

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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"I WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR"

A True Story told by Clyde Thompson

The following article is the true story of Clyde Thompson, once known as the "meanest man in Texas." It wonderfully relates how the power of the gospel of Christ changed a vicious murderer into a great, soul-winning instrument of evangelism on behalf of men behind bars. This narrative was first published in a small tract (now out of print) distributed by Star Bible. It is reproduced here (with some slight editing and reformatting) for the benefit of our readers.

There are two motivating factors in a person's life. One brings him to God; another is love for God. Fear brings a man to realize the consequences of his sin and turns him to God, and love for God will cause one to grow in God's favor. He loves God when he sees the love that was manifested in the Son of God.

When people have committed great sins, they sometimes feel that God cannot forgive them and therefore they are fearful before God. But when they come to realize that the blood of Christ is all-sufficient and can wipe away the guilt of sin, then they commit their lives to Christ, and no longer do they fear and tremble; they have put their trust where it ought to be and they know that God can and will deliver them from the power of darkness.

WILD YOUTHFUL DAYS

It is great and wonderful what God did for me. At the age of seventeen, I was sentenced to death in the electric chair — the youngest man ever sentenced to death in Texas up to that time. At the age of nineteen I was the youngest man ever placed on death row at Huntsville in 1931. I had sixty days to live.

There were three of us young men — I was seventeen, another thirteen, and his brother eighteen. We went hunting one night down on the creek; we had borrowed the pistol and shotgun of the brothers' daddy without his knowing it. Having reached the creek, we debated which way we would go. We finally decided to go up the creek. We met two men, one of whom had had some trouble with the older brother and his daddy. We got into an argument and a fight with them, and shot and killed both of them.

Young people, I want you to understand that it makes no difference how good you are, how wonderful your parents are (my father was a gospel preacher) or how wonderful your elders and your deacons and your preacher are. If you are in the wrong place at the right time you could be in serious trouble, and it could take you a whole lifetime to get out of it, if you ever could.

THE DEATH SENTENCE

I was sentenced to death twice in the same murder case within a year's time. The first sentence was reversed; I was again tried and sentenced a second time. A month after my trial the eighteen-year-old boy was tried and sentenced to death also. After I had received the death sentence the second time, his case was reversed after about twenty months, and two years after his first trial he was tried again in the same case and received a five-year suspended sentence. You know, this is the difference in what money can do. My folks had no money. I went to death row while this young man was still waiting trial in the second murder case. They had two cases of murder against us.

A COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

While I was waiting on death row, they dismissed the second case against me. I heard brother P.D. Wilmeth preaching the gospel over the only radio at that time in the penitentiary. Now there are radios all over the prison system; everybody has access to either a radio or a TV. The radio over which I heard brother

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I Was Sentenced to Death...



Editorial...

THERE IS HOPE

The story Clyde Thompson tells about himself is one I first heard many years ago on audio tape. While reading his story in preparation for this issue of *Seek The Old Paths*, I could not hold back the tears. On the one hand, it is amazing to read and learn of such a man that Clyde Thompson once was. But, on the other hand, it is also amazing to be reminded of the wonderful grace of our heavenly Father and the power of his glorious Gospel to change lives.

The Scriptures, the Bible, the Word of God is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:18). It has the power to convict and convert the vilest of sinners — if they will take heed to it. Before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus persecuted the saints with a vengeance (Acts 26:9), but years later he wrote Timothy and said, “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*” (I Tim. 1:15). No sin is too great that God will not forgive. But one must want forgiveness and then humbly submit to the will of the Father in complete obedience.

