

Seek The Old Paths

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

(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 22, No. 2

February 2011

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Lloyd Gale

Imagine, in America, the law and the courts on the side of sin. If the public teaching of God's word is ruled as unlawful and forbidden, then it follows that the printing and distribution of the Bible may well be declared as "hate speech" as well.

The Pharisees posed this question to Jesus. "What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" (Matt. 22:17)? The question was not asked for information, but to entangle Jesus in a conflict between the Roman kingdom and the kingdom that Christ preached (Matt. 22:15). "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites. Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he said unto them, Whose is the image and superscription? They then say unto him Caesar's. Then said he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:18-21).

With this answer, Jesus established the doctrine of dual citizenship. Christians are citizens of a *spiritual kingdom*, the church, and at the same time are citizens of a *carnal kingdom*. We have obligations to both kingdoms. You may recall that the apostle Paul was a Roman citizen and exercised his rights as such. It follows that if one uses their rights of citizenship, they are obligated to assume their responsibilities as citizens. Christians are to obey civil law so long as it does not conflict with

God's laws (Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

THE CRY TO KEEP POLITICS OUT OF THE CHURCH

The church is described by our Lord as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14). In order to be the salt and the light of the world, there must of necessity be interaction. The founders of this country (who gave us the *Constitution* and the *Bill of Rights*) were rooted and grounded in Biblical principles. With the rise of the false doctrine of pacifism, the church withdrew from the battle and has now allowed the atheists and secular humanists to chip away the foundation of America. Just open your eyes and see what has taken place in recent years. The enemy must be engaged where the battle is being fought. Jesus fashioned a whip and drove the secular humanists out of the temple of God (John 2:14-17). He was engaged where the action was taking place.

Today, the battle is raging in the congress, the Oval office, and in the courts. The voice of Christians is not being heard. Instead, they are in full retreat. They don't want to get

involved, not my responsibility, let someone else do it, too busy to even write our elected officials or to make a phone call, keep the church out of the conflict. Just who is it that is the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

Jesus gave a parable of a man who sowed good seed, but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30). Many elders, preachers and others have been asleep. Concerned with numbers, large congregations, and a social gospel, they have been silent and acquiescing to societal changes. They seek to keep the church out of politics, and for that matter, any conflict whatsoever.

The silence of Christians has allowed the founding principles of America to be undermined by the atheists, secular humanists, evolutionists and moral degenerates. We have elected politicians who are self-serving, who have gone along with the power and money of the enemies of the *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*. Good laws have been twisted, perverted and misinterpreted to serve evil men and women. And, sad to say,

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Dual Citizenship...



Editorial...

WORSHIPPING GOD IN ONE PLACE #1

Garland M. Robinson

Since God is ONE and His people are ONE, it is God's will that we worship as ONE. There are no class distinctions or positions of prominence in the Lord's church. "For ye are *all the children of God by faith* in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is *neither Jew nor Greek*, there is *neither bond nor free*, there is *neither male nor female*: for ye are *all one* in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

There is to be no segregation or discrimination among brethren. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34) and neither should such exist among us. Jesus commanded that we call no man our "father" upon the earth, as though we give special honor to some and not to others (Matt. 23:5-12). We cannot, by the authority of God, refer to any man as father, reverend, right reverend, or even doctor (as is presently the trend with many). Titles of distinction and honor do not exist in the church with the Lord's approval. Those who desire and/or demand they be recognized because of their degrees do so to their own shame and bring reproach upon our blessed Lord. Men love it — the Lord forbid it. We must obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 5:29).

God is ONE and declares that His people be ONE. The Scriptures declare that we are all the children of God (Gal. 3:26) and that we have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7). Our common association and bond is cemented to our common faith. One of the ways in which we grow stronger is by our joint participation (fellowship) in worship.

