

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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BOLDLY PROCLAIMING THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Marvin L. Weir

God's wonderful grace will only save those who have hearts pricked by the Gospel and will turn from their sins.

The absence of boldness in those who profess to be children of God has caused the Lord's church much misery. Boldness is a characteristic sorely needed by those overseeing the Lord's church and those who are preaching and teaching God's Word. Without boldness, the apostles would have never accomplished the task assigned to them. They were charged to not speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). Peter and John did not have to think the matter over or consult with their families. The quick answer of these two men of God was bold and decisive. *"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard"* (Acts 4:19-20). One can only weep as he contemplates the answer that many preachers and elders today would give if told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

The apostle Paul fervently prayed that he might open his mouth *"to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel"* and that even though a prisoner he might speak boldly as he ought to speak (Eph. 6:19-20). Doubt and confusion is not the message that is revealed in Holy Writ (Heb. 11:6; 1 Cor. 14:33). The

straightforward message of the apostle Paul declares, *"Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17).

First, one must speak confidently and boldly regarding the Creator of this universe. Genesis 1:1 states both truth and fact will be accepted by one who truly believes. Herbert Spencer introduced five facts of science in the 1800s that are found in the first verse of God's Word. *"In the beginning [time] God [force] created [action] the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]"* (Gen. 1:1). We do not need preachers and teachers today who have only a vague idea of what God meant in His revelation. Instead of creating doubt and uncertainty in the minds of folks, God's glorious truth needs to be stressed and His unchangeable characteristics emphasized (cf. John 17:17; Rom. 3:4; Mal. 3:6).

Second, one must boldly proclaim the Gospel plan of salvation. The Savior promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18) and He did so purchasing it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Thus, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18) and the right to set forth the terms of salvation (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). The one and only Gospel must be preached in its purity (Gal. 1:6-9) for it is the only power unto

salvation (Rom. 1:16). A believer of what Christ has said will *repent* of his sins (Luke 13:3), make the good *confession* (Rom. 10:9-10), and be *immersed* for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). The Lord **adds** those who genuinely obey the Gospel to His church (Acts 2:41,47).

The Lord and not man has the right to locate salvation, and He stipulates that it is located in Him (2 Tim. 2:10). We must then boldly affirm that salvation is to be found only **in** Christ Jesus, and one is only in Christ **if** he has obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation.

Third, one must speak boldly about the Lord's church. Instead of apologizing for the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), Christians need to stress that it is the **only** church that has the right to exist. The phrase "church of Christ" shows ownership and is not used as a proper name or as a man-made denomination.

Those who truly believe God's Word will boldly declare the differences between the **Lord's church** and the man-made churches that have no God-given right to exist. One will not be embarrassed that there is

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Proclaiming The Gospel...



Guest Editorial

THE LOOPHOLE SEARCH

Steven E. Yeatts

I was reading the comics the other day and got a chuckle from one that depicted Moses descending from the mountain holding the tablets of stone. At the base of the mountain a multitude of people were gathered and one fellow had his hand raised and the caption read, "Could you make copies? We'd like to begin a loophole search." Certainly there is nothing risible about the actual events that transpired as per Exodus 32 (and following) regarding the people's impatience, disobedience, and refusal to love the Lord their God first and foremost.

However, the caption as per the cartoon does bring to mind the attitude of many today in the religious world, and sadly is inclusive of some brethren in the Lord's church. They are not satisfied with the fact that the Word of God is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). They grow restless with the fact that grace and law do not exist mutually exclusive of one another (Gen. 6:8,22; Rom. 8:2; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 John 5:3, et al). They scoff at the reliability of solid hermeneutics which they have "traded up" for the new hermeneutic, and are not unlike the Athenian philosophers whose perpetual desire was to hear "some new thing" (Acts 17:21). They prefer to hold to manmade redaction as the source of God's Word, as opposed to the God-breathed inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3).

