

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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GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE PREACHERS OF HIS SHEEP

Earl Gieseke

The Gospel preacher has a clearly charged duty: *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry"* (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

A Gospel preacher must always preach the truth all the time and at every place. This includes both saints (the church and its shepherds) and sinners. Sometimes, he is asked to leave. In this case he must "shake the dust from his feet," and move on. Notice in the last verse of the charge that Paul urges Timothy: *"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."* So, according to this passage, the evangelist also has a duty (the same as shepherds) to "watch out for the welfare of the flock." Not only will God require the flock at the hands of the shepherds, but He will also expect the evangelist to give an account of his ministry, as he will each of us for

our service.

To Titus, Paul penned: *"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee"* (Titus 2:15). The evangelist has the same authority for his duties as the shepherds have for theirs. Though some of the duties differ, they also overlap some. Here we see the authority to preach, which includes *exhortation* (to call or invite by exhortation, beseech) and *rebuke* (a stronger word — admonish, convict, convince, tell a fault, reprove). Where there are no shepherds over the flock, it is especially important that the evangelist be mature, sound, faithful and fearless. The success and future faithfulness of the congregation will often fall largely on him. However, even with shepherds, the same is usually true, because shepherds sometimes hire an evangelist and act more like a board of directors than shepherds.

The evangelist must not love anything more than he loves the Truth of the Gospel. He must not go into the pulpit worrying about the big house he may have to move out of, or the good salary and fringe benefits, or the praise he may love from the shepherds and members alike. Although first an apostle, Paul was a powerful, faithful and fearless preacher. Though not always popular, and sometimes standing alone, he preached the truth, even to the point of making enemies among his

audiences. In Galatia, Paul stood alone against Peter because Peter was wrong, and he also made others his enemy there by telling them the truth (2:11; 4:16). We learn that not only must elders require the truth be taught to them, even to the point of rebuking if necessary (1 Tim. 5:17-20), but an apostle who was wrong had to be confronted and rebuked. Of course, we have no living apostles today; but, we do have shepherds, some who clearly need to be rebuked, due to their leading congregations into error in the work and worship of the church.

The question is: Who will do it? Who will lay their job on the line and speak forth the truth of the Gospel regardless of the consequences? Before preachers refrain from preaching the truth "in season and out of season," he better consider what the consequences will be IF he does not! Paul told the church at Colosse: *"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel"* (Col. 1:5). The only way one learns the truth about heaven is through the Truth of the Gospel.

Most who know anything about modern religion also know that millions of people in the USA know as much about the Truth of the Gospel as I do about piloting an airplane.

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God's Message...



Guest Editorial

ARE YOU A LIBERAL?

Richard Guill

Since the church of Christ today is being rent asunder by what is labeled as “liberalism”, it is not uncommon to hear a brother or sister referred to as “a liberal”. It is often used to describe preachers, but is not limited to them. What is meant by the term “liberal”? Are you one? How would you or any one else know? Let’s think about this.

The terms liberal, liberally, and liberality are used in the scriptures nine times, five times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament. In all of these usages the term refers to something desirable and good. Liberal and liberalism, as those terms are used today, generally are not references to something good and desirable. They usually refer to an attitude and philosophy in religion which is in conflict with the Word of God. Thus we turn to the dictionary to see what the word “liberal” means and then apply that meaning to see if we are “liberal.”

Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (1960) defines “liberal” as follows: “(1) originally, suitable for a free man; not restricted; (2) giving freely, generous; (3) large and plentiful, ample, abundant; (4) not restricted to the literal meaning; (5) tolerant of views differing from one’s own, broadminded. SYN. Liberal implies tolerance of others’ views as well as open-mindedness to ideas that challenge tradition, established institutions, etc.”

Now, let’s apply that definition to one’s religious views and practices.

1) NOT RESTRICTED. Liberals do not like to be restricted by anyone, God included. Their language will be filled with expressions that show their dislike for restrictions. They will talk about “not being under law, but grace”, or of God “not having a list of ‘shall nots,’” etc. They don’t want to tell anyone they are wrong about anything (except about them). Nor do they want anyone trying to restrict what they say or do. The desire for freedom from such restrictions is the heart of liberalism.

