

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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WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

from the elders of the East End church of Christ

We're embarking upon an expanded emphasis in printing and publishing the Word of God. We need and ask for your help.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21). Through the ages, God's inspired prophets were able to deliver His Holy Word by proclaiming it in towns, villages and cities — wherever people were gathered. He also chose to record His Word by having it written down by inspired men (cf. II Tim. 3:16-17). God caused his word to be recorded in sixty-six written documents. We have them all put together in one binding we call the Bible. This would preserve his word for all generations to come. Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away"* (Mark 13:31).

Never before in history have there been so many windows of opportunity open to man to expound upon and disseminate or distribute the Holy Word of God. For centuries, the "spoken word" was largely all man had, but as the fullness of time became more evident, the printing press was invented, and with such an invention, many, many more avenues of spreading God's Word became available. These were and are all good and most effective. However, none seem to be as diversified in use as the printed page. It has stood the test of time as is evidenced by the Bible itself — the number one best

seller of all time. It could well be said that the printed page is a silent form of preaching. It, like a person's life, is a "Silent Sermon." We invite you to read and consider the many advantages of the written word in brother Robinson's editorial on the next page.

A talented writer can make an article come alive for those who read it. Communication is the key to teaching and learning, for what good is preaching and writing if it's not understood by those who hear and read? The elders of the East End Church of Christ have come to the realization that we are most fortunate to have an exceptionally talented writer in our midst — that of our own preacher, brother Garland Robinson. We believe that a great window of opportunity has been opened for us to expand into a broader teaching field by using his outstanding talents full-time in the publishing of spiritual material such as tracts, reference works, study guides, sermons and various other teaching materials. Not only will the printed word be expanded, but the use of other technologies will also be included to offer those who prefer the advantages of audio and video lessons, radio and internet.

Brother Robinson is exceptionally talented in publishing and is very well read and versed in the Scriptures. We highly recommend his

work to all those who are interested in seeing the Word of God go forth to a nation and world who so desperately need it. It is for this reason that we have made arrangements with him to work full-time as writer and publisher of religious materials to further expedite the Lord's work. This new emphasis and area of labor makes it necessary for him to raise financial support on a monthly basis to carry on this worthy work. We look forward to working with him in this endeavor and highly recommend him to you. He has our full support and we ask that you, whether as individuals or congregations, will consider putting him in your budget and financially supporting him. We solicit your cooperation and prayers as we move forward in God's service.

The church at East End will receive and handle all financial contributions that come in for brother Robinson and will keep a complete and accurate record of such support. Those who wish to contribute to this worthy and needed work are asked to mail their contributions to: East End Church of Christ, Garland Robinson, 102 Edison St., McMinnville, TN 37110.

*Elders, Church of Christ
at East End*

*W. M. Bishop, Bud Butcher,
Bobby Craig, Charlie Turner*



Editorial...

A NEW OPPORTUNITY

Garland M. Robinson

Without fear of contradiction it can accurately be said that man's mission on this earth is to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). We must not be overwhelmed by this momentous task. It's possible to become so concerned with a duty that we never set out to accomplish it! We should not ponder over the magnitude of the job so long, that we lose sight of the responsibility and never do the work.

All Christians collectively have the job of "going" and "teaching." But as individuals, we must strive with all our might to do what we each can do. We all have at least one talent (ability). It is our responsibility to discover that talent (or talents) and then use it (or them) to the best advantage in the Lord's cause. We cannot do all the work ourselves, but we can do some. We can do our part. We can encourage others to do their part. Faithful Christians are not in competition against each other. We all work for the Master, doing the work he has assigned us to do. Jesus said he came to do the will of the Father (John 9:4). And, we must follow his example (I Peter 2:21).

For men to be saved from their sins, they must hear the Gospel. Paul writes to the church at Rome saying, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not *believed*? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not *heard*? and how shall they hear without a *preacher*? And how shall they preach, except they be *sent*? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:13-17).