THE CALLED OUT

The English word "church" comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* — *ek* "out of" and *klesis* "a calling." It has to

do with an assembly, those who are called out of their present location to assemble — a gathering together. We've been called out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into the glorious kingdom of God's only begotten Son (Col. 1:13). The kingdom (body) of the saved is the church for which Jesus died (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

The word "church" is used in three senses in the New Testament:

1) It is used in the *universal* sense. This is the world-wide body of Christ. It is made up of all those who obey the Gospel — becoming Christians. Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 16:18 when He said He would build His church. God adds souls to the church when they are saved (Acts 2:41,47). Paul speaks of the church universal in Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18.

2) The church is spoken of in the *local* sense. This refers to individual congregations that meet in various locations. So it is that we find the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Rome, the church at Philippi, Thessalonica, Troas, etc. Seven local churches are addressed in Revelation 2 & 3.

3) The church is spoken of in its *assembled state* for specified acts of worship. The church at Troas came together "to break bread" and Paul "preached" to them (Acts 20:7) — so did the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23). In the Lord's day assemblies of the local church, members are to "give" a free-will contribution which goes into the common treasury from which the church does its work (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Local churches were instructed to "sing" in their assemblies (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). "Prayer" is also offered by brethren in the church (Acts 12:5).

It would be strange indeed, if every avenue of worship present in the assembly was specified, and yet

the very nature of the assembly itself was not. However, even as every avenue of worship is specified, so is the assembly itself. The assembly of the saints was, and is, the coming together of the members of the local congregation into one place as one group in order to provoke one another unto love and good works, offering praise and thanksgiving unto God (cf. Heb. 10:24; 13:15).

Hebrews 10:25 speaks of the assemblies of brethren in a local congregation. "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...*" This verse commands every member of a local congregation to come together — constituting an assembly. It had become the habit of some to forsake the assemblies of the local church of which they were members. For various reasons, none of which were legitimate, some did not deem the regular assembling of the church to be important enough to attend. I suppose their thought was that if it's convenient I'll go and if it's not convenient I won't worry about it — it's no big deal. Had they forgotten their calling? Had they so soon forgotten they had been washed, redeemed and forgiven of their sins? Did they not realize what a privilege it was to acceptably worship the most high God? How sad, but it is just like so many today. I can't say that some church members today are in good company with some church members of the first century because such a company is not in good standing with the Lord!

Jesus very clearly pointed out in Matthew 6:33 that we must put the Lord's kingdom/church and His righteousness FIRST in our lives. To do otherwise is a wilful sin (cf. Heb. 10:26-31). It means one has forgotten he/she was purged from his/her sins (cf. 2 Peter 1:9).

Putting the kingdom/church first means we do ALL the Lord has commanded us to do. The principle of authority is stated plainly in Colossians 3:17, "*And whatsoever ye DO in WORD or DEED, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*" This means that everything we SAY and everything we DO is to be done according to the instructions (authority) of the Lord. It means we do WHAT He said do. It means we do it WHEN He said do it. And, it means

we do it HOW He said do it.

A MATTER OF AUTHORITY

There is a major difference between the church of our Lord (the churches of Christ, Rom. 16:16), and denominations. Members of the church of Christ ask, “Is it right?”; members of denominations ask, “Is it wrong?” Members of the church of God ask, “Did God say do it?”; while sectarians ask, “Did God say not do it?” Members of the Lord’s church ask, “Does Christ authorize it?”; the followers of men ask, “Does Christ condemn it?” Basically, the difference is this: saints ask, “Why?”; sinners

ask, “Why not?”

If we desire the truth, we must always be asking, “where does the Bible authorize” this or that. For our actions to be acceptable to God, we must act only in accordance with God’s divine will. When questioned about an activity, we must be able to point to a passage and say “here’s the authority.”

The Bible authorizes in three ways: 1) *direct command*, 2) *approved example*, 3) *that which implied*. When God tells sinners to “repent and be baptized” for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), that is a direct command. When the church at Troas met upon

the first day of the week to eat the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7), that is an approved example. When Jesus said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matt. 19:9), it is implied that those who put away their spouse because of their spouse’s fornication and marry again, do not commit adultery. Thus, Bible authority is derived in one or more of these three ways.

In the next issue, we will discuss splitting/dividing our worship assemblies.