2) GIVING FREELY, GENEROUS. I would hope that every Christian would be liberal in this sense. Sadly however, this is not the case. Many who need to be liberal in their giving of time, energy and money to the Lord are not so. God bless those who are liberal in this manner. Just as some in the first century were commended for their liberality (2 Cor. 8:1-8), we need to commend some brethren today for being liberal in their giving. Unfortunately, it seems those who are liberal in their teaching and practice are also more liberal in their giving. I have noted that liberal churches often have higher contributions and pay their preachers more than “conservative” churches of the same size. However, you cannot atone for a liberal spirit in doctrine and practice with liberal giving.

3) LARGE AND PLENTIFUL, AMPLE, ABUNDANT. With a smile on my lips, I say that we have a great many brethren who are liberal in this sense, preaching brethren like myself included. Too many of us eat too much, exercise too little, and become “liberal” in this sense.

4) NOT RESTRICTED TO THE LITERAL MEANING. One of the marks of a liberal is to criticize the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and make passages which “restrict” them to be figurative or to give words a different meaning than their usual and common one. A good example of this is found in 2 John 9-11. The term “doctrine of Christ” obviously refers to the doctrine taught by Christ, either in person or through the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit. That entire body of doctrine is the New Testament and by its precepts and teachings each of us will one day be judged (John 12:48). However, since this passage teaches there must be unity based upon the common truth of that body of doctrine, and that any one who will not abide in that doctrine does not have God and must not be fellowshiped by faithful brethren, the liberals advance

the idea that all that is meant by the expression “doctrine of Christ” is the acknowledgment of the deity and person of Christ. Looking for an alternate meaning, or one that is figurative rather than literal, when the passage is clearly literal, is a sure identifying mark of a liberal.

5) TOLERANT OF VIEWS DIFFERING FROM ONE’S OWN, BROADMINDED. The predominant movement in religion in general is “broadmindedness.” Our liberal brethren feel right at home among the denominationalists of our day. They do not criticize the denominational person nor tell him he is wrong, and the denominational person loves him for that and does not tell the liberal member of the church of Christ that he is wrong either. They have swallowed the error of thinking they can “agree to disagree,” ignore doctrinal differences as long as there is a common acceptance of Christ as the Son of God, and have “unity in diversity.” The only one with which the liberal will not be tolerant and open-minded is the one who disagrees with him, whether it be a denominational person or a brother in Christ. The liberal loves to fellowship denominational people and other liberal brethren, and has only good things to say about and to them, but from his mouth comes the most scathing denunciations of those who dare to criticize what they teach and practice. Yet they claim to be the ones who really know what love is and to practice it toward all.

6) SYN. LIBERAL IMPLIES TOLERANCE OF OTHERS’ VIEWS as well as open-mindedness to ideas that challenge tradition, established institutions, etc. Have you not listened to nor read what the liberals are saying about our “traditions?” You would think the church of Christ is just a group of people who practice their religion because of tradition rather than having a God-given basis founded upon the solid rock of biblical truth. Such issues as instrumental music in worship, congregational singing, refusing women the role of leadership in the church, and a host of other such things are scoffed at as being only matters of tradition and not matters of faith. The church as Jesus designed it and as the apostles organized it, and as it has existed for centuries is not good enough for them. It is too out-dated for the modern “baby-boomers” who do not like its “tradition-

alism”, so they are determined to change it and alter it to the extent that it no longer resembles the church you read about in the Bible. What do they use as an excuse for doing so? They claim the scriptures do not contain a plan, a pattern, or a blue-print for the church and its worship. Thus we can change it to suit our whims and fancies and God will accept us and our changes.

Brethren, these are all marks of a liberal, but they are not the only ones. I hope that as you read these things and examine your own attitudes and life, that you discover you are liberal in the good sense, i.e., with your time, money, etc., but that you are not a liberal in doctrine and practice. Furthermore, considering what these brethren are doing to the Cause of Christ, I hope you not only resolve never to become a

liberal yourself, but also not to lend them any encouragement or support in their pernicious ways lest you become a partaker of their sins (2 John 9-11).