Truly, far too many spend their time engaged in a "loophole" search when searching the Scriptures (no matter how superficial the search) intending to justify their rejection of the pattern of the New Testament and our amenability to it. Others will search for loopholes on subjects that are adversely affecting their own lives; such as marriage, divorce, and remarriage, alcohol, drug, or tobacco addictions, unfaithfulness regarding the assembling of the saints, and a host of other issues that contradict

the faithful life of a Christian (Matt. 19:1-12; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Col. 3:1-7).

We live in a society that revels in *pluralism* (you make the choice that is best for you and no one can mandate whether such a choice is right or wrong) and *relativism* (there is no such thing as absolute truth on any subject, most of all religious matters). In recent years it has become evident that for some political entities, laws are merely suggestions and that the law in the eyes of some is not absolute. For example, if the law says 30 days, that may be a good general guideline, but it could just as easily mean 29 or 39, or you fill in the blank. There is always a disturbing nexus between what happens in society and the quasi-agnosticism of some in the church. The Law of Christ is not law at all to those whose loophole search has convinced them that the New Testament is a defunct love letter that may have many good suggestions for us, but no substantive and essential pattern for our worship today. Of course any mention of a pattern for doctrine and worship (Acts 2:42; Rom. 6:17) will not go undetected by the "elitist enlightened" who long for the day when their "traditional" brethren bask in the glorious glow of the contemporary.

The loophole search will lead some to believe that secular institutions (a.k.a. Christian Colleges) are somehow tantamount to, or in some cases, paramount to the church for which Jesus died. This self-deceiving loophole search will cause otherwise lucid brethren to blindly defend an alma mater over the Alpha and Omega, even when the alma mater has made clear capitulations to untruths that warrant an objective review and public censure.

The loophole search conducted by those who refuse to consistently accept the authority of the Word of God will continue until Jesus returns and the Heavenly Father does some

weeding in His spiritual garden (Matt. 15:13). There was no loophole in Moses' day. The Lord God said to Moses as the people played around the golden calf, "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (Exodus 32:7). Loopholes are a temporary means of escape in this life, but with the Lord, there shall be no eternal escape for circumventing The Way because one preferred his own (1 Thess. 5:3; Heb. 2:3).

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Proclaiming The Gospel...

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only **one** church authorized by God (Eph. 4:4). Christ wanted it to be understood that He was the head of His church that is said to be His body (Eph. 1:22-23). He promises to save only His body (Eph. 5:23), the church! It then behooves people of the age of accountability to make sure they are members of the Lord's church. Will those who defend man-made denominations wearing names honoring some man or woman be willing to inscribe on their building that "this is not a church of Christ?" Can one not see there is indeed something in a name?

Fourth, a Bible believer will boldly state that God's grace will not save one in his sins. Some folks who are living in sin and refuse to repent will say, "I'm just going to continue to live like I'm living and take my chances." Others say, "I'll just keep on doing the best I can under the circumstances and if God wants to send me to Hell He will just have to do so."

Friends, God will keep His Word! It is not His fault that people refuse to repent and continue to cling to that which is sinful! It is, however, repent or perish (Luke 13:3). God's wonderful grace will only save those who have hearts pricked by the Gospel and will turn from their sins. The grace of God is not to be abused (Rom. 6:1).

May we boldly stand firm for the cause of Christ!

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A Christian First, Then, A Methodist

Walter W. Pigg

Some time ago an individual made a most interesting comment concerning her religion when I introduced myself to her as a preacher of the church of Christ. Her comment was that she was, “A Christian first, then, a Methodist.” To hear someone say that he or she is a member of the Methodist Church is quite common, especially in the South where I grew up. But for one to make such a clear distinction between being a Christian and being a Methodist was most unusual to me.

