

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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WHAT IF JESUS WERE ON FACEBOOK?

Don Blackwell

When I woke up this morning, I grabbed my iPhone, turned off the beeping alarm, and immediately updated my Facebook status. On the way to school I scrolled through my friends' status updates, and again updated mine with the song that was playing on my iPod. At lunch, I took a picture of me and my friends and uploaded it via the Facebook utility that I downloaded from the app store. I'm lying in bed now with my laptop and chatting with my BFF (best friend forever) in Tennessee. Status update: "Good night all. I'll text you in the morning." Such is the day of a typical American young person.

Facebook has taken the cyber world by storm and our social lives forever in a different direction. Compete.com ranked Facebook as the most used social network in the world. According to Facebook's own stats page, there are currently more than 350 million active users and 65 million people are accessing Facebook through their phones/mobile devices. They say the average user has 130 Facebook friends and spends more than 55 minutes a day on their site.

Facebook has opened doors of communication that didn't exist in the past. It has united old friends, helped to keep families connected, and openly provided opportunities to teach the Gospel. Unfortunately, however, **not everything that Facebook has brought us is good.** In many ways Facebook is like a win-

dow into one's soul. It allows others to see his hobbies and habits. They can see everything from pictures of his vacation to his favorite songs and websites. Truly, Facebook reveals more about us than we might at first realize. Sadly, the Facebook pages of some Christians bring shame on themselves and the Lord's church.

Are there Biblical principles that should govern our use of Facebook and similar sites? Certainly! In Titus 2:3, Paul tells us that the way Christian women behave themselves could result in the Word of God being blasphemed. In First Timothy 6:1, he says that the way Christian servants behave toward their masters could result in people blaspheming the name of God. These and other passages teach us the way we conduct ourselves in our daily social affairs could result in reproach being brought upon the body of Christ. So what does this have to do with Facebook? Facebook is a "social tool," and the way I conduct myself on that particular forum could help or hurt the cause of Christ.

What if Jesus were on Facebook? I want you to use your imagination and pretend that you log on to Facebook one day, and Jesus has sent you a friend request. We know that such is not possible, but for the sake of illustration, pretend. What would you do? Would you have to stop and think before you accepted it? Would you have to look through your pictures to be sure you don't have any immodest pictures of yourself or any-

thing tasteless? Would you need to make sure you don't have any pictures taken in inappropriate places? Would you go back over your postings to be sure you haven't said anything crude or inappropriate? Would you scan through your list of favorite movies and music, and perhaps delete a few of them before you let Jesus on your site? What about the games you play? Quizzes you take? Is there anything there that would make you stop and say to yourself, "I think I'll delete that before I let Jesus on my site?" If the answer is Yes to any of those questions, then why not go ahead and take it off now? The fact of the matter is, the Lord does look at our Facebook pages! He sees everything we post on Facebook (and everywhere else for that matter). Proverbs 15:3 says, *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place keeping watch on the evil and the good"* (NKJV).

There's another part of this, even beyond the fact that God is watching me on Facebook, and that is that other people are watching me. Why does that matter? It matters because what they see on my Facebook site affects what they think about me, the church and Christianity. What if I have my "religious preference" listed as "church of Christ," and then I have pictures posted of me at a nightclub or dancing or at the beach or some other place dressed immodestly or with an alcoholic beverage? What if

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Jesus on Facebook...



Editorial...

BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD #1

Garland M. Robinson

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that **ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1-8).**

The qualities mentioned in verses five through seven are often called “Christian graces.” Those who become Christians are compelled to add the attributes of *faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity* to their lives. A failure to do so causes one to be as it were, “blind”, spiritually near-sighted, having forgotten the happiest day of their lives — the day their sins were washed away in the precious blood of the lamb (cf. Acts 22:16; Eph. 1:7). But to warmly embrace and cultivate the Will of the Lord by developing and strengthening these attributes, makes one profitable in the kingdom and useful in God’s service.

The very act of developing the qualities mentioned in verses five through seven shows that we are not barren — we are not unfruitful.

These things must be in us and they must abound. They must become the pattern and standard of our lives. The world must see these things in us.

