

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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THREATS TO GOD APPROVED LEADERSHIP #2

Tom House

If the leader will use the knowledge of the Word which he is supposed to possess, such will provide him the instruction to discipline himself and end the self-imposed threats which lend themselves to the weakening of the Lord's body.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WHICH THREATEN GOD'S APPROVED FORMS OF LEADERSHIP?

The approach to this subject may seem somewhat unconventional when you take into consideration the number of lectures and articles which have been delivered or written on this or similar topics. It would be somewhat redundant to reexamine what so many others have so adequately covered. Most of the previously mentioned efforts have examined the problems from without; i.e., the problems of denominationalism, liberalism, anti-ism, etc. And yet consider, with all that has been spoken and written on these and similar subjects throughout the years, why do these problems and threats continue to persist? In the estimation of this writer, the responsibility of the perpetuation of these problems falls squarely in the laps of those who are leaders in the Lord's church. Is it the fact that the leaders are unaware of the mass of teaching which has been focused on these existing threats to purity of truth and authority? Not likely. Hence, the threats which perpetuate these problems and threaten to undermine God approved forms of leadership, are likely to exist from within the leaders

themselves.

First, and foremost, among things which threaten to undermine God's leaders would be the **lack of conviction on the part of the leader or leaders**. A leader without conviction is incapable of fulfilling an assigned mission, and thereby jeopardizes all who are to be involved in the mission for the following reasons:

1) One without conviction, more often than not, greatly suffers for the lack of consistency. Consider the lack of consistency in *Aaron* (Exodus 32). He assists Moses in leading the people out of Egyptian bondage, and then in the wilderness, submits to the whims of the people and forms a golden calf for the people to worship. Had he possessed true conviction, would he have made such a blunder? Likewise, the judge *Eli* loses his credibility as a leader because of his lack of consistency evidenced in the manner in which he trains his own sons (1 Sam. 3:13). King *Saul* evidences his lack of conviction as a leader when as one with the power to fulfill God's commands by virtue of his position as king, submits to the will of the people in clear rebellion of the command to completely destroy the Amalakites (1 Sam 15). In the New Testament, *Judas* will manifest his lack of consistency when he chastises

Mary of Bethany for using a costly ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus under the auspices of being concerned for the poor. The text reveals, however, that Judas was not concerned for the poor, but "was a thief" (John 12:1-6).

2) The lack of conviction usually yields to the ever-dangerous spirit of lawlessness. Lawlessness is a manifestation of one's lack of self-discipline and serves as a breeding ground for hypocrisy. Lawlessness is bred of weakness, and typically yields to those not in authority, the ignorant, and the otherwise unqualified leader, including women.

3) A leader without conviction usually possesses a certain degree of gullibility, in that, when error is being advanced in some manner, he may be easily led to believe that it is acceptable. As a consequence, this type of leader will be the 'pied piper' who will lead the flock into apostasy. Paul warned the Ephesian elders there would be some of their own number who would "...arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). A faithful leader with conviction will serve as a valiant shepherd when the

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Threats...



Editorial...

BIBLE AUTHORITY IN PRACTICE #1

*Authority is necessary for
EVERYTHING
we do! No exceptions have been found
concerning this Bible principle.*

In Matthew 21:1-18,23-27, Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time before his death. This event is commonly called the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. When he went into the temple, he saw the corruption of those who bought and sold and he overthrew the tables and ran out all the animals and merchants. The next day, as he was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came unto him and asked: "...By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"

Jesus addressed their question of authority by clearly showing that authority comes from either heaven or men. Therefore, the issue of authority is certainly a subject that people today need to address as well. By what authority do we meet on the Lord's day? By what authority do we sing and pray and teach? There are several relevant points that people everywhere need to learn from the text of Matthew 21:23-24.

AUTHORITY IS NECESSARY

The Lord's people are obligated to live so as to please God. We learn from Hebrews 11:6 that it is impossible to please God without faith and that we "...walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

The chief priests and elders recognized that authority was necessary. They ask Jesus, "By what authority doest thou these things" (Matt. 21:23)? The way many people act today is that they have never heard of the principle of authority. When it comes to religious activities, authority is the farthest thing from

many people's minds. When we ask the simple question of authority in regards to religious activities, they act like we're crazy! According to them, there is no standard except what one feels within their own heart. There has always been those who did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6).