I’m reminded of how many men and women find themselves in trouble with the law or otherwise are living a wild and reckless life. How many of this number even care? How many have an attitude of gratifying their lusts to the fullest and never once consider where such a life leads. What is the end of such a life? It’s not heaven. It’s not eternal bliss, comfort and reward. It’s an eternity with the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). It’s a place where a certain rich man said, “*I am tormented in this flame*” (Luke 16:24). It’s a place where “*...the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name*” (Rev. 14:11). It’s a place of “*everlasting*

punishment” (Matt. 25:46) where sinners will be cast “*...into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 13:50), “*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:44). II Thessalonians 1:9 makes it clear they “*...shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*”

The families of wayward souls know full well of the heartache and anguish their loved ones put them through. How many mothers and fathers have spent countless nights without sleep over the wayward direction of their precious son(s) or daughter(s)? God only knows the hours of prayer that have been offered on their behalf, the begging and pleading for them to get their life turned around, the longing for news that they are safe and not in a ditch or back alley somewhere dying or dead.

The devil uses the works of the flesh as one of his major tools in destroying the lives of those who indulge themselves to the fullest. By heaven’s decree we learn, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Gal. 5:19-21).

There is HOPE. There is FORGIVENESS when one repents and turns to God in living His way.

Some in the church at Corinth (I Cor. 6:9-10) had been *fornicators* and *adulterers* (sexual conduct outside of the God-ordained marriage of one man and one woman), *idolaters*, *effeminate* (having feminine qualities untypical of a man), and *abusers of*

themselves with mankind (homosexuals, sodomites, gays). The practice of men with men and women with women is defended by those who condone it as an “*alternate life-style*” — one that is acceptable. However, the Lord calls it sodomy and condemns it (Rom. 1:26-27). It is such a perverse transgression against nature and Deity that God wiped the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah off the face of the earth (Gen. 18-19) because of it.

Some had been *thieves*, *covetous* (craving possessions, especially of others), *drunkards* (alcoholics), *revilers* (abusive language), and *extortioners* (gaining other’s possessions by force, intimidation, undue or illegal power). While they lived in these sins, they would not inherit the kingdom of God (go to heaven). But in repenting and being baptized they had been *washed*, *sanctified*, *justified*. Now, they were children of God — redeemed, forgiven (I Cor. 6:11). Friend, if you’re involved in these things, you too can enjoy forgiveness if you will turn away from them and obey the Gospel.

There is hope. There is always hope, as long as an individual has conscience enough to be pricked in their heart. It has long been said that a preacher’s work is to *afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted*. The wayward, the lost, the undone in trespasses and sins, can turn their life around and obtain forgiveness for all they’ve said and done. The Lord in heaven above is a loving and merciful God. The account of what we call the prodigal son in Luke 15 illustrates this so well. When the boy had hit rock-bottom and had his fill of riotous (rowdy, disorderly) living, he “*came to himself*” and decided to go home. His father received him back with open arms. Our loving heavenly Father will likewise do the same when sinners repent and obey.

It’s not too late for you if you’re an alien sinner or you once were a faithful child of God but have wondered far from home. The way to God is explained in His Word.

For those outside of Christ, one must **BELIEVE**, for “*...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, “*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in*

your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

One must **REPENT** of their sins. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ said, *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). *“...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”* (Acts 2:38). *“...But now commandeth all men every where to repent”* (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of mind, a change of attitude. Without it, there will be no change of life.

One must **CONFESS** faith (belief) in Jesus, that He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 10:32-33). The man from Ethiopia wanted to be baptized after learning that he could be forgiven in becoming a Christian. *“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37). Paul wrote, *“That if thou shalt*

confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

One must be **BAPTIZED** in water to be born again (John 3:5) — become a child of God. Thousands on Pentecost wanted to know what to do to have forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:37). They were told, *“...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:38,41). Saul of Tarsus was told, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). *“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”* (Rom. 6:18). *“...Baptism doth also now save us...”* (I Peter 3:21). In water baptism, one contacts the saving blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-6) that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5).

For those who have already

obeyed the Gospel but are now unfaithful children of God, there is a “second law of pardon.” A Christian named Simon once sinned and was told, *“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee”* (Acts 8:22).

Friend, don’t give up on God. He has not abandoned you. He is still where He has always been. He is not far from any one of us (cf. Acts 17:27). You have wandered away from Him. He has not wandered from you. You need to come back. He cares (I Peter 5:7). He loves (John 3:16). He forgives (I John 1:9). Won’t you come unto Him and receive His forgiveness by obeying His Word?

