

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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How Is Your Hearing?

Charles A. Pledge



As some of us grow older we experience changes in several bodily parts, among them our hearing. Modern science has helped some tremendously but hearing properly remains a problem with many. Some had a hearing problem in the days of our Lord; but a different kind of problem than the one just mentioned.

Jesus had just begun to speak to his disciples in parables. This surprised and, perhaps disturbed, them. They came to Jesus after the parable of the sower and voiced their question. We read in Matthew 13:10: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”* The answer given is seen in verses 11-15: *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heav-*

en, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

Notice especially verse 15: *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time*

they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Jesus said the ears of the people were dull of hearing. Dull, not because of physical impairment but because of spiritual impairment. Dull of hearing describes a condition similar to a drunk whose sensibilities are dulled. He is in a stupor. Dullness of hearing involves a spiritual stupor; a condition wherein the spiritual senses are dulled.

Jesus in effect said that in this condition people were not going to hear him. They will listen to everyone else but Jesus. When it comes to hearing Jesus, their senses of hearing are tuned to something else. Sad, but terribly true! Dullness of hearing will always be a problem to some. Sometimes a physical impairment in hearing can contribute to an accident, leading to death. **Always, spiritual impairment will lead to spiritual death unless it is corrected in time.**

Those outside the kingdom who are dull of hearing are described in Matthew 13:14-15. They would not turn to Jesus. In another part of God's word, inspiration describes some of God's children who are dull of hearing. In either case, death looms and judgment will not treat kindly those who face God having died in such condition.

How is your hearing?

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ADVANTAGES OF BIBLE CLASSES

Ronnie Whittemore

For many years, organized Bible classes have played an important role in the development and strength of the church. Within their command and order to feed the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28), elders have the right and privilege to set forth programs such as Bible classes or training classes to teach the faithful to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). Along with these opportunities come responsibilities. The book of James stresses the grave and urgent duties that teachers have in teaching and training others. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). So certainly all Bible class teachers need to be prepared and grounded in the truth; for, many souls depend upon their teaching.

There are many reasons why Christians should attend Bible classes. (1) Christians are commanded to assemble together (Hebrews 10:24-25). (2) Failing to take advantage of an opportunity to do good is sin (James 4:17). But rather than concentrate upon those reasons in which one is "duty-bound," let us notice some practical reasons.

1. Bible classes help us to understand the importance of Bible study. In the Old Testament,

God's people were told of the need to study God's Word. The people were urged and commanded to read the law aloud as a group or publicly. *"When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing"* (Deuteronomy 31:11). But not only was it important to read the law, but obedience was stressed also. *"And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient"* (Exodus 24:7). In the New Testament, Bible study is emphasized also. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). Even the simple command to read was given to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

2. Bible classes help us to abstain from sin. In Jesus' confrontation with Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4; Luke 4), Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil by relying upon the word of truth. Three times, he stated to Satan, *"It is written."* The Psalmist wrote, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). Good things cannot come from a corrupt heart. James wrote, *"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls"* (James 1:21). What better way is there to overcome the

temptations of sin than to have God's truth in our hearts and upon our lips?

3. Bible classes help us to know God and his instructions. The apostle Paul simply stated, *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17). It seems quite simple that one cannot know the will of God unless he first reads and studies his will. Yet how many people admit to wanting to follow God, but they do not take the time to read his instructions? In daily affairs, one usually recognizes that he should get directions from a map or an individual before embarking on a journey. But when he comes to that lifetime endeavor to go to heaven, many people forget their maps (Bibles)! Again, Paul wrote, *"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:4). Jesus said, *"...The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

4. Bible classes help us to grow in the Lord. A baby cannot grow and be strong unless he drinks his milk and eats his food. Likewise, Christians cannot grow spiritually and be edified unless they partake of spiritual food. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:2). *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..."* (2 Peter 3:18). Just imagine how spiritually immature most of us would be if we had not taken advantage of Bible

classes. Most Christians receive their nourishment, not from pulpit preaching, but through Bible classes. The advantages of preaching are limited in that there is little if no opportunity for feedback. In the Bible class, students can ask questions and learn faster. Remember the eunuch's question in answer to Philip's question? *"Understandest thou what thou readest?... How can I except some man should guide me?"*

5. Bible classes prepare us to answer every man. The apostle Peter wrote, *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15). A Christian's responsibility does not end with self; he has obligations to others also. This writer wonders how long it would take for a

person (on his own) to reach the same level of understanding that he has now because of Bible classes - probably years and years.

