



# 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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## A CRITIQUE OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY

*John Chowning*

***Racism is to CRT what Total Hereditary Depravity is to Calvinism:  
a noxious taproot, a false understanding of human nature and society  
which promotes further falsehoods.***

The Christian Scholars Conference (CSC) was founded by Pepperdine professor Thomas Olbricht in 1981. On June 9-11 of this year, its annual conference was held at **Lipscomb University** in Nashville, and the Christian Scholars Conference web page, “some of the nation’s top thought-leaders focusing on the theme of ‘Recovery of Hope’ were among the more than 400 scholars and faith leaders representing nearly 100 universities from around the country.” (<https://christianscholarsconference.org/2021-in-review/>)

On Friday morning, June 11th at 10:45 a.m., in the final session of the Fred D. Gray Plenary in Human and Civil Rights, Ibram X. Kendi, a lecturer at Boston University, was the keynote speaker. According to the CSC website (<https://christianscholarsconference.org/panel/fred-d-gray-plenary-in-human-and-civil-rights/>), Mr. Kendi is the author of seven books and “one of America’s foremost historians and leading antiracist scholars”. Mr. Kendi describes himself as a “preacher’s kid” who was raised by parents who were fully immersed in the Black Theology Movement (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azJh4N69Q5k>). To this upbringing, Mr. Kendi has added the fundamental tents of Liberation Theology, Postmodernism, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). His 2019 international best-seller, *How to Be an Antiracist*, helped

land him on *Time* magazine’s 2020 list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

In his 2019 bestseller, Mr. Kendi declares “there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of ‘racist’ isn’t ‘not racist’. It is antiracist” (p.9). To become an antiracist, you must undergo a conversion experience (i.e., become “Woke”), categorically condemn anyone who disagrees with you, and embrace the fundamental goal of cultural Marxism/Critical Race Theory — the dismantling of the “oppressive” and “systemically racist” American culture which was founded upon the Biblical principles of personal freedom, individual responsibility, rule of law, democracy, and the free enterprise economic system.

According to Mr. Kendi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azJh4N69Q5k>), the church ought to be the engine of liberation from any government deemed “oppressive.” Because Jesus was a “revolutionary”, Christians are obligated to liberate society “from the powers on earth that oppress humanity”. “Savior theology” in which a Christian seeks to save individuals who are behaviorally deficient (i.e., in sin) is wrong because it aids and abets racism. An antiracist must reject this worldview for “liberation theology” — the overthrow of all structures of power (in the home, church, and government) to free the oppressed from their oppressors. This

is the only acceptable worldview.

When pondering Mr. Kendi’s work, one is hard pressed to decide whether his ignorance of first century history or of the New Testament is greater. Rome ruled its empire with an iron fist, and its subjects chafed under its severe oppression. Because of this, the Zealots of Jesus’ day sought opportunities to march against Rome to overthrow their oppressors. When they attempted to organize such an attempt with our Lord being the tip of the spear, Jesus refused (John 6:15).

About a year later when Jesus was in a face-to-face conversation with the most powerful Roman official in Palestine, Jesus said to Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36). Both the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul instructed Christians in the Roman Empire under the heinous and oppressive rule of Caesar Nero to *submit* to the governing authorities, not *revolt* against them (1 Peter 2:13-14; Rom. 13:1-6). Such blatant ignorance at a “Christian” “Scholars” Conference belies its name.

Since its inception, the Christian Scholars Conference has been a

*(Continued on page 60)*

**Critical Race Theory...**



Editorial...

# QUESTIONS ON SALVATION #1

Garland M. Robinson

**W**hen asked about whether water baptism was essential to being saved, a certain denominational “pastor” responded with a series of replies. They are numbered below.

What is the Bible answer to his comments? Let’s examine the Scriptures and see...

## 1. “A person is dead in their sins. Eph 2:1-3.”

It is true that a sinner is dead in their sins. We need to point out that babies are not born in sin. They are innocent. Jesus said, “*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*” (Luke 18:16). If babies are born in sin, inherited from Adam, then Jesus is saying, “unless you become as little sinners, you can’t enter heaven!” That’s not scriptural nor logical.

