

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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March 2000

THE SERMON OF SORROW

Lennie Reagan

This article is a portion of the sermon preached to the congregation of the Coldwater church of Christ relative to the action taken by their eldership in respect to the youth rally at the Senatobia, Mississippi, church of Christ. Brother Reagan called **Fred McClure**, a participant in this rally, and talked to him.

In Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, we read of his concerns over the first letter he wrote to them. You will remember that the first epistle discusses various problems within the church at Corinth and Paul had to use strong words for them to recognize their spiritually dangerous condition. The words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 give us some insight as to how Paul felt about having to do it. He was sorry he had to write the first letter; but, he was not sorry he wrote because it brought about their swift repentance.

This is not an effort to place myself on the level of the apostle in knowledge, ability, or any other aspect; but, that is exactly how I feel about this sermon. I am sorry it is necessary for this sermon to be preached; but, please understand, I do not apologize for presenting this sermon.

The **Senatobia church of Christ** is hosting a youth rally the end of January, INSIGHT 2000. The congregation here received an invitation and the schedule consists of speakers and various groups who teach doctrines and participate in activities which are not in keeping

with the authority of the Scriptures. This article and the enclosed letter will describe the action taken by our eldership and the leadership of other congregations who have like concerns about this youth rally.

This sermon is not an attempt to "get back" at anyone for the untrue and unkind attitudes and statements which have been made to me, about me, our eldership, or this congregation. This sermon is not in retaliation to a letter that the elders of Senatobia have published and given the members there naming our congregation as causing division, sowing discord among brethren, and Biblical error.

My heart is heavy. The impact of this sermon will affect every member of this congregation: some more closely than others and I have not taken nor do I take those relationships lightly. I am saddened that it has become necessary to discuss the matters which we will discuss in this sermon; but, please know every word is covered in prayer and spoken in love — love for you as a congregation, love for the souls of whom will be discussed, and love for the truth of God's Word. The only joy in making this kind of stand is found in a love of the truth and the hope that truth, not one congregation against another; but, that truth would prevail and all congregations of God's people would stand together in the truth of God's Word.

The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel records the pitiable condition of the nation of Judah as she stands

in rebellion against God. In Ezekiel 22:30, God declares His search "...for a man among them, that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." It is our desire as a congregation of God's people, and it should be the desire of every congregation, to stand in the gap to declare and commit to the truth of God's Word.

Please note there is a Biblical precedent and standard which all Christians will seek to enjoin. In closing out the epistle to the church at Rome, Paul writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Why is this type of action necessary? "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; (their own selfish agendas) and by good words and fair speeches (their sugar coated words which contain false doctrine) deceive the hearts of the simple (the innocent)" (Rom. 16:18). Christ warned His disciples. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6). Matthew, by inspiration, offers a word of explanation in that Christ was talking of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:12). Was our Lord being unkind or unloving toward anyone? Absolutely not. In fact, these and

(Continued on page 19)

Sermon Of Sorrow...



Editorial...

NOT ONLY DIGRESSIVE, OUT-RIGHT ERROR

Garland M. Robinson

Believe it or not, many today deny the murder — the annihilation — of six million Jews under the regime of Hitler and Nazism. The claim is made that “it never happened.”

In like manner, a host of “Church of Christ” people are denying that liberalism exists among us. The claim is that those who warn about it, expose it, and document it, are cynical, negative, trouble makers and liars. But, let the facts and documentation speak for themselves. They are myriad. One would have to be spiritually blind and no lover of the truth to deny what’s presently going on among the brotherhood of the churches of Christ.

In a web-page article by **Ken Young** titled, “*Communion — Frequency of the Celebration*,” the practice of partaking the Lord’s supper any day of the week is defended and promoted. The article reveals that as the leadership at the **Golf Course Road Church of Christ, in Midland, Texas**, planned for

“Stream ’97”, they “decided a very fitting conclusion to Saturday’s schedule of worship, study, and share groups would be the celebration of Communion. Many of our members had been on a “Walk To Emmaus,” an interdenominational spiritual renewal weekend, and had been greatly blessed by the Communion service taken on a Friday or a Saturday. Golf Course Road had also planned similar weekends, one for men and another for women. A Saturday morning Communion service was one of the high points of the weekend.

