

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 EARLY YEARS OF CANONIZATION (A STUDY ON HOW AND WHEN WE GOT THE NEW TESTAMENT)

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The canonization of the Scriptures is not a subject that members of the church study very often. Canonization refers to the process of collecting and organizing all of the inspired books into a complete work. In the book, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Giesler and Nix define canonization as: "...the recognition and collection of the God-inspired, authoritative books of the sacred Scriptures" (p.127).

Most people tell us that the canonization of the Scriptures came about in the latter part of the fourth century. In fact, the Catholic Church tells us that she is the one who determined what books were to be included in the Bible and delivered them to the public. This reasoning makes it appear that the early church was not concerned about the collection of the inspired texts. It also makes one wonder whether there was a standard that really guided the church during those years between the close of the first century and 397, the date when the canon is said to have been determined.

We want to look at three points that will help us to see that the canonization of the Scripture was always an important concern of the church. In addition, we want to show that the early church had ways (given to it by God) to determine which books belonged in the canon (New Testament) without any possibility of error.

Paul was one of the main writers of the New Testament. If Hebrews is

his, he wrote fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. His books were penned to specific churches at times. However, Paul did not want these books to stay just within those churches. He commanded for them to be passed on and read by others as well. *"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea"* (Col. 4:16). This indicates that the inspired messages were circulating throughout the first century churches. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter refers to "all his (Paul's) epistles." He was aware that many existed. In addition, Peter refers to Paul's letters as "scripture." Scriptures were the inspired writings given to men by God. Thus, the early church was aware of the inspired writings, recognized them, and accepted them as the Word of God.

The question now arises concerning the second, third and even fourth centuries. The apostles were all dead. We are told the canon was not developed until the end of the fourth century. This raises some questions. Did Christians during the second, third and fourth centuries have the inspired Word of God? Did they know which books were inspired and which were not? Were they concerned about the canonization of the Scriptures? The answer to these questions is "Yes." They also had a full-proof way of knowing which books were inspired and which were not.

The apostles of Christ had the ability to distribute miraculous gifts to members of the body of Christ. This was done by the laying on of apostolic hands. This ability was manifested in the city of Samaria after Philip converted many who were lost. *"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 8:14-17).

The powers that were distributed to these new converts are referred to as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There were nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Each person received a gift at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

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Editorial...

PRAYING TO JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Garland M. Robinson

There are three members (personalities) of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 17:29; John 5:18; Col. 2:9; Acts 5:3-4). Some conclude we can pray to any one or all three with God's approval. What does the Bible say?

How did Jesus answer this question? He instructed his disciples to pray to the Father. "*When thou prayest... pray to thy Father. ... After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*" (Matt. 6:6,9). We are not only instructed to pray to the Father, but to do so in the name of Jesus. "...*That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name*" (John 15:16). "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name. ... If ye shall ask any thing in my name*" (John 14:13-14). Jesus says to his apostles, "*and in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name. ... At that day ye shall ask in my name*" (John 16:23,26). Since Jesus has said we are to pray to the Father in "his name," why not do it the way he said do it? Why wouldn't the Lord's own instructions be sufficient to answer the question, "to whom do we pray?" What else would the Lord have to say to get us to understand to whom prayer is to be addressed?

To pray "in the name of Jesus" simply means that we pray by or upon his authority. He is the one who instructs us to pray. The inspired apostle said, "*And WHATSOEVER ye do in WORD or DEED do ALL in the NAME OF THE LORD JESUS*" (Col. 3:17). If we, at our own option, can pray to Jesus or the Holy Spirit instead of God the Father, then we must have authority from the Bible to do so. But where is such authority? To what verse shall we turn that gives us that authority?

If we direct our prayer to Jesus,

in whose name do we pray? Upon whose authority do we pray in such fashion? Do we pray to Jesus in the name of Jesus, or in the name of the Father, or in the name of the Holy Spirit? We find no command, no example nor anything implied in the Bible of any such practice!

