

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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WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

Matthew Carver

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the central pillar of the Christian faith. Paul readily admits such when writing to the Corinthian saints. *"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then [is] our preaching vain, and your faith [is] also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith [is] vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Cor. 15:13-19).

The number of those who would deny the resurrection account and affirm the truthfulness of the implications given above as submitted by Paul is growing at an alarming rate. Further, the number of those abandoning religious belief altogether is increasing (see Lyons, "Non-religion On The Rise In America:" apologeticpress.org/articles/240476). As Christianity becomes further derided as a religion of ignorance and superstition, it is maintained that Christians have no legitimate reasons to believe what they do. Rather, the contention goes that everything a Christian believes must be taken on an unsupported and unsubstantiated faith.

Believers in Christ must therefore be prepared to meet these challenges. They must be prepared to cogently explain the evidence supporting their Christian beliefs. How, then, are we to begin our defense of the very nucleus of our faith? Or, to ask a question that many skeptics continually pose, "Why should we believe in the resurrection of Jesus?"

There are several historical facts upon which the vast majority of New Testament scholars, both believing and skeptical, agree (see Habermas, G. & Flew, A.G.N. (1987), *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers). These facts can be gleaned from the Bible, which therefore makes this method of study most preferable. An exhaustive list will not be given here, nor will the items listed be given an exhaustive treatment. They are submitted merely as an introduction to the study and as an encouragement to further pursuits along this line.

First, **the resurrection of Jesus was "proclaimed" from the very beginning by those who were eyewitnesses to the risen Lord.** According to the report of Paul to the Corinthians, after being resurrected from the dead, the Lord *"...was seen of Cephas; then of the twelve"* (1 Cor. 15:5). Again, he reports that the Lord *"...was seen of James; then of all the apostles"* (1 Cor. 15:7). As for himself, he states, *"and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of*

due time" (1 Cor. 15:8). So, then, as we hear the testimony of the apostles we are in fact hearing the testimony of those who were eyewitnesses to the facts attested. To what did they give witness? Luke writes, *"and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 4:33). Of Jesus, Peter declared, *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it"* (Acts 2:23-24). On another occasion, the same apostle preached, *"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses"* (Acts 3:14-15). Further examples of the early proclamation of the resurrection can be found in Acts 4:8-12 and Acts 5:29-32.

What, then, is the importance of this early message with respect to the historical truthfulness of Christ's resurrection? The importance lies simply in the fact that these men, from the very beginning, made the resurrection of Jesus the absolute basis of their message. There was no time for legendary embellishment or

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Why Should We Believe?...



Editorial...

WORSHIPPING GOD IN ONE PLACE #2

Garland M. Robinson

SPLITTING/DIVIDING OUR ASSEMBLIES

A practice of dividing or splitting our assemblies has crept into the body of Christ in recent years. It is a practice that was done among the denominations; and, as often is the case, it was borrowed from them by some churches of Christ and incorporated into their church services. Instead of the whole church assembling together in one place to worship God on the Lord's day, some divide into smaller groups and conduct services. This is sometimes called "children's church," "youth worship" or "junior worship." It is also sometimes referred to as "children's bible hour." While the adults are having their worship, the young people meet in another part of the building and hold their service. This requires adults to be taken out of worship in order to conduct the young people's services.

Various "reasons" (excuses) are offered as to why the worship assembly is divided: 1) the children disrupt the worship service, 2) the young people can learn better if they have a service conducted on their level, 3) this is a learning period so they can be taught what adult worship is, etc. etc. The motive in dividing the worship assembly may proceed from a good intention, but is it scriptural? Is it authorized? Is it done according to a "thus saith the Lord?" The answer is a resounding NO. It is not authorized! This is a classic example of an oft stated fallacy, "the end justifies the means." Supposedly, the end result is that the young people will be trained so they can one day be brought back into the main assembly. But what better place to be trained how to behave than in the worship assembly of the saints? The Lord has not authorized dividing the Lord's day worship assembly, regardless of the motive or intent.

If a congregation can divide the

Lord's Day worship assembly into two groups that are conducting worship services simultaneously or parallel to each other, then they can divide the worship assembly into as many groups as they desire. And sadly, some have even done so. They have followed this unauthorized path to its logical conclusion.