God demands we have authority for all we say and do. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." To do something "in the name of the Lord" means that we act "by the authority of the Lord" — as the Lord has authorized. When the police come to your door and say, "Open in the name of the law," we understand that means "by the authority of the law." When Peter and John healed the lame man in the Lord's name, they did so by the Lord's authority (Acts 4:7-10). It is in Jesus' name that we will be saved (Acts 4:12). It is in His name that we will be judged (John 12:48).

The Scriptures are filled with examples of the necessity of authority.

Cain and Abel (Heb. 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), Abel had to offer according to the instructions or authority of God. For Cain's offering to be rejected, he offered that which was not according to faith, i.e., his offering was not authorized.

Noah and the ark (Gen. 6:14-16). Had Noah changed or ignored any of God's instructions, he would not have followed God's authority. Men may ridicule and mock the example of authority, but that does not change the truth of it.

Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2). These priests had no authority to offer fire that did not come from the altar. However, they offered "strange" fire (unauthorized fire) and paid for their sin with their lives.

King Saul and the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3-23). Saul was not authorized to offer a sacrifice. He offered one anyway and was rejected by God.

God has always demanded respect for his Word!

JESUS IDENTIFIED TWO SOURCES OF AUTHORITY — ONE APPROVED AND ONE NOT APPROVED

Not just any authority is adequate. Many look to the pope, the church, the pastor, a creed, council, synod, conference, or 'wherever' for authority. It's not enough to say, "I like it," "I want it," "It makes me feel good," or "It does a lot of good." Our concern must be what "God likes," "what God wants," "what pleases God."

Jesus asked the priests and elders concerning the baptism of John and by what authority John baptized (Matt. 21:25). Jesus summed up the issue of authority in this simple question. Authority either comes from heaven or it comes from men. The consequences of the answer to this simple question are profound. If one's authority comes from heaven, it stands approved of God. If one's authority comes from men, it stands condemned of God.

Do you want to be approved or condemned by God? The answer is simple. We desire to be approved of God. The answer is so obvious that even a child can understand it. Therefore, we must refuse to participate in practices that are not authorized in the Bible, but instead are based on human authority! "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). Human teaching (the doctrines and commandments of men) makes worship vain/useless (Matt. 15:9,13). If we desire God's approval, we must abide in the teaching/doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). God's curse rests upon those who teach differently (Gal. 1:6-9).

Human wisdom is not what pleases God — we must worship Him according to His will, not our will,

because man cannot direct his own affairs (Jer. 10:23). The Bible clearly shows that God's ways are not man's ways (Isa. 55:8-9). Though many ways "seem" right to man, we know that only God's way is right (Prov. 14:12). To be approved of God, men must trust in the Lord and not depend on themselves (Prov. 3:5-6).

God tells us exactly what he wants and he does so in the Bible! God's Word is complete and contains all of God's will (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We displease God when we teach and practice things not taught in the Bible!

GOD USES THREE METHODS TO EXPRESS HIS WILL OR AUTHORIZE CERTAIN ACTIONS

A Direct Statement. This is a clear and plain statement or command to do a certain thing. For example: "*Repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins...*" (Acts 2:38). "*Now we command you brethren...*" (2 Thess. 3:6). A direct statement is that which the Bible explicitly states.

An Approved Action or Example. There are instances in which God does not expressly tell us to do a thing, but gives instances of Christians doing that thing with his approval. For example: eating the Lord's supper on the first day of every week is an approved example (Acts 20:7). This example is valid because of the underlying command to eat the Lord's supper found in Matt. 26:26-29. Giving of our means on the first day of every week is an approved example (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The Lord's work (the work of the church) is to be financed through the free-will offerings of its members. There is no authority in the Scriptures for fund raisers. We have no authority to beg from the public to do the work God has given us to do (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

An Implication or Logical Conclusion. A certain truth may not be expressly stated, but follows from what is stated — it is implied. It is just as authoritative as if God said it specifically. What God implies is not man's assumption or reading into a thing. It is what the Bible teaches. What God (the Bible) implies is sure and certain. For example: We teach the truth when we say that Lot went down into Egypt, even though the

Bible does not say that he did. It does say he came up out of Egypt (Gen. 13:1). He could not have come up out of Egypt unless he had gone down into Egypt. The Bible implies this. Matthew 19:9 implies that one who has "put away" their mate because of their mate's fornication can remarry with God's approval. Mark 16:16 implies that infants cannot be baptized — since they cannot believe, they cannot be baptized.

If God has not authorized an action by one or more of these three ways, then we have no authority to act. Authority is necessary for EVERYTHING we do! No exceptions have been found concerning this Bible principle.