Let us all, rather than simply abstaining and remaining silent, stand up and speak out and earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). To do less is to fail our Lord.

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BLINDED TO THE TRUTH

Marvin L. Weir

The apostle Paul stated that *“the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them”* (2 Cor. 4:4). So many in this world profess to believe in God, but their actions belie their profession. How can people claim to be obedient to the Lord and then pick and choose only those commands they desire to obey? It is because they have allowed themselves to be blinded to the truth.

Most denominations teach that baptism (immersion) is **not** necessary for salvation. There are even those who claim to be members of the Lord’s church who espouse that baptism is not essential for salvation. What is the **truth** regarding this matter? The Bible declares the Word of God to be true (John 17:17). In fact, the apostle Paul admonished, *“let God be found true, but every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4). Unless one has been blinded to the truth, he will always accept God’s Word over man’s word.

Billy Graham, champion of Baptist doctrine for years, calls on people to **repent** to be saved, but denies they must be **baptized** to be saved. Is Billy Graham correct or is God correct? They both cannot be correct because they differ with one another on the question of what one must do to be saved.

The apostle Peter rightly accuses the Jews of crucifying the Christ (Acts 2:36). Divine inspiration then records, *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift*

of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38, emph. MLW).

Billy Graham and those of his persuasion are **right** when they say people must repent of their sins but, they are **wrong** when they say baptism is not necessary for forgiveness of sins. The conjunction “and” clearly shows that remission of sins is reserved for those who **repent** and are **baptized**. One cannot be baptized without repentance or repent without being baptized and expect to be saved. God has spoken regarding the matter, and His Word takes precedence over the word of any man.

Those not blinded to the truth of God’s Word will desire to submit to what the Scriptures teach regarding salvation. Please note the following Scriptures and examples that prove baptism is essential for salvation.

First, the apostle Peter states that baptism saves a person (1 Peter 3:21). How can what Peter declares be true if baptism is not necessary for salvation?

Second, baptism is the act that puts one into Christ Jesus. Paul says, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). If baptism puts one **into** Christ as God’s Word teaches, how can one be saved without being baptized (outside of Christ)?

Third, baptism is a burial (not a sprinkling) and those who are baptized should then walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). False teachers declare that men are saved and have newness of life before they are baptized, but the Word of God truthfully teaches that newness of life follows one’s baptism. Those not blinded to the truth will accept the Word of God instead of the word of men.

Fourth, the great commission

states, *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16, emph. MLW). To **repent** of one’s sins is to **believe** and obey the Lord’s command, and to be **baptized** is to **believe** and obey the Lord’s command! In the latter part of verse 16 it is not necessary to say “he that disbelieveth [and is not baptized] shall be condemned” because one who does not believe will not obey the Lord’s commands. Thus, one who refuses to be baptized to be saved does so because he does not believe baptism is necessary for salvation. It is simply a lack of faith — a failure to believe the Word of God.

Fifth, some 3,000 on Pentecost **repented** and were **baptized** in order to be saved (Acts 2:37-41).

Sixth, those in Samaria who **believed** the preaching of Philip were **baptized** (Acts 8:12).

Seventh, the eunuch **believed** the teaching of Philip, made the good **confession**, was **baptized**, and then went on his way **rejoicing** (Acts 8:36-39).

Eighth, Cornelius **believed** and was **baptized** for the **remission of sins** (Acts 10:43-48).

Ninth, the Philippian jailor **believed** and was **baptized**; Lydia was also **baptized** (Acts 16:31-33,15).

One is simply blinded to God’s truth who allows himself to believe the false doctrine that the act of baptism has nothing to do with his salvation. It does one absolutely no good to claim to believe God but refuse to obey Him!

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WHAT IGNORANCE DOES TO THE CHURCH

Ben Justice

No less than eight times in the New Testament, we find the expression (or its equivalent), “I would not have you to be ignorant.”

