

# 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 DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

***There is no coattail righteousness taught in the Bible.  
In the realm of politics a man might sweep into a lesser office by  
catching hold of the coattail of a much more popular politician.  
But no one is going to heaven by hanging on to the  
righteousness of someone else.***

A definition of terms is first in order. By the Bible, I mean the Word of God — the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven of the New Testament. This Book is our all-authoritative and all-sufficient guide in matters of the spirit. Doctrine means teaching or instruction. Imputed means to count, reckon, "calculate, evaluate or consider" (Gary Workman). Righteousness is right standing before God, proper acceptance by him, justification, conformity to God's standard or right-doing. God declares us righteous, justified or acceptable to him when we do his will. I propose that we look at this subject both negatively and positively, both by noting some ruinous doctrines that have been taught and by setting forth the true Bible doctrine of imputed or reckoned righteousness.

### THE SUBJECT VIEWED NEGATIVELY

Numerous religious leaders have gone wild with this word *imputed*. (1) They want to impute Adam's sin to all of us and thus we have original or Adamic sin. This is back of the Calvinistic concept that every person is born a sinner, actually conceived in sin. Sin thus becomes an inherited thing. Another's sins are not imputed

to us. No human being has ever been guilty of Adam's and Eve's sins in Eden except Adam and Eve. (2) They want to impute all our sins to Christ and thus make him the greatest murderer, liar, adulterer, drunkard, robber, etc., the world has ever known. It is true that Christ became our great sin-bearer and that the God of heaven laid on him the sins and iniquities of us all. But he was still the INNOCENT Lamb of God becoming an atonement or sacrifice for our sins. (3) Some think they can impute the righteousness of a saintly person to themselves. They think of certain giants in the faith who have lived very exemplary lives and thus have built up a reserve of righteousness or good works beyond what they needed. These have been transferred to a Bank of Good Works and those deficient can borrow from someone's surplus or superabundance. (4) Many have been led to believe that Christ's own personal righteousness is transferred to us. They think they are just as good as he is and if this doctrine is so, they would be.

### A REFUTATION OF THE FOREGOING

Adamic or original sin will not fit a single one of the following definitions of sin, such as: the thought of

foolishness is sin (Prov. 24:9), whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23), a failure to do what we ought is sin (James 4:17), sin as being transgression or lawlessness (1 John 3:4) and that all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17). Ezekiel 18:20 refutes such by affirming that the "soul that sinneth, it shall die." Sons do not bear iniquities of fathers and vice versa. Fathers are not righteous because sons are and vice versa. Judgment passages uniformly teach that we shall give account of OUR works — not another's.

Jesus did bear our sins when he went to Calvary and by his stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24). The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all of us (Isa. 53:6). Isaiah 53:5 states, "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*" Yet it was still the case of the just suffering for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). He died for murderers but did not become a murderer personally; he died for adulterers but did not become a moral misfit personally; he died for drunkards but did not become a drunkard personal-

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**Imputed Righteousness...**



Editorial...

## BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD #2

Garland M. Robinson

I refer you to last month's issue to read the first installment of this article. We are speaking of Christian graces that every Christian is to incorporate into their lives.

### KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is correct insight, understanding, true wisdom by which our faith is increased.

It has always been the case that we are to grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). God desires that we *know* and *understand* the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17). In understanding, we are to be "men," not children (1 Cor. 14:20). Grace and peace is multiplied through *knowledge* (2 Peter 1:2). Paul commended the church at Rome for being "...full of goodness, filled with all *knowledge*, able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). We are to be filled with the knowledge of His Will (Col. 1:9). Without the knowledge of God's Will, we cannot see what our work is, for it is only defined by the Lord's instruction. Therefore, Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Souls are condemned for not having the knowledge they should. "*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*" (Rom. 10:2). We must make sure we know the truth and then practice it in our lives.