WE MUST HAVE BIBLE AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF EXPEDIENCY

An expedient is an action which expedites or helps carry out an obligation God has given. When God has authorized an action and told us HOW to do it, we have no option but to do it THE WAY he said do it. In many cases, God has not specified "exactly how" a matter is to be car-

ried out. We have the command, but he didn't tell us how to do it. We may then proceed in any way in accordance with our best judgment so long as it does not violate the general instructions of Scripture.

How LIMITED we are regarding a practice, depends on whether God used "specific" terms or "general" terms to express his will. When God uses specific terms, it would be sinful to proceed in a way other than the way God said. God gave Noah specific instructions regarding the dimensions of the ark, one window, one door, etc. Noah would have sinned if he had not followed those instructions. When God uses general terms, man can use several alternative choices in carrying out the obligation. For example, Noah could use hammers, saws, etc. in building the ark.

The area of expediency is far reaching in application. It is the ground upon which we have authority for: church buildings, baptisteries, song books, PA systems, multiple communion cups, chalk boards, etc. We must have authority for everything we have and do!

part 1 of 2 parts

18th Annual "Seek The Old Paths" Lectureship July 17-31, 2003 "What God Has Joined Together" East Corinth Church of Christ

Lessons include:

**Baptism & Salvation, Jesus the Lion & Lamb,
Love & Commandment Keeping, Christ & the Church,
Husband & Wife, Worship in Spirit & in Truth,
The Vine & the Branches, Faith & Works, Grace & Law,
The Broad Way & Destruction, The Narrow Way & Life,
Sin & Death, The Goodness & Severity of God,
Prophecy & Fulfillment, Service & Sacrifice, Faithful
Children & Proper Training, Death & Judgment, and
many more.**

News Brief...

From Freddie Clayton, Dunlap, TN...

We certainly do not mention the following in order to advertise, support or endorse it, but to keep you informed of the rampant liberalism/modernism at **Lipscomb University**. They are fast approaching the day when they will hardly be recognizable as once being associated with members of the church of Christ.

The Hazelip Biblical Preaching Seminar is scheduled for May 12-14, 2003 at Lipscomb University's Center for Spiritual Renewal. The announcement of this event says: "Preaching and Evangelism" is the theme of this year's conference, which will feature one of the nation's foremost authorities on preaching. Dr. **Fred Craddock**, the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament (emeritus) at Emory University, will conduct a preaching workshop for participants. Other speakers in the seminar will include Randy Harris and Mark Love, Abilene Christian University; John Mark Hicks, Lipscomb University; and Chris Seidman, Dallas, Texas.

WHO IS FRED CRADDOCK?

Lipscomb says: Some background on our Breakfast Speaker, the Rev. Dr. Fred Craddock. Newsweek Magazine named him as one of the twelve best living preachers. The fact that fellow clergy consistently vote him one of the most outstanding preachers of our time says much about his stature. Dr. Fred B. Craddock is minister of Cherry Log Christian Church in Cherry Log, Georgia. He is Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, Emeritus, in the Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Much sought after as a lecturer, he has delivered the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale, the Scott Lectures at Claremont School of Theology, the Adams Lectures at Southeastern Baptist Seminary, The Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, the Cole Lectures at Vanderbilt, the Westervelt Lectures at Austin Presbyterian Seminary, the Mullins Lectures at Southern Seminary and Earl Lectures at Pacific School of Religion. Dr. Craddock has traveled the World giving lectures in many Countries.

How did this "reverend," "dr," "denominational," "sectarian" preacher

get invited to Lipscomb? Why are they so excited to have him come? Does Steve Flatt know about it? If he does, what will he do about it? Is he leading the school in the paths of righteousness? Where's any evidence of it? Mounds, piles and stacks of evidence all point to the school's continual departure from the "old paths." When was the last time they had a sound Gospel preacher for such a program? Don't expect it to happen!