For most who participated in these events for the first time, taking Communion on a day other than Sunday was a new experience, and for some, it was

approached with a sense of uneasiness. However, almost everyone who went through one of these experiences gave testimony to the significant impact the Communion had on them.”

The article discusses how that an elder’s wife had been blessed by taking communion at a renewal weekend for ladies that was not in their building. He says,

“somehow it seemed more uncomfortable for her to take Communion on Saturday in the same auditorium where we take the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. As time approached for that evening assembly she commented to her husband that she thought the crowd would be small. After all, it had been emphasized to everyone that it was their choice whether or not to come back after dinner for Communion. If they found this offensive in any way, they were encouraged not to come. To her surprise, as she entered the auditorium, she discovered a very large crowd already overflowing to the balcony. She told me the Communion service that evening was one of the most powerful times of worship she had ever experienced.”

It seems ironic that in the next paragraph we read, “one of our greatest concerns is to do only that which pleases and honors our Lord.” Yet, they finish their column by sharing “the results of our studies concerning this issue.” Their conclusion is that they find no prohibition of observing the Lord’s supper on any day of the week. They say, “the apostles never once specified a correct day to celebrate Communion in their writings. Jesus himself insti-

tuted this new celebration on a day other than Sunday, likely Thursday evening.” Their further conclusion is that since the Lord favors “heart” over “structure,” it matters not what day the supper is eaten.

Let’s examine their findings and practice.

Acts 20:7 reveals the day and frequency of the Lord’s supper. The verse reads, “*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*” The background of this passage concerns Paul’s journey to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; 20:16). He stopped at Troas and waited there seven days in order to meet with the brethren on the Lord’s Day. At this worship service, the disciples “break bread,” i.e., they ate the Lord’s supper. This act of worship was the scheduled day on which they were to meet and observe the memorial of the Lord’s suffering and death.

If the “supper” could be observed on any day of the week, why didn’t the church there meet before Sunday and observe it since Paul, an apostle, was visiting them? It was clear he had a ship to catch (Acts 20:7,11) because he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Waiting seven days until the next Sunday would delay his departure even longer. Yet, he waited along with the church until the Lord’s day. Why not eat the supper with an inspired apostle every day that week? Would that not have been a “high point” in the lives of the brethren there? Why wait? They waited because the first day of the week was the day on which the memorial of the Lord’s supper was to be observed. The Lord’s day observance of the communion had to have come from the teaching and tradition of the apostles.

If the memorial of the Lord’s supper can be observed on any day one chooses, then it is the only memorial in the whole Bible where such is allowed. The Passover (Exodus 12), the sabbath (Exodus 20) and the atonement (Lev. 23:27) were all kept on specific days given by God. The people were not allowed to observe them whenever they chose. The same is true with the Lord’s

supper. The only day on which partaking of the Lord's communion is authorized is on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Every week has a first day, therefore, the first day of every week is the specified day of the Lord's supper.

So many today are not content with the Lord's prescribed worship. They deem it to be cold, drab and lifeless. They desire to pump life into it so they cater to man's whims and desires. They often poll the participants and prospective attendees to see what they want. When they feel they can get by with changes in worship, they incorporate them. Their escape from criticism comes with simply telling folks that if they feel uncomfortable or are offended by these things, then don't come. They care not if discord and strife triumphs between them and the right-

eous. Just as long as they have their "contemporary worship" is all that matters. As long as they obtain their "high" of human emotion, they care not. They content themselves in thinking that if "they are pleased" then the Lord must be satisfied. How could "we" be wrong since we "feel" so good? But, one's feelings is not the proper judgment of whether one is right before God or not. God's word is the standard, not one's emotion.

You can also have your choice of other programs and activities at the Golf Course Road church. The Brother's Keeper Concert, sponsored by their Youth Ministry, will be held in the auditorium with tickets on sale for \$5. Or, single parent families may attend their 12-week program titled "Just Me and the Kids" to be held at the building. The cost,

by the way, is \$15 per family. Or, you may register for their "Living through Loss" Spring Grief Recovery Seminar or the Parenting Teen Seminar. After Stream in the Desert... their prayer is: "Father, help each of us now choose to allow the Spirit to work in us — to pour from our cups that have been filled with Your love to those around us who need Your love. In Jesus Holy Name, Amen." How far will some go to be like the nations 'round about? I guess there's no limit!