It is by the truth, the Word of God, that we will be judged. Jesus said, "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48). In Revelation 20:12 John wrote concerning judgment, "*And I saw the dead, small*

*and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*"

### TEMPERANCE

Temperance is self-control, self-discipline, the ability to restrain ourselves. It is to have the mastery over our passions and desires. We do not have the excuse to run wild and blame it on the excitement of the moment. We are to be rational, deliberate, reasonable, balanced, clear-headed.

There is no law prohibiting temperance (Gal. 5:23). It is good and appropriate. It is to be desired, cultivated and developed in our lives. Self control enables us to apply the knowledge we have of God's Word.

Paul reasoned with Felix "of righteousness, *temperance*, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:15). Felix, considering the sobering words of Paul, "trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." He was unwilling to exercise restraint in his life. He would not say "no" to his passions and lusts. He was consumed by the "good life" (as men call it) and would not let it go. At least for a moment he contemplated the consequences of his actions and the impending eternal torment he would suffer, but he resisted the power of the Gospel and chose to continue his life as it was. Nothing more is said in the Scriptures if he ever found a more convenient season. We are left to believe he did not. Oh, what he would give "now" in exchange for his soul (cf. Matt. 16:26)!

### PATIENCE

Patience is cheerful (hopeful)

endurance, constancy, bearing up under trials, longsuffering. It provides the consistency to help us exercise temperance (self-control).

Patience is a characteristic of those who love the Lord. Romans 2:7 says, "*To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.*" As children of God, we are to be patient (2 Tim. 2:24; James 5:8). We are to be patient in facing tribulation (Rom. 12:12). We are to be patient toward all men (1 Thess. 5:14). We are to be patient in waiting for Christ (2 Thess. 3:5; James 5:7).

Everyone needs patience. Don't you need some? Will you hold up your hand and say "I have plenty, I have patience to spare." I don't expect to see any hands.

### GODLINESS

Godliness is true piety, holiness. It is God likeness, godly character out of devotion to God. Every day that passes affirms the fact that we are to grow closer in likeness to our Lord. Our life in the Lord is to be quiet and peaceable "in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2). We are to exercise ourselves unto godliness because godliness is "profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. 4:7-8). The teaching and doctrine of the Lord is according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3). We are to follow after godliness (1 Tim. 6:11) because Titus 1:1 says that acknowledging the truth is godliness.

Some suppose that gaining wealth and prosperity in this world is godliness, but they are sadly mistaken according to 1 Timothy 6:5. Faithful Christians are to have nothing to do with those who so believe and teach. We must come to believe and know with all surety that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Some have only a form of godliness and are hypocrites (2 Tim. 3:5). Knowing that the world will one day pass away prompts us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). Hell to shun and heaven to gain are great incentives to live a holy life in all godliness (2 Peter 3:11). Are you seeking to do such?

### BROTHERLY KINDNESS

Brotherly kindness is fraternal

affection, love of and toward brethren. First Thessalonians 4:9 says, “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” Nonetheless, we’re told to “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). That means I had rather see you commended, recognized or praised rather than me. As we measure things, I may have done something greater than you and worthy of the praise, but because of brotherly love and kindness, it pleases me that you receive the praise while my deeds go unrecognized. Brotherly love must continue (Heb. 13:1).

Can you imagine what a far greater world it would be if its citizens had a heaping helping measure of brotherly kindness? It starts with us. Have you already started? Are you willing to start?

#### CHARITY

Charity is sincere and genuine

interest in the welfare of others. It is active goodwill toward those in need. The English word “love” is often referred to today in place of the word “charity.” However, I like the word “charity” best because it defines more closely the good will, interest and promotion of others. When we extend charity, we do so based on our own genuine desire to work ‘good’ toward others. It’s certainly true that *love* prompts us to do that, but *charity* expresses more fully the motive behind the good will.

Some proud individuals have been heard to say, “I don’t want your charity.” They recognize the “hand out” from those who are extending charity, but they are so proud they don’t want it. Christians help others and do good to others because of their pure heart of charity. When we find ourselves on the receiving end of charity, we ought to appreciate it and be thankful for the kindness and love shown to us. My counsel and advice is to accept the charity that is offered to us because we could very well be

denying the giver a blessing if we do not. The Lord’s people are always interested in being good, doing good, giving good and receiving good. Can you imagine what a world it would be if everyone lived this way?