As we begin to look at verse five, let’s notice the word “diligence.” The Holy Spirit says, “giving all *diligence*.” Diligence means earnestness, eagerness, carefulness, zeal, haste, speed. One does not naturally or accidentally incorporate the graces in verses five through seven in their lives. It takes determination and deliberate action to do so. It takes effort and resolve. There is a conviction down deep in our soul that we must do these things. It compels us to make every effort to do the Lord’s Will. That is the whole point of becoming a Christian is it not? It’s not only to have forgiveness of sins that we might be saved, but to grow in Christ, to become more like him with every passing day. We start as babes in Christ, then we grow, we mature, we increase. We mold our mind and life to imitate His. He is our perfect example (cf. 1 Peter 2:21).

Let’s also examine the word “add” in verse five — “giving all diligence, *add*.” It has to do with furnishing, nourishing, contributing. It means to amply or abundantly supply. We are not to incorporate these things in our Christian life in a meagerly, paltry, scantily, skimpy amount. We are to abound and flourish in these things. A failure to diligently add these qualities in our life indicates we have forgotten we have been purged from our sins (v.9). Oh what a tragedy that would be. Contemplating such, Peter writes, “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn*

from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Each one of these graces is to work in harmony with the others. Each one adds to and compliments the others. Each one will temper and make the others perfect. Let’s examine each of these qualities (Christian graces) in 1 Peter 1:5-8.

FAITH

Faith is conviction, confidence, trust, reliance upon, fidelity, strong assurance.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Without faith, nothing else we do is of any value. It would be useless to seek and develop *virtue or knowledge or temperance or patience or godliness or brotherly kindness or charity* if we do not have faith. Faith is the foundation upon which all else is built. It is that which motivates and inspires action that pleases God. Every act of obedience and service to Christ is based *in* faith and it’s based *on* faith. It is not acceptable to be guided by opinion. Opinions are not law. Everybody has one and they differ one from another. We are governed by “the faith” of Christ, not our opinion.

It was by and through faith that the ancient worthies “...*subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report*

through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:33-40).

Man’s heart is cleansed, purified, by faith. Concerning the Gentiles Peter said that God had “...put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).

Man is justified by faith. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Faith must precede water baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

We live and act every day by faith, not by what we think is right. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). We live “by faith” according to “the faith” that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

The Christian life is lived in faith. “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).

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. “...He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

Faith comes to rational people through rational means: John 20:31, “But **these are written**, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Romans 10:17, “So then **faith cometh by hearing**, and hearing by the word of God.” Acts 15:7, “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should **hear the word of the gospel**, and believe.” Acts 18:8, “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians **hearing believed**, and were baptized.” Luke 8:12, “Those by the

way side are **they that hear**; then cometh the devil, and **taketh away the word** out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”

VIRTUE

Virtue is manliness, valor, moral excellence, courage, rigor, energy, praise, goodness. It is the determination to do that which is right — that which is according to what is right with God. It is to be sought after, nurtured and attained. It adds to our spiritual growth. It seeks maturity toward the Christ.

In 1 Peter 1:6, the Holy Spirit through Peter wished Christians “...to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected. True virtue is not a tame and passive thing. It requires great energy and boldness, for its very essence is firmness, manliness, and independence.” (Barnes Commentary on 1 Peter 1:6)

Part 1 of 3

Jesus on Facebook...

(Continued from page 41)

my status update has the lyrics to the latest Lady Gaga song? Or maybe I’m venting and running someone else down with a generally ugly demeanor? We could give dozens of examples, but the question is, “What effect is it going to have on my non-Christian friend (or Christian for that matter) who looks at my site?” He might say to himself, “I do better than that and I don’t even pretend to be a Christian!” Or he might just think, “What a hypocrite!” Please don’t misunderstand our point. We’re not suggesting that you simply need to take these inappropriate things off Facebook. We’re not suggesting that you need to hide them better. We are not suggesting that you go to nightclubs (or anything else you say or do), but do a better job of keeping it a secret. Posting these things on Facebook for all the world to see makes it worse, because when a Christian advertises immorality, he hurts the church. What we’re suggesting is that you root these things out of your

life and heart altogether (cf. Matt. 5:8; Phil. 4:8; 2 Tim. 2:22).

Once again use your imagination. Imagine that you are surfing Facebook and you see that Jesus has his own site. You are excited so you send him a friend request. Would he accept it? Most of us, when we receive a friend request, have some sort of criteria before we indiscriminately accept someone as our friend. We want to know if we know the person. We glance at his information, his friend list, where he lives, etc. But what about Jesus? Does he have criteria for friend requests? Sure he does! He said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). Therefore, to be a friend of Jesus, you have to obey him. In light of this, ask yourself, “Would Jesus accept my friend request?” Before you answer the question, consider your faithfulness in attending worship, your Bible study habits, your efforts to teach others, your giving, the way you treat other people, etc. Now, with your answers in mind, “Would Jesus accept your friend request?”