Shall we segregate the couples with children from the couples without children? What about those with special needs? Can they be singled out so they can meet and worship together where their particular needs are addressed? What about those who have earned degrees in higher education, wouldn't they benefit by worshipping with those who share their level of academics? If so, then what about those with a High School Diploma or an eighth grade or third grade education? Shouldn't they worship together? Men have needs peculiar to them and women have unique needs too. Shall they be divided and each worship in their own assembly? Wouldn't the farmers deserve their own assembly. What about factory workers or stay-at-home moms? Where will it all end? If two groups can, then all groups can.

Once brethren become accustomed to dividing the assembly, before long they'll decide it's not necessary to go to the meeting house with the rest of the saints anyway. Such has led some to form "house churches." Consequently, you have small groups meeting all over town or all over the county. Are elders authorized to oversee "mini-churches" (house churches)? It's not even practical and certainly not Biblical. Some like going to the lake or camping, so "off they go." They want to enjoy their time in the great outdoors and marvel at God's creation. They don't think twice about forsaking the assembling of the saints because they don't do much assembling anyway. They'll borrow some unleavened bread and fruit of the vine from

church and have their own worship service. And, by the way, one of the elders will be along with them. Could not the golfers, hunters, fishermen, sight-seers, and "I-can-worship-at-homers" do the same? If not, why not?

Brethren, there's nothing wrong with enjoying the outdoors or engaging in morally upright activities, but we ought to plan our trips while being mindful of the Lord's church. We ought to seek out the church where we're going to be and make plans to assemble and worship with them. Wherever Paul went, he found the church and worshipped there (cf. Acts 9:26; 20:6-7).

The practice of dividing the assembly for worship on the Lord's day is sowing the seeds of the local church's own destruction. Carried to its logical conclusion, every group can decide to meet wherever they want, conduct their own church service and feel good about it. Consequently, there's no longer a need for the local church with elders, deacons, preachers and members (cf. Phil. 1:1). The work of the local church is destroyed because there's no longer a common church treasury and no elders to oversee the flock. Each group pacifies themselves because they gave a few minutes on the Lord's day to think about Jesus. Once that is dispensed with, they can get on with what they like to do and don't have to worry about being challenged to grow and being responsible, mature, working members in the kingdom.

EXAMPLES OF THE PAST

Ancient Israel was instructed by God through Moses when they were about to enter the land of Canaan. This instruction was for the whole congregation of Israel: men, women and children. "When *all Israel* is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before *all Israel* in their hearing. Gather the people together, *men, and women, and children, and thy stranger* that is within thy gates, that *they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your*

God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. (Deut. 31:11-13)

Though there is a supposed “generation gap” between the young and the old, God’s will was for Israel, a type of the church, to have periods wherein they *assembled together*. The young need to learn the ways of the Lord and God saw fit to include them in certain assemblies. Vital instruction is given in these assemblies — the old are reminded of the word of the Lord and the young are taught it. The young can learn. They can learn from the adults. This was God’s will. They were to assemble together.

When Israel had conquered a portion of the land, Joshua assembled Israel together in one assembly and “...read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before *all the congregation* of Israel, with the *women*, and the *little ones*, and the *strangers* that were conversant among them” (Josh. 8:34-35).

The masses gathered to see and hear Jesus. Thousands are mentioned in Matthew 14:21, “And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and *children*.” Didn’t these people know the children could not understand Jesus? Oh yes they could understand! What a tragedy it would have been had the children been put off by themselves and missed the opportunity to see and hear Jesus.

The church at Troas came together to worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:6-12). They did not have a parallel service for the young while the adults were having their worship. The young people were present. Verse nine says that among their number was a *young man* named Eutychus who had “...fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing [him] said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. ... And they brought the *young man* alive, and were not a little comforted.”

The example of the church in Corinth gives a great deal of infor-

mation in regards to worship. The Scriptures are so plain and specific that they cannot be ignored. God knew men would one day divide the worship assembly, so He refuted the practice nearly 2,000 years ago. The apostle Paul made clear that all men should know that the things he wrote are the “commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37).