First Corinthians 14:1 tells us to “follow after charity” (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22). We are to do all that we do in “charity” (1 Cor. 16:14). Colossians 3:14 says, “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” First Timothy 1:5 says, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” We are to be an example in charity (1 Tim. 4:12). “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

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**SEND US YOUR  
CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

## PROGRESSIVE SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

*Marlin Kilpatrick*

**S**in is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). A good illustration of this fact is seen in the Old Testament. God tells Moses that “...the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16). The Hebrew word for “iniquity” means perversity. A synonym for perversity is wickedness. The sinfulness (wickedness) of the Amorites had not (when God spoke to Abram) reached its fullness. The name “Amorite,” according to Bible scholars, is used representatively of all of the (then) inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

Since the “iniquity” of the various tribes that inhabited the land of Canaan had not yet reached its fullness, we have here an illustration of the progressive nature of sin. As with nations, so it is with the individual. No person is instantly as perverse as he may become. Man is not born a sinner, but he becomes a sinner by transgressing God’s law and allowing sin to have its progressive influence in his life. “*But evil men and seducers*

*shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Tim. 3:13).

Eventually, there comes a day of accounting for one’s life (2 Cor. 5:10). In the case of the tribes that inhabited the land of Canaan, most of them were defeated when Joshua and his army entered the land and began the conquest (see the book of Joshua). God intended for Israel to defeat and drive out these wicked people, but Israel only partially obeyed the Lord. Later, this proved to be a “thorn in the side” of the Israelites, for these heathen nations (tribes) that remained in the land led them into idolatry, which in turn caused the northern kingdom (Israel) to go into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom (Judah) followed about 135 years later, going into the Babylonian captivity. No sin goes unpunished. In the case of the Amorites, we see that there comes a time when the stench of sinfulness in a nation reaches a point when God will no longer tolerate that nation’s

existence.

Brethren, an entire Old Testament book (Daniel) is devoted to the theme that “our God rules in the kingdoms of men.” Since God rules over all nations, how long will he allow our nation to exist? Of course, no one knows the exact answer, but the Scriptures warn us about the progressive nature of sin and its consequences. And, this was written for our learning (cf. Rom. 15:4). God has richly blessed our nation, but his blessings will not continue indefinitely if we remain in a downward slide into gross immorality. The taking of innocent lives (abortion) and the recognition of “same-sex” (homosexual and lesbian) marriages are two examples of our progressing further and further into wickedness.

Since God is no respecter of persons (or nations), and when America’s iniquity is full, he will surely hold us accountable. Think about it.

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## Imputed Righteousness...

(Continued from page 49)

ly; he died for the violent but did not become violent personally; he died for the dishonest but did not become dishonest personally. It is a monumental mistake to impute the guilt of our sins to Jesus and thus make the Immaculate Son of God into the greatest sinner of all times. Brethren who just glibly say that our sins were imputed to Christ and stop there without further elaboration need to be careful lest some uninformed reader or auditor conclude that Christ really did become the greatest sinner of all time.

The righteousness of other people is not imputed to us. I am not a child of God simply because someone else is; I am not sober, righteous and godly because somebody else is. I am not on my way to heaven simply because somebody else is. There is no coattail righteousness taught in the Bible. In the realm of politics a man might sweep into a lesser office by catching hold of the coattail of a much more popular politician. But no one is going to heaven by hanging on to the righteousness of someone else. Transferred or borrowed righteousness is not taught in Holy Writ. The foolish virgins in Matthew 25 thought they could borrow righteousness, preparation and readiness from the wise five in that famed, familiar parable. They requested of the wise five what could not be transferred or transmitted — righteousness and readiness to meet the Lord in peace!