The Golf Course Road church decided a very inappropriate, unfit and unauthorized act by their "celebration of Communion" on Saturday night. That is not renewal, that is destruction and ruin!

Sermon Of Sorrow...

(Continued from page 17)

other warnings came because of the love Christ has for all men.

Paul, as he was with the elders of the church at Ephesus, warned them of the grievous wolves and men who would speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them. You will remember that Paul reminded them of his love for them: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). This is a spiritually protective move designed to warn the innocent of the false doctrine and those who espouse it. It is by the example of Christ and apostolically commanded so that souls may be saved and that is my motive and by their fruit and from their admission, that is the motive of the eldership here.

Another Biblical consideration is that the eldership of this congregation has the God-given directive to "...watch for our souls, as they that must give account..." (Heb. 13:17). The eldership has an obligation to weigh the spiritual profitability of meetings and other such events before they can encourage our attendance and based upon the speakers and groups who have been invited to this youth rally, the eldership cannot

endorse this event.

The enclosed letter which was sent to the eldership of the Senobia congregation describes some of the reasons this youth rally cannot be supported. Additionally, brother **Fred McClure**, one of the scheduled speakers at INSIGHT 2000, was personally contacted and asked a few questions.

Question – How do you feel about instrumental music in worship? Brother McClure: "I don't use it."

Question – Why? Brother McClure: "The Scriptures are silent."

Question – Is it a matter of conscience or is it wrong? Brother McClure: "I'm not going to say that God will send anyone to hell for using it; but, I don't get involved in controversial stuff. It is not a salvation issue."

Question – Do you believe there are faithful Christians in denominational churches? Brother McClure: "I'm not in the judging business."

Question – Is immersion in water essential for salvation? Brother McClure: "Water baptism is important."

Question – Is it essential? Brother McClure: "This is fruitless."

Question – My wanting to know what a man teaches is fruitless? Brother McClure: "Why are you asking?"

Question – Our kids have been

invited to attend and I want to know what they are going to hear. I don't know you nor what you teach and I have an obligation to know what they are going to hear. Brother McClure: "In youth rallies I tell the kids to be like Jesus."

Question – If you teach that instrumental music in worship is not a salvation issue, is that what Jesus would teach? Brother McClure: "I don't know what Jesus would teach. I'm not going to answer your questions. This conversation is over."

Question – Why won't you answer my questions? Brother McClure: "I don't have to. I don't do this."

Question – You don't believe Peter's command in I Peter 3:15 to always give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you? Brother McClure: "Yes; but, I am not going to answer your questions."

Question – If I were a man on the street would you answer my questions? Brother McClure: "Yes, look at the context."

Question – I am considering the context. I'm asking you to answer questions about what you believe. Brother McClure: "This is fruitless. You can ask your questions; but, I'm not going to answer them. You can write what you want to write. Here's something you can quote, This is foolish and irrelevant."

This and other considerations (e-mails and web site information) for AVB and One Time Blind drama group was made available to the eldership of the Senatobia congregation. The eldership of the Senatobia congregation was invited to discuss this information; but, they chose not to accept the invitation.

Those who oppose this type of action are quick to offer objections to

what the Bible teaches congregations must do to warn of false doctrine and those who proclaim it.

Possible objection #1. “What about the autonomy of the Senatobia eldership? What right do you have to “interfere” (using their word) in their youth rally?” Each congregation is under the oversight of the local eldership. The Lord’s church is not tied by any type of denominational

or ecclesiastical organization; but, there is a fellowship between congregations. The Lord prayed that unity, based upon truth, would exist among all Christians, not just within the local congregation (John 1:7). However, when a congregation brings in those who teach doctrines not found in the Bible, the basis of that fellowship has been negated. John reminds us of the parameters of that

[NOTE: Below is an Editorial that appeared in the October, 1999, issue of *Vigil*. It speaks of the **Homewood Church of Christ** in Birmingham, Alabama, and also “Christ’s Church” where **Fred McClure** preaches.

“HE THAT BIDDETH HIM GOD SPEED...”