Each person sins when they violate God’s word. Sin is a transgression of God’s word (1 John 3:4). And, Romans 4:15 says, “*for where no law is, there is no transgression.*” Babies can’t violate the Scriptures, they’re innocent. Each one sins when they are drawn away by their “own” lust (James 1:14-15). So, those who are dead in “their” trespasses and sins, are those who have personally sinned themselves by giving in to their own lust. We’re not responsible for someone else’s sins. We’re responsible for our own sins (Ezekiel 18:19-32).

## 2. “God is the one who makes us alive. v.5”

Yes, God makes sinners alive **WHEN** they **BELIEVE** (trust) Him and **OBEY** His will. When one believes and obeys the Lord in baptism, they receive the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; see also Romans 6:3-6 & vs. 17-18). Hebrews 5:9 says, Jesus is the “*author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him.*” What if a person “believes” in Jesus but does not “obey” Him? Belief “alone” (faith alone, faith only) is dead, useless, void (James 2:17,24,26). Mark 16:16, “*He that BELIEVETH and is BAPTIZED*

*shall be SAVED; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” That is not emphasizing obedience over faith. Nor is it emphasizing faith over obedience. It involves **BOTH**. When there is no Belief and Baptism, there is no salvation.

Man is required to “respond” to God’s will in order to be saved. Man decides for himself whether he will reject God’s word or accept God’s word. Man does this, not God. God gives us “free will” to choose for ourselves. Every action man chooses for himself is something he chooses for himself: “doing, obeying, working.”

Man’s choice to “believe” is a work, not a work of merit, but a work of action that man chooses to **DO**. Belief (faith) is something man **DOES** — one chooses to believe. Faith is not forced upon anyone. John 6:29 says, “*This is the work of God, that ye BELIEVE on him whom he hath sent.*”

**Faith** is a work that God commands man to do. Those who desire to be forgiven, do it, therefore they believe. **Repenting** is a work man chooses to do because God’s commands it (Acts 17:30). **Confessing** Jesus as God’s Son is a work man chooses to do because God commands it (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37). Being **Baptized** is a work man chooses to do because God commands it (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16). When a sinner does these things (believes, repents, confesses, baptized), Acts 2:40 says it is man making the decision to save himself. Actually, it is God that saves man, but only **WHEN** man responds (in faith) to God’s commands. A sinner believes and obeys God in order to be saved. At no time can man claim God owes him salvation or that man has placed God in his debt. That’s the point made in Ephesians 2:8 when we read “*and that not of yourselves. Not of works....*” Man’s obedience (action, work) is not “our” work. Man did not make up out of our own mind. It is God’s work (the work) that God has commanded man to do. Man simply trusts God enough to do what (the

work) God commanded him to do.

## 3. “Salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:5), not of our own doing (v.8) and not a result of works (v.9).”

Salvation certainly is by grace. Grace means “favor, benefit.” God is doing man a favor, extending man a benefit, by offering him forgiveness of his sins. God’s grace is extended to the entire human race (Titus 2:11-12), not just those who believe him and obey him. Jesus died for all men (Heb. 2:9). He extends to mankind the wonderful benefit (favor) of his grace/mercy; that is, the forgiveness of our sins.

Man’s salvation did not come about by man’s own doing. Man did not come up with the idea of forgiveness and how to obtain it. Nor did he work out a plan where he could save himself. That’s impossible. Salvation from sins is God’s plan, not man’s plan. Man can’t save himself apart from God. However, there is a sense in which man can, and does, save himself (but not of his own doing, plan, or process). Acts 2:40 says, “*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, SAVE YOURSELVES...*” Yes, we can save ourselves. The inspired Peter said so.

When the first Gospel sermon was preached on the day of Pentecost, those who cried out saying “*men and brethren, what shall we do*” (Acts 2:37) were told to “*save yourselves*” (Acts 2:40). Since we can’t save ourselves without God, why does this verse say we can save ourselves? The answer is this, sinners save themselves by accepting (that is, believing, trusting) the Lord’s plan (not man’s plan) **AND** obeying (doing) what the Lord specifies **SINNERS MUST DO** in order to be saved. In verse 38 they had been told to repent **AND** be baptized “**FOR**” (in order to) receive the forgiveness of sins. In verse 40, there were many other words spoken to exhort them to **DO** (obey) what they were told to do. In verse 41, those who gladly received these words of exhortation **WERE BAPTIZED**. They did what they were told in verse 38. As a result, about 3,000 souls were added unto the church that day. **WHEN** were these people added to the church, the Lord’s body? Acts 2:41 says it was **WHEN** they were **BAPTIZED**. Not before they were baptized.