It is also an egregious error, yet one widely held, that Deity transfers to us the personal righteousness of God the Father or the personal righteousness of Jesus Christ. Were that the case, then we would be as sinlessly perfect as they. Bogard, the Baptist, once laid claim to being as perfect in his soul as was God himself. The consequence of this is that one would never fear falling for absolute perfection does not fall as long as absolute perfection is possessed. The step is very short between an acceptance of this personal righteousness of God or Christ imputed to one and his colossal claim of once-saved-always-saved. The two go together like the proverbial horse and carriage.

## THE TRUTH POSITIVELY DECLARED

Moses wrote of Abraham in Genesis 15:6, “*And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*” Both Paul and James quote this passage in the New Testament (Rom. 4:3; James 2:23). Abraham was an obedient believer. God reckoned, imputed or put down to his account such. Abraham was not accounted righteous when he was disobedient and neither are we. He was not accounted faithful when he was unfaithful and neither are we. He was not imputed as a follower of the Lord when he was not a follower and neither are we. He was not accounted a lover of God while he was a hater of God, if such he ever was, and neither are we. God put down to his account his faith when he had that faith and counted him a person of righteousness.

There are only two ways a person might be justified or counted righteous. I know of no third alternative. (1) If a person never sinned and always maintained absolutely perfect obedience, he would be counted as righteous or justified simply upon the basis that he had never violated a single statute of the Lord’s will. Were this ever the case, which it is not due to man’s utter failure to keep God’s law with absolute perfection, then man might well glory and find plenty of occasion to boast in Jehovah’s presence that he had earned or merited his heavenly salvation. His justification then would be a matter of debt — not of grace or favor. (2) The second way is for God to declare man justified by grace (God’s part) through faith (man’s part). Paul in Romans shows that man cannot be righteous or justified by his own efforts. He proves conclusively in Romans 1-3 that both Gentile and Jew have sinned, have sinned grievously and thus have come short of Jehovah’s glory. That God, through the Gospel of Christ, is willing to impute or reckon righteousness (justification) to the obedient is set forth profoundly throughout Romans. In fundamental fact it is the burden of the entire New Testament. It underlies the whole scope of the Scheme of Human Redemption.

Let us note how Paul used the case of Abraham to further his argu-

ment for justification by God’s grace and man’s obedient faith. Abraham was the illustrious founder of the Hebrew people, the Israelite nation. Was Abraham saved or made righteous by a sinlessly perfect life or by God’s grace through his obedient faith? Not the former, Paul is quick to avow. Had Abraham been made righteous or had been justified by a life of absolute perfection, then his justification would have been a matter of pure debt; God would have owed it to him. Paul denies that this is how justification or righteousness came to the illustrious founder of their great nation. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. Abraham believed what God told him. His faith was then reckoned (accounted or set down to his account) to him for righteousness. Abraham did not have this reckoned to him because of Abel’s faith, Enoch’s faith or Noah’s faith, all of whom preceded him in faith’s great list of worthies. It was due to HIS faith. There is NO Biblical authorization at all to this foolish notion that another’s personal faith or individual righteousness is imputed to us (set down to our account). What was reckoned to Abraham was his faith because he possessed it and had for years when Genesis 15:6 was stated of him.

Righteousness is not something transferred to us. We do not inherit it; we do not borrow it from those we think have a superabundance of it. Peter told the first Gentiles to be converted under God’s glorious Gospel that acceptance to God comes from fearing (an awesome, reverential respect) God and working righteousness (Acts 10:35). The household of Cornelius experienced a declaration of their righteousness by God when they heard and heeded the glorious Gospel Peter preached to them. That is when God imputed or reckoned righteousness (justification) to them.

God’s righteousness (not his personal attribute of this precious possession but his plan to make or declare men righteous) is revealed in the Gospel from “faith to faith” (Rom. 1:16,17). It is a system of faith and leads to faith by its ardent adherents. The Romans became righteous before God when they heard (10:17), believed (10:10), repented (2:4), confessed (10:9,10) and were immersed in water into Christ and into the

blessed, beautiful benefits of his blood (6:3,4).

The Corinthians had become righteous when they came into Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30). Recall that they had heard, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). This is when God imputed righteousness to them or declared them justified. They had become a washed, a sanctified and a justified people (1 Cor. 6:11). This is how they became righteous.

