



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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MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR! GALATIANS 5:19-21

Jim Blankenship

In one typical day in this country:

1. 2,556 babies are born to teenagers out of wedlock.
2. 40 children die from guns.
3. Six teenagers commit suicide!
4. 135,000 children bring guns to school.
5. 3,288 children run away from home.
6. 211 are arrested for drug abuse.
7. 437 will be arrested for drinking while driving.
8. 7,742 teenagers will become sexually active.
9. 1,106 will have abortions.
10. 2,795 will become pregnant.

In 2006, the teen birth rate rose for the first time since 1991. Between 2005 and 2006, the birth rate increased 3 percent for teens aged 15-17 and 4 percent for teens aged 18-19.

Tennessee ranks 9th nationally with 25% of all teenage girls giving birth. Abortion has been on the decline, which says they are giving birth to their babies rather than killing them. (*Data on sexual activity among female high school students from the *Youth Risk Tennessee Alliance for Children and Families*, March 2009).

Promiscuity, licentiousness, debauchery, wantonness, immorality, all on the rise! Our children and

young people reap the havoc of uninformed and uncaring parents. It is no different with adults!

WHY IS MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IN HIGH GEAR?

A Gallop pole reveals:

1. Less than 50% (of adult Americans asked) knew that Genesis was the first book of the Bible.
2. On an average, American teenagers can name only about three or four of the Ten Commandments.
3. Over 75% of the adults asked were unable to name one single prophet of the Old Testament.
4. Only 34% among adults knew who preached “the sermon on the mount.”
5. Only 35% knew that the Roman Empire ruled Palestine during the time of Jesus.
6. Only three out of ten adults could name the four accounts of the life of Christ.

The prophet Hosea said, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (4:6). There’s the problem! It has been accurately stated, “As goes the home, so goes the nation.” A brief glance is all that is necessary to recognize the decay and decline of morals in America. Our homes are often crumbling right before our eyes. The divorce rate continues at

over 1 million a year. Crime is raging all around us. Tragically, many children from an average home today have been neglected, have not learned respect for authority, often are allowed to roam as they choose without direction and guidance, and go without the godly examples of a father and mother. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

A desperate need today is for people to go back to the Bible as the standard of right and wrong. Let us return to morality as God has clearly defined. Let us set before our young ones an example of purity and godliness. Let us train our children in the way of righteousness. Let us teach and shape youth in the way God would have them go.

America needs to learn...

Wrong is still wrong regardless — even if you don’t get caught. One might cheat on taxes, copy answers from another’s test, break the speed limit, shoplift from a store, etc. etc. The philosophy of many — it’s only wrong if you get caught. We need to remember Moses’ words in Numbers 32:23, *“Be sure your sins will find you out.”* MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if it’s legal. God intends civil government for good. We are taught to respect it.

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Moral Decay in America...



Editorial...

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Garland M. Robinson

God has not left it to the judgment of the individual as to what is right and wrong in religion; nor has he given men a choice in regard to what church they belong (as so many declare).

Jesus came into this world to establish his kingdom, which is his church/body (Matt. 16:18-19; Mark 9:1). There is “one body...one faith” (Eph. 4:4-5). The one body is identified as the “church” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Jesus is the saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23). Do you think he will save any other body than his? He said he wouldn’t in Matthew 15:13, “*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, SHALL BE ROOTED UP!*” Don’t you want to be in the Lord’s church, the body of the saved?

God has certain principles and laws that must be obeyed: “*Forget not my law*” ... “*Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye*” (Prov. 3:1; 7:2). Sin is a violation of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Everyone must abide by the Lord’s way. What seems right to men is the way of death (Prov. 16:25). It is not in man to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). We must follow God’s directions and be faithful to his commands. When we do, the Lord adds us to the body of the saved which is his church (Acts 2:38,41,47). We have no choice in the matter.

Why should everyone be a member of the church of Christ? Notice these many reasons.