Another example is found in the conversion of a sinner named Saul. He was on his way to Damascus to

persecute Christians. He was struck down on the road by a bright light. *“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to DO? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST DO”* (Acts 9:6). He was trembling in fear having learned he was persecuting the Lord and his church. He desperately wanted to be forgiven of such a heinous sin. He went to Damascus and for three days was so troubled in heart that he refused to eat or drink (Acts 9:9). A disciple named Ananias came to him, taught him the Gospel and what he had to do to be saved. Being taught God’s word like those on Pentecost, Ananias told him, *“why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). He was not told to be baptized to show he had already been saved. He was told to be baptized in order to wash his sins away. He did the same thing those in Acts 2:37-42 did. They repented and were baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Saul repented and was baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins.

According to many, Saul was saved on the road to Damascus when he was struck down by the light. If that is true, then he did not have any sins to be forgiven by being baptized three days later. Also, if he was saved on the road to Damascus, he was the most miserable saved man you can ever imagine. For three days his soul was in such turmoil that he refused to eat or drink. That doesn’t sound like a saved man to me, does it you? Acts 8:39 tells about a man from Ethiopia that was rejoicing AFTER he was baptized. Paul certainly wasn’t rejoicing BEFORE he was baptized! It was AFTER he was baptized that he was able to eat (Acts 9:19-20).

Saul was told to go into Damascus in order to LEARN what he MUST do to be saved. He did not know what to DO on the road. He had to be TAUGHT what to do. There was no one on the road to teach him. God did not give the task of teaching the Gospel into the hands of angels. He placed that responsibility in the hands of men. Souls have to be **Taught**. They have to **Hear**. They have to **Learn** (John 6:45). They have to **Believe**. They have to **Obey** what they’ve learned (John 8:24; Matt. 7:21).

We often hear someone claim they were saved “here or there,” while doing “this or that.” A man once told me he was saved in the middle of a corn field. He said he wasn’t even thinking about it and the Holy Spirit just came and saved him. He said he just had this wonderful feeling come over him and he did absolutely nothing to be saved! Dear reader, salvation doesn’t happen that way. The Holy Spirit doesn’t work that way — nor

does God the Father or Jesus the Christ.

Without being TAUGHT what to DO to be saved and then doing that from the heart, sinners can’t be forgiven of their sins. That’s why Jesus said, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16).

## Elder's COLUMN

### “THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU”

(ROM. 16:16)

Ivie Powell

In this age of marketing the church, many denominations, and unfortunately some churches of Christ have decided to change their name. Their reasons vary: a new emphasis, a Different location, a new “face lift,” a merger, a Division, Doctrinal barriers, etc. It is interesting to note many have dropped “church” from their new identity; e.g. The Branch, The Crossing, Grace Pointe, The Grove, The Mount, The Journey, etc. Others have the idea that any name is acceptable such as: The Cowboy Church, Endurance Church, The Bikers Church and even the Church of Schizophrenia. It is very apparent that many are of the persuasion that there is nothing in a name. Yet, their inconsistency is readily seen when it comes to marriage, naming of children, name of a business, one’s beneficiary, and identifying of criminal’s names.

We are exhorted to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11), and in so doing we will call “Bible things by Bible names!” Denominations and denominational names are without biblical authority (Col. 3:17) because they are not speaking as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11)! The inspired words of Paul in 1 Cor. 1:10-13 is a riveting denunciation of party names which create division!

As one searches the Scriptures he will discover that “the church” has no given name. In other words, there is no one exclusive name for the church, but is spoken of in many scriptural designations: “the church” (Acts 8:1), “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15), “the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16), “the church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15), “the general assembly” (Heb. 12:23), “the church of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23), and “the churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). All of these designations have reference to the one church of the New Testament which clearly identifies the church belonging to deity!

Paul’s letter to the Romans was written in 57 or 58 A.D. Toward the close of the epistle he wrote, *“The churches of Christ salute you”* (Rom. 16:16). Friends, there was not one denomination on the face of the earth when Paul wrote those inspired words! There was only the one church that Christ established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-47)!