Rom. 1:13, “*Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren...*”

Rom. 11:25, “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery...*”

I Cor. 10:1, “*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant...*”

I Cor. 12:1, “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*”

2 Cor. 1:8, “*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant...*”

I Thess. 4:13, “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren...*”

2 Peter 3:8, “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing...*”

We should not be like the fellow who prayed, “Lord, make me ignorant and ignoranter.” Many church members don’t really realize the high cost of ignorance. Either that, or they just don’t care. My friend, it was “ignorance” that put Jesus on the cross. While suspended between heaven and earth he said, “*they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Acts 3:17 says, “*And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.*”

It was “ignorance” that caused Saul to set out to eradicate the Lord’s church. He said of himself before his conversion, “*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*” (I Tim. 1:13). He said in Acts 26:9, “*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*”

It was “ignorance” that caused Israel and Judah to go into captivity. Isaiah 5:13 says, “*Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.*” Jeremiah 4:22 says, “*For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.*” Hosea 4:6 says, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...*”

Have you ever thought about

WHAT IGNORANCE DOES TO THE CHURCH? Here are ten things:

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO LOOK LIKE THE WORLD IN THEIR IGNORANCE

The apostle Peter penned these words in I Peter 1:14, “*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.*” One who has obeyed the Gospel has come out of the ignorance that is characteristic of the world. Ignorance of God’s word should never be said of Christians as it is of the world.

Paul spoke of the ignorance that is characteristic of the world in Eph. 4:17-18. He wrote to the church of Ephesus and said, “*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*”

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO FORGET THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIANITY

Paul told Titus to preach on a number of different subjects (Titus 2-3). In Titus 3:8 he said, “*This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*” Jude said, “*I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this...*” (Jude 5). In 2 Peter 1:13, Peter declared, “*Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*” As long as we live we will always need to be reminded of the fundamentals of the faith. These things must be constantly affirmed. Repetition, repetition, repetition is the key to learning. So long as there are new converts coming along, there will always be the need to inform them of the fundamentals of the faith. So long as there are unfaithful Christians who need to be restored, there will always be the need to be reminded of the fundamentals of the faith. An organization is only as strong

as its foundation. The fundamentals of the faith are the foundation of the church. When the fundamentals are forgotten, the foundation is destroyed.

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO BE SPIRITUALLY IMMATURE

Sadly, many do not want to get past the bare basics of Christianity. Hebrews 5:12-14 describes such people. However, the Bible commands, “*Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18). We are to add to our faith the Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-13), one of which is “knowledge.” Colossians 1:9 speaks of being “*filled with the knowledge of his will.*” Philippians 1:9 speaks of our love abounding “*more and more in knowledge.*” Listen to the sayings of Solomon. “*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge*” (Prov. 1:22). Doesn’t this describe some in the church? It is sad indeed when some brethren “hate knowledge.” It is apparent in their speech, actions and attitudes. We all need to have the attitude of the truth set forth in Proverbs 2:10, “*When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.*” Is knowledge pleasant unto your soul? Proverbs 10:14 says, “*Wise men lay up knowledge...*” Sadly, there are too many spiritual misfits in the church who see no need to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection (Heb. 6:1).

IGNORANCE CAUSES FALSE DOCTRINE TO INVADE THE CHURCH MORE EASILY

Perhaps this is the greatest curse of ignorance in the church today or in any day. The account given in Matthew 22:23-32 illustrates this truth vividly. The Sadducees were in error on the resurrection. Jesus told them, “*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*” (Matt. 22:32).

Paul pointed out to the Athenians that they engaged in ignorant worship (Acts 17:23). Many today engage in ignorant worship because of their ignorance of God’s will concerning what constitutes true worship (cf. John 4:23-24; Matt. 15:9).

Like the blind leading the blind, many are falling into error because of their ignorance. In 2 Peter 3:3-10, some “scoffers” were in error concerning the judgment of God. Peter corrected their error. He noted in verse 5, “*For this they willingly are ignorant of...*” In verse 8, he said, “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing...*”

Ignorance of God’s will is wreaking havoc on the Lord’s church. Ignorance is causing many, even whole congregations, to be “*carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Eph. 4:12).