John the apostle wrote, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him...Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 2:29; 3:7). These were John’s little children. To God they were his children. He had imputed righteousness or declared them justified when they obeyed Christ. They remained in a righteous, justified or saved state as long as they did the Father’s will.

**CONCLUSION**

God imputes righteous when we obey the Gospel. That is when we are declared justified. Faithful conformity to his will for our lives will keep us righteous, justified, saved.

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**A TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER  
RICHARD CARLSON**

*Adam Carlson*

On Saturday, April 17, 2010, my father Richard Carlson passed from this earthly life unexpectedly. In this brief article I would like to discuss a few aspects and things from his life.

**A GOSPEL PREACHER**

Of all the things my father did in this life, he was first and foremost one who faithfully proclaimed the message of Jesus crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). He did so in a simplistic manner so that all who heard could understand.

He was one who was an unwavering supporter of all other men who devoted their lives to the Gospel and was always ready to offer an encouraging word to anyone who was in need of such. You might think of him as a Barnabas (Acts 4:36). He was very supportive of my decision, almost two years ago, to enroll as a full time student at the *Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development* (near Elizabethton, TN). He was always ready and willing to assist me in my studies.



**HUSBAND**

Dad was a faithful husband. He and my mother were married for twenty-six years. From as early back in my child-hood as I can remember was the devotion he had for mom, truly following the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” By his example and preaching, he no doubt taught others how a husband and wife are to treat one another.

**FATHER**

He was a father, not just any type of father, but rather one who truly brought me and my sister up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). He trained us up in the way we should go (Prov. 22:6). Furthermore, he taught us God’s word (Deut. 6:6-9), instilling in both of us a proper understanding and respect for the Scriptures. It is because of this and his example, that my sister and I are both members of the Lord’s church.

**HIS EXAMPLE**

Dad set the right example for us in the companions that he chose (1 Cor. 15:34). Some of my earliest memories include being in the company of several different wonderful Gospel preachers of whom I have had the honor, over the last several years, to get the opportunity to know and have likewise influenced me by their examples of service to God.

**CONCLUSION**

While much more could be written about my father this will be sufficient. Dad was one who was devoted to God, family and friends. Even though he is no longer with us here, he will live on by his example and life. He, like Abel is dead but still speaks (Heb. 11:4) and like Enoch who walked with God (Gen. 5:22).

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# Elder's COLUMN

## THE WORK OF ELDERS #1

Ben F. Vick, Jr.

***Appointing men to serve who are not qualified is wrong, and the church that appoints them is heading for trouble. Each one of the qualifications listed is necessary for each man to have in order to serve.***

Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey together, ordained elders in every city (Acts 14:23). Thus, in each congregation it is the Lord's will that a plurality of men, having met the scriptural qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, be appointed to serve as overseers of the flock. Paul said that if any man desired the office of a bishop he desired a good work (1 Tim. 3:1). Elders are servants, not mere figureheads to be listed on the church letterhead. The fact that men were ordained or appointed to serve as elders indicates that there was a work for them to do. *What is the job description of elders?*

When Paul met with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, among other things he told them, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). This one inspired statement lays out the job description for elders (overseers) of the flock. Elders are first to take heed to themselves. This is an on-going job. What is true of elders, is also true of all members. One cannot help another unless his own life is right. If he fails to do this, his influence for others will be nil. The devil works as hard to get elders and preachers as any other member of the church. The devil does not have to worry about those he already has. Thus, elders must be vigilant regarding their own lives. Peter admonished: *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

**Elders are to take heed to all the flock.** The words "take heed" translate a Greek word which means "to be in a continuous state of readi-

ness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately; to pay attention to, to keep on the lookout for, to be alert for, to be on one's guard against" (*Louw and Nida*). Jacob was a steward for Laban twenty years. Jacob said, *"Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes"* (Gen. 31:40). Shepherds are on call 24-7. They do not punch a clock. Their work is certainly not limited to making decisions. Like good shepherds, they are to be always on guard.