The word “churches” in Romans 16:16 has reference to local congregations of the Lord’s one church. Another example is “the seven churches which are in Asia” (Rev. 1:4). Meaning, the one church that belongs to Christ is found in these locations. Therefore, each congregation would be a “church of Christ!” Again, Christ is the head of the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23), and He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). One cannot separate Christ from His church!

Without question, “Christ’s church” or “the church of Christ” is a Scriptural designation of “the church” that belongs to Christ! Let us therefore wear the designation “the church of Christ” with dignity and honor to our risen Savior, Jesus Christ! *“The churches of Christ salute you”* (Rom. 16:16).

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## Critical Race Theory...

(Continued from page 57)

mouthpiece of Satan. From its early days of promoting the gobbledygook of a “new hermeneutic” to this year’s invitation and celebration of Critical Race Theorist/antiracist Ibram X. Kendi, Thomas Olbricht’s creation has repeatedly failed to heed Isaiah’s warning: “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*” (Isaiah 5:20-21).

## Since its inception, the Christian Scholars Conference has been a mouthpiece of Satan.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed in the academic world by Derrick Bell, Kimberle’ Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and others. In the 1970s it was introduced into American law schools and has been influencing the American government’s judicial branch ever since. Public school curriculum and even the U.S. military have been targeted by Critical Race Theorists for its indoctrination and implementation. If the proponents of CRT are ever as successful as they desire to be, America will experience its own Bolshevik Revolution. This is because of the following characteristics of Critical Race Theory:

**CRT’s foundational worldview is false.** The fundamental premise of CRT is its dogmatic belief that all people — especially white, heterosexual males (like America’s “Founding Fathers”) — are inherently racist. The worldview of CRT is that racism is “institutional, structural, and systemic” in America (Ibram Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, p.18).

A Critical Race Theorist uses the lens of race to view the past, the present, and the future. Any person or portion of society which disagrees with their chosen point of view does so because of inherent racism (a.k.a. “white privilege”). At the heart of CRT is a fundamental redefinition of “racism”

from “a sinful, *personal* choice to pre-judge another based upon the pigmentation of one’s skin” to “an inherently biased society determined solely by the history of the country you live in and the amount of melanin in your body.”

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL TREE FROM WHICH CRT IS A FRUIT, IS EVIL

According to Jesus Himself, a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 7:16,20). An evil philosophy produces false doctrines as its fruit. The philosophical root of CRT is atheistic Marxism. As a matter of fact, one synonym for CRT is “Cultural Marxism.”

Like Marxism, CRT divides the world into two classes of people — the “haves” and the “have nots” (or, to use “Liberation Theology” and Marxist terms: “the oppressors” and “the oppressed”). Unlike classical Marxism which divided these two groups according to *social status*, CRT identifies them according to *race*. The goal for either form of Marxism is “social justice” — the righting of all wrongs committed in previous generations by redistributing power (i.e., an overthrow of the government) and redistributing wealth (i.e., reparations).

Marxism categorically rejects every fundamental truth taught in Scripture. When cross-pollinated with postmodernism, it has created such radical and militant fruits as the Social Justice movement and Black Lives Matter, as well as Critical Race Theory.

**CRT’s obsession with race and overt promotion of prejudice are sinful.** Like the white supremacists of the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryans within Germany’s Nazi Party in the 1930s and 40s, Critical Race Theorists are obsessed with race. Such obsession is sinful. God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11). Biblically speaking, there is only one “race” — the human race. Jehovah made all humanity from one blood (Acts 17:26) with one set of common ancestors — Adam and Eve.

Overtly promoting prejudice is sinful too. Prejudging another person on any basis — wealth, appearance, gender, ethnicity — is always condemned in Scripture (James 2:1-4). The righteous God judges everyone as a unique entity with free will, and “*in every nation he that feareth him, and*

*worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*” (Acts 10:35). Righteous people, who are expected to follow/mimic God (Eph. 5:1), will rid prejudice and its unfruitful works of darkness from their lives (Eph. 5:11). To contend that such is impossible for a human to do makes God a liar. To contend that such requires you to become “Woke” and be an “antiracist” is to embrace another gospel — a perverted one (Gal. 1:6-7).