The assembling of the whole church together was not just the practice at Corinth, it was the common practice taught everywhere, as stated in 1 Corinthians 4:17. Notice the many verses which speak of their “coming together” into “one place” to worship (1 Corinthians chapters 11 & 14).

11:17, “Now in this that I declare [unto you] I praise [you] not, that ye *come together* not for the better, but for the worse.”

11:18, “For first of all, when ye *come together* in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.”

11:20, “When ye *come together* therefore *into one place*, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.”

11:33, “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye *come together* to eat, tarry one for another.”

11:34, “And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye *come not together* unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.”

14:23, “If therefore the *whole church be come together into one place*, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?”

14:26, “How is it then, brethren? when ye *come together*, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

Whether correcting their abuse of the Lord’s supper or the exercise of spiritual gifts, one thing is common — they *all came together into one place* to worship. They did not divide into groups and segregate their number.

James 2:2 gives an example of the church assembling together when he wrote, “...if there come unto your *assembly*...” Thayer defines the Greek word translated “assembly” as: “...a bringing together, gathering (as of fruits), a contracting; an assem-

bling together of men.” The assembly of which James spoke was the common meeting of the church. It was the “gathering together” of the members of the local congregation. The saints united in their worship to God by assembling together in one place as one group and offering their adoration and thanksgiving in unison. There can be no other conclusion drawn from the very definition of the word James used.

Hebrews 10:25 specifies the same uniform teaching. “Not forsaking the *assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” The church can’t assemble in separate groups. If they divide, they’re not assembled; and, if they’re assembled, they’re not separated!

Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines the verb “assemble”: “1: to collect into *one place* or *group*: convoke 2: to fit together the parts of — vi: to meet together: convene.” The same dictionary defines “together”: “1a: in or into *one place*, *mass*, *collection*, or *group* b: in a *body*: as a *group*...”

If there’s three or five or ten (or more) in a family and an order is given to assemble, how can that be done if the whole family is not together — assembled in one place? How can a local congregation come together into one place on the Lord’s day and not be together?

The “good book” specifies that the whole church come together into one place on the first day of the week and worship God (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23).

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Why Should We Believe...

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for councils to assemble and concoct a false message with which to deceive the public. As Peter says in his second letter: *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty”* (2 Peter 1:16).

Second, **the resurrection message was “believed” from the very beginning.** When confronted with such a contention as this, one may not be overly impressed. After all, for every claim extant in the world there seems to be someone to believe it. However, the unusual facts surrounding the reception of the resurrection as fact from the very beginning stand to make it the more historically certain than any other far-reaching and incredible claim that we are prone to disbelieving today. These considerations are as follows.

Luke records that some 3,000 souls responded to the Gospel only two weeks removed from the ascension of the Lord (Acts 2:41). As time progressed and the circulation of the Gospel increased, the number of disciples grew to 5,000 (Acts 4:4). The magnitude of the apostles’ success would be entirely unbelievable if the body of Christ still lay in the tomb. Keep in mind that these converts were made in the very city in which Jesus was crucified. Certainly many of these men and women had seen the Lord during His personal ministry on the earth. Perhaps several had actually witnessed the crucifixion. How, then, could such men and women still believe this message of a risen Savior? If the message of the apostles was not compelling enough, could they not investigate for themselves to determine the truthfulness of their claims with but little trouble? Would not the apostles fear this very procedure if they knew their message to be false? Despite the ease with which their message could be disproved and exposed, it never was! As Luke reports, multiplied thousands believed. The only conclusion that can be drawn that explains the available information is that these men and women came to truly believe

that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised.

Third, **the conversion of two early skeptics supports the veracity of the resurrection.** The two most prominent early skeptics of the Lord’s resurrection became two of the most prominent Christians in the early church. James was the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19). However, of the Lord’s brethren (brothers) it was said, *“For neither did his brethren believe in him”* (John 7:5). In spite of this, James, as described by Paul, came to be regarded as a pillar in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). Why the sudden and drastic change? Paul records, *“...he was seen of James; then of all the apostles”* (1 Cor. 15:7). This striking reversal of James’ belief respecting his brother is best explained when the resurrection is accepted as true.