RENDER TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD’S

Douglas Hoff

Luke 20:22-25 says: “*Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.*”

When we read this passage we realize Jesus was showing it is necessary to pay taxes even to unrighteous governments. However, the other part of His answer is very important too. That is, render to God the things that are God’s. With its imprint, the Roman denarius showed it belonged to the government’s realm. In a similar fashion, Christians reveal to whom they belong by the image and inscription which is upon them.

Whose image do we bear? It is God’s, for we were created in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Christians have a special relationship with the Lord. As Paul said, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). He also wrote that “*...as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” (1 Cor. 15:49). Additionally, whose inscription do we bear? It is Christ’s, for as His disciples we are an epistle of Christ to be read by all men (2 Cor. 3:2-3). It has rightly been said that the only Bible some people will read is that found in

the life of a Christian. In Galatians 2:20, Paul said that “Christ lives in me.” We need to remember that non-Christians are watching and “reading” us. What will they see?

An important responsibility Christians have is to remember that we ought to render to God the things that are God’s. After all, every created thing belongs to God. We are just stewards of His goods (Luke 16:1; 1 Cor. 4:1-2). What are some examples of things we ought to give to Him?

Our very lives belong to God. Paul wrote, “*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Cor. 6:20). Jesus bought us with His shed blood (Acts 20:28). Therefore, Christians belong to God in a special way. Accordingly, we are told to “*present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1).

Every person was given life by God. That means even the non-Christian is not his own (Ezek. 18:4). He owes his life to God who gave him his spirit (Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1). Long ago, king Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall (“mene, mene, tekel, upharsin”) and Daniel told him, “*...the God in whose hand thy breath [is], and whose [are] all thy ways, hast thou not glorified*” (Dan. 5:23). Notice that even a person’s breath belongs to God! This makes sense since God created the air and there-

fore it is His (Psa. 24:1).

King Belshazzar learned too late that he had a responsibility to worship the God of heaven. Instead, he had praised the gods made with human hands — the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone (Dan. 5:23). The one thing that we can truly give of ourselves to God is worship. This is because worship arises from the will of man. It requires a conscious decision and the desire to praise the God of heaven.

The LORD created mankind with free will. He will never force man in this world to do something against his will. He is well pleased when we choose to offer Him our worship. Long ago Jesus said: “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him*” (John 4:23). Our worship is perhaps the most important thing we can render to God which He rightly deserves (Isa. 42:8,12; Luke 17:18; Acts 12:23).

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[Brother Douglas Hoff is a faithful Gospel preacher I’ve known for many years. He is in need of a place to preach. If you know of a faithful congregation needing a good preacher, please let brother Hoff know. – editor]

Dual Citizenship...

(Continued from page 9)

many “Christians” have voted to elect such men and women, knowing their desire to advance evil causes.

A Democratic controlled House, Senate, and President recently passed a “Hate Crimes Law.” It is a law designed to control free speech and to punish speech that progressives do not like. Under this law, teaching God’s word (law) on homosexuality has been deemed discrimination like racism. Stop and think. The law itself is discrimination because it equates race with a life-choice. This is a slap in the face of minorities, most of whom, do not approve of homosexual conduct. The making of such a law is certain to bring upon America the wrath of God.

For godly people to speak out publicly against such things as abortion and homosexual conduct has been declared by the courts as illegal and subject to punishment. Imagine, in America, the law and the courts on the side of sin.

If the public teaching of God’s word is ruled as unlawful and forbidden, then it follows that the printing and distribution of the Bible may well be declared as “hate speech” as well. Did you know that when Congress was debating the “Hate Crimes Law” in 2007 a motion was defeated that said the printing and distribution of the Bible could be prevented by this law. This motion protecting the Bible from the Hate Crimes Law was actually DEFEATED by the liberal Democrat majority in Congress.

SUCH YOU SAY WILL NEVER HAPPEN IN AMERICA

Are you aware that our brothers and sisters just north of us in Canada are being persecuted for teaching God’s word? And that we in America are just in the beginning stages of this new law?

How is *Hate Crime Speech* being applied?