There are many avenues through which men can hear the Gospel. The most obvious is by *word of mouth*, teaching one on one. This will never be replaced and is a basic and essential part of evangelizing. Another most basic and fundamental avenue by which men hear the Gospel is through the *printed page*. This is obvious because of the Bible itself. God saw fit to record His Word on paper. Where would we be without the Bible? Could we get through the day or the week without being able to read God's Holy Word? Many other avenues exist today that were not possible in past centuries; such as: *television, radio* and *internet*. However, the written word continues to be, and will always be, indispensable.

God chose that men would learn the truth through the preaching of his word. Men think it's foolish, but it is the means by which men are saved (I Cor. 1:18,21). The word of God is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Preachers are to preach the word when it's popular and when it's not (II Tim. 4:2). That makes the Word of God invaluable.

The word of God that is spoken is the same word when it's written down. Those who hear the Word of God preached have the Word of God in their heart and in their memory. But, if that same word is written down, countless more can learn and profit from it that did not hear it presented by a preacher of the word. Notice these clear and obvious points that are true concerning the "written word."

The written word can enjoy a **much wider circulation** than the spoken word. It can be copied and passed out and its usefulness multiplied many times over. God instructed that his word be written down so that generations to come could read it (cf. Exodus 7:14; Num. 5:23; Deut. 17:18; Josh. 8:32; Isa. 30:8; Jer. 30:2; 36:2; Rev. 1:11). God alone knows

how many Bibles have been printed and distributed. God alone knows how many faithful souls have written sound Bible lessons that have literally gone around the world. Since *Seek The Old Paths* began over nineteen years ago, millions and millions of pages have been printed and distributed.

The written word can **go where we cannot**. Distributed by hand or through the mail, it can literally go throughout the whole world! Preachers of the Gospel can only be in one place at a time. But their words on paper make it possible to multiply their efforts many times over. Paul wrote, "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16; cf. II Cor. 7:8). There are so many places in the world we cannot personally go and preach. But our written lessons can get into the hands of people who might not otherwise learn the Gospel.

The written word can **stay longer than we can**. Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord in the temple. It was read to Josiah the king and led to a great reformation (II Chron. 34:14-22). Who left a copy of the law in the temple? How long had it been there? What a difference it made when discovered and read! A tract or article will stay where it's put until someone moves it or destroys it. Personal experience has taught us that great benefit has been gained by the written word being read years after it was written. This is even true with *Seek The Old Paths*. A preacher may have long been dead and yet the words he wrote are still fresh and rewarding to those who read them. The inspired writers of the New Testament have been dead for centuries, but the words they wrote are still with us today.

The written word is **more private**. Not everyone will listen to someone present the Gospel. But, if they have the opportunity to read and study in private, they will do so. What if the Ethiopian eunuch did not have a copy of the written word to read on his return trip home? He had the Word to read and he read it (Acts 8:27-28). It led to his conversion and he went on his way rejoicing. Tracts

left in hospitals, nursing homes and other places, even our private homes, often find their way into hands of those who will read them. There are many contacts that would not have been made except for copies of the written word left for someone to pick up and read.

The written word **can be restudied**. When you hear a sermon, it's gone except in your memory, unless it's been recorded where you might be able to hear it again. One may not fully grasp the meaning or significance of the Gospel when first heard. It needs more study and reflection. Tapes and videos can do this, but the written word can do it as well. Paul's admonition to Timothy is appropriate to all, "study to shew thyself approved unto God" (II Tim. 2:15). The Ethiopian was reading and studying (Acts 8:27-39). The written word can be read and studied again and again.