IGNORANCE CAUSES IMMORALITY TO INVADE THE CHURCH MORE EASILY

It is true that many do not care about morality, even after having been taught correctly. However, there are many who are just ignorant. Ignorance leads to immorality. Why do people, even in the church, socially drink, smoke, dance, dress immodestly, curse, gamble, etc.? In the context of Ephesians 4:17-25 it clearly connects ignorance with immorality. Paul spoke of those in Romans 1:28, who “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge.*” The result of such is spelled out in verses 28-32. People do some of the most horrible and immoral things because of their ignorance of God’s will.

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO NOT BE ABLE TO ANSWER BIBLE QUESTIONS

First Peter 2:15 tells us that we are to “*put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,*” but many Christians cannot do this because of their own ignorance. First Peter 3:15 says, “*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.*” First John 4:6 says, “*...Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*” Sadly, many do not know “*the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*” Some would not know error if it ran over them in the road. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Paul wrote about the Christian warfare. What are Christians to do in this spiritual war? Paul declared in verse 5, “*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*” The original language is very strong. It carries the sense of utter dev-

astation. Many do not like it, but the Lord’s church, as the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), has the God-given responsibility to demolish and destroy error. Anything that would “*exalt itself against the knowledge of God*” should be cast down. But, many Christians haven’t enough Bible knowledge to be able to do this. It is a shame when the church can’t give basic Bible answers to basic Bible questions and be able to refute basic and common error!

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO NOT BE ABLE TO CARRY ON SPIRITUAL TALK

It is very difficult to carry on a conversation with many that is centered on/around the Word of God, because of their ignorance of the Word of God. Paul spoke about this saying, “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men*” (1 Cor. 3:1-3)? Have you ever tried to carry on a spiritual conversation with a spiritual misfit? It is practically impossible because of their utter and sheer ignorance of the Word of God. Sad indeed!

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO BE INEFFECTIVE IN EVANGELISM

You can’t teach what you don’t know! Jesus said in Mark 16:15, “*Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” It is sad indeed when the church can’t teach the lost the ABC’s of Christianity because of their ignorance. God wants all men “*to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4). A real obstacle to evangelism in the church today is the ignorance that is characteristic of so many members. We need to get back to the time when members of the Lord’s church were known as “*Bible-Toting, Bible-Quoting*” people.

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO OFFER UNWARRANTED CRITICISMS

In speaking of the Jews of his day, Jesus said, “*But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless*” (Matt. 12:7). The people to whom Jesus spoke “con-

demned the guiltless.” This happens all too often today. It is amazing how many believe they are experts in every subject. They speak of those things they know not. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:12, “*But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.*” People offer unwarranted criticisms many times because of their ignorance. Just as the Jews unjustly condemned and criticized some of their fellows because of their ignorance, could it not be the case that we do the same thing today because of our ignorance? Before Paul was converted to Christ, he said he was “*a blasphemer.*” But, he said he “*did it ignorantly in unbelief*” (1 Tim. 1:13).

IGNORANCE CAUSES THE CHURCH TO BE REJECTED BY GOD

Hosea 4:6 says, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...*” Romans 1:28 says, “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*” Romans 10:3, “*For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteous of God.*” Without submitting ourselves to the righteousness of God, we can’t be accepted of God (Acts 10:34-35). Ephesians 4:18 says, “*Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*” Indeed, the greatest tragedy of being ignorant of God’s word is being eternally rejected by God. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to God’s will!

CONCLUSION

How sad it is when congregations seem content to remain in ignorance of God’s word. Some congregations are like the church of the Laodiceans, who were “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Rev. 3:17). We need to take heed to the words of the apostle Paul, “*Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame*” (1 Cor. 15:34). It is to our shame if we do not have “*the knowledge of God.*”

Don't be like the fool of Proverbs 1:7 who "despise wisdom and instruction" or like the one described by Solomon in Proverbs 30:3, "I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." Some are perfectly content to remain ignorant of God's word. Many do not know any more 30

years after being baptized than the day they were baptized. So, as Paul said, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (I Cor. 14:38). There is not much one can do for the person who willfully rejects Bible knowledge. People may not realize it, but this is exactly what a person does when he chooses

to miss the services of the church, and when he chooses to neglect personal Bible study. Those who choose to remain ignorant cannot possibly enter heaven.

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God's Message...