Our hearts are sad. By the time this issue of VIGIL is in the mail it will have already happened. The wife of the pastor of **Christ’s Charismatic Episcopal Church** in Fairfield, a lady from **First Baptist Church** in Opelika, a lady from **Shades Mountain Baptist Church**, a lady from **the Church at Brook Hills**, and one from the **Central Church of Christ** in Tuscaloosa will have spoken at a ladies’ conference sponsored by Christ’s Church at Birmingham. Participating also will be the drama team at **Cathedral of the Cross**. All proceeds will benefit **Christ’s Church building fund**. This conference will have been conducted in the facilities of the **Homewood Church of Christ** in Birmingham, unless the elders of that church change their minds and decide to take a stand against that which is clearly out of harmony with the Scriptures. Remember, this article is being written before the fact, and it is not too late for that eldership to withdraw its permission for “Christ’s Church” to use its building. I have personally talked with two of the elders and urged them to do so.

The use of those from denominational churches in such a gathering amounts to endorsement of those denominations. Second John

10-11 commands, If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

What is called **Christ’s Church** was formerly known as **the inner city church of Christ**. In all fairness let it be noted that this ladies’s conference is not an activity of the Homewood Church of Christ, but the Homewood church is doing the very thing the inspired writer said in the above-quoted verses not to do. It is receiving them into its house and thereby bidding them God speed.

The use of the name “Christ’s Church” suggests the members of that church wish to distance themselves from the church of Christ. I am glad they do, if they have forsaken the distinctive teaching of the New Testament, if they consider themselves as nothing more than a denomination among denominations, if they are bidding God speed (and they are) to those who teach error that damns men’s souls, then I hope they will stop calling themselves the church of Christ. Churches of Christ have been known as a people of the Book. Since these brethren have forsaken the Book, thank God they no longer will seek to be identified with churches of Christ!

Not only are these brethren sinning in bringing in false teachers to teach, but they are sinning also in seeking to finance the work of the church in some way other than by the contributions of its members. For years those in the denominational world have used various methods of raising money to support their religious activities. In the

Lord’s church we have pointed out time and again that God’s plan of finance is stated in First Corinthians 16:2: “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*”

Should I be surprised that the Homewood elders are allowing this unscriptural ladies’ conference to be conducted in the meetinghouse of the church at Homewood? I suppose not. After all, we have seen the Homewood church bring in teacher after teacher who is associated with the change movement in the church. We have seen the evangelist of the Homewood church promote the **Willow Creek philosophy** of church growth, and participate in “**Jubilee**,” a tool of the Liberal element in the church. We have read in the bulletin of the Homewood church that members of the church today have supernatural spiritual gifts. We have observed an article which argues there is nothing wrong with quartets, trios, and duets in our worship assemblies even though the Bible does not authorize such. We have seen the announcement in the Homewood bulletin of a woman’s coming to speak to a mixed audience on Monday night.

We have stood by idly as these things took place. The time has come to speak out. Perhaps we should apologize for not speaking out sooner.

I pray the Homewood church will do an about face, and return to the soundness that characterized that great church when I first moved to Birmingham.

*Bobby Duncan, deceased
4207 Adamsville Parkway
Adamsville, AL 35005*

fellowship: *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...”* (1 John 1:6-7). Paul commands: *“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”* (Eph. 5:11).

The Bible provides an example of the eldership of one congregation involved with other congregations. The church at Jerusalem, in Acts 15, wrote letters to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia and the autonomy of those churches obviously was not disturbed. The action of our eldership and the other congregations as well, is not a hostile takeover bid nor does it in anyway interfere with the autonomy of the eldership at Senatobia; it is exactly what the Bible commands should be done (Rom. 16:17-18).

Possible objection #2. “All you are doing is causing trouble and sowing discord and division.” Unfortunately, more and more people are holding to that view; but, what does the Bible say who causes the division and discord? In 1 Kings 18:17-18 we are able to read this same complaint charged against the prophet Elijah: *“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.”* Ahab tried to pressure Elijah into believing that he was the troubler of Israel and all the while it was Ahab’s evil message and practice which caused the division. Christ warned us that division would come (Matt. 10:35-36). But the division comes from acceptance of error and not from applying the truth.

Possible objection #3. “What about the problems that you have at Coldwater? You must think you are infallible (or without sin).”

When we read the words of Christ as He commanded men to beware of false prophets and to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, to which sinlessly perfect people was He speaking? When Christ commanded

to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24), to which sinlessly perfect people was He speaking? When Paul commanded the church at Rome and at Ephesus and in Galatia to mark, reprove, rebuke and when Jude commanded that we are to earnestly contend for the faith, to which sinlessly perfect people were they speaking? No one has a claim of sinless perfection; but, we do have an infallible standard – the Word of God and we can know the truth (John 8:32).