A NEW EMPHASIS

With the help of faithful brethren, I (Garland Robinson) would like to begin a new emphasis in my work of preaching the Gospel. This is being done with the full cooperation and endorsement of the elders of the East End church of Christ. **If you have not already done so, please read a letter from the elders on the front page of this issue.**

Before I explain what this new emphasis is, let me take time to tell you about the East End church. This faithful church has stood in the "old paths" since its beginning over 70 years ago. They are involved in so many good works, each one seeking to advance the cause of Christ. In addition to the (1) pulpit and (2) classroom, it conducts (3) Gospel meetings, (4) VBS and (5) annual ladies day. The church has oversight of (6) WSOJ-LP, a low-power radio station which preaches the Gospel 24/7 on 102.5 FM. It can be heard in most parts of the county and in some areas outside the county. It is also broadcast around the world over the internet at (7) pioneerpreachers.com and (8) wsoj.net. There's nothing on this station but Gospel preaching and congregational singing. We invite you to check it out yourself. In addition to these two web sites, the

Gospel is also taught at: (9) eecc.org (the church's website), (10) aburning-fire.net (942 radio lessons as well as articles and books preached and written by from Jim Boyd) and (11) seektheoldpaths.com. We broadcast (12) Sunday's sermons on a local cable TV channel that is shown two hours each Lord's Day in four counties to more than 10,700 homes. We have a (13) weekly column in the local newspaper entitled "Where in the Bible will I Find." We have numerous (14) Bible correspondence courses being studied (some students are prisoners). We conduct (15) church services in four different nursing homes and assisted living facilities. We support (16) preacher students in their training to preach the Gospel. We have in our facilities a (17) computerized "Bible Call" program that runs 24/7 where people call on the telephone and listen to short Bible lessons. We support (18) various mission works, not only in this country but around the world. We've sent huge shipping containers to Guyana, South America, full of medical supplies, school supplies and other needed items. (19) We maintain a well-stocked clothing room and (20) food pantry from which we distribute clothing and food to the needy. (21) Food is also collected for orphans and picked up twice a year. (22) Ladies meet once a week and work together to make hand-made quilts and distribute as needed. (23) Meals are prepared and distributed to our shut-ins every week. (24) Visitation groups keep track of absentees and make visits, send cards, and phone calls. (25) We maintain a resource room for Bible teachers that has everything they could possibly need. (26) Door to door efforts are made weekly (sometimes daily) to interest people in studying the Bible. (27) A children's Bible class is conducted every Sunday evening before service that is filled with memorization of Bible facts. (28) Every October brings an annual "homecoming" and provides a great time of fellowship. As a congregation, you can see we have a "mind to work." It takes a great amount of interest and effort by so many people to be involved in all these works. There's always a lot going on — every day of the year. But, there's always room to improve and expand.

In addition to these works, the

church at East End would like to expand its work in the area of the *written word*. This will involve Bible teaching/preaching not only printed on paper, but radio and internet as well. Much and lasting good can be done in printing the Word. This includes *Seek The Old Paths* (circulation over 15,000 a month) as well as other literature such as tracts, CDs, DVDs and other study materials. We also receive mail from brethren needing help with Bible questions and various other requests. It takes a great amount of time to handle all these things. Therefore, **the elders and I have made plans for me to work full-time in the area of the written word**. This involves the church at East End seeking someone else to fill the pulpit. I, in turn, will be working in the area of literature. I will also be available to teach and preach by appointment in neighboring congregations. As you can see, this is a full-time work. There is no lack of anything to do.

In order to expand into this work, it is necessary for me to raise financial support. I, therefore, humbly ask your financial assistance to do this most important and needed "labor of love." You may contact me and/or the elders at 102 Edison St., McMinnville, TN 37110 or by email (mail@seektheoldpaths.com).

We would like to get this new work started as soon as possible. Please let us hear from you soon.

We humbly ask for your prayers and your financial assistance in this expanded work of printing and publishing the Gospel. Our plans are to start this endeavor by the end of June. Be sure to read the letter from the elders on the front page and the editorial on page 10.

EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY AN URGENT NEED FOR EVERYONE

Wayne Jackson

It was never the will of God that direct, supernatural communication from heaven to earth be a perpetual phenomenon throughout this planet's history. Rather, "the things of God" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11) were to be committed to a series of inspired documents, collectively known as the Bible. The Holy Scriptures were designed to provide men with all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and to furnish devout students completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the value of the Bible to the human family. The most brilliant minds of history have praised the "Book of books." Our second president, John Adams, called the Bible "the best Book in the world." Lincoln characterized the Scriptures as "the best gift God ever gave man." Sir Isaac Newton thought the Bible to be "the most sublime philosophy" known to humanity. The list of laudatory testimony is almost endless.

