



# 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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## THE BIBLE STATES THAT IT IS INSPIRED (JESUS CONFIRMED IT TO BE SO)

Lloyd Gale

**T**he Bible is incomparable to any other book ever written. It does not cater to the worldly desires or mundane ambitions of men and women. In fact, it condemns much of what men and women desire and highly prize. On the other hand, the Bible commends much of what men and women despise. It may truly be said that the contents of the Bible could not have come from man but could only have come from the Creator of heaven and earth.

Do you recall that when the chief priests and Pharisees sent the officers to bring Jesus to them that they returned empty handed? When asked why they had not brought him, hear their reply. *“Never man spake like this man”* (John 7:46). Indeed, never has any man spoken like our Lord. When Jesus had finished the greatest sermon that mortal man had heard up until that time, Matthew records the truth when he wrote, *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”* (Matt. 7:28-29). Little did they at the time know that he was to be the “all authoritative one” (Matt. 28:18).

The Bible claims for itself to be the inspired word of God. It is filled with such statements as: “thus saith the Lord,” “God spake,” “The Lord testified saying,” “The Lord hath spoken it.” It has been calculated that among the words of the prophets alone these

expressions occur 1,300 times, and in the entire Old Testament 2,500 times.

The writers did not claim “they” were the authority, but that they wrote by divine illumination. They said they spoke as they were moved (born along) by the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote these precious words to Timothy, *“All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is evident that the inspired Paul intended for it to be understood that there is no such thing as the doctrine of “partial inspiration.” This is reason enough for me to hold to the King James translation because they got it right.

### THOSE WHO HATE THE TRUTH WILL ALWAYS DENY THE TRUTH

A case in point is a headline of the Nashville Tennessean newspaper (7/2/2011): *“Were Adam and Eve real or just a story?”*

You may decide for yourself why such a false concept made front page headlines of this newspaper. Did the reporter do any research to see if the false teachers had any validity? Did the reporter care if creating doubt in the veracity of God’s Holy Word might affect some weak soul? So was he too busy to separate the facts from fiction? If so, I will do his work for him.

The book of Luke records the genealogy of Jesus all the way back (on his mother’s side) to Adam. Read it for yourself in Luke 3:23-38. Why then would any rational and honest person give credence to a fairy tale that the account of Adam and Eve is just “a story about what it means to be human?” Based upon what evidence?

The Apostle Paul was inspired to record *“Never the less death reigned from Adam to Moses”* (Rom. 5:14). If Moses was a real person, then so was Adam. Again we read, *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Cor. 15:22). Adam therefore was as real as Christ and not just a story about what it means to be human. *“For Adam was first formed, then Eve”* (1 Tim. 2:13). The record in Genesis states that Adam was *“formed...of the dust of the ground”* (Gen. 2:7). *“Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”* (1 Tim. 2:14). *“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam”* (Jude 14; cf. Gen. 5:1-18). Was Enoch descended from “a story about what it means to be human” or a man named Adam?

### IS THE ACCOUNT OF CREATION TRUE?

Jesus believed it to be true and confirmed it to be so. The fact of the

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**Bible Is Inspired...**



Editorial...

## THE BIBLE IS UNIQUE #2

Garland M. Robinson

Go back and read again the April issue where the Bible is shown to be unique in its **Continuity**, its **Circulation** around the world and in its **Translation**. We continue this study here...

**The Bible is unique in its Survival.** The Bible was first written on perishable material which made it necessary to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press made it accessible to the masses. Yet none of this ever diminished its style, correctness, or existence. The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.

Bernard Ramm (1916-1992) speaks of the accuracy and number of biblical manuscript authority:

Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their massora (parva, magna, and finalis) they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity — scribes, lawyers, massorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?

In regard to the New Testament there are about thirteen thousand manuscripts, complete and incomplete, in Greek and other languages, that have survived from antiquity. No other work from classical antiquity has such attestation.