Because it is scriptural in organization. It has *elders* who oversee (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7), *deacons* who serve (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13), *evangelists* who preach and teach (2 Tim. 4:2-5) and *members/saints* who faithfully follow the Lord (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:2). It has no higher authority on earth than the local congregation. There are no earthly headquarters or legislating body to make rules. It’s citizenship is in heaven, not on earth

(Phil. 3:20). Every congregation appeals to the Bible and answers only to God.

Because it requires no more or less than that which is set forth in the Scriptures. First Thessalonians 5:21 declares: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*” Colossians 3:17 demands authority for everything said and done. The church of Christ works and speaks as the “oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). The Bible is its only creed.

Because it is scriptural in its worship. Worship in the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) consists of: *singing* psalms, hymns and spiritual songs without instrumental accompaniment (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), *praying* unto God the Father in the name of Jesus the Son (Matt. 6:9; John 16:23-26; Acts 2:42), *giving* a freewill contribution on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), *partaking the Lord’s supper* on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; Matt. 26:26-28), and *preaching* the Gospel (Acts 20:7).

Because it is the fulfillment of divine prophecy — God’s eternal purpose. Ephesians 3:1-11 explains this well. The Lord’s church is not an accident or substitute. It is spoken of in Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-4 and Daniel 2:31-45. It is the eternal kingdom spoken of throughout the ages by the holy prophets (cf. Acts 2:16). Jesus said, “*I will build my church*” (Matt. 16:18). It is his and wears his name (Rom. 16:16).

Because the Bible is its only creed. The church of Christ has no manual, catechism, discipline or prayer book. The Bible is completely sufficient. “*...His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him...*” (2 Peter 1:3). “*All scripture is given by 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 fur-*

nished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is the book from which all will one day be judged (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12). I want no other! How about you?

Because it is built according to the pattern in the New Testament. There is one builder and head, Jesus the Christ (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 3:3-6; Eph. 1:22-23). “*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*” (Eph. 2:19-20). On what was the church you attend built?

Because it has a Bible name. Why would a bride choose to wear a different name than the groom? “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Romans 16:16 speaks of congregations everywhere and says, “*the churches of Christ salute you.*” What name does your church wear?

Because the Gospel is its only drawing power. Gimmicks and gadgets, food and fun, party and recreation will not save. Those drawn by such look for the “loaves and fishes” and will walk away when they are no longer offered (John 6:26-27). Men are drawn to God by the Gospel, nothing else (John 6:44-45; 1 Cor. 1:18-21). It is God’s drawing power to save (Rom. 1:16). Men are saved when they obey it (1 Peter 1:22; Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21-23). What draws you to the church you attend?

Because it is supported by the free will offerings of its members. Collections are to be taken up on the first day of the week from the membership. “*Now concerning the collection for the saints...Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...*” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). There is no Bible authority for fund raising of any sort: pie suppers, car washes, rummage sales, etc. What does your church do?

Because it stands for the purity of the Gospel in doctrine and practice. Scripture demands we preach the Gospel exactly as written. “*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” (Gal. 1:8-9). The Lord’s church demands a “thus saith the Lord” (Col. 3:17). Where does your church stand?

Because it is scriptural in the plan of salvation. For one to be saved, the Christ commanded everyone to: *Believe* in Jesus the Christ (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), *Repent* of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30), *Confess* faith in Christ as the Son of God and savior of the world (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10), be *baptized* (immersed) into water for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Leave out any one of these, and there is no salvation! What does your church believe and practice? Most teach “faith only.” However, “faith only” is the doctrine of men, not God. It will cause those who espouse it and believe it to be lost (James 2:24; Matt. 15:8-9).

Because it is the church you read about in the New Testament. It is the same in organization and worship. It believes and practiced no more and no less than the Bible requires. The church is the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). One enters the church upon being baptized (Acts 2:38,41,47; 1 Cor. 12:13). Have you been added to the Lord’s body by being baptized (Acts 2:41,47)?

The church of Christ is Biblical in every way, rightly dividing the “Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). What about the church you belong to?