**CRT’s identification of humanity’s fundamental dysfunction is inaccurate.** Because the taproot of CRT is wrong, the theory incorrectly decrees humanity’s fundamental issue to be a *skin* problem, not a *sin* problem. Prejudging a person based on the pigmentation of their skin is wrong regardless of whether it is an Aryan like Adolf Hitler or a Critical Race Theorist who advocates the defunding of the police. God’s remedy for humanity’s fundamental issue is not a political revolution (John 18:36) with financial reparations; it is a Redeemer (Matt. 1:21) who demands repentance (Mark 1:15) and graciously offers every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3) to members of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues (Rev. 7:9).

**CRT’s definition of success is the furtherance of evil.** CRT espouses and spawns such works of the flesh as hatred, wrath, strife, seditions, and envy (Gal. 5:19-21). Mr. Kendi writes in *How to Be an Antiracist*: “The only remedy to racist discrimination is anti-racist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.” Chanequa Walker-Barnes, a self-proclaimed “public theologian and ecumenical minister” wrote in her book, *A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal*,

**“Dear God, Please help me to hate White people. Or at least want to hate them. At least, I want to stop caring about them, individually and collectively. I want to stop caring about their misguided, racist souls, to stop believing that they can be better, that they can stop being racist.”**

These sentiments are not for godly virtues which promote a soci-

ety's peace and the loving of your neighbor as yourself like Jesus commanded (Matt. 7:12; Mark 12:31; Luke 6:31). Because of its Marxist philosophical heritage, Critical Race Theory's highest level of success is achieved when evil is called good and good is called evil. Seizing political power and enslaving a nation's citizens remains the long-term goal of every ravaging Marxist, even the ones wearing the sheepskin of Critical Race Theory.

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Critical Race Theory are  
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It does not matter how many

“Christian” “scholars”, public officials, or educational institutions embrace Critical Race Theory, God's word still admonishes His people to “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ...ye are complete in Him*” (Col. 2:8,10).

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## THE PSALM OF THE CONQUEROR

*Bill Boyd*

David was an old school warrior. He fought his foes face to face, with bucklers, swords, and helmets. It was hand-to-hand, one on one, one after the other, until one of the armies was driven from the battlefield. This kind of fighting called for physical strength and mental stamina. The soldier had to fight hard and keep his wits. The end of a day of battle was the end of a hard day's bloody work. You can read of many such encounters, in all their glory and in all their gore, in Homer's song of the wars on the windy plains of Troy, if you have the stomach for it.

It is easy for me to read the **Ninth Psalm** and imagine David standing exhausted on a battlefield after a hard fought victory, watching his enemies flee, and lifting up a voice of praise to the LORD for his help. In this psalm, David sings of the defeat of the wicked, of the LORD's role in the victory, and of God's merciful remembrance of the meek and lowly.

The Psalm begins with praise, “*I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High*” (Psalm 9:1-2), and continues, “*Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings*” (Psalm 9:11).

David sings of his enemies in their defeat, “*When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence*” (Psalm 9:3). “*Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. O*

*thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them*” (Psalm 9:5-6). “*The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaiion. Selah. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*” (Psalm 9:15-17). “*Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight*” (Psalm 9:19).

David sings of the LORD's role in the victory. “*Thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right*” (Psalm 9:4). “*The LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness*” (Psalm 9:7-8). “*Shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation*” (Psalm 9:14). “*Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah*” (Psalm 9:20).

And David sings of God's attentiveness to the meek and humble who trust in him. “*The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*” (Psalm 9:9-10). “*When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.*

*Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death*” (Psalm 9:12-13). “*For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever*” (Psalm 9:18).

The LORD's kingdom of Israel under David was of this world, and then, did his servants fight against flesh and blood with carnal weapons of warfare. But it is clear from the Psalms of David that there was a spiritual element to these carnal battles. David was fighting “*the LORD's battles*” (1 Samuel 18:17). Their purpose was to prepare a way for a different kind of kingdom. God would establish a “spiritual” kingdom with a “spiritual” purpose greater than any civil purpose God has had for any earthly kingdom. Its citizen soldiers would help achieve spiritual victory over the spiritual hearts of men with spiritual weapons. Therefore, we read in the New Testament, “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God...*” (Eph. 6:10-17), “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12), and “*endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*” (2 Tim. 2:3).