Notice the words of Robert R. Taylor, Jr. as he speaks about wisdom and how it is obtained. His text is James 1:5, "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"

"...James tells us the how of wisdom's possession — ask of God. ... Note that he did not tell them to study human philosophy. He did not tell them to sit at the feet of worldly-wise possessors who think they have the last word of any human difficulty. He told them to pray. Then he supplies us with some imperative instructions."

"We are to pray to God. James did not believe nor urge that we pray to a departed saint like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, a minor prophet or one of the apostles in the New Testament. He did not say to pray to a departed ancestor like a father, mother or grandparent. These prayers would not avail."

"Many today are confused about whether we are to pray to the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit or all three. I recently received a question in the mail touching whether we should pray to Jesus or not. James says ask God. This is the Father. He did not say, 'Pray to my Elder Brother — the Christ.' He did not say pray to the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught the disciples in the Model Prayer to pray, 'Our Father, which art in heaven...' (Matt. 6:9). He was in their very midst and yet did not command, 'Pray to Me.' In his own recorded prayers in the New Testament Jesus NEVER prayed to Himself, never to the Spirit, never to

an angel, never to mother Mary and never to a departed saint. The invocation of saints, prominent in Catholic circles, is NOT a Biblical doctrine. Stephen, in Acts 7, is not an exception. He was an inspired man and had direct communication back and forth with heaven having seen a vision of the standing Jesus at God's right hand. What he said to the Lord directly is in the same class as Ananias' conversation with Jesus relative to Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:10-14. Here is a back and forth conversation between the Glorified Jesus in heaven and a faithful disciple in Damascus when the miraculous was still available. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament consistently taught that prayers are prayed to God in the name of Christ as Paul clearly and cogently taught in Ephesians 5:20."

"James says that such prayers of God's faithful children will be heard and answered. If prayed sincerely and in full harmony with God's Word, every prayer will be heard and heeded. It may be a yes; that is an answer. It may be a no; that is an answer. It may be that God will give us something different and far better than that we asked; this also is an answer — a precious one."

"James gives us the blessed assurance that God is generous in His giving. He gives to all; He gives generously. There is no way we can duplicate this. We cannot give to all and surely cannot give generously to all regardless of the extent of earthly possessions. Some things only Heaven can do."

"Furthermore, He does not upbraid us. He does not cast it back in our teeth. He does not say, 'You asked for this only yesterday or last week and here you are asking it again!' Far too often this is a human reaction between mates, between parents and children or among various relationships where there are givers and recipients. It goes something like this, 'What! You are asking this again! I have granted your requests repeatedly and now you are asking more of the same!' God gives; He gives to all; He gives to all generously; He does not cast it back in our teeth when the next requests are made. Generous Jehovah combines both generosity and wisdom. Wisdom guides and governs God in all His

bequeathed gifts to mankind generally and His people particularly. His physical gifts are for all such as air, food, water, etc. The spiritual gifts He gives are reserved for His people only as per Ephesians 1:3. This is a mar-

velous motivation for being a child of the Sovereign of the Universe — Jehovah God.” (end quote)

Why do people stray so far from the Bible? Why not just follow what it says? There’s no need to make it com-

plicated. When we do what those of the first century did to obey God and be found in His favor, then we will be accepted with God just as they were. Are you ready to follow the steps of the Savior wherever they lead?

Canonization...

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but all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (I Cor. 12:7-11). These gifts served numerous functions. They furnished these young churches with the revelation they needed to function as the body of Christ. They would also enable them to be able to determine which writings that came to them were divinely inspired and which were not.

Three of the gifts are of particular value to this study: *the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits*. Let’s briefly define each of these gifts.

The gift of *Wisdom* involved the “skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth” (Strong). “Wisdom is intelligence, then practical action in accord with it. Here it is speech full of God’s wisdom (I Co. 2:7) under the impulse of the Spirit of God” (Robertson).