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said those who go to heaven are they who do the will of the Father in heaven. The Lord and Saviour is standing at the door of your heart and gently knocking. In Revelation 3:20 we read, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*

Are YOU ready to obey? You who have strayed away, are you ready to come home? Why not today?

I Was Sentenced to Death...

(Continued from page 41)

Wilmeth belonged to a guard; he had it out in the corridor of death row and I heard the gospel preached there.

Here I am, nineteen years old, and I had never made a commitment to my Lord. I sent for brother Wilmeth and asked that he come up and baptize me, and he did. I was taken off death row and baptized there in the Walls Unit at Huntsville. That was six days before I was to be executed. Two days before I was to be executed I received a stay of execution to await the third trial of the other boy — which was the second murder case. Had that young man received the death penalty in that murder trial I should not be here tonight, I assure you.

The governor said that he could not see justice in letting one man die when there were two men equally

guilty and he wanted to wait until the young man was tried in the other case. After the stay of execution, I had ninety days to live. Well, I thought that this time it would be the end of it, since I was sure the other boy would receive the death penalty and I would also be executed. But six hours before I was to be executed, the warden came in and told me that my sentence of death had been commuted to life imprisonment. I didn’t even believe him. I had made up my mind that this was the end of life. They had already taken me out of my cell and given me my last bath; they had offered me my last meal. You can have anything within reason you want to eat for your last meal when you are to be executed, but I didn’t have any stomach for it.

A HARD ROAD AHEAD

The governor debated about commuting my term to twenty years, but

decided, on advice of counsel, that he would commute it to life. They took me off death row, and for a year I lived as faithful to my Lord as I could in prison. Not one Christian from the outside came in to encourage me in the way of the Lord. Had Christians come in, and services been held in that institution, I am sure that the horrible things which happened afterward would not have happened and I wouldn’t have spent twenty-five more years in prison after I had already been in for three. But I spent twenty-eight years in confinement.

A year after I was released from death row they sent me to the Retrieve Farm which is down close to Angleton on the Gulf Coast, and this was a living hell on earth. They worked us as high as seven or eight weeks (from daylight until dark) without even one Sunday of rest. There was no time to even wash our socks. We would come in so tired at night that we would just fall in bed

and not even remember that we had come into the building or whether or not we went to supper; we would just fall exhausted and then the next morning we were up and at it again.

I lost my faith completely. I didn't believe that there could be a God who was merciful and could let these things happen to me. My daddy came to see me after I went to the Retrieve Farm, and I took the Bible that he had given me on death row and handed it to him and told him to take it because I didn't believe it any more, and I would not try to live it. I know how that must have hurt my daddy, and it probably put him in an early grave. In 1938, he died at the age of fifty-three.

The next six years I tried with great determination to escape from prison. I made four major attempts to escape, but I was always plotting and planning to escape. I felt that if I was going to spend my life in prison it would be a very short one. And I would make them kill me or I would get away. At one time, trying to escape, a young man was shot down by my side and killed, and another one was shot and wounded. The guard rode up to within thirty feet of me and said, "Stop or I will kill you, too." I stopped and looked back and saw him about to shoot me and I ducked my head. I had a high crowned hat on and he shot it off with a load of buckshot. Had his intentions been carried out I would not be here tonight.

I had two knife fights with fellow inmates on that prison unit and killed both of those men. Because of my past record of having been sentenced to death for murder (and this is a good example of what a past record can do for a person) they tried me for my life. Ordinarily a fellow would get five years or maybe ten for a crime of that kind in the prison (for fighting for his life and killing somebody) and yet they sentenced me to life both times. I now had three life sentences in the penitentiary and practically no hope of ever getting out, unless I broke out.

Well, things went from bad to worse. The officials soon realized that I was not a man who was afraid to die, and that I was determined to get away, so they put me in with other people of this kind so that we might be watched more closely. This was at

the Central Farm. Then they built what they called "Little Alcatraz" out on the Eastham Farm, Northeast of Huntsville, and they took me out there with about twenty-five other fellows. They wouldn't even let us out to work in the field without two guards over us because they knew that we were going to break if we could.