THE VALUE OF BIBLE STUDY

There are multiple values inherent in a study of the sacred Scriptures. Meditate upon the following.

1) *The Bible is the only source of valid knowledge as to the origin of the human family.* The baseless theory of evolution is so riddled with such a vast variety of factual inaccuracies that it assaults the analytical ability of any thinking person (see Mastropaolo). Darwinism stands in bold contrast to the sublime Genesis record of human commencement.

2) *The Scriptures provide the only explanation for man's purpose upon the planet.* David Hume, the Scottish skeptical philosopher, wrote:

"Where am I, or what?

From what causes do I derive my existence and to what condition shall I return? ... I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most

deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty" (Smith, 553).

3) *Aside from the illumination of the Bible, man's future would be but a dark, terrifying enigma.* When Pierre Curie was killed in a tragic accident, his wife, the renowned Madame Marie Curie, who had abandoned her earlier faith, exclaimed: "Pierre is sleeping his last sleep beneath the earth; it is the end of everything, everything, everything" (Curie, 249). When the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body, the Lord informed them that their problem, in part at least, was their ignorance of the Scriptures (Matt. 22:29). It is only through the Gospel of Christ that "life and immortality" have been fully revealed (2 Tim. 1:10).

4) *Without a knowledge of the Bible, human beings are bereft of any religious or moral compass to direct the affairs of life.* Evolutionist George G. Simpson of Harvard wrote:

"Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the workings of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolutely ethical criteria of right and wrong" (Simpson, 180).

If there is no absolute moral code, every man becomes his own "god" and may write his own ethical rules. In that event, chaos prevails, because every man entertains a "way" within himself that "seems right" to him (Prov. 14:12).

5) *Without an objective code of conduct, that stands apart from our own conscience, we do not have the sufficient motivation for exalted living.* David stored the word of God in his heart that he might not sin against his Maker (Psalm 119:11),

because, as Jeremiah observed, "it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Moreover, without adequate information concerning "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22), we become the victims of religious confusion.

SOME PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Effective Bible study is not a random process; rather, it is a science. The following suggestions are made for those whose goal is efficiency in their investigation of God's Word.

1) Sometimes it can be helpful to *know something of the author of a biblical book or passage.* While this is not always necessary (Hebrews was left anonymous purposely), such information can be beneficial.

For instance, the most extended discussion of the virginal birth of Jesus is in Luke's Gospel record (2:7ff). Since a "virgin" birth had never occurred before, it is comforting to know that Luke, a very careful historian (1:1-4), was also a physician (Col. 4:14). If a scientist could be convinced by clear evidence that the virgin birth of the Lord really occurred, one may have firm confidence in the reliability of the historical narrative.

2) Frequently it is imperative that the student know something of the background of a particular book or passage with which he is dealing, if he is to appreciate the full impact of the text.

Unless one understands, for example, that Jeremiah was attempting to prevent Judah from having to suffer the Babylonian Captivity, or that Ezekiel was warning his people against the false hope of an early return from Chaldea, he scarcely appreciates the thrust of these inspired documents. In studying Psalm 51, which is saturated with tears of penitence, it is helpful to know the background story about David's adulterous relationship with

the provocative Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11 & 12).

3) One needs to have some familiarity with *the nature of the book he is studying*. Is the document historical narrative (Genesis)? Is it poetical in form (Psalms)? Is it largely characterized by prophecy (Isaiah)? Is it highly charged with symbolism (Revelation)? A host of errors have resulted from a failure to distinguish between the different styles of biblical writings.

Some, in order to accommodate evolution, have viewed Genesis 1 as poetry; others have attempted to literalize the figures in Revelation (e.g., the 1,000 years in chapter 20). Such approaches have been responsible for significant confusion in the religious community.