The gift of *Knowledge* had to do with insight into “things lawful and unlawful for Christians” (Strong). Robertson says: “This gift is insight (illumination) according to (*kata*) the same Spirit.”

The gift of *Discerning of Spirits* dealt with the ability to distinguish and judge. Vincent notes that it was the ability to distinguish “between the different prophetic utterances, whether they proceed from true or false spirits. See I Ti. 4:1; I Jo 4:1; I Jo 4:2.”

It is not difficult to see how these three gifts would be of great value in determining whether a letter sent to the church was inspired or not. These miraculous abilities enabled the churches to collect, as authoritative, only those writings which God desired for them to have. The power of the Holy Spirit would not make a mistake. The Spirit knew which writings were His and which were not. This was precisely the ability mentioned by John in his first epistle. “*But ye*

have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ...But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (I John 2:20,27).

Individuals who had received these miraculous gifts lived well into the second century. Polycarp, a disciple of John, became a martyr in A.D. 166. When we read the writings of men of that period, they quote from all twenty-seven books found within our present New Testament. Their quotes are intended to be authoritative statements. Again, we are impressed with the fact that the books of our New Testament were in existence, they were known, and they were quoted as being authoritative.

We have seen: 1) The first and second century churches recognized that the writings of the apostles and prophets were circulating among the churches; and, along with other writings, they were able to distinguish between those which were inspired of God and which were not; 2) Men quoted from every book of our present New Testament in the second century.

We now come to our third point. In the second century, the Muritorian Fragment was written. “The **Muritorian Fragment** is the oldest known list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740. It is called a fragment because the beginning is missing. Although the manuscript in which it appears was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent” (bible-researcher.com). Two things are of importance about this fragment. First, the date is important. The fragment dates back to A.D. 170. Second, the list is important. This was a list of books the church considered to be

divinely inspired and authoritative. In an article on the Muratorian Fragment by James R. Adair, Jr., we learn which books were included on this list. Mr. Adair writes; “The fragment begins with what is probably a mutilated reference to Mark, and Luke and John are mentioned as the third and fourth gospels, respectively. It is probable that Matthew was mentioned in a missing portion of the original. Thirteen letters are attributed to Paul and are enumerated in the following order: Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, and Timothy (the two letters to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Timothy are acknowledged). ... Finally, Jude and two letters of John are mentioned approvingly, as are the Wisdom of Solomon and the apocalypses of John and Peter (although the latter is said to be rejected by some).” Every book of our New Testament, except Hebrews and one of John’s letters is on this list. The canon was being formed. The books of the New Testament were being recognized as being divinely inspired of God. They were accepted as the authority of the church.

This study has been intended to be faith-building. It helps to assure us that we have the same Word of God today that the early church had. After the death of the apostles, the church quickly began to collect their writings into a canon of sacred Scripture. These books have been preserved for us in the New Testament. As Jesus declared: “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matt. 24:35). Peter echoed this sentiment in his first epistle: “*But the word of the Lord endureth forever”* (I Peter 1:25).

The Bible, the Word of God, was revealed in the first century. It has been collected and preserved unto this very day! Let us study it, apply it, and teach it to others. It will judge men in the last day (John 12:48).

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THE BIBLE IS THE COMPLETE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL

Roderick L. Ross

The inspired, eternal word of God, the Holy Bible, is sufficient for all things the Christian needs to be pleasing unto God. *"All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Tim. 3:16,17). The revealed word of

God completely (thoroughly) furnishes the man of God unto all — not some, but ALL — good works.

The Bible authorizes every good work that Christians are to do. *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious*

promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:3-4).

Notice, ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness are supplied by His divine power. Through these things (i.e., the words revealed) we are allowed to be partakers of the divine nature. Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction are provided by the word of God.