Finally, over on the Eastham Farm, four of us plotted and planned to take the arsenal and give guns to everyone who would shoot one. We hoped to kill anybody who got in our way as we escaped from that penitentiary. I had fallen so far that I would have killed every official and every inmate in the institution to escape from it. I was determined to get out of prison.

We captured two picket guards, got their two pistols, and with our knives and the two guards as shields, we went up the stairs to the arsenal. But they had laid a trap for us and we went right into an ambush. As I stepped out to open the door where the men could go into the arsenal, I was shot with a 30-30 slug through my shoulder. The guard was shooting at my head and missed. As I pulled this door open I looked around and saw these two men, that were friends of mine, lying on those steps dying. One of them still had his pistol in his hand. I ran over and grabbed it, but I could only use my left hand and I'm not a very good left-handed shooter.

I stayed in the hospital forty days and forty nights and they sent me back to Eastham Farm. I couldn't even raise my arm. It was about two years before I could use it. I went out in the field and worked with a hoe with one hand. About six or seven months after I went back out there, a man was killed in the wing where I was and they charged me with murder for the third time in the penitentiary. (They were determined to sentence me to death.) You know, if one of those guards had been killed that I was shooting at, I certainly would have received the death penalty again. But it was just fortunate they were not. All three of those men who went up those stairs with me died, and it is just amazing that I didn't — or that I hadn't killed somebody and been executed for that. So they charged me with a stabbing though I didn't kill the man, and the only rea-

son they didn't try me for my life on that case is because they couldn't find witnesses to testify against me.

TO THE DUNGEON

The officials of the penitentiary finally gave up on me. There was an old morgue behind death row that they had abandoned. It was an old concrete building containing six slabs that they had used to put caskets on. They put a steel door on it and put platted bars over the door opening, which was about a foot square. All the light I had came through those bars. The small cell was sandwiched between two tall buildings, and about five hours a day was the only time I could see my hand before me.

All the time I was in that building, I was allowed only a pair of shorts. They were afraid if I had anything else I would hang myself. They wouldn't even let me have a light, running water, or anything else. I didn't even have a spoon to eat with, for they were afraid I would sharpen it and kill myself or somebody else. Did you ever eat chili with your fingers? I have! When you have just a little bucket of cold water to wash your hands with, and you pour it over that chili with the grease and grime, you can rub your hands together all you want, but it won't come off.

A HAUNTED EXISTENCE

Man is the crowning glory of God's creation. God made man in His own likeness and in His own image, and that's why it is a sin to kill a man. It's not a sin to kill an animal. If you just go out and shoot a dog, that is not a sin; but if you kill a man, that's a sin. Why? Because man is made in the likeness and image of God.

There are eight people in their graves because I have lived, people who probably would be alive if I had not gotten them into trouble or killed them with my own hands. It is mighty sad to know that you've killed somebody and that you can't do anything about it as far as giving back that life. We teach that repentance involves restitution, and this is true insofar as it is possible. But if you've ever killed somebody, you can't restore that life.

The Lord knows that I would gladly take the place of any of those people in those graves if he could stand on the earth and be a child of God; but I can't take their places. Then what is life for me? The mercy of God, the goodness and the blessing of God, that He showed to us through the blood of His Son. Sometimes we want to limit the power of the blood of Christ. And we say, "Oh, well, you can be forgiven of this sin or that sin, or some other sin, but the Lord just can't forgive this one." Beloved, if He can forgive one sin He can forgive them all, and if the blood of Christ is sufficient for one sin, it is sufficient for all sins. I didn't realize this at first.

In this isolation cell I had three steps to make from one end to the other, and I walked back and forth in there like a wild animal for five and one-half years. I wore holes in that concrete floor where I made the turn at each end (with my bare feet). My feet got as hard as rocks.

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

After I was there two or three months, I asked the guard who brought my food if he would bring me a Bible. I knew they wouldn't give me anything else to read. He went to the warden and received permission to bring me a New Testament with Psalms. At the time I didn't think much about it. I just wanted something to read to keep from going mad in that place.