In comparing the text of the Bible with the writings of Shakespeare, we observe the Bible is by far more reliable. Now over nineteen hundred years old, the Bible is perfect in its

continuity and message. In every one of Shakespeare's (1564-1616) 38 plays, there are probably a hundred readings in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.

The Bible has withstood vicious attacks from its enemies as no other book has ever done. Many have tried to burn it, ban it and outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to present-day atheistic dominated countries. Yet it stands as the Book among books. Men have tried to cast doubt on it by fruitlessly seeking to find errors and contradictions. It can safely be said that if the Bible is not the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at destroying the Bible but have been unsuccessful. They are all dead and the Bible still lives! Just as it is written in 1 Peter 1:23-25, *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever."* Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35).

**The Bible is unique in its Teaching.** In so far as prophecy goes, it is the only volume ever produced by man or a group of men in which is to be found a large body of prophecies relating to the entire human race in general, and then more specifically to individual nations, to cities, and to the coming of a very specific person who was/is the Messiah, the savior of the world (i.e. to those who believe and obey Him, Matt. 7:21-23; John 14:6). The ancient world had many different devices (so they thought) for determining future events, but not in the entire gamut of Greek and Latin literature (even though they use the words prophet and prophecy) can we

find any real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Savior to arise in the human race.

The religion of Islam cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Muhammad uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any other cult point to an ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.

Concerning the personalities found in the Bible, it deals very frankly with their sins. The biographies today try to cover up, overlook or ignore the shady side of people. Take for example great literary geniuses; most are painted as saints. The Bible does not do it that way. The Bible calls sin, sin, no matter who the individual is. It simply tells it like it is. For example:

Sins of the people denounced (Deut. 9:24).

Sins of the patriarchs (Gen. 12:11-13; 49:5-7).

Jesus tells the faults of the apostles (Matt. 8:12,26; 26:31-34; Mark 8:17-18; Luke 9:40-45).

Shows the division in churches (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Rev. 2:4-5, 14-16, 20-23; 3:2-3, 15-19).

Men are rebuked to their face (Matt. 23:13-35; Acts 8:20-23; Gal. 2:11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).

**The Bible is unique in its teachings of Science and Medicine.** Multitudes of skeptics through the years have tried to make light of the Bible. How futile have been their attempts. Modern science is found in the Bible — the book 3,300 years ahead of modern medicine.

In the 1840s, Ignaz Semmelweis (Hungarian physician) caused an international stir by requiring doctors to wash their hands when they went from patient to patient. He lost his job and was forced out of Vienna. However, he is known today as an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures — rules strictly followed today to help prevent the spread of disease.

In the Holy Book of God called the Bible, these commands are found:

1. Quarantine of people with leprosy (Lev. 13:3-6,26,31).
2. Covering the mouth of the sick (Lev. 13:44-45).
3. Burning contaminated cloth-

ing (Lev. 13:49-55).

4. Shaving and washing of those who had been sick (Lev. 14:8-9).

All these procedures occurred 3,100 years before Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (known as “the Father of Microbiology”) discovered bacteria. It is indisputable that the author of the Bible (God) had knowledge of bacteria thousands of years before its discovery by man. How was Moses able to write about it? Leviticus 14:1 tells us: “*And the Lord spake unto Moses saying...*”

*Trichinosis* is a parasitic disease caused by roundworms of the genus *Trichinella*. The infection is acquired by eating raw or undercooked contaminated meat. *T. spiralis* is most adapted to swine. So, what do we read in the Bible? The Law of Moses forbid the Israelites to eat swine (Lev. 11:7,8; Deut. 14:8). Wonder why? The cause of this disease was unknown until recent medical discoveries; yet God (the author of the Bible) knew about it over 3,000 years ago.

The Bible is 3,400 years ahead of *circulatory system health*. Modern science has found that fat and polyunsaturated fat is bad for veins and arteries. But the people of Israel were commanded not to eat animal fat (Lev. 3:17; 7:23-25).