Reasoning from the above, one can rightly conclude that being a Christian and being “a Methodist” are two entirely different things. It would follow, then, that one can be “a Christian” and not be “a Methodist” or, one could be “a Methodist” and not be “a Christian.” Interestingly enough, that is exactly what the Bible teaches! It is our intention to show that to be the case in the following remarks. We begin by considering this important matter:

What It Means To Be A Christian

Acts 11:26 informs us that “*the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*” The term Christian is also found in Acts 26:28 and I Pet. 4:16. The term means an adherent or follower of Christ. It carries a meaning of honor and respect when correctly applied to Christ’s true followers. To better understand the meaning of the term Christian we need to look at how people became Christians in the first century.

Acts 2 records the beginning of the church, which Christ said He would build (Matt. 16:18). The Book of Acts, from chapter 2 onward, records the conversion of people as the church grew, even in the face of stiff opposition from the forces of evil. These converts to Christ would be called Christians, just as they are today, like those at Antioch.

When studying the conversions recorded in Acts, a distinct pattern of how people became Christians is noted. It will be observed that in every single case the convert first heard God’s word. It was from the hearing of God’s word that faith came, as Paul points out in Rom. 10:17 when he said, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God’s word called upon people to repent. Christ said it is repent or perish (Luke 13:3), and Paul

said that God, “*now commendeth all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). Paul also speaks of confession when he said, “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). The Ethiopian was asked by Philip to confess his faith in Christ before he was baptized (Acts 8:37). In every conversion, baptism of the individual took place. In Acts 2:38, the inquiring listeners were told to “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” In the Great Commission, as recorded in Mark 16:15-16, salvation was promised to those who believed the gospel and were baptized.

It should be noted that the converts were buried with him by baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). That is, they were immersed in water. They were also people who were capable of belief or faith (Acts 8:12). This ruled out infants and small children. When people today follow this same pattern that we have noted above, they, too, become Christians. At that point the Lord adds them to the church (Acts 2:47), of which Christ is the head and savior (Eph. 5:23). The Bible reveals no other way by which people became Christians. Now, that we have seen what it means to become a Christian, let us consider:

What It Means To Be A Methodist

As we have noted already, when people follow the Bible pattern they become Christians. That is what God wants and what Christ died on Calvary to make possible. But being “a Methodist” is something entirely different. The Bible knows nothing of people becoming Methodists, and history knows of none before the 1700s. The Bible does say, however, that people would “*teach(ing) for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9). Our Lord goes on to say that “*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*” (Matt. 15:13). In the great “Sermon on the mount,” Christ says, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). This tells us that there will be religious people who will not be acceptable to the Lord.

To be a Methodist is to be a member of the Methodist Church, which had its beginning in 1739 A.D. as a result of the teaching of John Wesley. One can be a

Methodist and never be a Christian. To be a Christian one must follow God’s instructions; to be a Methodist one need only follow the teachings of men. In fact, one cannot be a true Christian and a Methodist at the same time! It is a fact, however, that some Christians have departed from the faith and became Methodist, but not with God’s approval. Such people will not find salvation in the Methodist Church. It can be found only in the blood-bought institution, the church or body of Christ (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).

To see further how that being a Methodist is entirely different from being a Christian, note the following:

1. The Methodist Church was established 17 centuries this side of the establishment of the church which Christ built (Matt. 16:18).

2. Methodists generally sprinkle water on individuals instead of “burying” (immersing) them in water. This act is called baptism.

3. Methodists sprinkle (call it baptism) infants and small children who are incapable of believing in Christ and the Gospel, which is God’s power to save people (Rom. 1:16).

4. The Methodist church is governed by their Discipline, which contains various man-made doctrines. One example is that of the “faith only” doctrine, found in Article IX. It states, “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” This is a direct contradiction of what James says on the subject: “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (James 2:24). Another man-made doctrine is that of original sin. Also, the form of government of the Methodist Church is completely foreign to the New Testament.

Conclusion

Indeed, people ought to be Christians! And, this should be first and last. This is the only way God can be pleased and salvation enjoyed. There never has been nor will there ever be a God-given reason for being a Methodist. A faithful Christian is all anyone will ever need to be, and what an exalted privilege that is! Why would anyone ever opt for a man-made religion rather than the blood-purchased one?