MUST one be a member of the church you’re a member of to go to heaven? If you answer “no”, then why does it exist? If one can go to heaven without being a member of the church you attend, then why be a member of it? What purpose could it possibly serve?

MUST one worship as you worship where you attend in order to go to heaven? If you answer “no”, then why do you worship as you do? If it’s not essential to go to heaven, then why do it?

Salvation is in Christ’s church and his church alone. It is the church of Christ. Membership in it is essential to go to heaven. Why be a mem-

ber of anything else? God will root up all others (Matt. 15:13)! To what church do you belong?

Moral Decay in America...

(Continued from page 89)

Romans 13:1,3-4 says, “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ... For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to [execute] wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” Sometimes the laws of man conflict with the laws of God, and when they do, we must remember Peter’s words in Acts 5:29, “*We ought to obey God rather than man.*” Gambling, alcohol, abortion, divorce for any cause, may be “legal,” but never right. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if it’s for a good cause. Civic and religious organizations ask us to gamble (i.e. raffle) for a good cause, but Ephesians 4:28 says, “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor; working with our hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*” If there is a “dance for a good cause” like an abusive women’s shelter, lasciviousness is still a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19)! A beer manufacturer says, Buy our product and we’ll help M.S., but drunkenness is still a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:21). Paul goes on to say that “*They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” He also asks in Romans 6:1-2, “*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.*” MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if someone else encourages you to do it. In Genesis 3, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Passing the buck didn’t cure anything. “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to [do] evil...*” (Exodus 23:2). “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor. 15:33). Some people cave-in to peer pres-

sure, but they are still responsible. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if it’s hard to make right. Some wrongs are hard to give up and two wrongs never make a right. Our hearts go out to those who struggle with alcohol, homosexuality, pornography, lying, stealing, etc. We can’t let them believe it’s OK. We can show them the way of forgiveness by teaching them the truth and pray they obey it. Paul made a similar list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 as he did in Galatians 5:19-21 and told them “*such were some of you.*” The same thing is true today regardless of the sinful condition in which we find ourselves. We can repent if we really want to. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if someone else has done something that is worse. A teenager tries to get her parents to let her go to the prom by arguing, “But Mom, everybody’s going.” Social drinking is defended because they argue, “everybody does it.” Galatians 5:21 declares drunkenness as a work of the flesh. First Corinthians 15:33, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (morals). MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong regardless of who does it. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, “*... Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*” A man once commended a sermon on marriage, divorce and remarriage, but a year later condemned it because his daughter was now guilty. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if it doesn’t bother you. Some insist, “I don’t see anything wrong with it.” Walking into a plate glass door is easy to do, but it doesn’t keep it from hurting your head. I witnessed a baby drinking beer in front of her parents who apparently didn’t see anything wrong with it. We’re reminded of the old song, “I didn’t know the gun was loaded,” but it will kill just the same. Judas betrayed Jesus even though it didn’t bother

him to start with. MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if some call it expedient. The Apostle John wrote in John 11:49-50, “*Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*” Jesus died just the same. A salesman may lie in order to make a big sale to benefit from it because it’s expedient. Paul said in Ephesians 4:25, “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.*” Here is where many miss the mark today and another reason why MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

Wrong is wrong even if you don’t admit it. How often is God robbed every Lord’s Day? Notice Malachi 3:8, “*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*” MORAL DECAY IN AMERICA IS IN HIGH GEAR!

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IS GIVING AN ACT OF WORSHIP?

Rusty Stark

One of the questions lately raised about taking up a collection is whether or not GIVING is an act of worship.

This question must be answered in the affirmative — without doubt and without apology. That giving is worship, can be proved easily by a simple, straightforward understanding of the word “worship” and a clear explanation of the concept of giving.