In the days of Columbus it was generally believed the earth was flat. But in Isaiah 40:22 (Prov. 8:27) we read, “*It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth...*” The Hebrew word for circle is *hug* which means circle, circuit, sphere or compass. Isaiah did not get his information from the science of his day. His teaching clearly came from the creator of the universe. No wonder Psalm 14:1 says, “*The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, [there is] none that doeth good.*”

In Genesis 22:17, we read of God promising Abraham to multiply his descendants as “*the stars of the heaven.*” The Bible makes the claim that “*the host of heaven cannot be numbered*” (Jer. 33:22). Hipparchus (Greek astronomer, geographer, mathematician and founder of trigonometry, 190-120 B.C.) and Ptolemy (mathematician, astronomer, geographer, astrologer, 90-168 A.D.) listed a little more than 1,000 stars. In more

recent centuries, scientists could only count about 3,000 stars in the sky. In a short time after Abraham received the promise he had over 3,000 descendants. Is the Bible wrong? NO, not in the slightest. It was not until approximately 3,700 years after Abraham lived that the telescope was invented and found that the stars indeed cannot be numbered.

The Bible is unique indeed! It is God’s will revealed to man. The Psalmist recorded, “*Thy word [is] true [from] the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments [endureth] for ever*” (Psa. 119:160). The Bible describes man’s lost condition because of his own sins (Rom. 3:10,23). But, it

also tells of God’s grace and mercy in providing man the way to obtain forgiveness of his sins. It is in his only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ (John 8:24). There is no other whereby one can be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

When you deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, you deny your only chance of forgiveness and heaven after this life is over. Won’t you obey today? **Believe** (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), **Repent** (Acts 17:30; 3:19), **Confess** Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10), be **Baptized** for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), **Live faithful** to the Lord all your life (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

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### Bible Is Inspired...

(Continued from page 33)

matter is, He was a participant in the creation. The record reads, “*Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26). The personal pronouns “our” refer to the three members of the Godhead: Father, Word, and Holy Spirit. The book of John begins with these words, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not*” (John 1:1-5). Then verse 14 of this same chapter tells us who the Word is. “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*”

Jesus endorsed the entire Old Testament in Luke 24:44. “*These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.*” According to Jewish usage, the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms comprised the entire Old Testament.

### SOME OTHER DOUBTERS ANSWERED BY JESUS

Men have denied the universal

flood but Jesus taught that it was true. “*But as the days of Noe [were], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*” (Matt. 24:37). Men have scoffed and ridiculed the account of Jonah and the whale. I recently saw an attempt to say that Jonah was captive in a “whaler ship.” But who would you chose to believe, a degenerate wagging their finger at the Creator, or Jesus the Son of God? “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matt. 12:40). Man may not know the difference between a whaler ship and a whale, but you can be certain God knows the difference.

Jesus put Satan to flight by employing quotations from the book of Deuteronomy, a book that has often been doubted by modernists. It should be easy to see why the Devil and his earthly agents hate this book and desire to discredit it. Read John 4:1-11 about our Lord and savior.

Who do you believe? Fickle, ever changing, and always wrong men, or the one who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)? Jesus is the one who is the only way to reunion with the Father.

Jesus has the words of life. Whose words do you have?

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# UNDERSTANDING GRACE #5

## (BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED)

Bill Boyd

The letter to the Ephesians is not an epistle that emphasizes grace as one of its major themes, but the word is found twelve times, and one of those times is one of the most quoted passages on grace. Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

We need to remember that the basic meaning of the word *grace* is “favor.” The idea of “favor” is in the word itself. The oft presented idea that the favor is “unmerited” is often in the context. Whenever we are talking about the grace of God it is always unmerited, for God is never in debt to us for anything. However, that God’s grace is always unmerited does not mean it is always unconditional. In the twelve uses of the word “grace” in Ephesians, the word is used in five different contexts. Understanding the word in its context will help us understand what is being conveyed.