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STEADFAST FOR THE LORD

Charles Box

Those who were early members of the church were characterized by steadfastness. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Steadfast means firm or immovable. To be steadfast means “to continue all the time; to persevere; to be devoted to.” Paul challenged the brethren at Corinth by saying, *“my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58).

There may be many great needs in the church but none is greater than the need for steadfastness. Paul wrote to the Colossians and said, “though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (Col. 2:5). Peter gave the following warning to brethren concerning the danger of falling from their steadfastness. “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:17). Let us observe the importance of steadfastness:

Strong churches have steadfast members. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:13-16). The influence of the church can only be as strong as the members are steadfast. From Acts 2:42 we observe that the early Christians were steadfast. “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” This caused others to look favorably upon God’s

people. “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

Strong Christians are steadfast members. Christians who fail to be steadfast fail to be what God intended them to be. The member who is faithful a while and then unfaithful; can be counted on for a while and then cannot be counted on; is dependable for a while and then undependable, is a poor example of Christianity. Instead of being steadfast, the Bible calls this man unstable. “He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). Strong Christians are steadfast in their service to God. “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). The challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

Strong Christians understand the principle of being steadfast members. They realize they are made partakers of Christ only by being “steadfast unto the end.” “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb. 3:14). Christians must be firm in their faith; set and settled in their convictions about Jesus the Christ. They must be planted, fixed, strong, anchored and faithful in their relationship with the Master. Those who are steadfast have “hope” as an anchor for the soul (Heb. 6:19). The challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

Strong members recognize those things which produce steadfastness. Christians must recognize the contribution made to steadfastness as we learn the truth. “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Christians must learn, know, perceive and understand God’s will. No one will be steadfast for long who does not have an ever deepening knowledge of God’s word. Peter said, “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and for-

ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

Attending “all” the services of the church is another contributing factor in our steadfastness. In order to seek God and His kingdom first, we must be faithful at every service of the church. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). To seek God first means that we think about, meditate on, crave, require and demand that the kingdom be first in our lives. God and His kingdom must be first in rank or time or place in our heart and life. Those who willfully forsake any assembly of the church are not putting God first. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). Why don’t we have as many for Sunday morning Bible classes, Sunday night or Wednesday night as we have for Sunday morning worship?

Associating with strong Christians helps develop personal steadfastness. Those with whom we associate pull us in their direction. “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor. 15:33). Basement people pull others down, balcony people pull others up. You can be strengthened by good men or corrupted by evil men. “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20).

Find those things which contribute to steadfastness to the Lord and grow in them. The challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

Strong faith produces steadfast Christians. Christians must be steadfast, firm, and fixed in the faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Circumstances and situations of life must never shake our faith in the glorious Gospel of Christ. Our steadfastness stands on Jesus’

resurrection. Because He lives, we can live also. Let us be unshaken in our hope of being raised incorruptible and immortal. Our steadfastness must lead us to abound in the work of the Lord. The challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

Being a Christian is a serious responsibility. Christianity involves your salvation. Your Christianity may effect hundreds of others.

To become a Christian, you must **hear** the Gospel (Rom. 10:17), you must **believe in Jesus** (Mark 16:16), **repent of every sin** (Acts 2:38), **confess Christ** (Rom. 10:9-10) and **be baptized** to be saved (1 Peter 3:21). After baptism the challenge for every Christian is — **Be Steadfast.**

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TWO LESSONS FROM EZEKIEL 33

Douglas Hoff

Though the book of Ezekiel is often neglected because it has some admittedly difficult sections, one who ignores this inspired book does so to his own loss. The thirty third chapter has some remarkable lessons that are as applicable to the church today as they were for the Jews in Babylon almost 2,600 years ago.

The first lesson comes from Ezekiel 33:6 (NKJV) which says, *“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.”* This verse was given to remind the watchman that he had a responsibility to warn people of impending danger. In context, the watchman was a prophet. If he failed to give the warning, the people would be conquered by an invading army. However, the watchman would be held accountable for his failure to ‘blow the trumpet.’ The Jews had heard many warnings from watchmen like Jeremiah and Ezekiel that their nation would fall because of their sin. They did not repent and so God used Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, the temple and take many captive into a distant land.