No one has ever come to me after I have preached a sermon and said: “You have no right to tell people what the Bible says about salvation because you have sinned in your life.” Why then, will we pick out other Bible passages and say we have no right to obey them unless we are infallible? Could we not say that those who make this argument are themselves claiming infallibility by the same standard? If not, why not?

Possible objection #4. The suggestion has been made, “What if they don’t teach any false doctrine at the youth rally, what would be wrong with supporting them?”

Repeatedly the Word of God warns about having fellowship with those who teach erroneous doctrine and we cannot limit this association only in the presence of false teaching. Is it being suggested the fellowship of which the Bible prohibits is valid only the moment the false doctrine is being spoken and then, at the end of the sermon, it’s okay to fellowship the one who taught false doctrine? Surely not!

To invite a man who knowingly teaches false doctrine to come and speak is an endorsement of the error he espouses (2 John 9-11). Additionally, it is giving a false pretense that man is a sound, faithful preacher. Paul commanded the Corinthian Christians: *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* Later he commands: *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate”* (2 Cor. 6:14,17).

Unity among God’s people requires disassociation from those who do not speak the same thing, and those who cause division by not speaking the same thing as found in the Bible (1 Cor. 1:10). Even though Lot did not participate, he vexed his

righteous soul with the unlawful deeds of those around him (2 Peter 2:7-8). Those who failed to distance themselves from Korah, even though they did not participate in his evil were considered guilty (Numbers 16:26,32-33). The psalmist realized the dangers of associations with those who have done wrong (Psalm 26). Guilt by association is something that God recognizes and we should too.

My dear friend, I take no joy at all in preaching this sermon. But, even if our elders did not ask me to present this material, I would have done it. The eldership of the Lord’s church bears a tremendous burden and I am thankful for all faithful elderships and congregational leaders and I am grateful for our elders. It is not easy to take the stand that has been taken. The elderships and leaderships of the congregations who defend the truth endure the uncalled for, unkind, unscriptural, and many times personal criticisms for their faithful action.

Paul declared that we have the obligation to obey them which have the rule over us and submit ourselves to the authority of God (Heb. 13:17). To speak against God’s faithful elders is to speak against God (Num. 16:11). That is not to say that if you have a question, you cannot come to the eldership and discuss your question with them; that invitation is always extended; but there is a difference between asking the eldership a question and going among the congregation and planting seeds of discord and division. Of our elders, we are *“...to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves”* (1 Thess. 5:13).

I have tried to keep my attitude and my actions in constant view of what the Bible demands of me as a Christian and as a Gospel preacher. In today’s society of selfishness, this stand is not popular. However, if we will remain loyal and true to what the Bible teaches and do so with the proper motivation and attitude, we will not please many men; but, we will be pleasing to God.

You are loved, Lennie Reagan
Coldwater Church of Christ
bulletin, Jan. 23, 2000
PO Box 321
Coldwater, MS 38618 →

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ELDERS OF THE SENATOBIA, MISSISSIPPI, CHURCH OF CHRIST

Below, we have enclosed an open letter which has been sent to the elders of the church of Christ meeting in Senatobia, Mississippi. Sadly, letters such as this one must be sent when congregations cease following the old paths and begin to follow the paths paved by men. The leaderships of the congregations who signed the letter met on Tuesday, January 4th, 2000 at the church building in Coldwater, Mississippi. The elders of the Senatobia congregation, who had previously been provided information regarding the participants of their upcoming youth rally, were invited to come and discuss with concerned brethren, the upcoming event. They declined to come and meet with their brethren. In fact, they had been approached on three occasions before the meeting, yet refused to come and meet. **The letter you see below is being published this week by all the congregations who signed it – either mailed in their weekly bulletins or in copied form for the members of that local congregation.** It is a sad day in Israel when this must be done – but it must be done for the purity of the Gospel and the body. We take no personal satisfaction in doing this, nor do we rejoice in this effort. However, we value our allegiance and obedience to God above any and all ties on earth. Our prayer is that the elders at Senatobia will repent, canceling these who teach contrary to the doctrine and cause division by doing so. We pray the members will take the opportunity to seek truth, which can be found.