Sometimes Christians ask,

“What do I do if I see another Christian posting something inappropriate on Facebook?” Perhaps I have seen a brother or sister in Christ use foul language in his/her status update, or maybe he has posted a picture of himself downing a Budweiser. What do I do? Jesus told his disciples to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” In other words, use wisdom and be kind. Second, the same Bible principles that apply elsewhere apply here. Galatians 6:1 discusses the fact that those who are spiritual should assist a brother who is overtaken in a sin. There may come a time, when out of love for my brother and concern for the church, I may need to address something a fellow Christian has posted on Facebook. Maybe I need to call him on the phone, or send him a private message. Facebook does not exempt us from our Christian duties.

What if we spent as much time each day in Bible study as we do on Facebook? The average person spends 55 minutes a day (nearly an hour) on Facebook. For some, it’s obviously a lot more. What would your spiritual life be like if you spent

that much time in Bible study and prayer?

Here’s a question? Are you a daily user of Facebook but you’ve told yourself you’re too busy to study your Bible every day? The answer may make you stop and think about your priorities. Jesus said, “but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

Before I went to bed tonight I decided to spend one minute on Facebook. Status update: “Reading my Bible. No more Facebook tonight.”

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IGNORANCE AND APATHY DESTROY THE CHURCH

Douglas Hoff

A troubled church asked its members to identify the problems they faced. The survey had only one question: “In your opinion, what are the two biggest problems this congregation must solve?” One man wrote, “I don’t know and I don’t care.” How right he was! *Ignorance* and *apathy* keep people enslaved to the devil and his ways.

The devil would like people to remain *ignorant* of the Bible because they would then have no power to overcome him. Thomas Gray (1716-1771) wrote poetic words that have been quoted out of context and misused for years. Many have heard the catchy phrase “ignorance is bliss.” Gray said that in this life, sorrow is an all too familiar reality and happiness swiftly flies away. Focusing on troubles only serves to destroy any chance for contentment. As such he wrote, “where ignorance is bliss, ‘tis folly to be wise.” However, this should not be taken as a blanket endorsement of ignorance!

Another familiar cliché is “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” Oh, but it can! This is especially true in spiritual matters. In fact, when people do not “know” God in the sense of understanding His nature and obeying His commandments, they will be destroyed. The Lord said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee” (Hosea 4:6). When Jesus comes again he will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has often been said that ignorance of the law is no excuse. The Lord created within each person a drive to know God (Acts 17:24-27); therefore, mankind is without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Ignorance is a curse from which each individual must free himself to attain heaven.

Apathy is another one of Satan’s tools for destroying souls and keeping them in his power. It is much like inertia to the soul. Overcoming the initial resistance takes work many

are unwilling to put forth. Apathy has tragic consequences though. Edmund Burke once said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Do nothing and you will lose your soul (Matt. 25:24-30).

There is a story about a new minister who was trying to motivate the congregation to become more spiritually minded. He wanted them to be better Christians who were busy doing the work of the Lord. Thinking about how best to accomplish this task, he preached sermons on the love of God and the sacrifice Jesus made to save us from hell. People filed out of the building Sunday after Sunday saying “That was a good sermon.” Still, there appeared to be no change in the lives of the members. Months passed and the preacher became a bit discouraged. Finally, he decided to use a different approach to motivate and warn the church. The following Sunday when he got into the pulpit he cried out, “Fire!” The preacher’s expression was so convincing that people jumped up and heads turned in fear but no flames were seen. After a while people sat back down and a buzz rippled through the auditorium. Questions abounded. One of the older members asked the minister why he had pulled such a stunt during a worship service. It seemed totally inappropriate he said. The preacher sadly said, “For months I have been teaching all of you about the dangers of hell fire. I have been preaching on the love of God and how He sent his Son Jesus to die in your place. Yet, your lives have not changed. I was beginning to wonder if any of you realized the danger you are in because of apathy. Why is that when I yell, ‘Fire!’ you take action but when I preach on the reality of Judgment Day no one moves a muscle?”

Brethren, let us never be guilty of spiritual lethargy (Heb. 6:11-12). Knowing God’s word ought to motivate us to love, serve and worship Him (1 Cor. 15:58).