Here is how this verse applies to us today. What happens if we know there are people living in sin all around us and yet we fail to warn them of the coming judgment? Will they escape? No. Will we be held accountable for our failure to speak? Yes. Our hands will be bloody. Paul could say that he was innocent of the blood of all men since he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:25-27). Why will sinners not be spared? They will suffer the punishment due for their iniquity. That is God’s justice. They had an opportunity to escape but did not avail themselves of it. Paul proved that “they” (all accountable souls) are without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Notice, Ezekiel’s statement clearly says the people will die in their sins even if the watchman failed to warn them of the coming judgment (Ezek. 33:8). This also shows what will happen to the hypothetical natives on some remote island who never heard the Gospel. Will God excuse them and let them slide into heaven because they never heard the Gospel? No. They too are without excuse. They will be damned to hell, and justly so, because of their unforgiven sins. If they had wanted to escape punishment, they could have sought the Lord and found him. This is what Jesus promised long ago (Matt. 7:7,8; cf. Isa. 55:6,7).

A second lesson comes from Ezekiel 33:30-32 (NKJV) which states, *“As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another; everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.’ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.”* At times, Ezekiel must have gotten frustrated because the people feigned an interest in his preaching. While they complimented him on his ‘good sermon,’ they would go away and live as they had always lived. The word of God did not penetrate their hard hearts. While most preachers like to be complimented on their ‘good lesson,’ it would please them even more to see people’s lives changed by the powerful word of God that was proclaimed (Heb. 4:12)!

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OF FOOD, FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

Jerry C. Brewer

We do a tremendous disservice to youth by giving them special status in the church. In so doing, we make them think the church is a social service center...

News Brief...

Here is an update concerning the Anti-Conversion Law Proposed in Tamil Nadu, India we reported last month.

Brethren, please know that the “anti-conversion” law in no way inhibits or thwarts God’s children in Tamil Nadu, India. The law is not aimed at genuine conversions but at perversions. The specific events that precipitated the Chief Minister to enact this new law was allegedly the promises of Islamic clerics of material benefits for the converts. The News Reports point the cause to Muslim conversions of the untouchables which promise higher social status and monetary gain. Accounts of entire villages converting to the Islamic faith are not unheard of. Though all religions are included in this law, genuine conversions are still acceptable by the Indian government.

The “Chief Minister Jayalithaa said the legislation was not directed against any particular religion or minorities. There was no provision under the IPC to prevent conversions and therefore the government felt the need for a legislation to curb forceful conversions through ‘force and allurements.’” “Describing the protests against the law as ‘knee-jerk reactions’, she said the ordinance sought to protect the weaker sections from exploitation. She promised the law would not encroach upon the freedom of the minority communities.” “The ordinance is not directed against any particular religion, least of all any minority religion. It is directed against the use of fraudulent means, allurements and force in enticing individuals into changing their religious denomination against their will,” she said.

On October 23rd, the BJP president, M Venkaiah Naidu, made the same promise on a national level. The previous promise he made three years ago failed — that the “BJP would enact anti-conversion law in all the states ruled by the party and would create people’s opinion for the law in the states ruled by other parties.” These are proposals, not laws, and the opposition to such laws is no less today than it was three years ago.

On October 31st, “despite strong opposition, the controversial Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Bill was today passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly with the AIADMK and the BJP outvoting the combined opposition of the DMK, the Congress, the Pattali Makkal Katchi and the Left parties.”

The present law in Tamil Nadu does not ban legitimate conversions. If the full text from the chief minister was accepted (it is not clear whether this next part was included in the law passed by the legislature) it simply requires that the one converting and the one being converted present themselves before the district administration (police official or higher) to inform them before the conversion. Failure to do so can result in a one year jail sentence. It is an inconvenience, but no hindrance to the spread of the Gospel. Let’s pray diligently that our Lord will keep the door open in India. Now is the time for us to spread the word! Let’s join hands and work diligently while the doors are open.