– David B. Jones

January 10, 2000

To: The elders
 Senatobia Church of Christ
 PO Box 488
 Senatobia, MS 38668

Dear brethren,
 We regrettably decline to accept

an invitation to be a part of “Insight 2000,” on January 28-30, 2000. Among the reasons for not being able to support this effort are the views held by those used on this program. Fred McClure is a speaker on the Jubilee (he spoke in three sessions on last year’s program). The Jubilee is well known for being a tool of liberalism for the “change agents” within the church of Christ. Also, brother McClure is a minister for “Christ’s Church” (earlier known as the “Inner City Church of Christ”), in Birmingham, AL, which just recently used such false teachers as the wife of the Pastor of Christ’s Charismatic Episcopal Church in Fairfield, a lady from First Baptist Church in Opelika, a lady from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, etc., in their “Ladies Conference.” The proceeds from this event were to benefit “Christ’s Church” building fund.

The drama group, “One Time Blind” constantly fellowships denominational groups. At least one of them (he was the only one asked), doesn’t know whether or not mechanical instruments of music are scriptural. Yet, they are invited to teach our children! Acappella Vocal Band has the unscriptural practice of imitating the sounds of mechanical instruments in addition to their singing. God’s word says “sing” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Also, John wrote; “Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: be he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (III John 11).

God plainly tells us, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11), and “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

Sincerely,
 Leadership, Antioch Church of Christ, Coldwater, MS
 Eldership, Central Academy Church of Christ, Batesville, MS
 Eldership, Coldwater Church of Christ, Coldwater, MS
 Leadership, Courtland Church of Christ, Batesville, MS
 Leadership, Crocket Church of

Christ, Senatobia, MS
 Eldership, Independence Church of Christ, Independence, MS
 Eldership, Looxahoma Church of Christ, Senatobia, MS
 Leadership, Nesbit Church of Christ, Nesbit, MS
 Eldership, Southaven Church of Christ, Southaven, MS

**15TH ANNUAL
 “SEEK THE OLD
 PATHS”
 LECTURESHIP
 THEME:
 DANGERS FACING
 THE CHURCH
 (Changing Views)
 JULY 23-27, 2000**

CONTRIBUTIONS

Donald White.....	\$60
Woodrow Hoyman.....	\$12
Jimmy L. Clark.....	\$10
Anonymous.....	\$25
Seibles Road Church of Christ, Montgomery, AL.....	\$300
Charles & Nancy Verkist.....	\$50
Barbara L. Farley.....	\$95
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$50
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Anonymous.....	\$50
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Lonnie Barnett.....	\$20
Louis Francis.....	\$5
Anonymous.....	\$10
John H. Brown.....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$30
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$150
Beginning Balance.....	\$2,249.97
Postage.....	\$855.26
Paper.....	\$1,026.40
Contributions.....	\$1,227.00
Ending Balance.....	\$1,595.31

WHO SHOULD LEAD OUR WORSHIP?

Chuck Northrop

God has always expected those who lead in worship and service to be faithful to Him. Sadly, that is not always the case and some are even advocating and encouraging those that are unfaithful to be leaders. Those that advocate such argue that if we give responsibility to the unfaithful, they will become faithful. They say if we get them to teach a Bible class, lead a prayer, or serve on the Lord's table that will get them to attend. Brethren, that is getting the cart before the horse.

Paul's purpose in writing his first letter to Timothy was *"that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God"* (1 Tim. 3:15). These words do not apply just to Timothy but to all fellow workers in the household of faith. Paul wanted Timothy to know how Christians ought to behave in the church so that he could instruct the church in these matters.

Concerning men who lead in worship, Paul writes, *"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"* (1 Tim. 2:8). First, notice that Paul's instruction does not merely apply to the worship assembly but to worship wherever and whenever it is offered. Because of the context, we can be sure that prayer is used as a synecdoche ("a figure of speech by which we speak of the whole by a part...") —Dungan) representing all five avenues of worship. Second, notice that the instruction is given to men (males as opposed to children and women). Finally, notice that there are three specific conditions placed upon men who lead in prayer or more generally worship.