AN EXPLANATION OF WORSHIP

Worship is paying homage or showing adoration toward deity; it is to praise and glorify. “*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name...*” (Psa. 29:2) “Worship may be described as an expression of awe, devotion, and love — from man, the creature, to his Creator.” Another important fact necessary in order to distinguish ‘what is worship’ and ‘what is not’ is this: Worship is prescribed by God, that is, He has given directions to man, showing him how to pay homage, show adoration, praise and glorify him (John 4:24). Those actions that God has prescribed as a way of showing homage to Him, are worship.

AN EXPLANATION OF GIVING

1) The giving commanded in the New Testament is a prescribed action (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

2) It was to be done when the saints assembled. If it was not done during a time when the church came together, the money would not have been collected in one place. Paul’s stated purpose in making the command is so the money would already be gathered when he arrived at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

3) This action was performed for the purpose of: a) glorifying God (2 Cor. 9:11-13), b) showing our love to him (2 Cor. 8:8-9), and c) meeting certain needs for others (Rom. 15:26).

4) Notice that giving was also commanded in a discussion of the worship assembly of the saints (1 Cor. 11:17-16:2). First Corinthians 11:17 begins a discussion of the wor-

ship assembly — the time when the church came together into one place. The Lord’s supper is discussed in chapter 11:17ff. Chapter 14 shows how preaching and teaching, prayer, and singing fit into our public assemblies. Chapter 16 gives us the prescription for ‘how’ to give during the time we come together for worship.

GIVING AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

As many have pointed out, worship often included the giving of gifts.

1) In Numbers 18:11, the heave offering brought for sacrifice was called a “gift.”

2) One of the tithes given by the Israelites was specifically associated with a feast they ate before God as worship (cf. Deut. 12:17-19).

3) Hebrews 5:1. “*For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*”

4) The wise men came from the east to worship Jesus (Matt. 2:2). They brought gifts (Matt. 2:11).

5) In Philippians 4:18, the gift sent to Paul from the Philippians was called “*an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*”

6) Hebrews 13:16. “*But to do good and to communicate (share, be generous) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*”

Once we understand what worship is, and we understand what giving is, it seems a little silly to ask if giving is worship. A much better question might well be this: How could giving to God, as a demonstration of our love, in the prescribed place and time (the worship assembly), for the purpose of carrying out the mission of the church, be considered anything other than worship?

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-2 IS STILL APPLICABLE TODAY

As amazing as it seems, some are questioning whether or not we can apply the commands in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 to the church today. Some

reason that this was a gift for a special need at the time (needy saints), and that it was never intended to become a pattern for 'how' and 'when' saints give today.

This reasoning is faulty and dangerous. The instructions given to the early church are set forth in Scripture for a reason. We must take such guidelines as normative — providing a pattern for all Christians unless there is some conclusive contextual reason for seeing them in a more limited way. If we don't see it that way, then the New Testament cannot be a pattern. If the New Testament is not a pattern, then the chaos and division in the religious world is justified because we have no guidelines for what 'church' and 'worship' are all about. God is not to blame for the chaos and confusion in the religious world (1 Cor. 14:33). He has left us a pattern, and he commands us to follow it (2 Tim. 1:13).

Furthermore, the need that was met by giving is not a temporary need. Jesus said in Mark 14:7 that the poor would always be with us. The needs of the needy are part of pure religion. This was not simply a 1st century problem. It is an ongoing problem that every century and every generation must deal with. How do we go about meeting this need and fulfilling this obligation? How do we gather money to help the poor? God has not left us in doubt, he has given us the pattern in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

First Corinthians 16:1-2 authorizes a treasury, that is, a collective "store" of money. In Galatians 6, we see a context in which both giving to the poor and providing for the preaching of the Gospel come together. Verse 10 commands us to do good unto "all men." Galatians doesn't tell us 'how' to fulfill this command. We are left to verses like 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 for guidance in 'how.' But notice that Galatians 6:6 commands that 'those' who are being taught should support the 'ones' who do the teaching. Again, nothing is said about 'how,' but the same pattern given for the support of the weak would also provide for the support that allows those who 'preach the Gospel' to 'live of the Gospel' (1 Cor. 9:14).