In 1997, the Ontario Human Rights Commission fined the city of London and it’s mayor, Diane Haskett, 10,000 for refusing to proclaim “Gay Pride Friday.” It also ordered Haskett to make a public statement

praising the “valuable” contributions of gays and lesbians to her community.

In 2001, in Toronto, a printer named Scott Brockie was fined 5,000 for refusing to print homosexually-themed stationery for the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives.

In 2002, the Human Rights Commission in Saskatchewan, Canada, ordered Hugh Owens and the Star Phoenix newspaper to pay 1,500 to three homosexual activists totaling 4,500 for publishing an ad in the newspaper in 1997 quoting Bible verses regarding homosexuality. The Bible verses were just referenced, not even actually quoted.

In 2005, a British Columbia Knights of Columbus council was ordered to pay 2,000 plus their legal costs to two Lesbians for refusing to allow it’s facility to be used for their “wedding.”

In January 2006, Catholic city councilman John DeCicco of Kamloops, British Columbia, was fined 1,000 and required to apologize for saying that homosexuality is “not normal or natural.”

In June 2008, Stephen Boisson (a so-called Reverend) was ordered to pay 7,000 “for pain and suffering” because of a complaint by homosexual activists. He is also banned from expressing opposition to homosexuality in any public forum. His Crime? Writing a letter to the editor of the Red Deer Advocate newspaper in Alberta opposing homosexual activism in the public elementary school curriculum. He wrote, “Children as young as 5 and 6 years of age are being subjected to psychologically and physiologically damaging pro-homosexual literature and guidance in the public school system; all under the fraudulent guise of equal rights.”

CHRISTIANS ARE NOW UNDER ASSAULT IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD

In June 2004, a Swedish (Reverend) Ake Green was sentenced to one month in jail for calling homosexuality “abnormal.”

BUT WE ARE PROTECTED BY THE CONSTITUTION ARE WE NOT?

“Congress shall make no law

respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” (The first amendment to the Constitution)

Here in America, the New Mexico Human Rights Commission fined a Christian photography studio 6,000 for discrimination against homosexuals. Elaine Hugunin and her husband John, co-owners of the studio, politely declined to photograph a lesbian couple’s “commitment ceremony.”

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania’s “Hate Crimes” law was used to jail a dozen Christians. On October 11, 2004, homosexual activists were celebrating “National Coming Out Day.” The Christian group held a demonstration ranging in age from a 17 year old girl to a 72 year old grandmother, all of whom were taken to jail and spent the night there.

The next day, 5 of them, including the teenager, faced 8 charges, including 3 felonies under Pennsylvania’s “Hate Crimes Law.” Eventually, they were acquitted, but the fact that they were jailed and charged at all should shock all who care about liberty, freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

CAN IT GET ANY WORSE? YES, AND IT HAS

Pedophiles (child rapists and child molesters) are protected under this law as a (“Sexual Minority”). An amendment to explicitly prohibit protection of pedophiles (child rape and molestation) under the law was defeated by a majority of Democrats in Congress. Since passage of the law, homosexual activists have already started to use the law to accuse preachers and other Christians of inciting attacks against homosexuals because of their public opposition to the homosexual agenda.

What’s next? Will this law be used to prevent the printing and distribution of the Bible?

(Note: I wish to acknowledge that some of the material used in this lesson was compiled by the CHRISTIAN SENIORS ASSOCIATION.)

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WHAT ASSEMBLING WITH THE SAINTS WILL DO FOR YOU

Ivie Powell

The attitude of “What’s in it for me?” has become so ingrained in the public that the religious world has built facilities to accommodate both the spiritual and the physical man. This is done all under the disguise of “meeting the needs spiritually, physically and emotionally.” It would not be surprising to learn many are erecting medical facilities in their building. Thus, the whole man’s needs, spiritually, physically and emotionally will be met all in one complex. It should not surprise us if many of our brethren follow in like pursuit. After all, so many have patterned their “appeal” after the denominational world!