4) One of the most important factors in Bible study is a *consideration of the context*. Without a knowledge of context, the student can be in a maze of confusion.

For example, why does Paul advise against marriage in First Corinthians chapter 7 (vs. 8, 27, 38, 40), when elsewhere the Scriptures teach that it is “not good” to be alone (Gen. 2:18), and that marriage is desirable (1 Tim. 5:14)? One must understand that the apostolic counsel provided in the Corinthian narrative was in view of an impending distress (an era of persecution; see vs. 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 40). The inspired advice was never intended to apply with equal force, in every place, and at all times.

Here is another example. A consideration of the data in Acts 10 and 11, and the unique circumstances associated with the conversion of Cornelius (and the introduction of the first Gentiles into the church), would correct the common error that “Holy Spirit baptism” is a divine gift to be experienced throughout the entire Christian age. Context makes a world of difference in such a case.

5) One of the crucial principles of sound Bible study is that of *scriptural harmony*. The Bible, as the verbally inspired revelation from God, will be consistent in all its instruction. Thus, the sacred narrative must be studied synthetically, i.e., the teaching of the Scriptures on any given subject must be brought together. Various contexts dealing with a particular theme can provide the full-

ness often required to understand a subject more completely.

For instance it requires a consideration of several contexts to discover that the Lord’s supper involves: (a) the eating of bread and fruit of the vine; (b) on Sunday of every week; (c) in memory of the body and blood of the Savior; (d) as a pledge of the Lord’s final return (cf. Matt. 26:26ff; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23ff, etc.).

If one does not understand something of the principles of methodical study, he cannot gain the maximum benefit from his endeavors.

PRACTICAL HABITS FOR BIBLE STUDY

In addition to the “mechanics” of effective study, it is helpful to think also along the lines of study habits. I would like to offer some suggestions that have been helpful to me across the years.

1) If at all possible, *create for yourself a special “study” in your home*. In a spare room, the attic, the basement, etc. find yourself a “study nook” that can be yours. Furnish it with a comfortable chair, a desk, good lighting, and some book shelves. Make it your special place and plan to visit it regularly on certain days of the week (e.g., an hour each morning before work time).

Early morning is really the most ideal time for study. Discipline yourself to get in the habit of regular study. This is a difficult chore. If one is not preaching, teaching a class, or engaged in some activity that demands research, it is hard to carve out the time, particularly if it is a labor, rather than a love. But if one gets into the study mode, virtually every day, it will pay rich dividends not only in his personal life, but in qualifying him to help others.

In addition to devotional reading in the Bible itself, for example, one might select a popular (as opposed to technical) commentary that he will read through in the coming year. I try to keep a good book handy to read whenever I have a spare moment away from regular duties. For instance, if I know I am going to have to spend time in the doctor’s waiting room, rather than browsing magazines, I may take a book with me.

2) Every Christian should *build at least a modest library of good*

books. Handy tools, such as a complete concordance, a Bible atlas, some biblical dictionaries or encyclopedias, a few good commentaries, some volumes on Christian evidences, church history, etc., are vital for a well-rounded range of knowledge. One should subscribe to at least a couple good brotherhood periodicals those that teach (as opposed to merely haranguing).

3) Study the Scriptures from *several different vantage points*. Survey biblical books. Galatians falls into three natural divisions:

Personal — A Defense of Paul’s Credibility (1-2);

Doctrinal — Justification through the Gospel (3-4);

Practical — Walking by the Spirit (5-6).

Explore the biographical data of great Bible characters. Articles in Bible dictionaries (e.g., The Wycliffe Bible Dictionary) on Abraham, Joseph, Jesus, and Paul will enrich your life. Learn to do “word studies.” Words are the vehicles of intelligent communication. Even the non-specialist can learn something of the treasures of the original languages of the Bible.

4) In this day of mobility, a good student can take advantage of *good Bible lectureships* by listening to tapes as he drives about from place-to-place. It is important to utilize every possible opportunity to learn God’s word. The Christian who is ever learning will become a valuable resource to the congregation of which he or she is a member.