To get answers to the above questions, I wrote **John York** (an associate professor of Bible at Lipscomb who was listed as the contact for more information and also one of the preachers at Rubel Shelly's Church at Woodmont Hills). My note said... "Could you please tell me who is responsible for the selecting of Fred Craddock to participate in the preaching seminar?" His reply was... "Yes, I work with several other people including the President in deciding which speakers to invite. In this particular case, I personally made the invitation (with the permission of my superiors, of course) and I'm am delighted that Fred can come. We've had a much greater response to our seminar this year than in any previous years and I'm sure that is directly attributable to people's interest in hearing Dr. Craddock. Hope you can come! JOY"

After receiving the note from York, I wrote Steve Flatt saying... "I am Freddie Clayton. I met with you for an hour not long after you assumed the position of President and supplied you with documentation as to the direction of such as Jeff Walling and others with whom you had fraternized. You told me to give you a year or two to turn things around. Remember? Instead of recognizing Walling as detrimental to anybody, especially the young, you now have him there at Lipscomb three or four times a year it seems. A year or so later when I contacted the number attached to an announcement about the youth workers university concerning a "pastor" from Hawaii, I was told that "he is a Christian, but he just doesn't go to the church of Christ." I later found out there were other sectarians on that program and had been 2 or 3 times before. Then 'contemporary Christian concerts' began as part and parcel of what was offered on the campus of David Lipscomb University. What would be next? Now we receive

information that the Hazelip Preaching Seminar will feature a sectarian preacher. After writing John York as to who was responsible for this he said it had to be cleared from above him (that would include you), that he was responsible and that with Fred Craddock on the program, interest is higher than before. Brother, are these things examples of turning things around? Please at least try to explain what in this world is going on with you at the helm."

To this date, no word has been received from Flatt or any others.

From Jerry Brewer in Oklahoma...

This will come as no surprise to those who know the Quail Springs "Church of Christ" in Oklahoma City, but, just as I suspected, this church is participating in Billy Graham's "Mission Oklahoma City" which will be conducted in June, 2003. The following comes from their website: "Quail Springs Church of Christ is participating in Billy Graham's Mission-OKC from June 12-15. There are many outreach and evangelism opportunities that will be offered through this ministry." (www.quailchurch.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi)

Many will remember that Quail Springs is the congregation which fellowships the Quail Springs Baptist Church each July in a "Faith and Freedom Festival." A number of faculty and administrators from Oklahoma Christian University are members at Quail Springs. When the fellowship with the Baptists began, Kevin Jacobs, former President of the school was a member there. I don't know where the new president is a member.

From Kenneth Thomas in Tennessee (edited by Freddie Clayton)...

The comedy routine by Bud Abbot and Lou Costello has delighted many for generations, but that is not our concern here. Our desire is to provide information that should cause alarm and sadness among right-thinking brethren everywhere. I am writing about a recently found website: <http://churchathletics.faithsite.com>. The purpose for this site is said to be "Covering Nashville Area Church of Christ Athletic Leagues."

From links to this page you can

find the following churches participating in at least one of the four softball and/or basketball leagues: Antioch, Bellevue, Belmont, Brentwood Hills, Community, Creive Hall, Donelson, Goodlettsville, Granny White, Harpeth Hills, Hendersonville, Hermitage, Hillsboro, Jackson Park, Northside, Madison, Mt. Juliet, Rivergate, Riverwood, Rural Hail, Smith Springs, Tusculum, West End, Western Hills, West Nashville Heights, White House, Wingate, Woodmont Hills, and Woodson Chapel.

The list above includes those who extended an invitation to and supported the Billy Graham crusade (i.e., Harpeth Hills, Smith Springs, Woodmont Hills) showing their affinity for denominationalism, and those who opposed such a sinful extension of fellowship. It includes those (Belmont) who left the faith decades ago and who claim present day miracles with their own in-house “apostle” (Don Finto) and those who know the falseness of such a claim. It even includes a church (Hendersonville) and the very ones who split that congregation and formed (the Hendersonville) community church. Is it not possible that the platform of ecumenical agnosticism promoted by the now dead “Jubilee” will find greater acceptance with the youth through ball playing? The “commissioners’ of the “Nashville area Church of Christ Athletic Leagues” are (1) Softball commissioner, Pat Waggoner, (2) Men’s basketball commissioner, Mike Bray, and (3) Junior High and High School basketball commissioner, Lee Hickerson. Clearly, “who’s on first?” also means “who’s tending the flock?”, “Who’s kidding whom?”, and for far too many it may mean “who cares?”

Copied from the monthly bulletin of the Dunlap church of Christ, “Bulletin Briefs” edited by Jim E. Waldron Dunlap TN 37327.

**From Mark McWhorter
in Alabama...**

Quoting (**The Christian Chronicle**, February 2003, pg.34, *Bible Education Vital to Children as They Travel Life’s Rocky Road by Bailey McBride*) we read: “One indication that the church has minimized attention to Bible school is the fact that few congregations have a staff member whose responsibility is the education ministry. ... Most churches rely entirely on volunteers to handle all the matters of education for the church. The goal of educating a church to know the Bible,

to grow in faith and to deal with the moral and spiritual issues of life is too big for people who are volunteers. A trained, capable person must organize the spiritual education of the church. Without the continual development of program to teach the Bible so that God becomes a personal reality to each member and so the history of God’s working with mankind from Adam through the Apostle John is as familiar as family or national history all the other ministries will eventually fail.”