More remarkable than the conversion of the Lord’s own brother, however, was the conversion of the Lord’s greatest earthly foe. Saul of Tarsus, in his own words, stated regarding himself, *“and I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women”* (Acts 22:4). Again, he says, *“I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9). What, then, changed the convictions of this militant unbeliever? Again, his own words provide the answer. *“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest”* (Acts 22:6-8). From this moment onward the history of Christianity, along with the history of the world, changed in dramatic form. The newly converted Paul could later say of himself, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20). What other plausible explanation might there be for one of Christianity’s greatest enemies transforming into one of its most

ardent proponents if the resurrection never occurred?

Finally, **the establishment and perpetuity of the church declares the reality of the resurrection.** It is an undeniable point of history that the church of Christ was established (Acts 2). It is further incontestable that it has persisted for almost 2,000 years. However, a view of the Biblical data reveals that the church of the Lord did not begin until after His death (cf. Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4,41). The significance of this lies in the test of divine origin as submitted by one of the church’s early antagonists, a doctor of the law known as Gamaliel: *“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God”* (Acts 5:38-39). How, then, do we reconcile the perpetuity of the church with the atheistic contention that Christ never rose from the dead? I submit that such reconciliation cannot occur. The best and fullest explanation is that Jesus truly rose from the grave, thereby fulfilling His own prediction, *“...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. 16:18b).

For these reasons and more that could be named, all Christians have a broad platform upon which to affirm the historical veracity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are other objections which the skeptic may offer that fall outside the range of this article, but these proofs are given that we might be prepared to intelligently discuss with the doubting and the inquiring the reasons we have concerning *“the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15).

As the peerless apostle to the Gentiles wrote in the long ago, *“...take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Eph. 6:13).

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SELF-CONTROL

Douglas Hoff

Christianity is a religion that emphasizes self-control. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). To deny self requires subjecting one’s will to that of God. This means that the disciple needs to have the attitude the Lord expressed when he said, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). To deny self certainly requires control of one’s desires.

Sadly, there are many who have never learned to practice the virtue of self-control. Paul spoke of some unmarried and widows who might not exercise self-control (1 Cor. 7:8-9). When Paul addressed Felix “...he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). He was right to be afraid because his life was one of wickedness and immorality. Proof of this is seen in the next verse where we learn he was hoping Paul would offer him a bribe to release him from custody. His thoughts were evil and it appears he did not desire to control himself.

Christians are commanded to develop self-control in their lives (2 Peter 1:5-7). Doing such makes one able to bear fruit in the Lord. Failing in this regard makes the person vulnerable to false teachers who turn the grace of God into a license to sin (2 Peter 2:18-19; Jude 4). Peter said that developing self-control is intimately connected to the knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 1:8). Thus, it should come as no surprise that self-control is included in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

What is necessary to develop self-control in a person’s life? One thing is learning to control what you think about. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it [are] the issues of life.” Obviously, the word heart in this verse is not referring to the blood pumping

organ in the chest, but the mind of man. What a person thinks about will determine what kind of person he is or will become (Prov. 23:7). Jesus put it this way: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34).

The old saying, “garbage in, garbage out” is very true. If a person wants to live a holy life with self-control, he must fill his mind with things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Paul said to meditate upon these things. In other words, fill your mind with the good and it will push out the bad.

Self-control is developed when a person learns to control his thinking. Far too many never reflect on their thoughts. This is why they fail to change for the better. They are at the mercy of the bad thoughts in their minds. The Lord taught that overt sins arise from the motives that prompted the action. For example, adultery is a sin that arises from lust in the heart (Matt. 5:27-28). To prevent adultery, the lust must be removed. That is why Jesus said, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29). He did not mean that a person should literally pluck out his eyes. He is teaching that one needs to control his thoughts. The impure needs to be cut out and replaced with pure and holy thoughts. This is the heart of self-control.

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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]

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Elder's COLUMN

PROBLEMS FACING THE CHURCH #1

James W. Boyd

*The church faces problems that come from within
and from without its ranks.*

*Our lesson will center attention on problems
that we create for ourselves and come from within.*

This is not a lesson that makes one happy. The very subject is unpleasant. We do not consider it in order to express pessimism nor create depression. But we must face certain realities as we serve the Lord. We are going to consider some problems facing God's people in our time, not so much concentrating on specifics as with general problems that give rise to many aggravating situations and circumstances. Specific problems usually come from larger issues that must be recognized and corrected before the specific matters can be rectified.