THE PREACHER AND STUDY

Perhaps we could conclude this discussion with a comment relative to the preacher and his study habits. The man who stands before the congregation to preach to lost souls and to edify his kinsmen in the Lord, should overflow with the riches of Sacred Scripture.

Unfortunately it is the case today that *too many preachers desire (or are strongly encouraged) to become proficient in everything but the Bible*. They are office efficiency experts, church flunkies, visitation specialists, counselors, education directors, errand-boys for the elders, etc. Some (or all) of these chores may be quite necessary, in their place, but they are

not the work of a Gospel preacher.

Every preacher must engage in his own spiritual activities (e.g., as visiting the sick, helping those in need, etc.), but that is not his principal area of emphasis. As someone has said, "*The work of the preacher is threefold: to preach, to preach, and to preach.*" I would add to that: "To study and preach, to study and preach, to study and preach!"

Elders should encourage their preachers to spend more time in seclusion, studying and storing up great segments of information so that when they mount the pulpit, they are able to draw vast resources from the library of their minds. In such cases, the audience becomes excited about the beauty and value of God's written truth. I have, on occasion, spent hours digging out a golden nugget of truth (which may take only a minute or so to present) in the hope that it will challenge my brethren to deeper study. This is what results when teaching the Mind of God becomes a passion rather than a profession. When the preaching and teaching are stagnant, attendance will eventually decline. Moreover, a studious preacher provides the sort of example that inspires greater Bible study within the congregation.

CONCLUSION

We cannot but mention that if the church of today was a more studious body, she would not be plagued with as many problems as she now encounters. Knowledge is a powerful antidote to error. Let us encourage one another to return to the thrilling adventures within the Word of God.

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IT IS WRITTEN

Douglas Hoff

The phrase "it is written" is found eighty times in the Bible. Twenty six occurrences are in the Gospel accounts. Most of these are in connection with something Jesus said. Why did inspired men like Joshua, Matthew, Paul and Peter remind their readers so

often that God had previously written something on the matter under consideration? In each case it was to make or prove a point! It was an appeal to the highest authority man can find. God's Word settles the matter because His Word will stand for all time. Jesus said,

LEARNED RELIGION

Marlin Kilpatrick

Most every religion is learned and New Testament Christianity is no exception to this rule. When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, after warning him of evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, he said, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast *learned* and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast *learned* them; and that from a child thou hast *known* the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:14,15). Why, then, in the realm of religion, do people act as they do?

Why does the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church engage in so much ceremonialism in their various services? If one should ask such a question, the answer no doubt, would be, "This is the way we learned it." Ask a Muslim why he believes as he does and the answer, most likely, will be the same, "This is the way we learned it." Why do all people who profess to follow Christ engage in so many unscriptural practices? The answer is still the same, "This is the way we learned it." But from where did they learn it? Certainly not from the Bible. If the source of our learning is corrupt, our learning will be no better.

It's not enough to be taught. We must concern ourselves with where and by whom we were taught. Fortunately for Timothy, his faith was instilled in him by a godly mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). So, a hand-me-down faith is not necessarily bad, provided of course, those handing down their faith are sound in the faith.

In order for one's religion to be learned, there must be a process of teaching, learning and knowing. Concerning Christianity, Jesus said, "no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be *taught* of God. Every man therefore that hath *heard*, and hath *learned* of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44,45). We see this clearly illustrated in the case with Timothy.

As Christians, we should ask ourselves why do we believe as we do. Where did we learn it? We should be able to go to the scriptures and say, "Here is why I believe as I do. I learned it from the Bible." Dear brother or sister, if someone should ask, "Why do churches of Christ sing without musical instruments?" What would be your reply? With many it would be, "I'm not sure. Let's ask our preacher." With many church members, including some liberal preachers, the answer would be that our singing acapella is merely a tradition. Not so with me! I learned it from the Bible, and I shall (the Lord willing) continue to preach it from the Bible. Think about it.