The Holy Spirit makes them overseers by their meeting the qualifications given in the New Testament. This is not done in any miraculous way. Men read the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and strive to conform their lives to them. It takes a long time to grow an elder. It may take a generation or two to do so. Appointing men to serve who are not qualified is wrong, and the church that appoints them is heading for trouble. Each one of the qualifications listed is necessary for each man to have in order to serve.

**Elders are overseers.** The Greek word for overseers is from *episkopos* which means "an inspector, overseer; a watcher, guardian, I Peter 2:25; in N.T. an ecclesiastical overseer..." (Bagster, p.160). Thayer says the word means "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent." Elders are superintendents. They are charged with the duty of "seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly." A young man assigned to lead singing was dilly-dallying around prior to worship services. It was an hundred waiting on one. An elder told him

that it was time to start. The young brother rebuked the elder, accusing him of being "crass" in suggesting that an elder had the right to tell him to start on time. Such demonstrates a lack of respect for the eldership and is a failure to understand a part of the elders' role. Eventually this young brother left the congregation, began worshiping with and troubling another congregation until he saw that he could not rule it. He left that congregation and started another congregation, drawing disciples after him. Wrong attitudes toward those in authority will lead to that.

Brother Jack Lewis teaches that elders have no authority in the local congregation, except by example. But if a man has authority in his home, then elders have authority in the church (1 Tim. 3:4-5). They are not to abuse their authority (1 Peter 5:1-3), but the abuse of authority does not mean they do not have any authority. Can anyone imagine a school superintendent not having any authority? How can one be charged with a duty, yet have no power or authority to execute the duty? Perhaps the view that elders have no authority in the local congregation has influenced some men to allow anything to be taught or practiced in the church. Is it any wonder that so many churches are departing from the truth?

**Elders are to feed the flock of God.** Peter said, *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:1-3). The American Standard Ver-

sion of 1901 says, “Tend the flock of God.” The New King James Version says, “Shepherd the flock of God.” If elders *shepherd* or *tend* the flock, they will lead the flock in the right way. A shepherd will lead his flock, but he does not drive them (Psa. 23). Likewise, elders are to lead God’s flock as the New Testament teaches. Elders lead by example — poor examples are poor leaders. It is for this reason that Paul said that elders must have a good report from them who are outside the body of Christ (1 Tim. 3:7). Those who have a bad reputation in the world, if they serve as elders, will fall into reproach; that is, they will fall into disapproval and are subject to just criticism. They also become a snare of the devil. The devil can use them to catch others. Since a little leaven leavens the whole lump, if an elder is living an immoral life, it may cause others to fall into the same trap. Sins can be forgiven, but a reputation lost may never be regained.

**A shepherd will tend the flock.** This indicates he will be observant of the flock. What are the needs of each individual? Some may have a need for special attention. The needs may be spiritual; the needs may be physical; or they may be both. A good shepherd knows his sheep (John 10:14). Thus, elders must know the flock. In my mind’s eye I see a shepherd overseeing his flock, and when he sees a small weak lamb that needs to be carried over rough terrain, he picks it up and carries it until the pathway is smooth. He tries to strengthen it. He may also see an old cantankerous goat that needs a little prodding. He must be able to distinguish between the two. Sometimes that comes only by experience. Elders or shepherds must be ready and willing to do both.

**Shepherds are to try and bring back sheep that have gone astray.** Jesus said, “*How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should*

*perish*” (Matt. 18:12-14). A young preacher and his wife began working with a congregation that had overseers. As the preacher and his wife were getting to know the members, it was discovered that a good sister was in the nursing home dying of cancer, while her husband, also a member of the church, was committing adultery with a woman who was living with him. The elders had not been to see

him about this matter. It fell the lot of the young preacher and his wife to go and talk with this man about his sin.

Elders are to watch the souls under their care. This means they are duty bound to try to restore the wayward (Heb. 13:17; Gal. 6:1).

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## FIVE THINGS THE GOSPEL OF THE CHRIST CANNOT DO

*Roger D. Campbell*

**T**he Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Man’s true hope of going to heaven through Jesus is revealed in the Gospel. Yet, there are some things the Gospel cannot do.