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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA?

Roger D. Campbell

Two times in the New Testament we read about “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col. 4:16; Rev. 3:14). Paul also mentioned “the brethren which are in Laodicea” (Col. 4:15). Laodicea was a city located in Asia Minor. The congregation of the Lord’s church there was included in the expression “the seven churches which are in Asia.” They are the ones to whom the Book of Revelation was addressed (Rev. 1:11).

What do we know about the church of the Laodiceans? It existed when Paul wrote the Book of Colossians (A.D. 62/63). From what Jesus said years later to the saints in that locale through the apostle John, it is plain that something awful had taken place in the church there. From a spiritual standpoint, the church of the Laodiceans was a disaster at the time John penned the Revelation of Jesus the Christ (Rev. 3:14-22). What went wrong?

Were the people who made up the church in Laodicea ever really converted in the first place? Was it ever a true church of the living God? Go back to the Book of Colossians. Again, Paul referred to the members there as “the brethren which are in Laodicea” (Col. 4:15). Yes, they were real brethren in the Lord. What did Paul instruct the saints in Colosse to do with the letter that he wrote to them (the Book of Colossians)? First, they were to read it among themselves. Second, they were to make sure that it was also read in the church of the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16). It is obvious that the Holy Spirit spoke of the church in Laodicea as a real church.

But what happened to the church there? Know this: the brethren there did not go astray because they lacked proper instruction. There was an epistle that someone wrote to them (Col. 4:16), they were to be given access to the epistle that Paul wrote to the Colossians, and Jesus sent them a letter through John (Rev. 3). That is at least three letters of instruction to guide them.

Neither could anyone in the church at Laodicea rightfully say

that no one really cared about them. Jesus rebuked them alright, but He explained why He did so: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...” (Rev. 3:19). Let us take a deep breath right here and tell it like it is. No one, and I mean no one, becomes unfaithful to the Lord because there is not ample guidance available. Folks, every true child of God has the Bible for divine guidance! Second, no one, and I mean no one, wavers in his faith because no one cares about him. If every other person in the church becomes a cold-hearted snob, this fact remains: God cares for every one of His children (1 Peter 5:7).

What did Jesus say to the church of the Laodiceans that reveals what their spiritual status was in His sight? It is not a pretty picture, but consider these facts (references are from Revelation chapter 3).

1) *The Laodiceans had become lukewarm* (3:16). They so disgusted the Christ that He was prepared to vomit them out of His mouth! Could their condition be cured? Yes! By whom? By them. How? By becoming zealous. That is exactly what the Master told them to do: “...be zealous...” (3:19).

2) *They were proud and trusted in their own self-sufficiency* (3:17). They considered themselves as rich, having need of nothing. Jesus, however, lets all men know: “...without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

3) *They were spiritually poor, spiritually blind, and spiritually naked* (3:17). Jesus said so. He also said they did not know such was the case. They either had become so spiritually dull they did not recognize what they were truly like, or else they refused to see themselves as they really were (James 1:23,24).

4) *They needed to repent*. Jesus commanded them to do just that (3:19). Their apostasy shows plainly that a child of God can sin and stand in need of repentance. Jesus’ words also show that it is possible for a child of God in sin to come to his senses and “make things right.” His words further let us know that a whole congregation can get to the

point that it needs to repent. He who thinks that every modern-day congregation of the church of the Christ is doing just fine and dandy is lacking proper spiritual discernment, just like the brethren in Laodicea did.

5) *The Laodiceans needed to come back to Jesus to be blessed by Him* (3:18,20). Our loving Lord has graciously provided a way out of the muck of sin.

The Lord’s message to the spiritual train wreck known as the church in Laodicea, is a reminder to every congregation in the body of the Christ: what happened to them can happen to one or all, so we had best beware and be on guard (1 Cor. 10:12). If I had to choose, I would rather hear about the faithfulness of the ancient church in Philippi, but if I will open my eyes, I can also learn valuable lessons from the church of the Laodiceans.

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PUT TO DEATH!