I had trouble reading it since I had only a fourth-grade education. The King James Version was quite difficult then, though now I love it since I have educated myself in it. Somewhere I'd heard that the Bible was a book of contradictions and so could not be the Word of God. Having nothing better to do, I decided I could prove that. So I started studying to prove the Bible was a book of contradictions.

The more I studied it, the more it convinced me that it was a book of truth and I was false. When I came to realize that this was actually the word of God and the only hope for man in this world, I repented in tears, on my knees day and night for months. I read the Bible and kept asking God if He could and would forgive a wretch like me, and take me

and use me to His honor and glory. He did. I began to write articles for Christian papers — some of you may remember reading them many years ago. Christian friends would write me and send me literature, and I would take that literature and hand it to other people.

I wasn't a hippie, but I must have looked one, because they only gave me a bath and shave once a week. They would take me out of my cell and down a corridor where there were men on each side, and here they would bathe and shave me, and I would pass out literature. The guard was very lenient with me. He would let me talk fifteen or twenty minutes. It wasn't long until I had three fellows wanting to obey the gospel.

I wrote to a preacher in Dallas and asked him to come down and baptize these three men. He came and the warden came around and got me and the three men and they were baptized. They had built a new chapel in the Walls Unit since they baptized me. In the old chapel they had a baptistery, but when they built the new one they conveniently forgot the baptistery. So they didn't have a place in the Walls to baptize anybody. Somebody remembered this old deep bathtub around on death row and suggested we use it.

We went down the corridor of death row where men were waiting to be executed and where I had been waiting once. There I saw these three men buried with the Lord in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life. I was there to greet them and to say a prayer for them when they came out of that old bathtub where I supposedly took my last bath. You think that wasn't a thrill to me? It sure was! A number of other people were baptized in that bathtub, too.

I continued to study the word of God. They finally let me begin to get other things in there to study, and they even let me have a light in the place; finally they put running water in there, too. They just fixed me up to stay! Well, I had turned back to the Lord and I didn't care any more about my freedom. I already had changed my attitude toward man, and it wasn't too hard to get this hatred of people out of my heart.

The hardest thing for me to overcome was cursing and bywords. I had lived about six years with every-

other-word I said being a curse word or a byword. For about two years after I turned back to the Lord these things would pop up in my mind, but I would say in my heart, "They won't come out of my mouth," and they didn't. It took about two years to overcome this. I understood what James meant when he said, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

I studied diligently in that cell to educate myself. Among other courses of study, I took a two-year Bible course from Lee College in Tennessee. When I began studying in that isolation cell I couldn't even speak or spell the most common words correctly. Your little seven or eight-year-old children can spell better than I could spell at that time. When I quit school in the fourth grade, I was fourteen years old, the oldest and dumbest kid in my class — and the most embarrassed.

My daddy always planned for my younger brother to be a preacher, but he didn't become one, and neither did my older brother. But the "ugly duckling" became a preacher. My daddy died before I came back to the Lord, though, and I'm sad about this, because I wish he knew that I am a preacher — for that would please him very much.

A CHANGED LIFE

I think that my life is a testimony to the fact that a person who has committed murder can be saved. I committed murder, and there are a lot of people saved in this world today because I have lived in it — even though there are eight dead because of me. I thank God that He used me for His cause, but I don't thank God for sin. I thank God that He brought me to a sense of understanding that I couldn't save myself, and the only hope was His mercy through Christ Jesus.

When one finds out that he is a sinner, lost, undone, and without hope, and he turns back to God, God will help him, and use him in this world. If we have committed sin, we need forgiveness of that sin, and until we realize that we are lost and undone, and unless we have repented of sin, we won't be saved.

Finally they sent me out to Ramsey Farm and I did real well. I put the Christmas play on for Captain

McAdams the last two years, and I'm real proud of those plays and the men who worked with me. Those men were from the Bible class I was teaching on the farm. When I left Ramsey Farm, I had eighty-one men in class and sixty of them had been baptized into Christ. We baptized nine out there at one time in a stock pond.