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False teachers are busily converting biblically ignorant people to their own plans. They make it as simple to be saved as acknowledging that they believe Jesus is the Son of God. If that is true, then every demon in hell, and the Devil himself will be saved. Matthew records: "And, behold, they [the devils or demons] cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time" (Matt. 8:29)? The Devil talked to Jesus face to face in

Matthew 4. He never denied who He was, but tried to tempt the Lord to sin. So, if believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is all that is required, then who could even estimate how many would be saved? Yet, anyone who has any knowledge of the New Testament knows this is just a plan devised by men who are servants of Satan, to dupe other men to follow them. But, to follow them where? Brethren, it is the same place that all too many SHEPHERDS (and one group is too many) are leading men and women who profess to be Christians, into outer darkness!

I say it with much sadness; but, it must be said! What can a religious

teacher mix with the Gospel of salvation and still have the Truth? NOTHING. Anything plus the Gospel is too much! Anything less than the Gospel is not enough! Why are some men and women not satisfied with that which is perfect? James speaks of the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). Of what does he speak? Surely no one can successfully argue that he writes of anything other than the doctrine of Jesus Christ! It is that which Jesus said "will judge in the last day" (John 12:48).

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NON-RESTRAINT IN CONDUCT

Paul Vaughn

The effects of sin will do many things to a person. The alcoholic slowly destroys his body and soul with every drink of an alcoholic beverage. The person who becomes involved in pornography slowly dulls his moral thinking until nothing is pure.

The people in Jeremiah's day reaped the effects of sin, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" (Jer. 6:15). God was not pleased with the people of that day because of their idolatry and lascivious conduct. He is not pleased with the same things in the perilous times in which we live.

In chapter five of the book of Galatians, Paul lists "works of the flesh." Lasciviousness is fourth in that list of sins (Gal. 5:19). What is lasciviousness? It is defined as "absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness, indecent bodily movements, unchaste han-

dling of males and females." It is shameless conduct or non-restraint in conduct.

In the pages of the Old Testament, there is an excellent example of people who had an absence of restraint in their lives. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Because of their ungodly lives, God brought a flood upon the earth to destroy all but eight people. God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5).

There are many ways lasciviousness can effect people. It is seen in the absence of public decency. Immodesty and lewdness are paraded on the streets, at ball games, on the beach and sometimes at church. Lasciviousness is also seen in the lack of respect for the rights and feelings of others. The dance floor is overrun with the absence of restraint in conduct. There are multi-

tudes that have thrown off all restraint and have forgotten how to blush.

God has a remedy for the sin of lasciviousness. It is called the "lake of fire." "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

God does not desire that anyone should end up in hell. This is why He sent Jesus to die on the cross. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God demands obedience to His Word. Love for Christ will keep us from the sin of lasciviousness. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Do you love God enough to hold fast to His word and let it restrain your conduct?

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THERE WAS NO CHURCH BEFORE THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Dan Goddard

The church (or kingdom) and the Gospel system have, in a sense, existed from the very beginning. They have existed in at least five successive stages: first, in purpose, in the mind of God; second, in promise; third, in prophecy; fourth, in preparation during the life of John the Baptist and the earthly ministry of Christ; and fifth, in perfection. Consequently, the church has “began” in several different senses.

“Beginning” is used in this article in reference to the time the church, or kingdom of Christ began to exist in perfection; as a fact or reality on earth. It is affirmed by many that the church existed as a fact in the garden of Eden. Others believe that the church had its actual beginning in Judaism: that the church of Christ is just a renovated Mosaic religion. Still others believe strongly that the church was established in Galilee, called and named by His apostles. But, there was no church before the cross!

Following, are a few Scriptural observations that make the beginning of the church before the death of Christ impossible; particularly, during His earthly life. On the other hand, the same observations will reveal that the Pentecost of Acts 2 affords a Scriptural setting for all God’s requirements regarding the beginning or establishing of the church.

Check for yourself, and see how the references that are given converge in the teaching of Acts 2.

BEFORE THE DEATH OF CHRIST:

1. The New Testament was not in force (Heb. 9:16,17).
2. Christ was not the head of the church (Eph. 1:19-23). Who was the head of the church while Christ was in the grave?
3. The Apostles were not set in the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:8-11).
4. The church had no Spirit in it (John 7:39).