Who would dare set himself forth as an expert as if he knew all the problems facing the church? Most of us are only aware of things in a relatively small area of the world compared with the church over all the world. Furthermore, a problem in some localities may not be the case in other places. Each locality may have its own peculiar set of problems, but often they overlap. We wish to consider some matters that are probably characteristic of brethren in many, if not most, places.

It is nothing new for the church to face problems. It has been that way since Pentecost. This is not said to minimize the seriousness of problems, but only to help us get and keep things in perspective. We need to be aware of problems, but we should not think that merely being aware of them will correct them or cause them to go away. But if we are ever going to do something beneficial in correcting problems, we must first become aware of their existence.

The church faces problems that come from within and from without its ranks. Our lesson will center attention on problems that we create for ourselves and come from within.

Often, these are by far the most difficult ones.

IGNORANCE

There is among brethren a growing ignorance of the Bible. This is not being judgmental in an evil sense. It is to observe what is the case. It seems that so many in the church, young and old, have such a wide lack of knowledge, even of fundamentals. This is serious, seeing the emphasis in the Bible on knowing what the will of the Lord is. The Word provides the evidence upon which our faith is founded. Lack of knowledge of the Word can only mean a weak faith.

We are to study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15), but it is evident that many members of the church neither study nor show much interest in Bible study opportunities afforded them by the local congregations.

Even though Jesus said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4), so many place such importance on the material side of life to the neglect of the spiritual side that they do not learn His Word. Jesus taught, "*Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). Yet, so many do not search the Scriptures as did the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11). As in the days of ancient Israel, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6).

When members of the church know the Word of God, they will not only remain faithful, cannot be led astray by the whimsical manners of men, but will be aggressively active in doing the will of the Lord.

Without knowledge, there will be weak faith, no guidance, disapproval

from God, dangers of apostasy, and loss of salvation. Christianity is a taught faith (John 6:44-45).

THE WAY IT WAS

Churches of Christ were once known as a Biblically informed people. It would not be fair to so characterize the church generally that way now, even though there are many who know the Word. There has been an emphasis on academic degrees alongside a de-emphasis on "*thus saith the Lord*" in preaching and teaching. Some who preach are trained in religion generally, but not in "the faith" of Christ. Opinions of religious authors and theologians are more in vogue than the inspired writings of Scripture. Human literature, human wisdom, human reasoning are taught in classes rather than the Word. We have become a people that follow men all too often rather than learning from the Bible the way of God.

This drift has been accomplished under the guise of being more relevant for today, as if God's Word is not a sufficient guide for today. In some churches, if there is any Bible study at all, it is more from what some men have concocted than what the Holy Spirit has revealed. What a contrast to speaking as *the oracles of God* (1 Peter 4:11) and *preaching the Word* (2 Tim. 4:1-4) as Paul instructed Timothy to do.

CONFUSION

The result of this trend toward ignorance has been more language of Ashdod (cf. Neh. 13:23-24), imitation of denominationalism, unsound and uncertain sounds, non-Biblical doctrines, division, confusion, apostasy,

digression, and a general disrespect for the Word itself. When you realize that the law of sowing and reaping is still operative, it is frightening to consider what is happening and will happen to the future generations as we see the church becoming less and less like the New Testament church and more and more like the ways of men around us.

A major problem that has arisen is confusion over what is the work and mission of the church. You would think this would never be the case among us. You would think in light of the teaching that Christ came to save the sinner (1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10), the church is His body (Eph. 1:22,23), the Gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), that it would not be difficult to determine the work of the church as spreading the Gospel to the saving of the lost. Especially ought we understand this since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

We also must be reminded that what we do must be authorized by Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). The written Word is the source of that authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17). So many brethren seem to have ignored the need for authority because they look longingly toward doing what denominations do. We are not left to do just anything and everything somebody wants to do. We have a work that is to be done, a distinctive work of the church, and we must confine ourselves thereto.

WRONG GOALS CREATE PROBLEMS

Some, in order to get numbers and finances, have shifted the drawing power from the Gospel, to recreation and social reform without conversion to Christ. Some have gone wholesale into entertaining, providing fun and games for every age, secular education, baby sitting services, political actions, even joining the world in demonstrations for first one cause then another. The work of the church is the spiritual salvation of mankind through spiritual reconciliation with God.