“I think the church would be stronger in the next 20 years if a few large congregations would work together to develop and eventually subsidize the publication of a Bible curriculum that takes children from the nursery through high school. The materials should be developed and tested as thoroughly as possible so that the planners can be sure they are teaching the great principles and lessons that will lead children to a life-sustaining faith. I realize that some churches have devoted the time and resources necessary for planning a strong curriculum, but I don’t know of a single congregation that has tested and revised the materials so that outcomes are clear.”

I join Mr. McBride in his concern for the Biblical literacy of this generation and following generations. However, I believe he has missed the boat with his solution. We do not need a brotherhood curriculum. All this would lead to is the same failure that the denominations have with their publishing houses. His statement that volunteers are not capable of creating and teaching a Bible curriculum is astonishing. Does he believe that for almost 2000 years the church has missed the boat on this? Where does God command elders to find “trained educators” to organize Bible curriculum and departments? This is the same kind of thinking that has led to the belief that young people need a “trained youth worker.” Schools are now giving degrees in Youth Ministry. This will eventually lead to congregations requiring a degreed person to work with their youth. Already we have congregations requiring a Bible degree to preach. Next to come will be Mr. Bailey’s Education Director’s degree.

I am not against education and higher degrees. But we are rapidly sliding toward a professional clergy system in the church. That will only lead to apostasy. When it is believed that a man is not qualified to preach and teach until he has been ordained with

his degree, then there is a clergy-laity system.

Bob Spurlin (who has been bed-ridden since 1995 with MS) has written another book entitled “Don’t Ever Give Up.” It will be off the press soon and will include subjects like: Losing a child, Losing a spouse, The trouble with human suffering, Suffering a bedridden existence, Challenge of a caregiver, Facing disorderly children, Trouble in the modern family, etc. There are thought questions at the close of each of the 13 chapters. The cost is \$11.50 (postage paid), \$300 for a case. You can order these from: Bob Spurlin, 2101 Glenwood Dr. SW, Hartselle, AL 35640, (prechteach@aol.com).

CONTRIBUTIONS

M/M Charles Dinkins.....	\$100
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$50
Frankie Lou Bailey.....	\$40
Saks church of Christ, Anniston, AL	\$90
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M/M Ronald H. Allen	\$30
James W. Short	\$20
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Marie Barrett.....	\$15
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Edward Collins	\$5
Leland Reed	\$25
Church of Christ, Tiptonville, TN.....	\$25
Frank P. Allen.....	\$75
Ernest Armstrong.....	\$30
Glen & Tammy Isom (in memory of Wanda Lancaster).....	\$100
Don Hogue.....	\$100
Evans Church of Christ, Evans, GA	\$50
Church of Christ, Rockford IL.....	\$25
Robert Price (booklet maker).....	\$200
Floyd Roe.....	\$10
Anonymous.....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$90
Anonymous.....	\$300
Anonymous.....	\$65
Anonymous.....	\$160
Anonymous (booklet maker).....	\$150
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$25
Beginning Balance	3,211.48
Credits	
Contributions	1,725.00
Booklet Maker.....	350.00
Debits	
Printing.....	221.49
Booklet Maker.....	300.00
Postage.....	1,254.33
Bank expense	5.00
Ending Balance	\$ 3,505.66
Booklet Maker	\$13,500.00
Contributed.....	10,125.00
Remaining.....	3,375.00

"THE MORE I LOVE YOU, THE LESS I AM LOVED!"

James E. Farley

There is a terrible misunderstanding among people today concerning love. Sadly, this is true even among those who name the name of Jesus. Even when one speaks the truth in love, as did the apostle Paul (Eph. 4:15), some become offended and will often judge the speaker (preacher) as unloving and unkind. It happened during the days of Christ, and it happened during the times of His inspired apostles (Matt. 15:7-13; Gal. 4:16).

Some see love as overlooking error for fear of hurting another's feelings. They will claim they are opposed to false teachings and false teachers, but when one of their friends or family members is associated with some false teaching or erroneous group, they vacillate, hesitate and waver. They love them you see, and they do not want to see them hurt. Never mind these false ones are leading countless others straight to hell fire because of their counterfeit ways. They don't really love all the others. In fact, they don't really love the one they claim to love; they only have fond feelings of friendship for them. What these have is not real love at all, but some sort of emotional and subjective sentiment. Real love always sounds out a warning of danger!