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Isaiah 10:1, “*Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness [which] they have prescribed.*”

# LIBERAL CONGREGATIONS

Gary Colley

*The Lord's Word is not the final authority to the liberal mind. They place their own way above the Lord's authority, and practice the same.*

What is a “liberal” congregation? What are the identifying marks? Can one worship acceptably with such a congregation? Knowing that many are presently disturbed by and are wrestling with this question, we trust that our answer will be of help to all.

In Second Timothy 4:1-4, Paul gives the definition of those who are liberal in doctrine and practice. His charge to Timothy “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” was to “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.”

## MAN'S WAYS, NOT GOD'S WAYS

Notice:

- They refuse to endure (continue or abide in) sound (healthy, solid) doctrine (Truth).
- These follow their own lusts (desires) instead of the sound doctrine or teaching of Christ and the apostles.
- They find a plentiful amount of teachers who are willing to teach what they think, and they follow them as if the majority was to decide what is right and what is wrong.
- When the Word is preached in purity, their ears refuse and reject it.
- Finally, they willingly exchange the true religion of Jesus Christ for the fables of men.

“Liberal,” then, is a term, whether applied to individuals or congregations, which describes a complete lack of respect for the Word of God — if and when it interferes with human thinking and philosophy.

The Lord's Word is not the final

authority to the liberal mind. They place their own way above the Lord's authority, and practice the same. These are blind, evidently, to Jehovah's words spoken by Isaiah: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

Jesus says, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

Peter writes, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

Paul encourages, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ... And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:16-17).

## WHAT ARE THEY SEEKING?

These promote and force fundamental changes in teaching and practice which are unauthorized by the Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). Rather than worshiping in spirit and Truth, rather than letting “all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:30), and rather than doing the Lord's work with soberness, they want a pep-rally, handclapping, foot-stomping form of “worship,” as they seek emotional entertainment, wherein those leading the services become “stars,” and these, by their “fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:18).

## SOME IDENTIFYING MARKS

The convicting evidence will be found in what you see and hear, just as it was with Samuel and Saul. When Saul claimed to have done the commandments of the Lord in utterly destroying the Amalekites, Samuel said upon his return, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine

ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear” (1 Sam. 15:1-14)? In the same manner, these are convicted today.

- First, you will probably see the **New International Version** or some other of the modern perversions quite prominent to view.
- You may hear “special music” from choirs, or solos and quartets.
- You may hear doctrines such as Grace Only, even Faith Only, and that it is not necessary for one to know the scriptural reason for being baptized, if a man thinks he is obeying God.
- You will miss hearing the plan of salvation at the close of the sermon, but you may hear something to the effect that “the church of Christ is a big, sick, denomination” or the down-playing of the importance of the Lord's church, and how it needs to be changed.
- You may hear it said that instrumental music is optional in worship or that “meaningful worship” must be changed to the emotional, Pentecostal type of swaying, singing, and swinging while waving the hands.
- Or you may observe that two acts of worship are being attempted to be performed together “to make it more meaningful.”
- It is possible now that you may see women in leading roles even when men are present.
- You may hear that the Holy Spirit so powerfully works directly and apart from the Word among them “that even the elders cannot control their actions.”
- It is likely that the emphasis will be more on social activities than on doctrinal teaching, in which God, by the Scriptures, thoroughly furnishes the man of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17)!

## CAN WE PARTAKE?

A faithful Christian, who wants to remain faithful, after making every

attempt to change the unscriptural situations, needs for his or her own sake as well as that of their precious family members, to separate themselves and go to a faithful congregation! They are under scriptural obligation to “*mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17).

I would ask that you read these passages and make up your own judgment about whether a faithful Christian can partake of, or be a part in any way, of these errors.

Ephesians 5:11, “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*”

Galatians 1:8-9, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*”

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with*

*darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*”

2 John 1:9-11, “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*”

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

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# THE CONGREGATION OF THE DEAD

*Jason Patrick Hilburn*

**B**efore the Ephesians were converted, they could have been described as “the living dead” – people who were physically alive, but “*...dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph. 2:1; cf. 2:5). After their conversion, they could have been described as “*...alive from the dead*” (Rom. 6:13).