The Holy Spirit provides all things within the inspired word. Through his [the Spirit's] inspired word, he *converts* (I Cor. 4:15; James 1:18; I Peter 1:23), *saves* (John 17:17; Acts 11:14; I Cor. 15:1-2; Psalm 19:7), *produces faith* (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31; Luke 1:3-4; 8:12), *sanctifies* (John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; II Thess. 2:13), *cleanses* (John 15:2; Eph. 5:26), *purifies* (I Peter 1:22), *quicken*s (Psalm 119:50; Eph. 2:1,5; John 6:63), *enlightens* (Psalm 19:8; 119:30), *gives understanding* (Job 32:8; Psalm 119:104,130; II Tim. 3:15), *leads* (Psalm 73:24; 119:105), *comforts* (I Thess. 3:2; 4:18; Rom. 15:4), *produces spiritual growth* (Acts 20:32; Col. 1:10,11; II Peter 3:18), *produces fruit* (Col. 1:5-10; Gal. 5:22,23; [Col. 1:5-10 is an inspired commentary on how the Spirit produces fruit of the Galatians 5:22-23; it is through the word of truth, the word of God]), *strengthens* (II Tim. 2:1-2; Rev. 12:11; read Rom. 10:17 in relation to Hebrews 11), *regulates our lives* (I Tim. 3:14-15), *admonishes* (I Cor. 4:14), *guards* (II Tim. 3:13-15), *stirs up* (II Peter 1:12-13) and *exhorts* (I Peter 5:12). (Roger E. Dickson, Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit in Conversion and Sanctification, Contending for the Faith).

The word of God provides man with all these things. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT?"

The Bible commands us to **walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh**. In Romans 8:1,4 we read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*." "This I say then, *Walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other... If we *live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:16-18,25).

To walk "in" or "after" the Spirit does not mean the Holy Spirit operates on our heart directly and guides us through each day in a miraculous way. Many say this, but such an idea or practice is totally foreign to the New Testament (the Bible).

To walk "in" the Spirit or "after" the Spirit means to walk or live according to the teaching of the Spirit. All scripture is given by *inspiration of God* (II Tim. 3:16). Holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Spirit* (II Peter 1:21). The Bible is the Spirit's WORD whereby we live! Therefore, "we walk by FAITH, not by SIGHT" (II Cor. 5:7). That is, we live according to THE FAITH (the Gospel, the New Testament, Heb. 9:16-17) that was once and for all delivered by the Holy Spirit (Jude 3) and not according to what seems right in our own eyes. There was a time when God allowed men to walk according to sight (Acts 14:16), but not any longer (Acts 17:30; Prov. 14:12). Man has never been able to guide himself spiritually (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12). When we walk according to the Spirit's teaching (the New Testament), we walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:7). We walk/live according to God's commandments (II John 1:6).

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall *not walk in darkness*, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). When one obeys the Gospel by **repenting** of sins (Acts 17:30; 2:38), **confessing** Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Rom. 10:10) and being **baptized** in water (Acts 2:38; 22:16), he/she puts away the old man of sin (walking after the lusts of the flesh) and is raised to "*walk a newness of life*" (Rom. 6:3-6).

Are you living according to the teaching of the Spirit?

— Garland M. Robinson

The *fear* of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the *judgments* of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:7-10).

This all-sufficient word is once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3, ASV). It did not need to be delivered twice — once was sufficient. There is nothing further that we need. No further revelation is necessary. No further revelation has come, the Bible is all-sufficient.

THE HOLY BIBLE IS INCOMPARABLE

Compare the Bible with any supposed revelation from God or a god found among men. There is no comparison! All of the *sacred* writings of the world wane in comparison with the glorious word of God. The beauty, the majesty, the unity, the accuracy, the truthfulness, the completeness of the Bible far surpass any of the *pseudo-revelations*.

The Bible stands alone in the literature of the entire world as THE REVELATION OF GOD.