First Corinthians 16:1-2 is not only still applicable today, it is bind-

ing on us today. It is a means of showing our love, a beautiful, divinely prescribed act of worship to our great God.

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LIKE THE SADDUCEES?

Jerry Joseph

The Sadducees were one of the Jewish sects in the New Testament. They, along with the Pharisees, originated in the Inter-Testament period. They were not as large a group as the Pharisees but they did wield a great influence upon the people. In the early history of the Pharisees and Sadducees, there existed a great rivalry between them as to which would claim the office of High Priest. The Sadducees won control. However, the rivalry did not end because of their opposing teachings.

The Sadducees, in spite of their relationship with the priesthood and temple, must be considered as very liberal in their teachings. They differed from the Pharisees in the things they believed and taught. Let's notice some of these things:

They DENOUNCED the resurrection, angels and spirit. "...Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection..." (Matt. 22:23). In the Old Testament, there are references to angels, spirit and resurrection (Gen. 16:7; Exodus 23:20; Psa. 31:5; 49:15; 104:4; Eccl. 12:7). Therefore, the Sadducees did not believe what was set forth in the Old Testament.

They DISCARDED the oral traditions of the Pharisees. The Sadducees demanded that only the written Law (Pentateuch) was authoritative and the Pharisees' oral traditions were to be rejected. This of course was in conflict with the teaching of the Pharisees who taught that God had given both the written and oral law.

We must discard anything that is in opposition to God's Will and demand only that which the Lord has authorized should be accepted (Col. 3:17).

They DENIED what the Scriptures taught about the soul, punishment and reward. They did not believe the soul continued to exist after death, nor that people would suffer punishment or receive reward after death. They believed that punishment and reward was in this life. We must accept what the Bible teaches about the soul, punishment and reward (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 16:24-27; 25:31-46).

They DEMONSTRATED deism in their words and way of life. They believed that God wasn't too interested in man's life nor too concerned about one doing good or refraining from evil.

The Bible teaches God has always been concerned about what man does, how he lives and the condition of his soul. That's why, beginning with Adam and Eve, God has always had a plan for mankind. God is so concerned, that He demands obedience to His Law (Eccl. 12:13; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; James 1:21-22).

They DETERMINED to discredit the proclaimers of truth. In this way they were much like the Pharisees (Matt. 22:23-33; Acts 4:1-4). Even on occasion, the Sadducees and Pharisees overlooked their differences to join forces in attacking Christ (Matt. 16:1).

Today, there are those who are determined to discredit the proclaimers of Truth any way they can. When the Truth is "hitting too close to home" and the Truth cannot be answered, some will then attack the attitudes and motives of the faithful proclaimer by accusing one of being "too harsh" and "unloving." What a shame!

Today there are still some Sadducees, at least in belief and practice!

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PASHUR'S PROBLEM

Marvin L. Weir

The first six verses of chapter twenty of Jeremiah are full of warning to those who occupy a position of authority, but because of foolish pride, they despise and reject God's Word at the mouth of His faithful prophet. Let us learn from the fatal consequences of Pashur's problem!

Pashur's Position! Jeremiah writes in 20:1: "Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who [was] also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things." Being the son of a priest and "chief officer in the house of Jehovah," one would expect Pashur to support and sympathize with God's prophet. Not so! While serving in the house of God, Pashur was in opposition to Jehovah's purpose and His faithful mouthpiece, Jeremiah.

So many times the same thing occurs today in the Lord's church. It may be an elder, a deacon, the preacher, or a teacher entrusted to instruct a Bible class. What people so desperately need to learn is that a religious position does not automatically mean that one is faithful to the Lord and His cause. Pashur has many spiritual kinsfolk who today are leading gullible members farther and farther away from the truth. Those who are privileged to occupy positions of authority should take the position seriously. The Lord does!