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Many people today would describe the church as a large organization characterized by two distinct classes — the “Youth” and everybody else — with its mission to provide “food, fun and fellowship” for the first class at the sole expense of the latter. But Paul said there are no class distinctions in the church. We are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

When I was a boy, we had a “young people’s class” on Sunday evening at 5p.m. before our worship at 6p.m. This was a simple Bible class in which we learned the Bible and it was attended by junior high and high school students. Through the years, I witnessed an evolutionary process by which this simple Bible class arrangement became a separate entity with a life of its own. In those days, the Methodists had their MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) and the Baptists had their Training Union for Youth. With long-lingering eyes, many of our brethren viewed the fun and games these denominational organizations provided and saw their tremendous drawing power. Consequently, many churches began structuring their “young people’s class” toward a separate entity known as a “Youth Group.” By doing this, they drove a wedge into the body of Christ that separated young people from the rest of the church and — as they say — “the rest is history.”

One result of all this copy-cat class distinction in the church is the proliferation of “Family & Youth Ministers” who take degrees in that discipline from so-called Christian colleges and now populate the church in many places with absolutely no scriptural right to exist. And, like the frogs in boiling water, many good people in the church have become so inured to having it this way that they see nothing wrong with this division.

The “Youth Group” industry is big business today. It sells T-Shirts,

“Contemporary Christian” music, concert tickets, camping trips, outings to Six Flags amusement parks, and other gadgets and activities for big money. It continues to be fed by people like Oklahoma Christian’s Dudley Chauncey who runs “Winterfest” and by colleges which hand out their “Youth and Family Ministry” degrees. Step back and take an objective look at this structural arrangement in the light of the New Testament and you won’t recognize anything from any inspired writer.

Moreover, the phrase, “our Young People” as it relates to the church is not found within the Sacred Scriptures. The church has no young people. Parents have young people. The elders are not charged with providing social activities for my children. I’m charged with that responsibility which also includes bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). We do a tremendous disservice to youth by giving them special status in the church. In so doing, we make them think the church is a social service center instead of the blood-bought company of all the redeemed, and we denigrate the church for which Jesus suffered and died. According to many of the bulletins I read each month, one would think that Christ died to purchase a playground for people between the ages of 6 and 18 and that older members’ sole responsibility is to shovel them the money to fund all their “activities.” Thus, in their imagination, the mission of the church is to provide “food, fun and fellowship” for the youth, at the expense of the older folks.

The Childress, Texas church even has a periodical collection for “Youth” activities that is taken at the door following regular worship. To paraphrase J. D. Tant, many members of the church today — young and old — wouldn’t know whether Jesus Christ died for the church at Calvary or was drowned on a log ride at Six Flags.

The only scriptural youth director I ever knew was Clyde Brewer and he provided recreational funds for my brothers and me when we could pry them out of him.

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WHY DOESN'T THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BAPTIZE BABIES?

Roger D. Campbell

The New Testament often speaks about water baptism. John the Baptizer taught about it (Matt. 3:1-11), Jesus taught about it (Mark 16:16), the apostles taught about it (Acts 2:38), and first century evangelists like Philip taught about it (Acts 8:35-39). Baptism is, indeed, an important topic.

What about baptizing babies? Is it a scriptural practice? In order for it to be a scriptural practice, it must be authorized by the teaching of Jesus the Christ. He charges all men to observe the things that He commands (Matt. 28:20). As it is written in Colossians 3:17, all that we do is to be done in Christ’s name, that is, by His authority. If one were to read the New Testament from beginning to end, from Matthew 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, he would find neither a Bible command to baptize babies nor a statement mentioning the baptizing of such little ones. He would never find in the New Testament an example of baby baptism, nor would he read anything that implies that such a practice is authorized. Thus, the practice of baptizing infants is unauthorized by the Lord. Such a practice owes its origin to men, not God (Matt. 21:25). Here is strike number one against baby baptism: it is unauthorized by the New Testament.