FINAL DEVELOPMENTS

Later, my case came up for consideration for parole. The parole officers decided they would put it off for three years, and they wrote me a letter to that effect. I'd been in prison twenty-eight years, but they said they would review my case again in three years.

I had gotten acquainted with a Christian lady through a preacher friend who had been coming to see me. After a year of knowing one another, she and I fell in love and planned to be married as soon as we could. She worked and would not give up. She went to everybody about me — trying to get me out of isolation and then out of prison. Mr. Ellis, the manager of the prison, told her one day about four or five years before I got out, "Young lady, you might as well go on and forget this fellow. He'll never get out of prison." Well, that was the opinion of most of the officials down there and most of the inmates — and me, too. I just thought there wasn't much hope of

getting out of there. But all of these people underestimated the power of God and the influence of a good woman. The board turned me down, but two months later they released me on conditional pardon.

I was released from Huntsville prison after being in two months past twenty-eight years. My wife was there with a suit of clothes, a borrowed shirt, and a necktie. I was an old country boy and I had never owned a suit of clothes, and had never even worn a necktie.

MY CONCLUDING WORK

My work now involves meeting those released inmates. When those boys come out, I invite them to my house and dress them in a suit of clothes so they will have something decent to wear when they ask somebody for a job. Before I send them on their way, I try to teach them the gospel of Christ and bring them to the Lord.

I have counseled with a number of men on four units of the prison system, but the doors are practically barred to me now because there were too many of them wanting to be baptized, and the denominational chaplains and the manager of the prison did not want those people baptized. It was all right to teach them and encourage them to live right, but not to baptize them. The devil is pretty smart; as long as he can keep a person from being saved he is real

happy, and he has a lot of people working for him in this world today.

Beloved, the possibilities of teaching people who have been in trouble are tremendous. These people are really open-minded. They know they need help, and all it takes is somebody to guide them in the right way.

I want you to know how glad I am to tell you that there is a God in heaven who is a merciful God. And Jesus Christ His Son died for your sins. It makes no difference how great your sins or how small, the blood of Christ is the answer. And then a faithful life unto death will bring eternal life to you.

If you haven't obeyed the gospel of Christ we would encourage you to do so while time and opportunity are given you. If you have fallen short of God's will, won't you make it right with Him and live for Him in full dedication of life that He may bless you here and hereafter?

[NOTE: Clyde Thompson died of a heart attack July 1, 1979. His life story has been recorded in a book by journalist Don Umphrey (The Meanest Man in Texas, Quarry Press, P.O. Box 181736, Dallas, TX).

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Voices from the past...

SIX SEARCHING QUESTIONS

Fred E. Dennis

1. WHAT ARE WE?

We are beings endowed with a moral conscience, therefore responsible for our conduct. Animals have no moral conscience, hence are not responsible for their conduct. Our consciences should be educated in conformity to the teaching of God's word. Conscience is a matter of education. Conscience by itself does not attest to the right or wrong of a thing. Paul never violated his conscience, but

he committed some terrible sins (Acts 23:1). We should strive for a good conscience, and in all things be willing to live honestly (Heb. 13:18). "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). We are responsible to God for our actions.

2. WHENCE CAME WE?

Much has been said about the origin of the species. There is just one satisfactory explanation. We came

from God. Hear it: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

3. WHITHER ARE WE BOUND?

The body is destined to return to **the earth**, and the spirit shall return unto **the God who gave it.**

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). God made our bodies of the dust of the ground. The body goes back to the dust of the ground. God breathed into our bodies the breath of life. At death, the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

We are all bound for **the judgment bar of God**. This is a serious, solemn thought. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). *“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”* (Rom. 14:10). *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

We are bound for **eternity**. Jesus said: *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matt. 25:46). We are on our way to judgment and eternity.

4. WHAT IS OUR DUTY?

Our duty is to **hear God**. At the transfiguration, God spoke from heaven, saying: *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”* (Matt. 17:5). There was a time when folks were to hear Moses and the prophets, but that time has passed away. God speaks to us by his Son. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son”* (Heb. 1:1,2). Our faith comes by hearing God. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17).