Pashur's Hostility At God's Word! "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that [were] in the high gate of Benjamin, which [was] by the house of the LORD" (Jer. 20:2). Pashur's thoughts and desires are in opposition to God's thoughts and desires, so he chooses to insult and imprison the messenger. One cannot help but remember Isaiah forth-rightly declaring, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith

the LORD" (Isa. 55:6-8).

Many people today have great hostility toward the pure and powerful Word of God. God's truth is not their truth, and His way is not their way. Many of our elected officials detest and despise God's directions for nations and people. And on an even sadder note, most religious groups have nothing but disdain for a great portion of the Holy Scriptures. The great majority of mankind chooses their whims, feelings, wishes, and wants over a "thus saith the Lord!" As a tall weed or blade of grass may show which way the wind blows, a word or disgusted look can reveal the hostility of one's mind toward God's truth. Lack of trust in and disdain for the Word of God is alive and well today!

Pashur's Sudden Exposure! "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur; but Magor-missabib" (Jer. 20:3). Instead of joy and security on every side (Pashur), God calls him terror of every side (Magor-missabib).

People today need to remember that they can call themselves whatever they desire, but God will name them for what they are! Many who claim to be believers, God will call unbelievers. One may call himself a Christian and God will call him an alien sinner. Another may claim to be a follower of Christ and God will call him a follower of Satan. Many call themselves members of the Lord's church and God calls them members of man-made churches (denominations). What is important for us to learn is that a man is what God sees him to be! As the Scriptures declare, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).

Pashur's Deceitful Life! "And thou, Pashur; and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and

there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies" (Jer. 20:6). Pashur was a liar because he taught contrary to God's Word. This is precisely the situation for everyone today whose teaching does not agree with the Word of God. Do you remember Paul saying, "let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4)? One, no matter whom he may be, is a liar if his teaching does not agree with the Holy Scriptures! Elymas the sorcerer opposed the teaching of Barnabas and Paul and sought to undermine God's Word and turn "the proconsul from the faith" (Acts 13:8). But Paul answered and acted correctly in confronting Elymas and saying, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, [thou] child of the devil, [thou] enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). All who seek to pervert the way of God will be defeated and put to shame!

Pashur's Doom! "Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself; and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold [it]: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword" (Jer. 20:4). Those who oppose God in whatever capacity are doomed to failure. All of their friends and well-wishers are also doomed to failure. The eternal principle is, "and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

Are members of the Lord's church listening? One who defies God's Word carries in his own bosom the brimstone of his own deeds. What is more terrible than a person, who by hostility to the Word of God, has become a terror to himself?

May we learn that Pashur's problem was not with Jehovah's mouthpiece Jeremiah, but with God Himself! As it was then, so is it today!

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"WE ARE THINKING ABOUT CHANGING CONGREGATIONS"

Roger D. Campbell

We are not speaking about switching from one denomination to another. That would simply be a shifting from one man-made organization to another one of human origin. Nor are we talking about leaving behind a denomination to become a member of the Lord's church. Such would be the right choice, and it would bring joy to God and His people, as He would be adding a saved person to His church (Acts 2:47).

We have something else in mind. We are considering the scenario when an individual, couple, or family is contemplating the possibility of associating themselves, assembling, and working with a different congregation. They are now counted as a part of one local church of God, but wonder if it would be better for them to assemble and work with another one.

In the first century, there were disciples who at one time were worshipping with one congregation, but at a later time they assembled with a different one. Aquila and Priscilla are a case in point. This couple at one time assembled with God's church in the city of Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8,19). At another time in their lives, they were part of a congregation in Rome (Rom. 16:3-5). That happens frequently in our day also, as Christians, because of their jobs, schooling, or family arrangements, move from one location to another. Due to the distance involved, it is impossible for them to remain members of their previous local church, so they become members of a "new" one.