The first of these conditions is that men pray *"lifting up holy hands."* What is being stressed here is not the posture of prayer. *"Lifting up holy hands"* is a figure of speech denoting moral purity and holy living. The person doing the leading of our worship is to be the kind of person whose life is a reflection of holy living. The

prayers of a person who persists in sin is not heard (Isaiah 59:1-2; Micah 3:4; 1 Peter 3:12). Brethren, let us be sure. A person who willfully sins by forsaking the assemblies (Hebrews 10:25-26) persists in sin and his prayers are not heard by God. Brethren, do we want someone to lead us in worship whose prayers are not heard beyond the four walls of our church buildings?

The second condition is that men pray *"without wrath."* This denotes a disposition of the mind. A man that leads in worship should not have such a disposition that displays anger towards God, His provisions, nor His commandments. Further, he should not exhibit anger towards his fellow Christian nor his fellow man. The reason for such is found in James 1:20 which says, *"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."*

The third condition is that men pray without *"doubting."* The one leading us in worship ought to do so believing that his worship will come before the throne of God. In this way, his worship is offered in faith (James 1:6). Jesus taught, *"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"* (Mark 11:24). Surely, we would not want a man to lead us in our worship that does not believe that God will accept our offering of *"the sacrifice of praise"* (Heb. 13:15).

The principle that God expects those who lead in worship and service to be faithful is clearly demonstrated in scripture. Concerning the training of men to preach, Paul writes, *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Tim. 2:2). The gospel is to be deposited in *"faithful men"* who will not betray the charge to *"preach the word"* (2 Tim. 4:2) and who will deposit the same truths in other faithful men. In this way the succession of teachers would be sustained. However, if the

deposit was made in the unfaithful hoping that they will become faithful, the succession of teachers would likely fail.

In the list of the qualifications of deacons, Paul writes, *"And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless"* (1 Tim. 3:10). The word *"proved"* means tried or tested. Only after men have been tried, tested and proved are they qualified to serve as a deacon. The unfaithful have been tested but they have failed the tests and, thereby, are not qualified to serve. In Acts 6, a problem arose in the church in Jerusalem. The Grecian *"widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."* To solve the problem, the twelve apostles called upon the disciples to seek out seven faithful men to take care of these widows. The apostles did not call upon the disciple to find some unfaithful brethren to care for this situation hoping that it would make them faithful. The solution was not found in the unfaithful but the faithful for it is the faithful who will be faithful in their responsibilities. Jesus, in the parable of the talents, taught that those who use their talents faithfully will be rewarded with greater talents and those that are slothful will have their talents removed (Matt. 25:14-30). Because the faithful stewards were *"faithful over a few things,"* the Lord will reward them by giving them charge over many things (Matt. 25:21,23).

Brethren, if a man will not be faithful in a lesser responsibility such as attendance, why would we think that he would be faithful in a greater responsibility such as serving on the Lord's table, leading in prayer, or teaching a Bible class? In stark contrast to those who advocate giving greater responsibilities to the unfaithful, Jesus taught, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much"* (Luke 16:10).