Colossians 3:5 tells us to mortify sin in our lives. To mortify means “to make dead, to put to death, slay.” Five things are specifically mentioned (a host of others are found throughout the New Testament). The first item on the list is “fornication.” It is defined as: “illicit sexual intercourse.” It includes men with women, men with men, women with women and men/women with animals. It’s definition is very clear and understandable. First Corinthians 6:13 says, “the body is not for fornication.” But by observation, you would not know fornication is evil (immoral). It’s on display all around us: movies, television, music videos, songs, magazines, books. The thoughts and intents of people’s heart is filled with wickedness continually (cf. Gen. 6:5). First John 5:19 says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” However, God tells us to “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18) and put it to death. When we obey the Gospel, we put away the old man of sin and walk a newness of life (Rom. 6:1-18). How about you?

— editor, Garland M. Robinson

Elder's COLUMN

THE WORK OF DEACONS

Victor M. Eskew

A deacon is one who knows the Gospel, is committed to the truth and is willing to faithfully live out the truth in his life.

He studies his Bible, prays to God always, is faithful in his attendance of the worship services and Bible class times and is present when the church is engaged in her works. In essence, he seeks first the kingdom of God and the Lord's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). This man is a pristine example of Christian service to other members of the body of Christ.

Members of the church, including preachers, often speak of various "offices" that exist within the church. This is not inappropriate because Paul referred to "the office of a bishop" in 1 Timothy 3:1. It should be remembered, however, that these offices are more than mere positions. These offices involve very important works that need to be accomplished by those who hold these offices. Let's hear Paul's complete statement in 1 Timothy 3:1. *"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* The apostle states that the office of a bishop is "a good work." Bishops (elders) have duties. They have responsibilities. They have obligations. The Chief Shepherd will hold them accountable with regard to how they fulfill their tasks (1 Peter 5:4).

Another office within the church is "the office of a deacon" (1 Tim. 3:10,13). The apostle Paul sets forth the qualifications for this position immediately following qualifications of an elder (See 1 Tim. 3:8-13). The position of a deacon is restricted to men, married men, married men who have children. It is not a position available to women. Certainly, women can be servants of the church (Rom. 16:1-2), but they cannot hold "the office of a deacon."

In this article, we want to discuss the "work" of a deacon. There are four distinct areas we want to examine. First, the deacon's work involves *diligent service to the church*. This work is incorporated in the title of his

office. The Greek word is *diakoneo*. Strong defines this word as "an attendant." It involves one who waits upon another. It is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as "minister" (Matt. 20:26). One has said that the literal definition of the word is "to kick up the dust." The picture is that of a servant in a first-century home with a dirt floor. As he busily performs his duties, he kicks up the dirt on the floor.

After a man is appointed to the office of a deacon, he is usually assigned an area of work (i.e., worship, benevolence, youth, missions, building and grounds, education, etc.). This work has certain responsibilities that are to be performed. Once he has been assigned to a work, he should be given the freedom to perform his duties. Four steps are required for him to do his job effectively: 1) the development of a plan to accomplish the tasks assigned; 2) the recruitment of members of the church to assist him in carrying out the plan; 3) the execution of the plan, and 4) being accountable to the elders for how well his duties have been carried out. If a man is not willing to bear these responsibilities, he should not be a deacon.

The other tasks required of a deacon revolve around his qualifications. In 1 Timothy 3:9, one of the qualifications is for the deacon to hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." The "mystery of the faith" involves all that is found in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. A deacon is one who knows the Gospel,

is committed to the truth, and is willing to faithfully live out the truth in his life. This man studies his Bible. He prays to God always. He is faithful in his attendance of the worship services and Bible class times. He is present when the church is engaged in her works. In essence, he seeks first the kingdom of God and the Lord's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). This man is a pristine example of Christian service to other members of the body of Christ.

A third responsibility of a deacon is the constant development of his Christian character. *"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre"* (1 Tim. 3:8). A deacon should be a person who is deeply concerned about his Christian character and conduct. He rejects the world and transforms his mind by the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). He constantly seeks to conform himself into the image of his Savior Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). He is an example to the believers (1 Tim. 4:12). He lives his life in such a way that he can say: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (1 Cor. 11:1).

A fourth obligation has to do with the maintenance of a healthy, faithful family. A deacon is the husband of one wife and the father of precious children (1 Tim. 3:12). His family unit is to be one of his primary concerns. He needs to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). He also must make certain that his children are reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph.

6:4). His wife must maintain a high level of spirituality. Within the qualifications of a deacon, it is said of his wife: “*Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things*” (1 Tim. 3:11). A deacon must keep in mind that the quality of his family helped qualify him for his work. In like manner, it could disqualify him if he is not diligent to

maintain it.

