for your younger daughters? As a mother spoke to me in class just the other day, 'I hope my daughter waits until she marries before she has her children.' And Elisha took Elijah's cloak, struck the water and the water divided.' And the prophets said, 'the spirit of Elijah is now resting on Elisha', II Kings 2:13-15. Fathers, mothers, the cloak of responsibility, the cloak of righteousness rests upon your shoulders in today's world, Gal. 3:27. And 'how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news', writes the prophet, Isa. 52:7. And so fathers, mothers, when you too remove the cloak of righteousness from your shoulders to place it upon the shoulders of your children, may people say of you, 'they wore the cloak and they wore it well.' God's blessing to all of you and for your Gospel kindness you have made this spiritual heart in Christ very happy. It's nice to know in standing up for the truth we don't stand alone. We do have fellow brethren who stand with us. Stand fast for Jesus, you soldiers of the cross" **...P. Longden, Ontario, Canada.***

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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