5. Christ was not yet glorified (John 7:39; 1 Peter 1:11; Luke 24:26).

6. The apostles were not filled with the power of the Spirit (John 14:16,17).

7. The church had no blood in it (Heb. 10:1-4; 9:22,23).

8. People of God were under the law of Moses (Matt. 23:3; Rom. 7:1-4). If the church were in existence, God caused spiritual adultery or obedience to two spiritual laws at the same time.

9. The church would have been without atonement (Matt. 20:28; Heb. 9:12-15).

10. Christ had not become our High Priest (Heb. 7:28; 8:4). Church members would not, therefore, have been able to approach the Father.

11. The Gospel “in fact” could not be preached (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:8,9).

12. The church would have no cross in it (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

13. Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, waited for kingdom (Mark 15:43).

14. The cornerstone had not been rejected.

- a. The church could not be built till the cornerstone was laid.
- b. The cornerstone could not be laid till it was rejected (Psalm 118:22; Acts 4:11).
- c. The rejection of Christ was consummated in His death at Jewish hands (Mark 8:31).
- d. Therefore, the church could not have been built before His Death; hence, not during the personal ministry of Jesus.

15. The church was not purchased (1 Cor. 6:20; Acts 20:28). A thing is not bought until the price is accepted.

16. Many Scriptures indicate the church was yet future (Matt. 4:17; 6:10; 10:7; 16:18; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9; 22:18,29; 23:42; Acts 1:6).

17. Daniel’s prophecy would have been contradicted (Dan. 7:13,14).

- a. Christ came to (not from) the Ancient of days (God).

b. He was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom.

c. Christ went from earth to the Father when He ascended (Acts 1:9,10).

d. Therefore, Christ received His kingdom when He went to the Father; hence, He did not and could not receive it while on earth.

Conclusion: The church was not established before the cross of Christ.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Paths where we reviewed an ad for a "church fund raiser" conducted by the *Lee's Summit Church of Christ*. Since that is the name they used, that was how we identified them. However, we are happy to let our readers know that it was not the Chipman Road congregation that was engaged in this unscriptural activity. We believe the Chipman Road church to be a faithful and sound congregation and invite our readers to visit them whenever you're in the area. —**editor**) "I just received the April/May issue of *Seek The Old Paths*. On page 28 you have an article about a "Church Fund Raiser." In the article you write of the church in Lee's Summit, Missouri having a fund raiser for their youth. You should know there are 3 different churches in Lee's Summit and you leave no distinction between them. The Chipman Rd. Church of Christ in that city is a very faithful congregation of the Lord's people. To those that do not know about there being 3 churches there, this would possibly leave people thinking they are the ones doing the fund raising. I believe that you should make the distinction in the next issue of the paper. I really enjoy the paper and have been using articles from the paper on our web page here in Mexico, MO for some time" ...**Wesley Snyder, Mexico, MO**. "Chuck and Nancy Verkist in Ellensburg, Washington would love to locate sound faithful brethren with which to fellowship and worship in their area of eastern Washington state. Their address is: 906 E. 2nd Ave, Ellensburg, WA 98926. They would love for a sound preacher to come into their area and help them establish a church there. If you know of someone who might be interested, pass the word along. They are a fine Christian couple" ...**Editor**. "Thanks so much for your paper. Keep up the good work. May God bless you" ...**Tennie Hunter, Gainesboro, TN**. "I sure enjoy the paper as much or more than any I get and I get lots from different places. I'd like to say keep up the good work that you do so well in choosing material for the paper and it sure is circulated well. I can't believe anyone would have the nerve to write in and say take my name off the mailing list" ...**Addie Long, Harrisburg, AR**. "Please remove me from your mailing list. Someone added me to the list without checking with me. Thanks for your help" ...**David Rogers, Fort Worth, TX**. "Thank you for the *Seek the Old Paths* hard copy. I also refer to your web site quite frequently. We appreciate your steadfast stand for God's truth" ...**Virgil Poe, Kay, TX**. "Enjoy *STOP* each month. Thank you for bringing to our attention problems that are occurring in many congregations of the church. Keep up the good work. There are still many of us who take the Lord's words as our only guide" ...**Carl D. Thomsen, Texarkana, TX**. "I sincerely wish to write to thank you for maintaining my name on your mailing list. I use the materials in my bible class lessons, sermon, men's training classes and radio ministry. Thank you. May God bless you for the noble work you are doing" ...**Ken Dadzie, Ghana, West Africa**. "While at work, someone left a copy of one of your issues in the break room. I read it and shared it with another sister in Christ. We both were up lifted and delighted from reading it. Vol. 14, No. 9, Sept. 2003. After trying to find the address, being that we could only obtain a portion of the articles I thought I might ask you to please include us on your mailing list. Thanks in advance" ...**Clifton C. Green, Shelbyville, TN**. "We would like to be added to your mailing list to receive *Seek the Old Paths*. Our friends mailed us a copy that we enjoyed very much. Thank you" ...**Orville Garrouette, Ponca City, OK**. "Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Members of the church of Christ in the Philippines were so glad and happy when they received your publication which I sent for their readings and knowledge. Always include me in your mailbag. Continue sending me the *STOP*. May God bless you all who make this publication possible. Thanks God also for spreading the GOSPEL of God to the entire world. Keep up the good work. God bless us all" ...**Corazon G. Santiago, Van Nuys, CA**. "May the Lord continue to bless you in your wonderful work of carrying the old Jerusalem Gospel to the world. I've received *STOP* for several years. I enjoy it so much. I only request it be sent to people I know will treasure it as I do and I appreciate you honoring my request to send it to them. I enjoy so much reading the mailbag. There are so many people who never hear the whole word of God" ...**Name Withheld, Pecos, TX**. "I really do enjoy *STOP*. After I read it I pass it to someone else to read. Keep up the