I once heard a man spend fifty minutes of a so-called sermon urging the congregation to put his college in their budget. Since when did it become the work of the church to provide tennis courts, science laboratories, gymnasiums, etc. for schools?

Some seem to think that if they throw in some Bible classes alongside everything else that this justifies the church financing the whole scene! We only ask for Biblical authority for such as that before we accept it.

INDIVIDUAL/COLLECTIVE

One manner used to confuse the work of the church is to contend that whatever a member of the church can do, the entire church can do collectively. The fallacy of that is that there are duties the individual has that are not always parallel with the duties of the body, the church. Even though the church is made up of individual members, everything the indi-

vidual does is not a part of the corporate work. It is perfectly acceptable for the individual to conduct a profitable business, but not the church. The idea that the church can do whatever an individual can do is false doctrine that has taken millions of dollars from the treasuries of churches that was given for the work of the church, but used in areas of activity where the funds should not have gone, and the work of the church is abandoned to that extent. Some have spent huge sums on recreational facilities while missionaries go begging. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

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(Part 1 of 2)

REVEREND

Earl B. Claud

Wearing "man made" titles takes honor away from Christ and gives it to man.

The word "Reverend" is often added to a preachers name to designate his position in a church. We also see the words Pastor, Father, Master, Rabbi and Worshipful Master used in various religious groups. What does the Bible say about men wearing such titles?

Jesus said, "*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ*" (Matt. 23:8-10). The Psalmist wrote, "*He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name*" (Psalm 111:9). The English word Pastor is never used in the New Testament in reference to just one man. It is only used once and it is plural (Eph. 4:11). Pastors were also called elders. There was always a plurality of pastors/elders (Acts 14:23).

These verses are easily understood and show there is no place for titles in religion. Jesus tells us why men wear such titles. "*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*" (Matt. 23:11,12). When men accept the titles of Reverend, Holy Father, Father, Pastor, Rabbi or Master, they stand opposed to the teaching of Christ. When you find churches that have men wearing these titles you know they are not following the teaching of Christ.

We would hope that all Christians would be satisfied to be brethren and never be exalted by wearing "man made" titles (Matt. 23:8). Why not be satisfied to be just a Christian (Acts 11:26). Wearing the name Christian gives honor to Christ who deserves to be worshipped.

Wearing "man made" titles takes honor away from Christ and gives it to man. Jesus is the one who deserves our respect and worship (Phil. 2:9-11).