The Word of God says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Real love is action. So, let us notice some actions of true loving ones.

Real love caused Jesus to say, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

Real love caused the Lord to answer the scribes and Pharisees with, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:7-9). It is true that those who heard this were offended (Matt. 15:12); however, true love motivated the Lord to say of them, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

It was love indeed that caused the righteous Stephen to exclaim, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

True love is why Paul wrote as he did in Romans 16:17-18, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Love, real love, is what motivated Paul to rebuke and reprove the Galatians with, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth" (Gal. 3:1)? It is what caused him to call names so that others might be warned of false teachers (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 4:14).

Yes indeed, these were loving ones and their words and actions proved it! Still, some perceived them to be mean and even vicious with their words and actions. They could not help this, for no one can control the perceptions others may have of them. We must know our motivation, and we must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). We must have love for God, for Jesus Christ, for the church of Christ, for the Bible, and love for the souls of men and women everywhere. We must also proclaim the Word of Truth with boldness (cf. Acts 19:8-10; Eph. 6:18-20). There is no contradiction in speaking the Truth in love and in a bold manner. But some will perceive you as unloving and as a trouble maker when you do. The real trouble-makers are those who pervert the Gospel of Christ and lead people away from the Truth of God (Gal. 1:6-10; 1 Kings 18:17-18).

It seems when we love people enough to strongly warn them of error, they love us less and less. Paul wrote, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). It has always been so. It will always be so.

Threats...

(Continued from page 25)

devil's 'wolves' are threatening the flock. Paul writes to Titus concerning the fortitude which should be possessed of those who are leaders, and states that they are to hold "fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped..." (Titus 1:9-11). Clearly, when a leader possesses conviction, he is one who is stable in his faith and in his work (1 Cor. 15:58).

4) Also, the lack of conviction will usually be accompanied by a lack of good sense. Consider Solomon's son, Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12. Upon the death of his father, he comes to the throne of Israel. His subjects came to him pleading for relief from the excessive labor and heavy taxation. Rehoboam consulted with the older and wiser men who advised him to lighten the burden and the people would respond to him favorably. However, the king also consulted with the young men among whom he had grown up, who advised him to increase the burden on the people. Bear in mind, that any conviction which is deemed to be of any value, is based on knowledge and wisdom. The older men possessed such knowledge, the younger did not. Rehoboam hearkened to the council of the younger men, and as a consequence of this lack of common sense, the kingdom divided with ten of the tribes departing. This scene sadly depicts many similar scenarios in various congregations of the Lord's church today, where the lack of common sense in its leaders in listening to the unlearned, inexperienced, and the unwise, have caused those congregations to weaken by virtue of its division.

5) The lack of conviction will, as well, give way to the spirit of compromise. The child of God should never "...give place to the devil..." (Eph. 4:27). A leader is not to compromise with the 'gainsayer,' he must 'convince' him, and 'stop' his 'unruly and vain' deceit (Titus 1:9-10). Paul urged the Thessalonian brethren to

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“...stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15). For a leader to compromise the truth, clearly exposes his incompetence. A competent leader will emulate the sentiment as expressed by Solomon: “Buy the truth, and sell it not...” (Prov. 23:23). Consequently, if one possesses conviction, i.e., a strong persuasion of belief, he will not compromise that belief, but will be disposed to defend it (Jude 3).

Another formidable threat to approved leadership is **the spirit of infallibility**. It is certainly tragic to witness the problems which occur in congregations where the flock has had to endure a leader who believes he is beyond error. This is the type of individual who manifests the disposition of arrogant superiority. Paul warned of those who thought too highly of themselves: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3). In writing to the Galatians, he states: “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3). Then there was his stern warning to the Corinthians: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). One thing is certain, any person, leader or not, who believes himself to be beyond error, is already in error. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