Brethren, when the church assembles on the Lord’s day, it is for one purpose and only one purpose, that being to worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24)! The Lord has set forth only five acceptable expressions in New Testament worship:

- Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Thess. 5:17).
- Preaching (Acts 2:42).
- Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-29; Acts 20:7).
- Contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Any addition or subtraction from these five authorized areas of worship is without Bible authority (Col. 3:17) and is a flagrant departure from the word of God (2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19)!

There are only three ways Scripture authorizes:

- Direct command (Acts 10:48).
- An approved Bible example (Acts 20:7).
- Necessary inference or implication (Matt. 3:16).

There is no doubt that orchestras, dramas, choruses, testimonials, recreation and entertainment have an appeal to the flesh. However, New Testament worship is not based on man’s likes and dislikes, but solely on biblical authority (Col. 3:17)! The diligent student of God’s word quick-

ly observes that all of the aforementioned are the direct result of man’s departure from God’s word. Whenever biblical authority is set aside, then, man will resort to his own devices, and when that takes place, biblical chaos ensues!

When speaking of worship, the attitude of some is: “What’s in it for me?” Well, that really depends on what you bring with you. If you bring an attitude of sincerely worshiping God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), then you will receive the following:

- You will have a greater knowledge of God’s word (2 Tim. 2:15)!
- You will be preparing for a better and happier life (Phil. 4:4; 1 John 1:4)!
- You will be assured of the hope of eternal life for the faithful (Rom. 8:24-25; Titus 1:2)!
- You will be drawn closer to God (John 4:23-24; James 4:7-10)!
- Your faith will be strengthened (Rom. 10:17; Col. 3:16)!
- You will acquire a deeper insight into the truth found only in God’s word (James 1:25)!
- You will be admonished in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16)!
- You will have the fellowship of brethren who need your strength and in turn will strengthen you (Acts 2:42)!
- You will be preparing for your eternal home with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and all the saved of all the ages (Rev. 21:22)!
- You will be prepared for the uneven journey of the many wiles of the devil (Eph. 4:10-18).
- You will be strengthened in the Christian graces that are needed in remaining faithful (2 Peter 1:5-13)!

With all of these and many other positive aspects, why would any Christian not want to faithfully assemble with the saints on the Lord’s Day (Heb. 10:23-25)?

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THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Bible speaks of the *book of life* in at least fourteen verses.

It is a book that belongs to God (Exodus 32:33). It is being written by God (Exodus 32:32). It contains the names of the righteous (Psa. 69:28). This great book is now in the presence of God in heaven (Luke 10:20). At the day of judgment, this book will be opened by God and only those names found therein will enter heaven (Rev. 20:12,15; 21:27). Names in the book of life are kept there by God as long as we serve him. John wrote, “*He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels*” (Rev. 3:5). There is no clearer verse in all the Bible on the possibility of a child of God falling from grace. Although the Bible clearly teaches one can fall from grace, men still will not accept this truth (Acts 9:4,5; Gal. 5:4).

No one can get his name written in the book of life by his own ability. Each name is added to the book of life by God when one obeys his will. Every person who obeys is saved and is added to the church of the Lord (Acts 2:47; Rom. 16:16). Every person who fears (respects) the Lord and will obey Him will have his name recorded in the book of life (Malachi 3:16). Everyone should want his name in the book of life because no one wants to live in hell (Rev. 20:15).

It will be a glorious day when Jesus returns and all the saved go up to meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Jesus will deliver the saved up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23).

To obey the Lord and have your name written in the book of life, follow these commands: **Believe** in Jesus (Mark 16:16), **Repent** of sins (Acts 2:38), **Confess** Jesus as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9,10) and be **Baptized** in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16).