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

the congregation I attend as well as elders of congregations around me. I am hoping they will order the paper for their congregation. One congregation is more than 250 members. We have a preacher here that has literally destroyed a congregation that was once very strong. He uses the NIV in the pulpit. The preacher rules, if you have ever heard the statement. He will have to be stopped if it survives. The walking Bibles that we did have in the past are slowly decreasing and will continue if somebody doesn't stand up. The Foy Wallaces and Robert Taylors won't be here to help. Foy Wallace has already gone. We need your prayers and help. There's an older preacher in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that highly recommends your paper. I have a copy of an article that he wrote that was in the Gospel Gleaner in the 70s or 80s. That paper must not be in print anymore. There are several people in this area that receive STOP, thanks to brother Bob Spurlin. He used to preach at the congregation I attend. He would put a paper at the back. He ask everyone to sign their name and address to receive these sound papers like STOP. He was one of the best. He was fired for no reason. His daughter was killed in a wreck. The next day he was diagnosed with M.S. He wrote several books and continued to preach with the help of the computer. He has been a great man in the Lord's work. You can print any part or all of my comments. I only ask that you not use my name or area. It will hinder my efforts in fighting this evil of versions" ...**AL**. "Thank you for this paper. We both read it and love the truth in them and praise the day Carolyn Coleman sent my name to you. We pray your work will help many more" ...**M/M Carl Bayne, Dalhart, TX**. "We still enjoy STOP better than any other and would love to have one sent to our daughter and a good friend" ...**Charles & Gail Coulter, Lexington, TN**. "Keep up the good work" ...**Everett Poteet, Imboden, AR**. "T. J. Phillips has passed away" ...**Ruston, LA**. "Please remove me from the mailing list as I can read it now online. I enjoy the paper. I can save you some money by reading it on the internet" ...**KY**. "Brother Robinson, Here is a check that I hope will help a little to pay some postage or whatever is needed. Keep up the good work for the Lord. We need it. The world needs it" ...**Charlotte Rauchie, Bartlett, TN**. "A friend of mine gave me a copy of *Seek The Old Paths*. I really enjoyed it. I would like to get on your mailing list to receive it every time it's published. We need more things like this to read and pass along to others, believers and non-believers. I am a member of Bainbridge Church of Christ in Bainbridge, Georgia. It's always good to find Christian articles to read. I like reading and studying. So many churches of Christ are changing, but not for the best. Some are bringing in too much of the world. I'm from the old school. I think we need to stick with what God's Word says. Keep up the good work. Thank you" ...**Lavada Allen, Bainbridge, GA**. "I am writing to request a friend be put on your mailing list to receive the publication, *Seek The Old Paths*. He is a fellow Christian and would enjoy the lessons taught in this publication. I have received this publication in the past and have enjoyed reading and studying from it. Thank you" ...**Pamela Jones**. "My father, **Bill Graddy**, passed away in December and I need for you to take him off your mailing list. Thank you" ...**North Little Rock, AR**. "Mary Barnes passed away" ...**Winfield, KS**. Patsy V. Cox passed away" ...**El Paso, TX**. "Enclosed is a check for the good publication you publish" ...**Corrine Young, Columbia, MO**. "We would like very much for the monthly STOP to be sent to us. Here is our donation to defer the expense. May God continue to bless you and your work" ...**Dale & Oleta Eyberg, Fernley, NV**. "I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths*. Thanks and may the Lord bless and keep you and yours" ...**Sheldon Wright, Newcomerstown, OH**. "Please remove Garnett L. Randolph from your mailing list. He has passed on to his heavenly reward" ...**Chattanooga, TN**. "With the ease that I can view *Seek the Old Paths* on the internet and the rising costs to you

"I would like several copies of the November edition of STOP. If December continues the article by Robert Taylor Jr. on the versions, I would like extra copies of that. These are as good articles as you will read trying to make people aware of what is happening to the church. I will use some of the original copies to give to the elders of

for mail service, I am requesting that you stop mailing the publication to my address. Thank you for your service" ...**IN**. "Maurice Johnson, Jr. is deceased. Please remove from mailing list" ...**Elkton, VA**. "I would like this all to be anonymous. Would you add a name to your mailing list? If you have any Feb/2011 issues left, please send some. I gave mine away. The article on the *Hate Crimes* law is very informative. Keep up the good work" ...**OH**. "I would like to thank you for these news letters. They are uplifting and resourceful" ...**Keith Lause, Lima, OH**. "Jerry Ash is deceased" ...**Loves Park, IL**. "Please change my address. I enjoy your paper. Thanks" ...**Rita Anglin, Clinton, AR**. "I've read one of the *Seek The Old Paths* monthly papers and really enjoyed it. I would like to receive it monthly if I could. Thank you very much" ...**Janet Christopher, Trenton, GA**. "I appreciate your stand for truth. The Bible is the most beautiful, perfect, complete book ever written. It has all the answers for the human race. Keep up the good work" ...**Lisa Swift, Morgantown, KY**. "Thank you very much" ...**Cheryl Stephens, Tupelo, MS**. "Please send the monthly publication of *Seek The Old Paths*. I received it and want my friend to have the great publication also. I thank you very much. Keep the good work coming" ...**John Bowlen, Bloomfield, IN**. "This is to commend Lloyd Gale's article on 'Dual Citizenship' in the Feb/2011 issue. I am so happy to see teaching of this type, which hopefully will urge Christians to pay attention to what is going on in the world. We need to get out of the church pews and become involved in our government and be the 'salt and light' in a dark world. Preachers seem to be fearful of mentioning what is happening concerning abortion (4,000 plus babies murdered each year). They will not preach on homosexuality which is condemned by God. They will not urge Christians to contact their Senators, Congressmen and others in federal and state governments to see that laws they pass are Biblical. I look forward to seeing more articles such as this" ...**Riceville, TN**.

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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