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THEY PROFESS THAT THEY KNOW GOD, BUT IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM

The above words form the opening statement in Titus 1:16. The verse goes on to say, “...they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” In the context, the apostle Paul was writing to Titus about the circumstances, the people, and the activities that the latter would have to face and deal with on the island of Crete. In the previous verse, Paul had specifically mentioned those that are defiled and unbelieving. Such people, he said, profess to know God, but in works they deny Him.

All serious Bible students are familiar with the fact that Simon Peter denied Jesus three times. It is also commonly known that Jesus said, “But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:33). But, what about the concept of **denying the Lord with our actions?** Remember, Titus 1:16 says that some deny the Lord in/by their works. Despite their claims, their behavior makes it evident that they are not really devoted to and faithful to the God of heaven. Are you and I of that number? Does our action undo/negate our professed allegiance to Him?

If I sing, “All to Jesus I Surrender,” but when it comes to my first-day-of-the-week contribution, I grudgingly drop my leftovers that amount to one or two percent of my income into the collection, my profession of surrendering all for my Lord is not very truthful, is it?

If I sing, “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” but I have no intention of attending any service of the church after the Sunday morning session because, honestly, there are other matters that I count as more important on Sunday night, during mid-week Bible study and any night of a Gospel meeting, then do my works not deny my Lord and my professed devotion to Him?

If I sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy” in praise to the Creator, but outside of the church’s meeting place I habitually take the Lord’s name in vain, then do I really have reverence for the Lord, or do my actions deny such?

If I sing, “I Want to Be a Soul Winner for Jesus Every Day,” but I wouldn’t be caught dead talking to a non-Christian about the Bible and the salvation that is available through Jesus, then does my practice match my claim, or am I denying my professed allegiance to my Lord and His Cause?

If I drive home to my denominational friends the truth that we must go by the Bible, only by the Bible, and always by the Bible, but when I find myself in a major mess because I have unscripturally divorced and unscripturally formed a second union that civil authorities call “marriage” and I try to brush off my sinful actions by saying, “Nobody is perfect,” does that not sound like I am denying my Lord by casting aside what He said about these matters (Matt. 19:9)?

Some, like Peter, deny the Lord by claiming they are not His. False teachers deny the Lord that bought them with their damnable, destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1). Yet others deny the Lord by their actions (Titus 1:16). None of these three forms of denial is commendable, defensible, or acceptable. Any of them will cause a person to lose their soul. Regardless of the manner in which we deny the Lord, “...if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).

If we say that we know God, then we need to prove it: not by flaunting our faithfulness or by boasting about our behavior, but rather by obeying Him that saved us. “And hereby we do know that we know him, **if we keep his commandments**. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3,4). Who among us cannot understand such language?

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THE PSALMIST'S LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

Michael Light

One of the greatest single chapters ever written is the 119th Psalm. In this rich passage, David extols the value of the Word of God. If we could imitate his attitude and love toward the Word of God, we would be much better off.

Why did the Psalmist love the word of God?

Because *it will help young people succeed in life*. Notice verse 9, “Wherewithal shall the young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” David makes the point that young people can do what is right and please God in the days of their youth. Today, our culture states blatantly that the young are going to do wrong (commit what is commonly held as immoral acts; drinking, dancing, fornicating, drugs, etc.), regardless of what is taught to them in childhood. God through David denies this lie (cf. John 8:44). David’s son Solomon wrote “Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1).

Even in the church the impression is sometimes left that it is “normal” for young people to leave the Lord and live like the world once they leave their parents’ home. While it may occur more often than it should, it is never acceptable to God and should not be condoned in any way by the church (Gal. 6:7-8; Eph. 6:11).

Because *it will complete what is missing in a man*. In verse 10 David writes, “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.” Most people live empty lives. They search for meaning in all the wrong places. Notice the counsel of Solomon, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). If we go through our days on the earth without God, we haven’t truly lived. The key to David’s life was the fact that he sought God with his “whole heart.” We too must be completely

given to learning, loving and living the will of God. Some people know just enough Bible to be miserable. May we love the Lord and His word enough to follow Him wherever He may lead (Luke 6:46).