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Elder's COLUMN

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE

Jacob Campbell

Why should we study the Bible? Why bother opening this book to read it and try to learn its message? Why are preachers and elders always encouraging us to read our Bible at home and other places on our own? Christians get enough Bible on Sunday and Wednesday, don't they? How important is it to read and study the Bible? If we believe the Bible to be God's word, which it is, then we should see the importance in spending as much time as possible reading it, and try to gain as much knowledge from it as we can.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE? HERE ARE TWENTY SIMPLE REASONS:

1. God has commanded us to (John 5:39; Eph. 5:17).
2. The Bible is the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Thess. 2:13).
3. It is the only way to know God's Thoughts and Will for us (Isa. 55:8,9; 1 Cor. 2:9-16).
4. It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).
5. It builds us up (edifies), and is able to give us an inheritance (Acts 20:32).
6. It is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (Psalm 119:105).
7. It saves us (James 1:21).
8. It thoroughly furnishes (equips) us unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
9. It makes us wise (2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 5:17).
10. Its words endure forever and will not pass away (1 Peter 1:23-25; Matt. 24:35).
11. It is through the Bible that we are called by God (2 Thess. 2:14).
12. It is that by which we will be judged (John 12:48).
13. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (John 17:17; Titus 1:2).
14. Faith comes from it, and nothing else (Rom. 10:17).

15. We study so that we will not sin (Psalm 119:11; 1 John 2:1; 1 Cor. 10:6-12).
16. Those who search the scriptures are considered by God to be noble (Acts 17:11).
17. It reveals all we know about the church (Eph. 3:1-11).
18. We will be able to teach it to others (Heb. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:2).
19. We will be able to give an answer to every man who asks about the hope in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:15), contend for the faith (Jude 3), and be set for the defense of the Gospel (Phil. 1:17).
20. We love God and His word (Psalm 119:97, 119, 127, 159, 167).

Christians today do not know the Bible like Christians did in the past. In many congregations of the church, preachers and Bible class teachers are more concerned with pleasing the listeners, entertaining the youth and keeping large crowds.

We need elders who will make sure the flock is being fed God's word (Acts 20:28). Sometimes parents neglect their duty to raise their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). But, sometimes, we ourselves simply do not put forth enough effort in reading and studying the Bible, God's word, on our own.

Hearing it preached once or twice a week, or sitting in two or three Bible classes a week (if we attend them all) is not enough.

If something is getting in the way of our searching the Scriptures daily, then we need to get rid of whatever that is in our life, or learn how to manage our time better. A Christian who is too busy to read God's word daily, is too busy. Satan is continually seeking Christians' souls to destroy (1 Peter 5:8). When he gets one Christian to stop growing, that Christian has died. So, let us read, study, and know God's word so that we can "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), and "desire the

sincere milk of the word, that ye [we] may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Linda Woods	
(in memory of Bratton Woods, Pauline Hall, Hubert Hall)....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$25
Ed & Sandra Armstrong.....	\$500
Ed & Sandra Armstrong.....	\$500
Tyrone & Julie Rumford.....	\$1,000
Macedonia C/C, Dresden, TN	\$200
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$25
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$25
Land Between The Lakes C/C, Dover, TN.....	\$200
Anonymous.....	\$20
James Lucas Unger.....	\$25
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Carl & Gloria Bayne	\$100
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Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN	\$50
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Central C/C, Denison, TX.....	\$20
Stephen & Susan Siligato.....	\$82
Rosa Jackson.....	\$21
Anonymous.....	\$50
Jackson Street C/C, Alexandria, LA	\$100
Beginning Balance	\$ 5,535.12
Contributions	\$ 3,808.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$ 1,641.41
Supplies	\$ 27.98
Ending Balance	\$ 7,673.73

"ME AND MY BIG MOUTH!"

Roger D. Campbell

I have said those five words before, and my guess is that many of you have done the same. Maybe we have said them when we "let the cat out of the bag." Perhaps we heard others say them after they volunteered to help in some way, then to their regret, those that heard them offer their assistance immediately took them up on the offer. Or, it may be that we have said, "Me and my big mouth" on some occasion when we blurted something out that unnecessarily hurt someone's feelings or revealed an unexpected, unpleasant truth. However, simply exclaiming, "Me and my big mouth" does not really remedy anything, does it?

Consider some truths that each of us should strive to learn and remember about the expression, often made with a voice of disappointment in self, "Me and my big mouth."

1) **We need to think before we speak.** If we would develop this habit, we would less often be compelled to think to ourselves, "Me and my big mouth." Proverbs 29:20 states, "*Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him.*" Does not James 1:19 exhort us to be "slow to speak?"