Furthermore, babies are not proper candidates for water baptism. That is strike number two against the baptizing of infants. Biblically speaking, one that is a proper candidate for water baptism is one that believes in Jesus and the Gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37). Infants are unable to possess such faith, thus they cannot be baptized scripturally.

Biblically speaking, one that is a proper candidate for baptism is also one that is a sinner. Simon Peter, acting as Jesus’ spokesman, told the Jews assembled on the Day of Pentecost to repent and be baptized (Acts

2:38). The message of Acts 2:38 shows that repentance must proceed baptism, and at the same time it also shows the purpose of baptism: “for the remission of sins.”

In order for babies to be classified as “sinners,” and thus in need of repentance and baptism to wash away sins (Acts 22:16), then it must be true that they have in some way violated God’s law. This is so because the Bible defines sin as “lawlessness” or “transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Only those that have broken God’s law are “sinners.” Pee-wee children may be “guilty” of a lot of things, but breaking or transgressing the law of God is not one of them! Therefore, babies are not sinners, and because they are not sinners, they are not proper candidates for baptism. “Why doesn’t the church of Christ baptize babies?” That is a good and fair question. One thought that comes to mind is this: Why should it?

What scriptural reason is there that should cause the Lord’s church to baptize infants? The answer is, “There is none!” Through the ages many religious people have practiced and attempted to justify baby baptism. Friends, baby baptism is unscriptural. Such a practice is unauthorized by the Bible, and infants themselves are not proper candidates to receive water baptism. That is just the way it is.

If we are going to stick with what the Bible says and allow it to guide us, always speaking as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), then we will leave off the practice of baptizing babies. Not only will we not practice it ourselves, we will also do our best to help others to see what baby baptism really is: an invention of men that is both unnecessary and unauthorized.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Meal" was very encouraging. I salute Brother Jack Simons' scolding and scriptural response. While I am not surprised at the liberal antics many congregations are falling prey to these days, I am shocked that the elders at Skyway Hills would sign their names to such a weak and ridiculous defense of their practice. A young soldier I have been studying with for several months — and who is NOT a Christian — read both articles and just a few days later told me; "that Simons man is right." If a non-Christian can see it that clearly, I shudder to ask how any Christian could accept such error. Please keep defending the faith. For God and Country, I remain; **...SGT Timothy Hall, U.S. Army, Fort Bragg, NC.** "This is a gift for *Seek the Old Paths*. Please use the money any way it is needed. I appreciate the paper very much. I hope that it continues to thrive for many years. May God bless your efforts in the kingdom for many years to come. Tell everyone at the church there hello. We pray for their continued stand for the truth. The church there is doing so much for the cause of Christ" **...Victor M. Eskew, Brookland, AR.** "I have very much enjoyed receiving your publication for the last 5 years. I enjoy it and use it in teaching and preaching" **...Bill Trees, Sioux Falls, SD.** "Thanks for your good work!" **...Donald Ginn, Anniston, AL.** "I want to thank you for sending *Seek the Old Paths* to the Piedmont congregation. We appreciate seeing articles by Bob Spurlin. It's good to see someone doing what he can in spite of adverse circumstances" **...B. Dean Beard, Piedmont, AL.** "Thank you especially for the fine editorial "Misleading Use of Scripture?" in the September issue of *Seek the Old Paths*. How sad that the blind refuse to see, but at least we must keep trying to help folks out of the eternally condemning sin of addition in worship and otherwise" **...Gary Colley, McMinnville, TN.** "Thank you for the information you sent me concerning "Church of Christ disaster Relief Inc." Also thank you for sending *Seek the Old Paths*" **...Tony Demonbreun, Haleyville, AL.** "Thank you very much for the *STOP* magazine which I regularly receive. I learned many things by reading each issue. Thank you very much. God bless" **...Serafin M. Calixto, Philippines.** "Thank you so much for *STOP*. We believe it to be one of the best publications in our brotherhood. It is heart breaking to see liberalism and praise worship taking over so many churches in Nashville, TN. It creeps in slowly and before you realize it there is a take over like Madison Church of Christ had. This was so sad. Thanks again" **...Herb & Nancy Marlin, Nashville, TN.** "I heard that you have a wonderful paper that you put out once a month with good sound articles. I would like to receive it, and if there is a cost I will pay" **...Curtis Watson, Clio, MI.** [Note: there is no charge for the paper. It is supported by generous brethren from around the world, gmr]. "Greetings to you in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I hope this letter finds you and yours in good spiritual health and prosperity. I am a preacher in Nigeria at Baeita church of Christ and I would like to receive *Seek the Old Paths* publication. A friend sends me one and I enjoy it so much. It helps and encourages me and others to keep spreading the truth. Our Lord will continue to bless all your efforts to serve Him; As God will provide for you to donate to us. Our fervent prayer is that God will grant you and the ministry the strength to work for Christ" **...E. O. Agbeyemi, Nigeria, West Africa.** "I would like to receive your *Seek the Old Paths* in the mail. It is a very good paper. It brings back information that I knew at one time but had forgotten. You can't find many people today who tells it like it is. It's very uplifting to me. Very good articles in it" **...Name Withheld.** "You folks do great work! May our good God bless you in every possible way" **...Al Sowins, Wallowa, OR.** "I appreciate the work that is being done by the East Corinth congregation. I have used *Seek the Old Paths* to supplement my private Bible study as well as sharing the publication with others. I am enclosing a donation to be credited to the Bookletmaker Fund" **...Mary Lawrence, Fayetteville, GA.** "My son receives *Seek the Old Paths*. I read it and firmly believe you are standing for the truth. I pray you will continue to spread the Gospel through this means" **...Helen Guthery, Broken Bow, OK.** "Thanks for sending *Seek the Old Paths* to the addresses I sent you. You are doing a good work. We look forward to receiving your