The position of a deacon is a valuable part of the work of the local congregation. It could be said that they are the backbone of the local congregation. Their efforts both coordinate the activities of the members and accomplish the works of the local church. The deacon who performs his role well also benefits. “*For they that*

have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13).

Our prayer is that qualified men will arise to accept the office and work of a deacon.

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IS THE LORD'S CHURCH ADRIFT?

Ivie Powell

Many have not or are not willing to admit that the church of today is adrift.

The Hebrew writer presents a vivid picture of a ship drifting past its harbor because the pilot has not paid attention to the course. “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*” (drift away from them, ASV). “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...*” (Heb. 2:1,3a).

This text reveals at least four points: 1) The urgency of the situation — “give the more earnest heed.” 2) The urgency of recalling what you have been taught — “to the things which we have heard.” 3) The urgency of keeping focused on Christ — “Lest at any time we should let them slip” (or drift). 4) The consequences — “How shall we escape?”

While these verses have direct application to individual Christians, the same can be applied to congregations. That being the case, if a casual, flippant attitude can cause an individual to leave the faith, then can such an attitude cause a congregation to “drift” and leave the faith? If it is imperative for individuals to pay attention to what they have been taught, then what about congregations? If an individual can “slip” or “drift” away from Christ, can a congregation do the same? The answer to these questions is very self-evident (rhetorical) in nature. Still, many have not or are not willing to admit that the church of today is adrift. That is, the church of today has developed a soft, compromising attitude toward the doctrine of Christ! This philosophy or mind-set has been developed through a steady, slow

drift so much so that many have simply adjusted to the situation!

Several years ago, brother Ralph T. Henley spoke on the 3rd Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship on the subject, “Is a Denomination Emerging from the Church of Christ?” His third point, “There are some indications that the church is moving towards Denominationalism,” has direct bearing on the discussion at hand. As you read his points that were made in October of 1978, think of where we are today, 32 years later!

1. A Development of a Professional Clergy.
2. A Tendency to Make Doctrinal Compromise with Denominational Friends.
3. A Copying Of Denominational Concepts.
4. Spending More and More Church Money on Social Functions.
5. Orienting the Church Along Recreational Lines.
6. Mission Work At Home And Abroad Is Not Foremost In Our Plans.
7. Brotherhood Journals, For The Most Part, Are Pedantic And Shallow.
8. The Church Is Provincial, Middle-class, And Mostly White.
9. A Growing Acceptance of Instrumental Music As Being An Expedient.
10. A General Rationalization That People In Denominations Are Not Going To Be Lost. They May Have A Little Error Here and There, But Not Lost.
11. The Church Is Polarizing Around A Few Colleges, a Few Journals,

A Few Schools of Preaching, And A Few Leaders.

12. There Is A Movement, Perhaps Larger Than We Wish To Admit, To Deny Pattern Authority And Are Advocating “Unity In Diversity.”
13. A Sizable Group Of Preachers And Church Leaders Are Advocating A New Hermeneutic — an Acceptance As Binding Only That For Which We Have A Direct Command.
14. Church Historians Already Consider The Church of Christ As An “American Denomination...”
15. Worldliness And Secularism Have Pervaded Our Congregations.
16. We Have Lost Sight Of The Church As God's Means Of Saving A Lost World. (*God Demands Doctrinal Preaching*, pp.300-302).

Brethren, if you think this has not happened, then let every preacher and elder that reads this publication, print this article and preach a lesson on these points and see what happens!

Without question, in my humble estimation, the church is truly adrift, and the only way of turning her around is clearly and forcefully set forth by the apostle Paul, “**Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine**” (2 Tim.4:2)!

The question especially for every elder and preacher is: “Can the Lord count on you?”