The spirit of infallibility is many times personified by those adopting the disposition of the diabolical Diotrephes (3 John). The apostle John marked him as one who “loveth to have preeminence” (v.9). Unfortunately, there are far too many ‘leaders’ in the church today who bear the same characteristics of Diotrephes. They view themselves as ‘bosses’ or as some C.E.O. of a corporation. Sadly, the misfortune is that they fail to recognize their own fallibility, and will seldom ‘consider’ themselves when having to deal with others (Gal. 6:1). Even Paul recognized his fallibility and wrote of the necessity of having to discipline himself. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means,

when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

Finally, to be added to this infamous list, is the threat which is posed by **the spirit of materialism and worldliness**. When Paul was instructing Titus regarding the qualifications of elders, one of those qualifications was precisely aimed at this particular problem. Those who qualify to be elders cannot be “greedy of filthy lucre” (Titus 1:7). The word ‘greedy’ is from *aischrokerdes*, which means ‘sordid gain.’ The terms in this passage clearly indicate the person whose primary disposition is the possession of money and material gain. This is the type of person who will stoop to most any means to obtain personal gain. The obsession with wealth usually is connected to a thirst for some element of power and recognition. Sadly, there are those who are elders who possess this disposition — an attitude usually readily apparent, particularly when handling the Lord’s money. More times than not, these individuals are identified as having sole interest in hoarding the Lord’s money, even to the point of considering the money as their own. It would seem evident that they are not concerned with spiritual things, only material.

These leaders should recall the warning of Paul regarding the evil which is harbored in the “love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10). As leaders of the congregation, elders should be mindful of the Lord’s condemnation of Laodicea, whose primary problem was materialism (Rev. 3:17). The reader should ask, “What was the reasoning for the sad Biblical epitaph of Demas?” His departure from the Lord’s service was based in his love for the present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Rather than possessing the disposition of ‘greediness,’ Paul admonishes all Christians to “seek those things which are above...” and to “set your affection on things above” (Col. 3:1,2).

CONCLUSION

The reader may need to be reminded of the basic theme of the article, and that is the “THREATS” which are posed and may be imposed upon those who are our leaders. Remember, a threat is the realization of an impending danger that usually

manifests itself in some obvious form. The Bible teaches that we should be aware of Satan’s “devices.” The threats to which we have referred are obviously ‘devices’ of Satan. Brethren, we have been made aware of the devices; now let us do what is necessary to end the threats. Though, to some, the threats are recognized, others will ignore them or will find some reason for justifying in their mind that it is nothing about which one should be concerned. The ironic thing is, there are those among us who are consistently sounding out these warnings, but many of the church’s leaders only seek to silence those who sound the warnings rather than ‘stop the mouths’ of the deceivers (Titus 1:9-11).

The leader of the Lord’s flock has been designated as a “shepherd” (Eph. 4:11 — ‘pastors,’ from *poimen*, meaning shepherd). To set the proper perspective of the subject discussed here, a shepherd should be concerned about threats to the flock. If our shepherds were more concerned about the security of the flock, there will be less concern for self-promotion. If the leader will use the knowledge of the Word which he is supposed to possess, such will provide him the instruction to discipline himself and end the self-imposed threats which lend themselves to the weakening of the Lord’s body.

Paul’s admonition to Timothy serves as an appropriate ending. May our leaders apply these words: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:1-7).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

college that I had always heard was the "closest place to Heaven." Even though I was raised in a conservative congregation, I had not heard many strong sermons to teach against what I was hearing at Harding. Eventually, I compromised so I could fit in. I started using a NIV Bible and going to one of the most progressive churches in Searcy. In the back of my mind, I always felt that something wasn't right but I didn't know what it was. After I graduated in 1998, I then went on to other cities and became a member of progressive churches. However, in the year 2000 I was VERY blessed to meet a man that was going to the Memphis School of Preaching. He was the only one who ever had the courage to tell me what was wrong about it all. I appreciated him so much that I married him! Today, I am the wife of a VERY sound Gospel preacher and I thank the Lord everyday. When I read the article from this Harding student, I could sympathize. However, this Harding student is more grounded than I was in the fact that he/she knows that Harding is wrong. I am very proud of this student. My only concern is that if this student stays at Harding, he/she will have to be VERY strong to not succumb to the "changing winds" that are very prevalent at Harding. I am amazed that someone that is so new in their faith is as strong as this student is to KNOW that something is wrong. Something is wrong and VERY wrong. Please do not let your friends, teachers, Bible professors, chapel speakers, etc. tell you any different! God bless you!"