In some cases, there is only one congregation of the Lord's church available in a particular geographic region, so there is no second option available (before anyone asks, the answer is "yes"; yes, it *would* be wrong to attend a denomination if there were no local church of the Christ in the area). But what about those areas where there is more than one congregation to consider? Why do some members of the church choose to make a change from one congregation to another? There are a multitude of reasons why people make

that decision. Some would prefer to continue attending the same congregation, but because of declining health or other matters beyond their control, they feel that it is best to begin attending somewhere that is "closer to home." Others make the change because a new congregation is established in the area where they live, providing them an option that would save them an enormous amount of travel time and expense.

Though it may never apply to you and me, there are some brethren who change congregations because of the language factor. They are stronger in one language than they are in another, so they are more suited to a congregation that conducts its classes and worship activities in their best language. It makes sense for them to attend where they receive the most benefit. Some change congregations because their feelings have been hurt. If your feelings have been hurt because a lesson presented God's truth about a sin in which you are living (Eph. 5:11), then your heart *ought* to hurt! If someone has sinned against you in a personal matter, then the Lord's way of dealing with that is for you to go to that person and make every effort to resolve the issue (Matt. 18:15-17). Or, if you have committed a sin and refuse to repent of it at one congregation, running to a second one and trying to put some distance between you and "the scene of the crime" does not remove the sin. Only confession of your sin and repentance can remedy it (Acts 8:21,22).

Others switch congregations because they want their children to be around other children or youth, and where they presently attend there are few kids or young people. We respect the desire of parents to give their kids a chance to be around righteous people and be influenced by other kids who want to go to heaven. But, if a church appeals to you because it provides more fun activities for its young people, that has the feel of a worldly approach and not a spiritual one, do you not agree? It is not the church's role to provide entertainment, fun outings, or sports com-

petition for your children. Such activities should come from the individual homes, so if *you*, father and mother, want your kids to have fun with other kids, then *you* and other families need to organize and finance it.

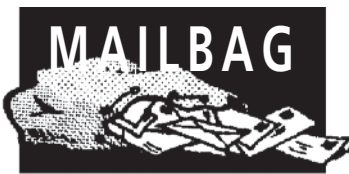
If you and I are considering changing local churches, should it not be for a *spiritual* reason? Should it not be that we would do such because we are persuaded that the second congregation will be one that can help us better serve the Lord and help us be prepared to go to heaven? Not because they have more people of a certain age category, not because they have a nicer facility, not because the members eat more meals together but because the second local church will help us to serve the Lord and make it to heaven!

I have a request for you. If you someday decide to leave one church and begin to work and assemble with a second one, would you please be honest about the reason(s) for the switch? Have the courtesy to tell the leaders of a congregation why you are leaving it. And, when you declare your reason(s) for the change, please do not tell the leadership of the church one thing (the "official reason" for leaving) and then in private tell your best friends the "real reason." Sadly, some individuals and families are not totally honest about their reason(s) for changing local churches. Please have the courage to tell the truth (Eph. 4:25).

There is a group of saints whom we respect greatly. They choose to change congregations in order to be a part of and work with a smaller, struggling one; not because they prefer small groups, but because they have a sincere desire to serve and help the church grow. Thank God for such spiritually-minded folks.

By the way, if you are considering changing congregations, how do you plan to contribute to the work and growth of the new congregation where you might assemble? You *do* plan to do more than just be a warm body sitting in a seat during services, right?

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“We are in need of more teachers for our Bible Correspondence Program (BCC). The last time you ran something in your paper we picked up about 30 teachers. WE NEED MORE TEACHERS. **International Bible Teaching Ministries** now has more than 5,000 stu-