2) **We need to avoid boasting in our speech.** If we brag about our knowledge, ability, or experience, and someone calls our hand on it or challenges us, we could be quite embarrassed by the outcome. "*Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain*" (Prov. 25:14). If we do not use our tongue to boast, then we can cut down the number of times when we feel like saying, "Me and my big mouth." A boasting tongue comes from a proud heart, and, "*Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD*" (Prov. 16:5).

3) **If someone is going to control my tongue, it is going to be me.** Others can exhort me and may even attempt to place restrictions on my speech, but when all is said and done, only I can keep my tongue in place. Jesus taught that if our hand,

foot, or eye offends us by causing us to sin, then we should "cut it off" or "pluck it out" (Mark 9:43,45,47). Would that principle not apply to the tongue as well? If our tongue causes us to sin, then we need to "cut it off," not by literally removing it from our body, but by taking whatever measures might be needed to keep it under control. We all recognize just how difficult it can be to keep our tongue in check. If we have gotten ourselves into trouble by opening our "big mouth," then we must work diligently to discipline our speech over an extended period of time so that people will eventually be able to say, "He/she used to be a real big mouth, but not anymore."

4) **We should not make promises or commitments that we will be unable or unwilling to keep.** We may at times be inclined to pledge that we will do something out of a desire to please others or else just to "get them out of our hair." Our personal character is only as good as our integrity. "God is faithful" because, when He speaks, mankind can count on His fulfillment of that which He has stated. Are you and I known as people of integrity, whose word is dependable and whose word is their bond?

5) **If I see I have a problem with my tongue, if I know that I am perceived to be a big mouth or speak loudly and non-stop, it is not something to try and laugh off.** No, it is a matter that I must try to correct. "*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin* [sin is not lacking, NKJV]: *but he that refraineth his lips is wise*" (Prov. 10:19). How we use our tongues is a matter of choice. That is right, you and I choose how we speak. If others form an opinion about us based solely on how we speak, then let us speak in such a way that they can truthfully perceive us to be people that speak with grace, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6), not as folks that have to constantly mutter, "Me and my big mouth."

6) **Control of the tongue begins in the heart/mind.** Putting the clamps on a "big mouth" begins

with proper thinking. "*...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things*" (Matt. 12:34,35).

7) **It is harmful to the reputation of the local church when a child of God is known as "a big mouth."** That description is often made of one that has a pattern of speaking loudly or non-stop. Am I "a big mouth?" If so, I am likely hindering the good name of the congregation of which I am a member. All of us need to work to show ourselves to be blameless, harmless, and without rebuke as we "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15,16). If I have been a big mouth in the past, I need to learn to "tone it down."

With more self-discipline, all of us can cut down on the number of times we are moved to say, "Me and my big mouth." Surely all would admit that our physical mouth is not big one day and little the next. No, our speech is not at all about the size of our physical mouth, be it large or small. It is about the heart from which our words come. When it comes to our speech, let us take great care and proceed with caution. May each of us strive to use our tongue as an instrument of blessing rather than cursing (James 3:10).