First: When Paul began the book of Ephesians he included his common greeting, “Grace be to you” (Eph. 1:2). As he brings the epistle to a close he says again, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen” (Eph. 6:24). Paul’s common benediction is a general statement that God’s “good will” would be with them. In the first use, no condition is stated nor necessarily implied, and sometimes the benefits of God’s good will are bestowed unconditionally. Matthew 5:45, “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” But in the last use of the word *grace* in Ephesians (6:24), a condition is stated. It concerns “...them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity.” There are special spiritual blessings for those who genuinely love the Lord that are not received by all men unconditionally. In both cases, “grace” is the bestowal of God’s favor.

Second: In Ephesians 4:29 “grace” is about us ministering that which is beneficial upon others. Ephesians 4:24-29, “...put on the new man, which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Rather than responding to men with lying, anger, and corrupt communication, we are to speak the truth and build each other up by what we say, and thereby “it may minister grace (favor) to the hearers.” We can minister grace to each other by what we say to each other. Our words can comfort, strengthen and encourage.

Third: The special and unique opportunities we have to be of service to God are something Paul calls a gift of grace. In Ephesians 3:2 he calls his opportunity to preach to the Gentiles, “a dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.” In Ephesians 3:7 he calls it “the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.” And again, in Ephesians 3:8 he says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Paul viewed his opportunity to preach the Gospel as a gift of God’s grace. I often think about that when I am preparing a sermon. What a blessing it is to serve in this way! Some of the Old Testament prophets called their work of preaching the message God gave them to preach a “burden” (Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Malachi 1:1). They were bringing messages of doom and judgment. But Paul, in preaching the “unsearchable riches of Christ” to the Gentiles, called it a gift of grace.

In principle, the grace to be of service to our Lord is not limited to

preaching, but applies in any work wherein we can bring him glory by our service. Ephesians 4:7, “...unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” and Ephesians 4:11-12, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” In context, this has to do with miraculous gifts some had received. It equipped them to serve in various miraculous capacities. But, some have natural abilities to serve in some of these capacities; and, they continue to do so today such as evangelists (preachers) and pastors (elders). If we ever feel like it is a burden or a chore to be a tool in the hands of God to accomplish his will, then we need to change our attitudes and be glad and grateful for our opportunities.

Fourth: Paul wrote about grace as he told how Christ “predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will” (Eph. 1:11); “To the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph. 1:6); “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7); “according to his good pleasure” (Eph. 1:9). God wants us to see the glory of his grace in the scheme of redemption and he wants us to praise him for that. We do that every time we sing “Amazing Grace.” One of the glorious things about the grace of God is the richness of it, and how it abounds toward us. “Grace, grace, marvelous grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.” In this category, I include Ephesians 2:7 where Paul writes of “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Fifth: Perhaps I could include the use of grace in Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8 in the same category above, but the common misuse of these passages and the unique grammatical construction associated with them, justifies dealing with them separately. Ephesians 2:4-5, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved

us, *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)*” and Ephesians 2:8-10, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*”

It is “*by grace ye are saved*” in Ephesians 2:5, and “*by grace are ye saved*” in Ephesians 2:8, but the word order is only different in the translation, in the Greek these words are identical. I wish everyone had access to William Woodson’s study of “are ye saved” that is included in his book, *Change Agents and the Churches of Christ*, 1994, pages 190-200. Here are a few excerpts from those pages:

“The translation ‘are ye saved’ renders the Greek term *este sesomenoi* which occurs in Ephesians 2:5,8, as is identified as the perfect passive periphrastic indicative construction with the present tense form of *eimi* (to be) and the perfect passive participle of *sodzo* (to save) ... they had been saved and were still being saved ... you

have been and are being saved. ... The periphrastic construction concerning salvation by grace through faith in Ephesians 2:8-10 firmly locks together the past action and the present result, the ‘having been saved’ aspect and the ‘are being saved’ aspect.”