Because *it was a constant to which he could always turn*. In verse 11 we find, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee.” Once we truly understand that the message of the Bible is from God and for our benefit, our lives become more stable (II Tim. 3:16,17). God has given us instructions to help us deal with every facet of life; every difficulty; every dark day (II Tim. 2:15; Psalm 23). We can overcome all obstacles with His divine guidance through His word (Phil. 4:13). In a world that is constantly changing and often seems to be leaving us behind, it is tremendously comforting to know God does not change and His glorious message of truth will continue to give us freedom (John 8:32).

Because *it brings joy to the recipient*. David is exuberant in the knowledge that with God’s guidance, life makes sense. Notice verse 16, “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.” Joy and pleasure are not always the same thing. We typically view that which makes us happy (brings joy) as good. But true happiness is much deeper and more lasting than a moment’s pleasure. (As a side note, God is not against us having pleasure — in fact a faithful child of God should also have a very good life, John 10:10). David has a great attitude when it comes to the word of God. Far too many people have a poor attitude concerning the Bible, mainly because they do not wish to have their lives directed by (interfered with — per their view) anyone but themselves. David knew that he was in need of God’s help (as are we all whether we wish to admit it or not).

Notice verse 97, “O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” He loved the instruction that he received. In verse 172 he adds, “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all

thy commandments are righteousness.” When we comprehend that God gave us His word to help us (not to hinder us), our attitude will be better and our hearts more receptive to His guiding hand.

Because *it will guide us all the way to heaven*. In verse 105 we read, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” The word of God will help us and direct us in the hard times of life. Many grope in darkness when the light of Jesus is just a moment away (Matt. 5:13-16).

May we imitate the attitude of the Psalmist in relation to the word of God.

HOW THE CHURCH RECEIVES ITS FUNDS

The *work* of the church is unique. The New Testament authorizes the church to work in three areas: 1) *Evangelism* — teaching and preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16), 2) *Edification* — teaching and instructing its members (1 Thess. 5:11; Col. 3:16) and 3) *Benevolence* — helping those in need of the necessities of life (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10).

To do the work God has commanded the church to do requires money (the funds necessary to carry out the work). God has given instruction “where” and “how” the church gets its money to do its work. It is by the free-will offering of its members. The Scriptures authorize a collection to be taken up each first day of the week. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we read, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon **the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him....**” A famine had made many destitute of the necessary things of life. Churches of Christ everywhere were instructed to help the needy. This passage tells them how to do it. ▶

Elder's COLUMN

THE BLESSINGS OF BEING AN ELDER'S WIFE

Dan Goddard

An elder's wife is a person greatly blessed because she has a husband who is following Christ through the Biblical teaching of God's Word. Knowing and abiding in Christ, she loves him deeply and treats him kindly so that his "prayers are not hindered." An elder's wife must be sure that she does not take advantage of her husband's Christ-like manner and make any hardships for him to be an overseer in God's church.

An elder's wife must never strive to be the head of the household or to be demanding in any way. She must be one who is submissive and has a "quite, gentle spirit" — not one who will drain his strength attempting to keep Him under control. He has to give constantly to his spiritual family and that must be the first priority in his life, therefore his physical family must be one who is truly helpful to him.

An elder's wife will realize that God gave the work of an elder to him, not to her, nor to both of them. It is the eldership's God-given responsibility to shepherd the flock they oversee. Elders' wives are part of the congregation the elders oversee. She must not interfere and take away from his authority. She realizes that his is one of the most important

In the New Testament, you never read of the church of Christ having chariot washes, bake sales, rummage sales, 10K walks, etc., etc. to raise money for its work. There is no Scripture that authorizes the church to solicit (request, seek, beg) money, food, clothes (material goods) from non-members (the general public). Therefore, you should never see the church of Christ soliciting material things from those who are not members of the church in order to help the church do the work God has commanded the church to do.