"I preach at the Chipman Rd church of Christ in Lee's Summit MO. Our legal name is The Church of Christ of Lee's Summit, but we call ourselves Chipman Rd. It would be great if you could make that distinction" ...**Bill Goring, Lee's Summit, MO**. (NOTE: Brother Goring refers to an article on page 28 of the April-May 2004 issue of *Seek The Old*

good work. It is needed so much" ...**Name Withheld, TX**. "You are doing a great job writing *Seek the Old Paths*. Keep up your good work and continue to rightly divide the word of God. It takes persistence, stamina, knowledge and wisdom. God bless you in this great work! I deeply appreciate what you write. It makes my faith strong" ... **Reba Miller, Plumerville, AR**. "Recently I requested 25 copies of *STOP* for our small congregation of the Lord's church. My husband and I have been receiving it for a long time and feel it is a very worthwhile and much needed publication. We pray that the good work you do may continue and that error in the church can be brought to light and extinguished. May God bless you in your efforts to contend for the truth" ...**Name Withheld, AR**. "I just read *STOP*, November 2003 and always enjoy it knowing God's word is always printed from the Bible. The article "Church Colleges and Universities" was written by a member of Livingston church of Christ, Ernest N. Stacey, Jr. My husband and I are also members. Ernest is a blessing to know and study with. We are a small group of about 40 but with God's help we will grow not only in number but in Spirit and Truth trusting God in all things. May God bless you in the good work you are doing" ...**Linda Goins, Walled Lake, MI**. "I am very pleased to read your paper full of scriptural truths which we all need to know. Thank you for a great paper" ...**Dorothy Chism, Plumerville, AR**. "We continue to enjoy *Seek the Old Paths*. Keep up the good work. Hope all is well with you and your family and that you will have a great New Year in our Lord's Service" ...**Joe Britt, Baxter, TN**. "We wish to continue receiving *STOP*. In these troubled times it is good to know that we have a good Gospel publication to keep us informed. God bless you in your good work" ...**Floyd & Phyllis Roe, Cushing, OK**. "I am sending a donation to *STOP* so they can continue to send your paper and spread the Gospel. I enjoy your paper very much and would like to help others get it" ...**Name Withheld, TN**. "Thanks for your good work" ...**Claud Estep, Carlsbad, NM**. "May God bless all of you who write for *STOP*" ...**M/M Rube Wilson, Jr., Binger, OK**.

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