What does it mean to be dead? Death can be defined as a separation. Physical death is when the spirit separates from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is separation from God because of sin (Isa. 59:1-2). When Paul brought the Gospel of Christ to those spiritually dead Ephesians, they believed and were baptized into Christ (Acts 19:1-5; cf. Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:3). They then were “*quicken*ed” (made alive spiritually; reconciled to God), and became a living congregation of the Lord’s church existing in Ephesus (cf. Rom. 16:16).

What would have happened if one

of those Ephesians decided to leave the Lord’s church? He would have ceased to be spiritually alive (Heb. 10:23-31), and if he remained in that state, he would find himself in “the congregation of the dead.” “*The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead*” (Prov. 21:16). He would experience spiritual death at the point of departing from faithfulness, and would later experience eternal death, being gathered with all those separated from God in eternal punishment (Matt. 25:41,46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Paul also told the Ephesians that Jesus is the Savior of only one body, which is His church (Eph. 5:23; cf. 1:22-23; 4:4). Therefore, to be outside of that one body (the one church) is to be outside of salvation. The conclusion is that every accountable person on earth is either a faithful part of that one church of the living, or he belongs

in the congregation of the dead. Being a faithful member of that one church of the living also means that he will become an active member in a local congregation of the living.

In another sense, there are “congregations of the dead” all over the world today, in the form of religious bodies who claim to be spiritually alive, but are dead. They have never truly obeyed what Christ commanded in His Word to be forgiven and to be added to His church (Matt. 7:21-23; Acts 2:36-41, 47; Rom. 6:3-5, 16-18; Col. 3:17; 1 Peter 1:22); therefore, those religious people are just as dead spiritually as any atheist or completely immoral person.

There are even some churches of Christ that were once alive, but are now dead, like Sardis was: “*And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven*

stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev. 3:1). Even though Jesus said that about the church as a whole, He also said: “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4). How could Jesus say what He did in verse one if there were still some faithful members? Why did the “living” members remain there if they knew about the problems? There are several possibilities, including: 1) The faithful may not have known about sins going on behind the scenes in the leadership of the congregation; 2) The faithful may not have known about private, personal sins of other members; and 3) The faithful may have been aware of such things, but they may have been trying to turn the situation around. Surely these faithful ones would not have ignored sins that had come to their attention. Children of God ignoring sin is what caused Paul to rebuke the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5; cf. 2 Cor. 2,7).

Another example of a living congregation gone bad would be the church at Ephesus which started out strong, with the apostle Paul himself converting them (Acts 19:1-ff). They soon established an eldership (Acts 20:17), and they received no real rebuke in six chapters of inspired Text written to them (Eph. 1-6). However, Paul had warned the elders at Ephesus about the dead coming to attack the living:

*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. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Act 20:28-31).*

By the time Revelation was written, Jesus said the Ephesians had left their first love and had “fallen” (Rev. 2:4-5). How sad, to read with joy about people in Ephesus first being converted to Christ, becoming strong and faithful, only to read of them succumbing to the wolves who sought to destroy them.

What is the application for us today? First, accountable people who are dead in sin should die *to sin* and become alive in Christ: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11; cf. 6:1-23). They can either become an active part of a congregation of the living, or they will find themselves in the congregation of the dead (Heb. 10:23-31).

Those in congregations of the dead (as in false religions of the world) need to seek the kingdom of God and discover the true church that belongs to Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). They should seek Bible authority for all things in religion, and specifically in such matters as the founder of the church, the date founded, the place founded, the organization, the plan of salvation, the ways of worship, and the doctrines taught. They will be added to that one true church, if they will do what the Holy Spirit commanded through the apostles in Acts 2:

*...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...And*

*with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:38, 40, 41, 47; cf. 8:12, 35-39; 10:34-35, 48; 16:15, 30-33; 22:16, etc.).*

How can today’s “living congregations” prevent themselves from becoming “congregations of the dead?” They also need to follow a pattern found in Acts 2, which begins with continuing steadfastly in sound doctrine, leading to fellowship with God and faithful Christians, and continuing in true worship: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Being a living congregation also involves helping others with their physical needs as necessary, encouraging one another, maintaining a proper Christian influence, and being evangelistic (2:44-47).

Leadership in faithful congregations of the living must be vigilant and extremely cautious when it comes to protecting the flock of Christ from dangers like wolves, apathy, and ignorance, lest they become congregations of the dead.

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