— Garland M. Robinson, Editor

works in the world. To make it as easy for him as possible, she will do all the little jobs she can for him so that he can give all possible time to his work. Likewise, she will be a part of and attend every meeting and activity of the congregation that she is physically capable of attending.

An elder's wife must be positive, encouraging and praying daily that God will give her husband the wisdom of James 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." His task is to serve and work and plan for the building up of the whole body. She will emphasize his strengths and not be discouraging and negative. She will respect, love, submit, adapt to him and pray to be the wife her husband needs. She will manage the household well and love and train the children so they will have Christ first in their lives.

An elder's wife must be one he can trust in all aspects: tongue, dress, spending of money, and conduct. She will be flexible, adapting to her husband's schedule and life. She must be ready to change plans or entertain company at any time. She will have a thankful and joyful spirit. She knows these attributes can come only through truly abiding in Christ.

An elder's wife must not be like the women of the world who can easily be deceived and confused by the words from ungodly people who demonstrate thoughtlessness and unkindness. She will guard her heart to be objective and not be overcome by her personal feelings. An elder's wife must constantly guard her tongue, never being a gossip or a busybody. Her words must be uplifting, true, helpful and kind. She will especially avoid being jealous or inquisitive regarding confidential matters. As she prays in faith, with true humility and complete dependence on God for strength, God will in time cause her to grow in self disci-

pline and controlled thoughts, keeping her mind on things above that are noble, and of good report, but most especially on the Lord and His great love. Through Christ's power, which He has promised to each of His children, she will continue, more and more, to overcome the sins of the heart that easily beset so many women.

An elder's wife cannot be a weak Christian. She cannot be a lukewarm Christian. She must be one who puts the Lord first in her life. She cannot be a true Christian or a true helpmeet without growing in "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love" (II Peter 1:5-7). She can do this through personal, daily Bible study and prayer. She will also meet with other Christian sisters for fellowship, encouragement, study and prayer. She will have open communication with her husband as they strive together to overcome the specific sins or shortcomings that may be weak in their lives.

As an elder's wife, she will strive to be aware of the physical and spiritual needs of others and will do all she can in serving these needs (but not to the neglect of her own family). She will be hospitable. She will always look for opportunities to influence non-Christians to come to the Lord. As she strives daily to grow in these areas of outreach, she will be able to relinquish her husband for his service with joy and not with self pity. She will have all that she can possibly do. She only needs to open her eyes and look around and become sensitive to the needs of others.