1) The Gospel cannot save a person that is determined to live in rebellion against God. The Gospel has the power to make believers and save obedient believers (Rom. 1:16,17), but it cannot save those who will not repent of their past sins and submit to God’s word.

2) The Gospel cannot help a troubled marriage as long as both spouses refuse to hear and heed what the Gospel says. The New Testament has specific, helpful instructions for every wife and every husband (Eph. 5:22-33). When such teaching is carried out properly, marriages will not only survive, they will bloom. But, as long as neither spouse is willing to do things God’s way, the Gospel cannot help their situation.

3) The Gospel cannot do the work of the church. The church must go and preach the Gospel because the Gospel does not preach itself (Mark 16:15). The Gospel tells us to help the needy, but the Gospel itself cannot feed the needy. God’s Gospel can motivate Christians to be compassionate, but His children must step up and share their bounty. The Gospel contains complete instructions that can strengthen and equip the church, but the Gospel itself cannot take what Christians have learned and teach it to others so that they, too, can teach. The task of training faithful workers belongs to saints (2 Tim. 2:2).

4) The Gospel cannot serve as a substitute for prayer. The same Savior that tells us to preach the Gospel also tells us to pray (Luke 18:1). The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that the Gospel is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), but He also led that same apostle to pray for opportunities to preach the Gospel (Col. 4:2,3). We live the Gospel, teach the Gospel, and defend the Gospel, but we still bring our petitions and thanksgiving before our heavenly Father in prayer (Phil. 4:6,7). The Gospel is great, but it cannot take away the need to pray.

5) The Gospel cannot take the place of faith. “We have the Gospel. What else could we need?” It is true that faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). And, it is equally true that the word of God can build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). However, we must not be deceived into thinking, “Hey, we have the Gospel, so why do I need to have faith?” Faith is man’s proper response to the Gospel message. The faith which pleases God is the faith that acts by love (Gal. 5:6). There is no benefit or consolation in having several copies of the Bible in our house if we are not going to put its teaching to use in our lives. It is still true that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (Heb. 11:6) and “the just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38).

I am so thankful that precious people taught me the Gospel. I thank God for the power of the Gospel to change people’s lives and people’s eternal destiny. But, there are some things that even the Gospel of the Lord Jesus cannot do.

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I would like the monthly STOP sent to me. Thank you" **...Carolyn Dunn, Cedar Hill, TX.** "Thank you for your good work" **...James R. Wells, Ravenden, AR.** "Would you please send STOP to my cousin. Thanks" **...Name Withheld.** "Thank you" **...Anthony Grigsby, Huber Heights, OH.** "I have been receiving your