Let me try to explain it this way, the Greek construction of the phrase translated “*by grace ye are saved*” does not simply mean “by grace ye were saved” at some point in the past, neither does it simply mean “by grace ye are remaining saved” into the present, rather, it means both of them together. The grace that saved you is the grace that keeps you saved. This means that if our initial salvation is unconditional, then our present salvation remains unconditional, and that would mean both unconditional election and unconditional perseverance of the saint. If any of it is unconditional then all of it is unconditional, and that brings with it the whole five points of Calvinism, including the old Baptist doctrine of “once saved always saved,” and it entirely removes from the discussion the free will of man. But, the grace of Ephesians 2:8 is conditional; there is the condition of

“*faith*” (2:8) and the condition of “*good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (2:10). As it is written in James 2:24, “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*”

The “*good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (2:10) cannot be the “*works, lest any man should boast*” (2:9), else we would have God ordaining works of boasting wherein we should walk. The difference in the nature of the two kinds of works is profound. Meritorious works that give us bragging rights do not save us; but, we are saved by the blood of Christ as we humble ourselves in obedience to that which God hath ordained.

Grace, faith, God ordained works, and our salvation are locked together by the periphrastic construction in Ephesians 2:4-10, and what God hath locked together let not man try to wrest asunder. You cannot earn or merit your way to heaven, but you can be saved by God’s grace if you will believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and remain “*faithful in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 1:1).

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## LISTENING TO THE PREACHING OF GOD’S WORD

*Rusty Stark*

It has been remarked that the word translated “meekness” in the New Testament has no exact corresponding word in English. It takes more than one word to convey the idea that is inherent in the New Testament word “meekness.” W. E. Vine points out that the meekness enjoined on us in the scriptures does not involve weakness. Instead, it is a submission of our strength to God’s will.

We have chosen this word to discuss the attitude necessary when we approach the preaching and teaching portion of our worship assemblies. We have chosen this word primarily because of its use in James 1:21, “*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*”

Meekness involves a teachable

spirit. This attitude is captured in the song, *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*. It is the attitude that not only seeks the Lord’s will, it seeks to be changed, molded, and shaped by the Lord’s will. It is an attitude that yields.

### MEEKNESS IS A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF WORSHIP

The preaching and teaching of God’s word was a part of New Testament worship. “*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight*” (Acts 20:7).

When the word of God is taught, it is essential that we listen with meekness. It was the proper attitude for those reading the letter written by

James (1:21). It was the proper attitude for those who read and studied any part of God’s word. It is still the proper attitude for any who listen as God’s word is spoken.

When we listen to God’s word being preached, we need various aspects of meekness:

1) “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:12-14).

In these verses, Paul expresses an awareness that he still has more

growing to do, more things to learn, more changes to make. As we sometimes sing, he was still “pressing on the upward way.” What an example of meekness set for us by this great apostle. If he could recognize his own need for spiritual change, how much more should we be meek when we receive the word which is able to save our souls?

2) *“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance”* (2 Peter 3:1). Not every sermon will be new to us. Some are for the purpose of reminding us of truths and obligations and dangers we already know about. The meek person will be glad for these reminders. Having a truly teachable spirit, he knows that God’s word is able to save his soul.

3) *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15).

The preaching/teaching part of our worship can help equip us to give an answer. It can help us in our efforts to reach out to others and to save their souls also.

It is sad that people have altered God’s intended purpose for teaching and preaching in his worship assemblies. How can it be called meekness when our desire to be entertained and pleased pushes out our willingness to listen? How can it be called meekness to call for plays and drama instead of the simple preaching of God’s word? How can it be called meekness when we insist on sermons that are more like after-dinner speeches than true sermons? True meekness will not look to be petted and praised. It will look to be challenged and changed. True meekness will respond to rebuke with repentance, not stiff-necked stubbornness.

How powerful would our sermons be if everyone (including the preacher) approached them meekly with a desire to know and grow.

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## Elder's COLUMN

# GIVING ANSWER FOR OUR RELIGION

Joe W. Nichols

Most of us have likely heard one or more of the following statements: “I don’t believe in arguing the Bible;” “The truth doesn’t need defending;” “Debating is unchristian.” The devil couldn’t be more pleased with such statements — they contradict God and the Bible! Contrary to such thinking, Christians are obligated to think logically, to reason soundly, and to use logic and reasoning in defending the faith (Jude 3).