publication" **...Phyllis & Floyd Roe, Cushing, OK.** "I'd like to thank you for adding me to the *STOP* mailing list as per our email conversation. Keep up the good work! You are helping more people than you will ever know. Enclosed is a check. Please use this in whatever manner you see fit to help in the production and distribution of *STOP*. Thank you once again for adding me to the list. May God bless your efforts and all those who work with you there at East Corinth" **...Jake Taft, Cordova, AL.** Hello, I'm making sure we are still on your mailing list to receive *Seek The Old Paths*. My husband does his lessons from them. Thank you. We really enjoy them please keep them coming" **...Ludington, MI.** "Thank you for your good work in your publication. There seems to be some increase in interest here. If possible, would you please increase the amount of *STOP* that is sent to us? We will be sending a check soon to help defray the cost. Thank you again for your good work and may God bless you" **...Robert Ward, Page, AZ.** "Thank you very much and thank you all for working so hard to spread the truth" **...Billie Sue Duty, London, KY.** "I have been reading these for two years and enjoy them" **...Lafayette, LA.** "I am 46 years old, a gospel preacher working in Sto. Tomas Church of Christ, Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte, helping the local preacher here named Lito Solon. As a gospel preacher I give myself to reading books and other reading materials. Lito Solon introduced to me your paper. He showed to me the copies he has and I appreciated the paper so much because of its topics and issues tackled. It reminded us to walk in the old paths and never follow the modern paths invented by man. I would like to receive "*Seek The Old Paths*." It is great. I like it so much. You're doing a great work. Thank you" **...Tito Peralta, Philippines.** "Thanks for standing up for the truth, keep up the good work" **...Jennifer Semple, Keithville, LA.** "Keep up the good work" **...Scott Klaft, SC.** "I greet you in the wonderful name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. I write to be included on your mailing list of *Seek the Old Paths*. It is quite educative" **...Godfrey M. Simulubwa, Mkushi.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth 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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