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where He is silent, let us likewise be. Let us do no glorying in human creeds. God's word is our guide and our only guide. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Let us do good and put our time and money in the work of the Lord. Buckle on God's armor today, now. March faithful under the leadership of Jesus Christ the Son of God (John 3:16) ...**Gene & Audrey Pegg, McMinnville, TN.** "Keep up the good work, good articles we all need. Thank you" ...**Dorothy Gilley, Livonia, MI.** "My address has changed. Thanks for your good paper. I am now 99 years of age. God bless" ...**Perry B. Cotham, Grand Prairie, TX.** "I was given several copies of STOP from a lady who lives in Manassas, Virginia. They are so full of truth. I would like to be put on your mailing list, please. I meet with the Lord's church in Powhatan, VA, which is a faithful church. I am the preacher there for the past two years. I will stand in the ways and ask for the old paths and walk therein. Please keep in your prayers a very small membership of 19 faithful saints" ...**Harold Langley, Jr., Powhatan, VA.** "I would like to be added to the mailing list of *Seek The Old Paths*. I saw a copy and really appreciate your stand for the truth" ...**Vida Hodges, Ft. Stockton, TX.** "I have learned of your publication, *Seek The Old Paths*, through a friend. It is my understanding that I may receive complimentary copies each month upon request. I am a retired person who has been a member of the Lord's church since I was a teenager, 66 years of my life, and have witnessed many changes which I regret to say are not for the better. I know of one congregation, which I have known of for most of my life, which was once sound. The old members have all passed on and would 'turn over in their graves' if they knew what is going on there now. The so-called elders have turned everything over to the preacher who is very worldly. We need a restoration movement today as much as it was needed 200 years ago. Maybe more now than then. People don't want the truth today. It makes them uncomfortable. I enjoy studying the Bible and reading sound magazines and papers. This gives me the spiritual strength to go on. The Bible is the only guide we can depend on to get us to heaven. We need sound Gospel preachers, teachers and most of all sound elders in the church who will not stand for anything but the truth. I have no respect for those who compromise truth for any reason. I refuse to listen to them. My prayers are with those who stand for and preach and teach the truth" ...**Arab, AL.** "I wanted to write and let you all know that our Great and awesome God has walked me out of prison. I'm in a transition center, making a slow transition back to society. My freedom will never be taken for granted again. Here is my address so I can keep getting *Seek The Old Paths*. I truly look forward to continue receiving them. Thank you" ...**Jerry Hawkins, Thomasville, AL.** "Please remove Clastel Dulaney from your mailing list. He passed away" ...**Fulton, MS.** "Would you add my name to the publication? Thank you very much" ...**Royce Huett, West Plains, MO.** "Please send me two dozen of the Jan. 2011 issue of STOP. I want my family to have one and some others also for this is a big problem with most people, Christian and non-Christian (Easter and so-called religious holidays). I'll get more when I can. I want to get some for our church too. May God bless your work" ...**Name withheld by request, OH.** "I've been noticing in the MailBag section of STOP that some are asking for back issues. I would like a bundle of about a dozen or more. If it's not too much trouble, I would like to have them all different issues and go back to the earliest ones. I'm sending a check to cover the cost of mailing. Thank you so much" ...**Geneva Stark, Eufaula, OK.** "You do a great job publish-

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ing the paper. Keep up the good work" ...**Bill Rogers, Winchester, TN.** "I have enjoyed this paper for many years and have passed it on to others. These two men have asked to be put on your mailing list. They too, think it's a wonderful paper. It is so sad when people ask to be taken off your mailing list. Enclosed is a token of appreciation for your good work of teaching the Truth — only God's inspired word" ...**Tyler, TX.** "Enjoyed Robert Taylor's articles on modern versions. Not much being said since Foy Wallace, Jr. Died. Most at Harding uses the NIV. Jimmy Allen requires it in his Bible classes. I tell the college students who attend where I preach, 'don't ever try to debate with an NIV Bible,' ...**Douglas Robison, Searcy, AR.** "Thanks to all of you for another year of great articles in STOP. If only all preachers in the church would teach as you write. God bless you in the new year ahead for good health and safety. You are appreciated so much!" ...**Name withheld by request.** "I would really appreciate it if you would add me to your mailing list. A friend from Indiana sent me a copy of STOP. It was the best I've ever read. I am in prison in Florida. There isn't much Jesus at all. Some confess to being a Christian but fall real short in acting like one. I've started a Bible study here where there wasn't one. It's hard going but I have the Lord behind me. In the January 2010 issue, the article on 'What Do We Know About Hades' was great. I used it in my class. Truly, God sent people like you to make my life worth everything I put into it. Thanks" ...**James T. Erwin, Jr., Tomoka Correctional Institution, Daytona Beach, FL.** "My husband and I enjoy STOP. Please remove Dolores Whatley. She died from cancer. Thanks. Oh how much we need more elders and preachers to not deviate from the truth! We stay in the word daily and don't want to 'add to' or 'take from' God's word" ...**Shirley Waggener, Ball, LA.**

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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