Paul states, *“Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21). To prove is to try, discern (Phil. 1:10), examine (Gal. 6:4), and put to the test (1 Cor. 11:28). The conclusion being that Christians are to prove, try and test what is heard regardless who the speaker might be. The Bereans were of this disposition, *“searching the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11). For this reason, *“they were more noble than those in Thessalonica.”*

Those who mix truth and error are consistently before us and we must ever be on guard. Subsequently, we must not only be studious, but questioning and testing what is said. Jesus warned, *“Take heed what ye hear”* (Mark 4:24). Our testing equipment in testing what we hear is the Bible. It is our measuring rod, our “yardstick” to determine correctness.

Peter exhorts, *“sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer...”* (1 Peter 3:15). The Greek word translated “give an answer” is a legal term used in court wherein the attorney talks his client off a charge levied against him [*Wuest’s Word Studies*, First Peter, p.89]. Since the Bible has no verbal defense except its believers, persons of faith must be its defenders. Therefore, Peter enjoins upon Christians the obligation to defend the faith in a verbal way — “give an answer.” The only restriction given is

that it must be done with an attitude of “meekness” and “fear” in trusting God and His word rather than self.

God called upon Israel to “reason” (Isa. 1:18) and so Elijah debated the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21). Religion needs to be constantly tested and tried as to its quality. In the cases of God and Israel, and Elijah and the false prophets of Baal, the genuineness of the two religions was tested and that which was not of God was shown to be vain and wanting.

One’s “Christianity” stands in its right to exist as the religion from God when it can be substantiated in faith and practice in light of Scripture. Children and servants of God are: 1) To not believe every speaker (1 John 4:1); 2) Not to succumb to a perverted Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9); 3) Beware of those who go onward and abide not in the Doctrine/Gospel of Christ (2 John 9-11); 4) Mark them that cause divisions and occasions contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18); 5) Contend (go to battle) for the faith once delivered (Jude 3); 6) Reason out of the Scriptures as Paul did at Athens and Ephesus (Acts 17:17; 19:8); 7) Expound more accurately to others the way of God as did Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26); and 8) like Paul, be “set for the defense of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:17).

Valid and sound argument is not wrangling or contentious dispute, but is the method of giving proof and evidence. By reasoning truth, we confirm Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God; the New Testament plan of salvation and worship; church polity, etc. We are confident in what we believe and practice because we have Scripture to witness to our intellectual hearts in the matter. Consequently, such confidence allows us to teach and preach with all boldness (Acts 4:29).

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# GOD'S ESTIMATION OF "GOOD" PEOPLE VERSUS OURS

*Douglas Hoff*

The Bible is God's message of love and concern for mankind. It is also a story of mankind's need of redemption. God created man in a state of purity, innocence and sinlessness. Adam and Eve were blessed to begin life in a perfect world — a veritable Paradise (cf. Rev. 2:7). The Creator wanted them to enjoy life as His special creatures made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Genesis 1:31 reveals that at the end of the Creation, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." This statement certainly included the first two human beings. They were "very good" because they were not yet marred by sin. As such, they were initially able to have unimpeded fellowship with God who made them. God created man to have fellowship with Him (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3-7).

Colossians 1:16 says of Jesus, "All things were created by Him and for Him" (cf. Rev. 4:11). We were given life to please God! This only happens when we obey His will. Sadly, man's earthly paradise was lost when sin entered the world (Gen. 3:6-19). Significant changes occurred as a result. Adam and Eve lost their innocence, sinlessness and close fellowship with God (Gen. 3:21-24). Death entered the world for the first time (Rom. 5:12). Though their disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit may seem trivial to many, God viewed their sin as a heinous crime. Before their transgression, the Lord had warned the first couple that the penalty for disobedience would be death (Gen. 2:17; 3:3). Did they die the day they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Yes, they did! They did not die physically — that would occur 930 years in the future (Gen. 5:5). But, Adam and his wife died spiritually that awful day when they broke God's simple law.