MAIL BAG



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

mined to create difficulty in our Lord's church. I am certainly not opposed to women, nor to the woman being a useful servant in our Lord's kingdom. And, I thank God for all those good ladies in the church who find a great blessing in fulfilling the role that God gave them to play in the church. We would be in a world of hurt without them. May God continue His blessings upon them. Let us all pray that we can determine and follow the will of God for His kingdom in this century — and that peace and harmony will again be found in the great fellowship of believers in our time. In Christ" ...**Carroll Sites, Higden, AR.** The letter reads... "You may have heard recently of some of the changes the **Malibu Church of Christ** has chosen to make in its worship "method." As of last Sunday, the Elders of the Malibu Church of Christ announced that women would be allowed into a much more active role in the leadership of worship. Women will now be allowed to lead prayer, serve communion, take the offering, and offer the communion meditation. No specific mention was made about whether this change would be extended to include the homily or song leading. The Eldership of the Malibu church has been doing research and study on this subject for the last three years. The research has led them to the course of action which they are pursuing. It is my personal belief that Dr. Fran Carver, and a group of women from the Malibu church also had an influence on this decision. They have very recently become very vocal on campus about the abilities that have been granted to women. It is their belief that a woman should be able to lead prayer in a church service just as a man. I am not sure of my feelings on this particular decision. My gut reaction tells me to stay with what I have been taught from baptism. My mental reaction tells me that perhaps I should study and question and seek. Then perhaps my answer will be a little better founded. Either way, as brothers and sisters who are serving in the church in other locations, I believe that you will be faced with this question in the next few years. What is the role of a woman during a church worship service? Yours in Faith" ...**end of letter.** "We would very much like to receive your publication *Seek The Old Paths*. We were given the December '99 issue and were very impressed with the contents" ...**Steve & Linda Horton, Odessa, TX.** "I would like to thank you for the soundness of your publication and the fact that you are willing to expose false teachers. So many in the brotherhood are unwilling to do this in fear of being accused of being 'judgmental.' I have to keep studying to keep myself grounded in the truth and not be lead astray by the ones wanting change throughout the brotherhood. Again, thank you for *S.T.O.P.* and your willingness to stand for the truth" ...**Debbie Walker, Valdosta, GA.** "Dear brethren, every time an issue of *S.T.O.P.* comes I am anxious to sit down and read it from cover to cover. It is so good to read on the correspondence page that so many more are asking to have the paper mailed to them. For the ones who ask to be deleted, there is only sorrow. It is very sad that people don't choose to be fed the meat from God's Word. Liberalism is worse than the anti movement because so many well-known preachers have turned from their once sound speaking and are leading thousands into what is nothing less than denominationalism. The Lord's church is the way of truth and we have to be able to teach, hear and live all of it. May God bless all of you in doing that" ...**Name withheld.** "What a wonderful work you all are doing at East Corinth! I appreciate you sending me the tapes from the lectureship. We don't have the opportunity to attend lectureships in this area and these lectures are feasts for the soul! I received my box in today's mail and can hardly wait to begin listening to them. Thank you very much for your generosity. Please, accept my heartfelt thanks once again. My prayer for you and the saints at East Corinth is one of great blessings from our loving Father" ...**Beverly Williams, TX.** "I have been receiving your papers over the past years, and enjoy them very much. At the present time I know of only three churches in Northwest Ohio that are standing for the truth — things are bad! Keep the good work up" ...**Harold Driver, Bowling Green, OH.** "I always look forward to your publication and pray you continue to stand on solid ground" ...**Dorcas McLeod, Lucedale, MS.** "I am writing on behalf of my husband, Garnet Hale. He receives your publication "*Seek the Old Paths*" and enjoys studying it and the excellent material on your web

site. He has shared the publication with fellow church members who would like to receive copies" ...**Mrs. Hale, Wayne, WV.** "We continue to appreciate you and the good brethren in Corinth who stand upon the inspired Scriptures" ...**Jerry Brewer, Elk City, OK.** "Please remove Meadowbrook Church of Christ from your mailing list" ...**Tom Perkins, Jackson, MS.** "I am a happy reader who has benefitted from the quality articles which I read in *STOP*. I will continue to remain a proud reader of *STOP*. The articles are helpful and meaningful; as its editor I commend you in your work" ...**Dustin Forthun, Poplar Bluff, MO.** "Keep on keeping on. We need a newsletter like this one to keep us aware of what to watch out for in the Lord's church today. Thanks" ...**Neoma Haskin, Old Spanish Trail church of Christ, Tucson, Arizona.** "I cannot thank you enough for sending me this information. You are saving people's souls. God bless you and your efforts for His sake" ...**AL.** "Dear brother Light: I agree with you. Thanks for the article in this months (Feb/00) *Seek The Old Paths*. I have traveled from Alaska to Florida to Texas to California and the Carolinas and its hard to find a faithful congregation. I think it's a wonderful thing you're doing exposing those unfaithful congregations. I think it is a trend in this country now. When men leave the Bible, it's the most fatal mistake they will ever make in their life. They go to college and gain a lot of knowledge and they think they are wise, I'm here to tell you they just get stupid. There is only one wise God and he is the Father of wisdom. Any wisdom we get must come from God's word. There is no wisdom in man's institutions. The Lord's church must come back to the Bible. Thanks for the encouragement. In Christian love" ...**E. Y. Mock.** "We are visiting a little congregation in LaFeria, TX. They are trying very hard to stand for the truth. The preacher here would like to have *Seek The Old Paths* publication sent to him, if you could send at least 10 copies he would appreciate it" ...**Ken and Shirley Barnett.** "Please add me to the mailing list for "*Seek The Old Paths*." I understand that it is one of the last reliable publications printed. Thank you" ...**Al Rupert, Dayton OH.**

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

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