6. Bible classes help us to bear fruit for the Lord. Jesus said, *"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away..."* (John 15:2). Christians should bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the various graces listed in 2 Peter 1:5-11. Bible classes speed up the process and reinforce what we have learned publicly or privately.

If you are not a regular part of the Bible class program, why not take advantage of its manifold blessings now? You may be surprised at the difference that it will make in your life.

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ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?

Billy Bland

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)?

The salvation of one's soul is extremely important. Jesus said the salvation of the soul is more important than anything in the whole world.

This being the case, we should not be in error concerning its salvation.

But what about after one has obeyed the gospel and has been saved from his past sins? Is he now unconditionally saved? That is, can he do any thing that will cause him to lose his soul? Is it possible for one to fall from grace? The Bible answer is YES.

This of course does not mean that one will fall from grace, or has to fall, but it does mean if he turns away from God, he will lose his soul. A believer can become an unbeliever – *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12). A believer (a Christian), can depart from God!

Sadly, many have been taught that once they become a Christian, they can not so sin as to be lost. One “preacher” said, “all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger.” Thus according to the doctrine of “once saved always saved,” there is nothing you can do to be lost – nothing!!

Such teaching, however, doesn’t agree with God’s word. Let us note a few scriptures that teach that a Christian can so sin as to be lost.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, said; *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:4). These Christians were going back to the law of Moses and bringing over into the New Testament things that had already been done away (specifically circumcision). Paul said that if they went back to the old law, Christ had profited them nothing – **“YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE.”** We should not deny what the Bible so plainly teaches.

Again, why would Paul warn these Christians concerning the “works of the flesh” in this same chapter if they

could not lose their souls if they engaged in such practices. He wrote; *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Galatians 5:19-21). Reader friend, did you notice that God is telling Christians that if they did such things they “shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.” Again, one should not deny what the Bible so plainly teaches.

In the parable of the sower Jesus taught that a believer can fall away. He did so when he spoke with reference to the seed that fell on the rock. He said; “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Did you note that Jesus said that they “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away?” Yes, a believer can fall away.

And why would Jesus tell us to abide in him, if we could not leave him (John 15:1-6). There are many other scriptures that teach that a saved person can so sin as to lose his soul.

Not only does the Bible warn us against falling away, but it likewise tells of the condemnation of those that do. Peter wrote; *“For if after they*

have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Peter 2:20-22). Here is a sad description of those that knew the truth, had obeyed the truth, but turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

Sometimes people will argue that when a Christian sins, he will come back to God before he dies. Certainly a erring child of God can come back. The prodigal son of Luke 15 teaches that very thing. But it is not the case that they always do come back before they die. Ananias and Sapphira were a couple that died in the sin of lying. They didn't come back. Judas died in the sin of suicide. He did not come back (See Acts 1:25).

Still it is argued that one cannot take the believer away from God. The scripture that is used (actually mis-used), to teach this is John 10:27-29. This passage says; *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them*

me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." This is a beautiful passage describing the security the believer has in Christ. But take note of the fact that this security is based on the condition that the sheep hear Christ's voice and *follow him* (verse 27). If one ceases to hear the voice of Christ and ceases to follow Christ, he will be lost.

Let it be clearly understood that the Bible does not teach that one "has" to fall away. Neither does it teach that if one does fall away that he cannot come back. God tells us that if a Christian will confess his sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:8-10).

God also tells us that if we add to our faith the things mentioned in II Peter 1:5-11 (Virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity), that we will not fall away. So God tells us how to keep from falling. God wants us to go to heaven. But we go there because we choose to obey God and follow him, not on a false security that we can't be lost.