In the Scriptures, death is a word that has the root meaning of separation — either of the spirit from the body (James 2:26) or of the soul from the presence of God which is also called the second death (2 Thess. 1:7-

9; cf. Rev. 21:8). Sin transformed the first two souls who had been created as "very good," into people who were now outcasts! They were no longer good people in God's eyes. It was fitting they should be *driven* from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 3:24). God did not want them to remain in the Garden of Eden because they would have access to the tree of life and could eat of it and live (physically) forever. However, God, in His great love for man, was not willing for that to happen. He had much better plans in mind but this required a restoration of fellowship. He was willing to save man from his ruined condition.

Adam and Eve were originally good people for they were created that way. Almost 3,000 years ago Solomon observed: "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29, schemes). The same sad story is repeated whenever sinless young souls make their first accountable decision to sin (cf. John 4:11; Heb. 5:13-14; Matt. 18:3). Sadly, when sin first touches a soul, that person ceases to be inherently good. This is not to say that the person cannot never do good again. However, just as with Adam and Eve, there is a need for sin to be forgiven in order for fellowship with God to be restored. As long as sin remains unforgiven, the guilt and potential for eternal punishment remains. Sadly, this fact is rarely appreciated by most people. During the Lord's earthly ministry, Jesus taught that many will be lost when the Day of Judgment arrives (Luke 13:23-27; cf. Matt 7:21-23). Few will enter by the narrow gate that leads to life because few are seeking it (Matt. 7:13-14). Jesus promised that if a person seeks, he will find (Matt. 7:7-8). The reasonable conclusion from this teaching is that most people are lost, and will continue to be lost, and will ultimately perish as the ungodly and unrighteous souls they truly were. They will forever be known as sinners and enemies of our Lord (Rom. 5:6-10). Such are not "good people" in God's sight regardless of how

"good" man considers them to be.

Man and God often see the same thing in two very different ways. This is a very old problem. Samuel, the prophet and judge, declared concerning God, "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7; cf. Acts 13:20).

Have you ever heard a person speak of another and say something like, "She was such a GOOD person!" Most of us probably have. Comments like this are often heard in eulogies at funerals. We need to remember that few people are truly "good" as God sees it because few people are right with God! You can be right with God by obeying the Gospel and living faithful the rest of your life (Acts 2:38).

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## “SAME-SEX” MARRIAGES?

In today's news, we hear much about what is called “same-sex” marriage. What is promoted by such is a man married to a man and/or a woman married to a woman. What about such marriages? Are they approved of God? In discussing such issues, many want to leave God out of the picture. Some are more concerned about the feelings and the thinking of man than the will of God. As we turn to the Bible, we can see, understand and know how God feels about it. And, He is the one who counts!

Notice these words of Matthew 19:3-6, “*The Pharisees... came unto him (Jesus), tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together; let not man put asunder.*”

From the beginning, marriage was ordained by God to be between male and female. “*And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of*

*my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” (Gen. 2:21-23).

God made a woman for man, not another man. As one has said, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve! Notice these words in 1 Corinthians 7:1-3, “...*It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*” Paul said that a man is to have his own wife and a woman is to have her own husband. It is not man with man or woman with woman. Same-sex marriages are contrary to God's plan. Marriage is between a man and a woman. This has been true from the beginning and has never changed. It will never change.

Same-sex marriages are not pleasing to God for they constitute a homosexual relationship. Homosexuality (which is sodomy) is condemned by the Holy Scriptures which were given by the inspiration of God (Gen. 19:1-14; Lev. 18:22-23; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Tim. 1:8-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Since homosexuality is condemned by God and same-sex marriages are homosexual, it is easily seen that such marriages are not approved by God. Since God is the originator of marriage, he knows what is best. We had better listen to God and make our marriages according to his will.

Let us build our marriages upon God's holy Word. Then, and only then, they will be pleasing to God.

—Jerry Joseph

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