dents from 148 nations enrolled in the online Bible correspondence course program. Of these, a few are Christians wanting to grow in knowledge. Others have embraced denominational error and are offended by truth. But most are simply seekers, looking for the way to heaven. IBTM also now has more than 100 teachers working in this study program — but we need more. The more teachers we have to teach, the more students that we can reach. Our volunteer teachers grade lessons, answer questions and encourage their students to keep studying God’s word, all by email. It is a work that requires patience, commitment and a love for lost souls. But occasionally it is also a work that gives our teachers the joy of knowing that someone they have never met face-to-face has ‘put on Christ’ as a result of their efforts. If this sounds like a work you want to be a part of, please let us know. www.IBTMinistries.org or info@IBTMinistries.org” ...**Ronald D. Gilbert- Director, Algood, TN.** [NOTE: If you are willing to help teach others the Gospel, I encourage you to get involved with this program. Brother Gilbert is a faithful Gospel preacher. I heartily endorse this work. —Garland Robinson] “Please do not send the bundles of STOP anymore because the brethren do not read it. Please continue to send my single copy because I love the fine magazine and read it as soon as it comes, most of the time. May God bless you as you publish this splendid work. Keep it up as long as you can” ...**Bruce R. Curd, Marion, NC.** “Emma Stewart has passed away” ...**Blountville, TN.** “I wish to continue receiving this great publication of the church of Christ and I thank you for your dedication to the truth. Thank you” ...**Kenny Young, St. Gabriel, LA.** “I am writing regarding my address change. I enjoy reading STOP. I would appreciate it if you could start sending it to my new address. Thanks” ...**Tracy Estey Rhodes, Muscle Shoals, AL.** “Thank you” ...**Crowley, TX.** “So thankful to the Lord for brethren that are still preaching and teaching the Truth. I sure look forward to each month’s STOP” ...**Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK.** “Please remove my name from the STOP mailing list. I now read it online” ...**Kenny Westmoreland, Celina, TN.** “Enclosed is a check to help with the mailing of STOP sent to me. I deeply appreciate receiving them” ...**Marietta Hamby, Rockwood, TN.** “Louis M. Johnson has passed away” ...**Glen, MS.** “Dear brother Robinson, Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am a recent subscriber to *Seek The Old Paths*. It is a wonderful publication rooted and grounded in the Truth that today’s world needs so much. I have been a member of the Lord’s church for almost 30 years and due to some unfortunate circumstances, I am currently incarcerated. I am not discouraged and I am using the time behind bars to minister to many that have never heard the truth of God’s word. I am in a battle with not only denominationalism, but also with Roman Catholicism, Islam, Mormonism and even Paganism, just to name a few. I am humbly requesting that you send the following back issues to aid me in the battle: Aug-Nov/09, Jan/10, Mar/10, and Nov/10. I would appreciate any and all others you could send. There are no volunteers from the Lord’s church coming to this unit, so I have no support from the outside other than the prayers of the faithful. I ask that you and the STOP faithful will put me and my family in your prayers. May the Lord continually bless you and STOP for your efforts in his service” ...**Rajah Greer, Stevenson Unit, Cuero, TX.** “Here

is our contribution to help you with your expenses. May God continue to bless you and your work” ...**Name withheld by request, Fenley, NV.** “Please change our address on the STOP mailing list. Our thoughts and prayers are with you” ...**Darrell Maggard, Lawrenceburg, TN.** “Thank you for your wonderful work with *Seek The Old Paths*. So much teaching in the publication. We need to hear the Gospel. Please continue to write as you are. May God bless you and all concerned in this printing STOP. Please list as anonymous” ...**Baxter, TN.** “Keep up the good work you do for the Lord’s church!” ...**Baleri & Darrell Cunningham, East View Church of Christ, Tucson, AZ.** “Jeremiah 36:1-26. In verse 23 we read, ‘And it came to pass, [that] when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast [it] into the fire that [was] on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that [was] on the hearth.’ How many people are like Jehoiakim, king of Judah today? They want to cut up and burn the words of our Lord because they refuse to hear and believe. Oh, they believe just what they want to hear and in their hearts they cut and burn the rest of God’s Word. How fitting then the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21, ‘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.’ A few versus later Jesus talks about the wise man and the foolish man, and for the foolish man and all who will not hear and do the words of Jesus... ‘great was its fall.’ Our soul is precious in the eyes of the Lord, but not so for those who will not be a doer of the Word. Hell is described as a terrible place and for good reason. God does not want us to go there!” ...**Del Brantley, Salem, KY.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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