publication for some time, however since November, I have not. Please start sending it to me again. If possible, could you send me the ones starting in November. I so enjoy your paper and don't want to miss any of them. May God continue to bless this good work" **...Oleta Trigg, Big Sandy, TX.** "My husband and I enjoy receiving and reading your publication. Please send STOP to the following people and accept the enclosed donation to defer mailing costs. Thank you for your efforts to proclaim the truth from God's Word. May God continue to bless your efforts" **...Rhonda Brown, Maysville, OK.** "Thank you so much for the good work you do. May God bless you in each effort" **...Andrew & Linda Martin, Ramer, TN.** "It's a great work you are doing, sowing the seed of the kingdom. We pray for your physical endurance and your family" **...Bill & Ellen Brockway, Lucedale, MS.** "I always look forward to getting my STOP — a great paper" **...B. J. Kirby, Tyler, TX.** "Levi Davis has passed away" **...Magnolia, AR.** "I would like to be put on your mailing list" **...William Grimes, Jr., Centerville, TN.** "I am wanting to know if STOP is still free to us that would like to receive the pamphlet? We would like to start taking the paper soon. Thank you very much" **...Jean Davis, Merkel, TX.** [YES, the paper is free. We're glad to be able to send it to you.] "Enjoy the soundness of the teaching of your articles" **...Rowdy Kincade, Wewoka, OK.** "Thank you" **...Lozell Milligan, Corinth, MS.** "Could you please remove Bill Leftwich from your mailing list. He is deceased and I do not want to continue receiving his mail. Thank you" **...Roxie Snow, Fort Worth, TX.** "Thanks for past issues, but please stop sending STOP asap. I appreciate it" **...Don Lord, Yukon, OK.** "Thank you" **...Anonymous, Jonesboro, AR.** "I hear so many people say come to 'my church.' There is only ONE church and it is the LORD'S church. Anyone can be a member of that church. If they HEAR the Gospel (John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17), BELIEVE (Rom. 1:16; Acts 18:8; Heb. 11:6), REPENT (Luke 13:3,5; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 17:30), CONFESS faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10), be BAPTIZED (immersed) (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; I Peter 3:21), CONTINUE FAITHFUL unto death (Matt. 25:21,34; I Peter 1:1-11; Rev. 2:10; I John 1:6-9)" **...Everett Poteet, Imboden, AR.** "I appreciate being on your mailing list. I love the work you are doing. I wish to have my issue sent to a new address please. Thank you so much" **...Robert Swindell, Sparta, TN.** "I am writing you for two reasons. One is a change of address. Two, just to let you know we truly enjoy the Old Paths paper. We look forward to getting the paper in the mail. We also share the paper with other Christians at church in Rittman, Ohio. Again, thank you" **...Troy & Dianne Pertee, Sterling, OH.** "My reason for writing is to be put on the monthly mailing list for *Seek The Old Paths*. The articles I have read are from a couple left some place and sometime, it is not whole, so I'm asking that you would mail me STOP for my studies and information that I may grow in spirit, understanding, knowledge, hope, and faith as I use the Bible and your material. Thank you for having and publishing such information that can be used. I will do my best to support your endeavors any way the Lord God blesses me. Thank you" **...Jerry Jones, Memphis, TN.** "While I have enjoyed STOP for quite some time, I am no longer able, due to illness, to continue reading it as before. Please remove me from your mailing list and save your postage. Thank you and may your good work continue" **...Roy Rogers, Gahanna, OH.** "I am writing to ask if STOP is still in print. If it is, I would like to ask if I could pay for it and the postage to send it to me by the post office mail? I do not have access to a computer or email. What would be the total cost if you could do this for me? Thank you kindly" **...Marietta Hamby, Rockwood, TN.** [NOTE from the editor: STOP is FREE for the asking. We're glad to add you to our mailing list at no charge. The paper is supported

by the free-will offerings of individuals and churches. The contributions have been down the last few months. You can see that our funds are beginning to get low. Paper and postage costs are our two main expenditures. We buy paper in bulk straight from the warehouse. That saves considerably; however, we spend about \$1,900 each time we buy (it lasts about three months). Postage averages a little over \$1,700 a month. We had some expenses this month that only come once or twice a year. We want to sincerely thank everyone for your prayers and financial help. Without you, this work would not be possible. I want to thank the many good brethren at the East End church of Christ for their untiring help in preparing each issue to put in the mail. This is truly a labor of love. —gmr, editor].

### WHERE ARE THE PROTESTERS?

There is considerable attention focused upon the protesters to nuclear energy by the news media. Personally, I believe most of their fears are unfounded. I have a few questions every American would do well to consider on this subject: *What If* 40-50 people were killed every day by a malfunctioning nuclear plant? *What If* that malfunctioning plant seriously injured 1,500 others every day? *What If* the presence of nuclear plants drove 8-20 people to commit suicide every day? *What If* nuclear energy caused 200 broken homes every day? *What If* it caused 250 people to suffer permanent brain damage every day, besides the other injuries already described? *What If* it caused 125 parents to abuse their children or to assault other loved ones every day? *What If* it caused 5-6 billion dollars direct damage and inestimable indirect damage every year? Now, if you will just double every figure I have quoted, you will have a partial picture of the effects of beverage alcohol! *Where are the protesters?* (Author Unknown).

*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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