"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" (I John 2:3-4).

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Israel and *no one else*. It did not include Gentiles unless they became converts to the Jewish faith! Therefore, even if the Old Testament had not been done away in Christ (Hebrews 10:9), it would not be binding on Gentiles today (including "sabbath keeping"). **It never has been!!!**

Jeremiah 31:31-34 reveals the Old Law was only *temporary* in that God would one day give a New Law: "I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel...*not according to the covenant* that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." Notice, the new law would be different than the old law. Jeremiah's statement was made 900 years after the Law was given and 600 years before Christ. The Hebrew writer quotes this passage from Jeremiah and applies it to Christ being "*the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second*" (Hebrews 8:6-13).

Jeremiah 31:31-34 further states some differences between the Old and the New. The old law was written on stone, the new law would be written on a person's heart — the old did not provide forgiveness of sins whereas the new would.

The ten commandments were part and parcel of the Old Testament and have not been binding since Jesus died on the cross nearly 2,000 years ago. Christ at that time gave a **better covenant** which was established upon **better promises** (Hebrews 8:6). Jeremiah 31:31-34 prophesied the Old Law would be replaced by a New Law. We can read of its fulfillment in Hebrews 8:6-13.

What happened to the Old Testament? The New Testament tells us! Notice these

verses from Hebrews. "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first **OLD**. Now that which **DECAYETH** and waxeth old is ready to **VANISH AWAY**" (8:13). "For there is verily a **DISANNULLING** of the commandment going before for the **WEAKNESS** and **UNPROFITABLENESS** thereof" (7:12). "For the law having a **SHADOW** of good things to come, and not the very image of the things..." (10:1). "He **TAKETH AWAY** the first, that he may establish the second" (10:9). "There is made of necessity a **CHANGE** also of the law" (7:12). In Colossians 2:14 we read, "**BLOTTING OUT** the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and **TOOK IT OUT OF THE WAY**, nailing it to his cross." "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are **NO LONGER UNDER** a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25).

WHEN did all this take place? The Old was taken away and the New ushered in when Jesus sealed it with his shed blood on calvary. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament...For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force **after** men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Hebrews 9:15-17).

What then was the purpose of the Old? "It was *added* because of transgressions, *till the seed should come...*" (Galatians 3:19). The "seed" is Christ (Galatians 3:16). The Old was only given to keep the nation of Israel "in check" until Christ came. Having come and fulfilled it, he took it out of the way and gave a new law. All men today live under the new, not the old. Are you obeying it? Read Hebrews 11:6, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:10, Mark 16:16.



Questions & Answers

Garland M. Robinson

SHOULD WE FOLLOW THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Most people believe we *should* keep the ten commandments today. But what does the Bible say? Let it answer!

The ten commandments were given to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai after they left Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:13; 9:9-10). Deuteronomy 5:2-3 says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with *US* in Horeb. The Lord *made not this covenant with our fathers*, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." This was a *new law* God had given. This law had not been given to their fathers (ancestors). It was only given to the children of Israel!

The command to observe the sabbath (the 4th commandment) had never been given before Mt. Sinai (Nehemiah 9:13-14) and consequently, was not to be observed by any people except Israel for it had not been given to them. Though this is contrary to the belief of those who say "sabbath keeping" was given earlier, the Bible says otherwise. The 10 commandment law was made *only* with the house of

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I am sorry this issue is arriving late but is due to circumstances beyond my control. The first two weeks in December was spent in Taiwan (Republic of China) preaching and teaching the blessed gospel of Christ. The missionaries on the island are doing an outstanding job. I was glad to be able to assist them in 19 full hours of Bible teaching. That's equivalent to 5 weeks of teaching as we hold services. Please send us names and addresses of those inside Mississippi you would like to receive **Seek The Old Paths**. We have received many good personal comments and letters from so many.

-gmr-

Seek The Old Paths is a publication of the East Corinth church of Christ and is under the oversight of its elders. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:1; II Peter 1:12. Manuscripts are welcome.

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