...Brenda Sprague, Bells, TN. "God be with you and all you do and thank you for walking in and helping us to walk in the old paths. Thanks"

...Phil Vanwinkle, Burbank CA. "Thank you all for your constancy and perseverance. Teaching the truth often generates opposition and anger from the other side, and I for one appreciate your love and patience! Here in Page, Arizona, as in many small churches in the West, there have been many difficulties. And, the fight goes on! Enclosed please find a little help to keep up the good fight, and from the church in Page. Thanks again"

...Bob Ward, Page, AZ. "Would you please add my name to your mailing list. Your choice of articles is superb for the times in which we are living. It's so good to see the word preached in its purity and simplicity. Thank you so much for the good work you do for the brotherhood"

...Ed Collins, Talladega, AL. "I'm the evangelist for the Crandon church of Christ in Wisconsin. I receive your publication and enjoy it very much. We have 12 families here who are very dedicated to the Lord and to spreading His gospel. I would like to see if you could send us enough copies so all can enjoy reading it"

...James Crawford, Crandon, WI. "I would like to express my gratitude for the publishing of *STOP*. As many others have said, it is difficult to find many to take a firm stand for the truth contained in God's word and *STOP* does just that. The efforts put out by the editor and writers of this publication are sincerely appreciated by me and my family"

...Steve Preston, GA. "Dear Brethren, I picked up a copy of your magazine at the Dillon Church of Christ, Dillon, SC, a few Sundays ago. I have really enjoyed reading it. Thank God someone is printing the truth. Would you please add me to your mailing list"

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...Walter & Glenda McAlister, Mt. Vernon, IL. "I think it is great"

...Andrew Lancaster, Albertville, AL. "I appreciate you brethren at East Corinth, and the *Seek The Old Paths* publication so very much. May God continue to bless your righteous efforts"

...Dennis Sargent, Pomeroy, Ohio. "Keep up the good work. Our congregation truly appreciates the *STOP* publication. Additionally, our congregation has begun a new effort called the Michigan Bible School. The need for solid, advanced Biblical education up here is sorely needed. We begin our first semester in January. We would appreciate your (and the brethren's) prayers on the school's behalf. God bless in future efforts"

...John Natiw, Michigan Bible School Co-Director, Plymouth, MI. "I believe your paper to be a good work and really necessary in these times. I appreciate receiving it"

...Wanda Clements, Sun City, AZ. "I enjoy and have just recently found your web page. I think you have some good and applicable articles and would like to keep them on file. Do appreciate the work that goes into keeping up this page. Thanks"

...Al Lawson. "We feel the need for more and better information to be given to the congregation on matters to do with change

"I would like to respond to "Seeking in Searcy, AR" (March 2003 issue). I am a recent Harding graduate and attended there from 1992-98. I was raised in a very conservative church in Arkansas. When I first arrived, I still wore dresses Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday and used the KJV Bible. I had an extremely hard time fitting into a

agency, the community church movement, etc. Please initiate a bundle of 30 copies. Thank you again and keep up the good work" **...Dennis Francis, Suffolk, VA.** "I appreciate the good work of the East Corinth church of Christ. Thank you for your very sound and informative publication in *Seek the Old Paths*. Thank you. God speed to you as you "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3)" **...Danny Douglas, Elizabethtown, KY.** "*STOP* is such a wonderful publication. I would like to thank you for the hard work you put into this work! I know that many help in this work for the kingdom, so I also thank them. In this world of "make me feel good, tell me what I want to hear and do not step on my toes" religion, your truthful publication is a sight for sore eyes!! Please continue to "speak as the oracles of God"! The TRUTH and ONLY the TRUTH will lead us on to "the PROMISED LAND!" May each and every soul come to the truth of God's Holy Word, now, before it is everlasting too late! May God Bless You In Every Way" **...Greg Barnett.** "We just received our latest copy of *STOP* and have read it through. All the articles are excellent. Roger Campbell's article "Response to an Inquiry About the Use of Mechanical Instruments of Music in Worship" is very good. I couldn't help but think that if this person had a thorough knowledge of the Bible then these trivial things wouldn't even have been brought up" **...Gloria Comstock, Cleveland, OK.** "Thank you for your good work. May God bless you in all you do" **...Debbie Drake.** "It is very refreshing to read the info posted on your website. In a world of so much liberalism and apostasy, I thank God for your firm stand on the doctrine" **...R. L. Clark.** "I appreciate the work you do with *STOP*. Keep it up! Your Friend In Christ" **...Ron Hall.** "Thanks for the web site. I listen to the singing and lessons" **...W. C. Chilton, McMinnville, TN.** "God bless and keep up the good work" **...Eddy Craft, Elizabethton, TN.** "I have been receiving *STOP* for about a year now and have been so impressed with the articles and the issues that it covers, and their relevancy to the church. Please add this list of names to your mailing list. Once again thank you for a great publication" **...Rodney Odom, Hohenwald, TN.**

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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