Our duty is to **believe the Gospel**. Jesus said: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). Virtue does not lie in simply hearing, but in believing the truth when it is heard.

Our duty is to **obey the Gospel**. Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey (Heb. 5:8,9). God will not save us and God cannot save us unless we obey. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (I John 5:3). The Bible ends with a blessing pronounced on the obedient:

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into city” (Rev. 22:14).

5. WHAT IS OUR DANGER?

There are two great dangers confronting all. One of these is that we will **neglect the great salvation**. *“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. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, a every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will”* (Heb. 2:1-4). How shall we escape if we neglect? There is no escape. However, *“the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9). If we perish eternally, it will not be because God willed it so. He wills just the opposite of that, but he cannot save us against our stubborn wills.

We are in danger of **losing our souls**. The devil would have us to believe that we are in no great danger, but such is a lie. Jesus raised this warning: *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul”* (Matt. 16:25,26)? Jesus would not talk about losing our soul if we were not in very great danger of doing that very thing.

6. WHAT IS OUR DESTINY?

There are two destinies before us. One is **heaven** and the other is **hell**. The writer of this article and each reader thereof are facing one of these destinies. Which will it be? May God grant that we may realize that we are beings endowed with a moral

conscience; and, therefore, responsible for our conduct. May we appreciate our high and holy origin. May we think of the solemn, serious fact that it will not be long until these perishing bodies will go back to the earth and the spirit will return unto the God who gave it. May we hear, believe, and obey the truth, and thus be made free from our old sins. May we keep right on hearing, believing, and obeying. By doing this we are not neglecting the great salvation, and neither shall we lose our souls. May heaven be the happy lot of each one of us in the sweet afterwhile.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Church of Christ, Maysville, OK	\$100
Herb Moyer	\$60
Anonymous	\$50
Ruby York	\$180
John H. Brown	\$25
Norma C. Williams.....	\$20
Anonymous	\$200
Anonymous	\$300
M/M Jack Cato	\$25
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them in a long time. Please continue the good work for it's hard to be able to ever hear a godly, good sermon any more. Your paper gives me a lift I can't or don't get at home and I do want to thank everyone who has a part in publishing this great paper. I'm enclosing a list of friends who would like to receive your paper. Thank you so much and may God bless your efforts" **...Norma C. Williams, Union City, TN.** "Please remove the following name and address from your mailing list immediately. Thank you" **...Conny & Tammi McBryar, Wildwood, GA.** "I am moving and don't want to miss a copy. Please change my address. I look forward to receiving it" **...Ruth Blair, Saquache, CO.** "Dear brother Robinson, Thank you for helping us to continue on the 'Old Paths.' Please use the donation where it is needed most. May God Bless us all" **...Ed & Jewel Warfield, Lancaster, CA.** "Dear Brother Robinson, I would like to sign up for your magazine "Seek The Old Paths." I am enclosing some money for postage and if it is more, please let me know. I picked up a copy at a lectureship in Indianapolis and enjoyed it very much. We attend church at South Holland church of Christ in South Holland and Peter Bumpass is our minister. Thank you" **...Don Thompson, Park Forest, IL.** "Please use this contribution for "Seek The Old Paths" **...Don Huffines, Gainesboro, TN.** "Thanks so much for a wonderful and truthful paper. I am requesting one to be mailed to our preacher, he said he would like to receive it. Thank you again" **...Wilma Donaldson, Dickson, TN.** "I have had the great pleasure of reading your paper on several occasions, in turn, I also shared them with my brother. Being life long members of the church of Christ, we have felt the divisions of the Lord's church firsthand. In and around Flint, Michigan is no exception. Our 'families' we have literally grown up with the past 50 to 75 years are scattered. What is left of the true Lord's church are managing to unite and continue in our ministries. I would like very much to read more about these divisions and how we can eliminate them in the future. It is so very distressing to have three or more churches that were once united and loving families within a ten mile radius now separate — the very thing we were warned about 2,000 years ago. It is very refreshing to have a magazine like yours that still speaks the TRUTH. If it is possible, I would like to receive your magazine for myself and brother. Thank you so much for your good works" **...Name withheld, MI.** "Our friends shared a copy of *Seek The Old Paths* with us. We understand you will send us a copy (free) if we request it. Would you please add our address/name to your mailing list? We are so encouraged from reading the copy they shared with us. Thank you" **...Albert & Mary Wise, Liberty, MO.** "I was born and raised in the church so I have been going to church for almost 62 years. As a child I went through two church splits, another church in town has a gay preacher that left town in the middle of the night. Well, when you think you have heard it all, here is a new one. A congregation we just had to leave had not had elders in about 30 yrs. In their desire to appoint elders, only one man was qualified, two others negotiated their terms for agreeing to become elders. One still goes to his cabin at least one Sunday a month, missing church to go to a pro football game, not attending men's meeting because his wife does not want him too, wears a baseball cap and shorts while leading singing during VBS because 'it is not a worship service.' When someone objects they are told repeated lies and ignored. The Lord's church in Southeast Colorado is getting smaller, pray for the few remaining Christians in the area" **...name withheld.** "I enjoy reading your publication and would like to continue receiving it. Thank you" **...Mike Jones, Evergreen, AL.** "Thank you for sending STOP. We enjoy and look forward to receiving it" **...Joe and Katie Gibbins, Sherwood, AR.** "I surely appreciate receiving *Seek The Old Paths*. I also share them with a friend that attends the church of Christ in Godfrey, Illinois. They are true to the Bible. Enclosed is a check. Thank you. In Christian Love" **...Ida E. Horn, Alton, IL.** "I have received your monthly publication for some time. I enjoy it very much. Enclosed is a small check to help with expenses. Please send "*Seek The Old Paths*" to the enclosed friend. Thank you very much"