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“heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

In His infinite wisdom, God knew that man would need the Creator’s will preserved in written form. Man tends to forget. Man also tends to doubt even those things that are well known. Peter wrote: “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:12-15).

The writer of Hebrews showed that God wants his children to believe and have hope through the written word: “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:13-18). Notice that not only did God make a promise to Abraham (and his spiritual descendants), but he then confirmed it with an oath. Both the promise and oath were initially spoken, but then committed to writing.

Since God cannot lie, He has nothing to hide. Thus, with His word committed to writing, humans can always check and see what He has promised. To man, written documents are considered more authoritative and binding than a verbal agreement. (Of course, Jesus wants the Word of His followers to be equally binding whether spoken or written; see James 5:12; cf. Matt. 5:33-37). In today’s world it is not uncom-

mon to see the disclaimer *in writing* that any *verbal* agreements made during the sale of a vehicle are unenforceable. Anything the salesman promises regarding repairs, condition or warranties should be in writing! Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous people who will lie and even have their sin committed to paper. Thankfully for us, God will honor all of His promises and is not deceiving anyone.

Between men, written contracts serve to remind the parties of their obligations and rewards or privileges. Almost without exception at least two copies of contracts are made; one copy is given to each party and occasionally one is filed for safe keeping. There is always the possibility that one party may lose his copy or it may be destroyed. This is why real estate transaction records like deeds and mortgages are filed at the court house. This is an ancient practice that even Jeremiah performed (Jer. 32:6-29).

Perhaps you have played the children’s game where a message is passed around the room by being whispered from one ear to another. The message delivered by the last player usually has been seriously corrupted from the original. People living today do not have to rely on a verbal record of God’s revealed will. God’s Word has been preserved for all mankind, not just those who lived when it was revealed. It was put in writing so everyone could have a chance to learn God’s Will and obey it.

The Bible, the very Word of God, has been preserved by God’s providence through the centuries. God promised that it would not fail or pass away (cf. Matt. 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23). When copies have been made, they have been checked and rechecked for copyist or typographical errors when it has been translated, copied and printed. Though we today do not have the original manuscripts written by the apostles, we can be sure we have the correct message. How? Through the multiplied copies and translations that were made shortly after the originals were penned! Peter spoke of Paul’s letters (2 Peter 3:15,16). How did Peter know about and read these letters? Copies were made and circulated. As a matter of fact, there are more than

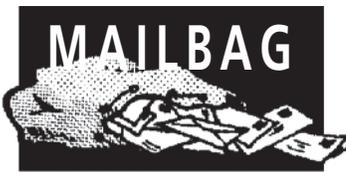
five thousand manuscript copies of New Testament letters that still exist today! Some of the more famous ones are on display in museums.

The salvation of each person depends on his obedience to the Gospel of Christ. God tells us in the Scriptures that “*the Lord is... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). People can only repent and be saved when they come to an understanding of their sin against God’s Law. This is why God’s Word is written!

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CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

In Genesis 1:28, God tells man to subdue the Earth. That command implies that God has placed, within the creation, many tools that man can learn to use for his benefit. After sin entered the world and sickness and death became a reality, God's remarkable foreknowledge then became evident. One of the first antibiotics ever discovered by man has been in use for thousands of years. Modern researchers are just beginning to appreciate the wonder of this natural antibiotic that kills some 650 different strains of disease organisms, and is virtually non-toxic. Best of all, disease organisms don't become resistant to it. What is this miracle antibiotic? The metal silver. The ancient Greeks and Romans used silver containers to keep liquids fresh. American settlers often placed a silver dollar in milk to delay souring. Most of the world's airlines today use silver filters on board to prevent dysentery. After testing 23 different methods for purifying water, NASA selected silver water filters for use on board the Space Shuttle. Japanese researchers have found that silver is even able to detoxify some poisons. (Creation Moments, The Original Antibiotic, 7/28/08).

Make sure you read the front page article and the editorial in this issue. We need your help in a new emphasis of our work in the Gospel.

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; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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