The rewards will be greater than anything she can imagine as she grows in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Most assuredly, the "peace that passes all understanding" will be with her always and most especially during the trials that will surely come.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Thank you very much" ...**M. L. Bush, New Ellenton, SC.** "Brother Garland, as usual, some really great articles in the Sept/2009 issue of STOP. Really appreciate your publication. Keep up the good work. God bless you" ...**Larry Acuff, Lithia Springs, GA.** "Magnolia Bible College is closing on December 17, 2009. Please remove the college from *Seek The Old Paths* mailing list" ...**John F. Gardner, Acting President, Magnolia Bible College, Kosciusko, MS.** "A dear beloved brother of Christ has been moved to a nursing home. Could you please add his name to your current mailing list? This dear brother is a precious soul who so enjoys receiving Bible based material. I know he would be grateful for your help in receiving STOP" ...**Billie White, Tuscaloosa, AL.** "I'd like to get my uncle on your list to receive STOP. It's my way of thanking him for taking me to the church of Christ when I was just a teenager" ...**Linda Whitehurst, Cassville, MO.** "Please use enclosed check to help mail literature, etc. to prisoners as you see fit. I appreciate your work and share STOP with others. It is nice to see Bettye Zumbun mentioned also. I only met her once but was impressed. Also, I would like to have Euna Geeter (Summerville, GA) contact me. I am trying to learn something about a family who lived in Summerville in the long ago and wonder if they are still there in that area. Continue to fight the good fight" ...**Sybil Taylor, Bonifay, FL 32425.** "Refused. Return to sender" ...**Eloise Hulsey, Tyler, TX.** "Refused" ...**Don & Jean Owens, Scottsboro, AL.** "Dear brother Garland, keep up the good work. The Lord bless you and keep you. Could you send some copies of STOP to the church at Culpeper? Lost my wife on April 15, 2009. We were married 61 years 10 months. Miss her!" ...**Culpeper, VA.** "Thank you for your diligent efforts to produce this publication. Please remove from your list Harold & Jackie Knipple. Contribution enclosed" ...**Burlison, TN.** "Good publication. Keep up the good work" ...**James Sampson, Marshfield, WI.** "Your efforts are greatly appreciated" ...**Robert M. Price, Jacksonville, FL.** "Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless the officers and members of STOP for the effort of spreading the word of God. Continue the good work and may the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us" ...**Corazon Santiago, Los Angeles, CA.** "Dear *Seek The Old Paths!* I just finished reading the copy of 'Powerful Preaching' that I picked up at church. It is a wonderful Gospel paper. I would like to give you a list of people that would really like to read good Gospel preaching. I am 84 years young and I copy Gospel papers and send them out each month. Yours is one of them. I have over a hundred names and getting more regularly. I'm sending a little money for the sending of the papers" ...**Jasper, AL.** "I have been reading STOP for a number of years. I had one with me Tuesday morning for Bible study and some of the people asked me how I got it. I read the article in Vol. 20 No. 8 about the man in prison and it made some of them want the paper. Please send us some each month. We would appreciate it. Keep up the good work" ...**Frank Neal, Sr., Rockvale, TN.** "Dear Brother Robinson, I appreciate your efforts to proclaim the truth regarding Biblical matters. Please apply this enclosed toward your printing costs" ...**Wilma J. Stagner, Bowling Green, KY.** "Dear Brother Robinson, I look forward to reading each of your bulletins, they are filled with the truth and sound doctrine based on God's Word. I am 94 and a member of the church in Oak Grove, MO. You held a meeting for us and I have been getting your bulletin ever since. I pray that God will continue to bless you in your work. In Christian love" ...**Marjorie Alley, Oak Grove, MO.**

"My husband and I appreciated you very much when you were at East Corinth church. Please put these people on your mailing list if they are not on it now. Please start with October 2009. God bless you" ...**Name Withheld, Selmer, TN.** "Please add me to your mailing list to receive STOP.

'contentious; given to strife; exciting contention.' It does not sound like I would want to be described as bateful. Evidently some individuals are bateful. The Bible warns about being this kind of person. God does not like that kind of person. In the second chapter of Romans Paul states that certain individuals will have God's judgment come down upon them. In verse eight, he says that those who do not obey the truth, those that obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath will bring wrath upon themselves. He also says contentious people will have the same end. Proverbs 26:21, states, 'As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.' The bateful person will make situations worse than they need to be. Just like throwing wood on a fire will make the fire bigger and hotter, the bateful person will take a stressful situation and make it become a situation of great strife. In James 3:14-16, we find out that a person with this attitude does not have the wisdom from heaven. God says a person like this should not be proud of his actions. Instead a person should do their very best to control such thoughts and the tongue which speaks what the mind is thinking. Do not be a bateful person. Control yourself. Control your tongue. Be a person of peace." ...**Mark McWhorter, Pell City, AL.**

PRINTING UPDATE. The work of writing, printing, preaching, TV, radio, newspaper, etc. is going well. There's never a moment with nothing to do. As a matter of fact, there's not enough time in the day to do all I would like to do and that needs to be done. I love the work! I'm still in need of personal support but I know the Lord will provide. I appreciate so much those of you who are helping spread the Gospel. To God be the glory. —**Editor, Garland M. Robinson**

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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"In the 1828 Dictionary by Noah Webster, *bateful* is defined as