"I have enjoyed STOP for awhile and appreciate you taking your time and talents to portray the whole truth as revealed in His word. I attended Lipscomb in 1943-45 and your write-up in the April 2008 was so very sad. I've been knowing for a good while they seemed to be going off the deep end and I haven't helped

...James M. Neal, Houston, MS. "Please discontinue paper" **...Kenneth Thomas, Pekin, IL.** "There is a new congregation started in Cleveland, Mississippi, called the Bolivar church of Christ. We now have a safe haven for the children. I would like to circulate *Seek The Old Paths* to each member" **...Roy Boone, Cleveland, MS.** "Thank you for continuing to send STOP to me. You and all your writers contribute such wonderful articles and I enjoy every one. Thank you for promoting sound doctrine so convincingly in a 'what's the use' kind of world. It's good to know that many refuse to give way to the 'change agents' and apostasy, and remind us that there are still caring and sincere people seeking to do God's will" **...Las Vegas, NV.** "I am enclosing a check to assist in the publication and mailing of *Seek The Old Paths*" **...James Puckett, Midland church of Christ, Midland, MI.** "I would love to be on your monthly mailing list. I truly appreciate the work you do on and through your magazine" **...Deborah Dunkerson, Burton, MI.** "Please add me to the mailing list to receive *Seek The Old Paths* monthly. I am an elder" **...Darrin Sanders, Rutledge, AL.** "Please put me on your mailing list to receive STOP. I really enjoy reading your paper from cover to cover. I picked up a copy from the Boulevard church of Christ in Las Vegas where I am a member and don't want to miss any issues. That is why I want to be included on your mailing list. Thanks so much and it is so refreshing to know there are still a lot of sound doctrine out there when so many have fallen away and adding to God's word. I am so saddened by those congregations who have started using instruments in worship and take the Lord's supper when they feel like it. Keep up the good work" **...Janet Hayes, Las Vegas, NV.** "I have appreciated your sending me your paper for the last five years or so. I will soon be leaving the country and request that I be removed from your mailing list" **...Jade Hammond, Lawrenburg, TN.** "Thanks very much" **...Carl Minchey, Goodlettsville, TN.** "Thank you for an excellent editorial on the debacle at Lipscomb" **...Al Sowins, Camp Wood, TX.**

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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**

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