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“The power of God unto salvation is channeled to the lost through the preaching [teaching] of the Gospel. Not every Gospel sermon in the New Testament had the desired result because many of them were interrupted. Stephen’s great sermon in Acts seven was cut short by the angry members of the Sanhedrin Court. Paul’s marvelous discourse on Mars Hill in Athens was interrupted just as he began to give expression to the vital truth of the resurrection from the dead and the final Judgment. The lesson Paul was delivering before Festus was cut short. Festus could scarcely refrain himself from exclaiming that Paul’s much learning had made him mad (insane). Sermons today can be interrupted or disrupted by unthoughtful brethren who watch the clock, who play with children, or who drum their fingers to show their impatience, or in some other way to show their boredom. How rude, how shallow, and how indifferent to the message of the saving gospel such actions are. The attitude we have toward God’s word is the attitude we have toward God himself” ...**Bob Winton, Manchester, TN.** “My wife and I have been enjoying STOP for about fifteen years. We attend services with a sister in Christ who would like to receive it also” ...**Flint, MI.** “I just learned of your monthly publication. Can you put me on your mailing list and my dad also” ...**Sharon Johnson, Newport, AR.** “I pray God’s blessings on your work for the Lord. It’s so much needed. I’m sending more ‘seed’ (money) to bear fruit. I’d like to have extra copies of some back issues. Thank you” ...**name withheld by request, OH.** “I so look forward to receiving your monthly publication of STOP. It is wonderful to read after men who are adhering faithfully to God’s Word. I am sending a small amount to help with the postage. Please add this name to your mailing list. Thanks. I would like to remain anonymous please. Keep up the good work. May God bless you in your efforts” ...**name withheld, Lascassas, TN.** “Please remove my name from your mailing list of *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you for your time” ...**Harold Denney, Atlanta, GA.** “Thank you. We enjoy *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**Conna Lee Blevins, Shady Valley, TN.** “May God bless your work. The Word must be sown. Here’s a bit more help. No name please” ...**OH.** “I have received your paper for several years and it has been very helpful. I really do enjoy it. Please add this name to your mailing list” ...**Johnnie Vickers, Fairhope, AL.** “Revelation 3:14-17, ‘And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ John, directed by the Holy Spirit to write this letter to first century churches, showed they had problems. But, unlike Laodicea, he was able to say something complimentary to many of them. The letters to the seven churches in Asia symbolizes the church in our day. I believe we are in the Laodicean age. With the creation of many denominational churches, many so-called believers are smug and satisfied with the writings and traditions of men – thinking they are in truth, but are actually in error. Oftentimes the writings of such individuals as Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen G. White, are esteemed above God’s written Word as he inspired it to patriarchs, prophets and apostles. False worship has been a problem through the ages. Examples are Cain’s refusal to offer the appropriate sacrifice, Nadab and Abihu using strange fire for worship, the Judaizers in Galatia, and even today the errors of celebacy, purgatory, sinner’s prayer and eternal security are and have led many into perdition. The Lord’s church needs to stand for the type of worship authorized in the Scriptures and speak the truth in love in regards to popular, but false doctrines. Stand for the Truth” ...**Leslie Putman, El Dorado, AR.** “I would like the monthly STOP sent to me. Thank you” ...**Carolyn Dunn, Cedar Hill, TX.** “Thank you for your good work” ...**James R. Wells, Ravenden, AR.** “Would you please send STOP to my cousin. Thanks” ...**Name Withheld.** “Thank you” ...**Anothy Grigsby, Huber Heights, OH.** “I

have been receiving your publication for some time, however since November, I have not. Please start sending it to me again. If possible, could you send me the ones starting in November. I so enjoy your paper and don’t want to miss any of them. May God continue to bless this good work” ...**Oleta Trigg, Big Sandy, TX.** “My husband and I enjoy receiving and reading your publication. Please send STOP to the following people and accept the enclosed donation to defer mailing costs. Thank you for your efforts to proclaim the truth from God’s Word. May God continue to bless your efforts” ...**Rhonda Brown, Maysville, OK.**

HE BREATHES WITH HIS FEET

What breathes with its feet, has thousands of jaws but no mouth, has up to fifty arms, and an eye on the end of each arm? No, it’s not a new creature for the next Star Wars movie. It’s the starfish. When God designed the starfish, it almost seems as if He tried to see how differently He could make this creature from all the others. Depending upon the species, the starfish can have from three to fifty arms while there is an eye on the end of each one. The rough skin of the starfish is covered with tiny jaws to keep parasites from attaching themselves to the starfish. Even more amazing is the fact that each of these thousands of jaws works independently of the rest. To get its oxygen, the starfish takes water in through tubes in its feet, each containing a tiny pump and a pipe system linking it to the other feet. The starfish presents us with the lesson that our Creator did not have to make the creation in any specific way. This is referred to by theologians as “voluntary creation.” If God had chosen to, humans might be breathing through our feet! But the biblical truth of the voluntary creation was one of the crucial ideas that provided the basis for the modern scientific method. — From *CREATION MOMENTS, INC.*

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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