

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 19, No. 11

November 2008

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Victor M. Eskew

***God has not called His people to be political activists.
He has called us to be preachers and practitioners of the Gospel of Christ.***

The first time this writer heard anything about liberation theology, he was working nights at Federal Express in Memphis, Tennessee. The year was 1991. It was election night in Memphis. The incumbent was being challenged by an African American. About midnight, the results of the election were announced over the loud speaker: Willie Herrington had defeated Mayor Hackett. When the victory was sounded, one of my co-workers began to shout the words: "We are free! We are free!" I did not understand the meaning of his words at the time. Now, I know they were part of an approach to Scripture referred to as "Liberation Theology."

Liberation theology dates back to 1955. Its origin was in Latin America. Many people in those countries were poor, oppressed, and sickly. The religious leaders, especially the Roman Catholic priests, were concerned about their plight. Their concerns directed them to the scriptures. Scripture was interpreted in light of the social concerns of the people. The oppressed needed to be liberated. The poor and downcast needed to be freed from the heavy hand of the government. The needy and sickly needed to have the opportunity to be themselves. Basically, the Bible began to be interpreted from a social perspective instead of a spiritual perspective. "Truth" and "freedom" found in John 8:32 meant "knowledge of pres-

ent realities" and "freedom from the oppression of the present administration."

Since 1955, many special interest groups have taken hold of liberation theology. In the United States, liberation theology has been embraced by three groups: African Americans, feminists, and homosexuals. The members of these groups feel they have been severely oppressed by the public and by the government. Thus, they call for freedom, or, liberation. This writer's co-worker at FedEx believed that the black community in Memphis had been oppressed by the whites and by the Mayor's administration. This young man believed that Willie Herrington would provide freedom from oppression to the black population in Memphis. Thus, he shouted: "We are free! We are free."

Liberation theology involves the interpretation of the Word of God. Those who hold to liberation theology, therefore, quote the Bible often. It must be remembered, however, that their interpretation begins with the social concerns of the oppressed and not with spiritual realities. Thus, every aspect of their religion is used to address social injustice, poverty, and human rights. We have already noted their slant on John 8:32. Jesus said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth about which Jesus spoke was the gospel of Christ. This truth,

when known, sets mankind free from sin, Satan, and wrath to come. This is not how liberation theology views this verse. In their thinking, Jesus is perceived to be a non-white, social liberator. "Truth" means "knowledge of those who are oppressing and how the oppression is taking place." "Freedom" is liberation from the oppressor and the oppression. Freedom is the ability to be the person you were really intended to be.

Another key passage used by the liberation theologian is Luke 4:18-19. In the context, Jesus is in a synagogue in Nazareth. The scroll of Isaiah is given to Him. "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" Those who hold to liberation theology see this verse from a purely social perspective. Jesus again is viewed as a liberator. He came to bring relief to the social outcasts and the oppressed. Liberation theology sees nothing spiritual within this verse. It involves the liberation of special-

(Continued on page 83)

Liberation Theology...



Editorial...

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ON SALVATION #3

Proponents of “faith only” set forth many passages which they believe support their doctrine. If a verse mentions “faith”, they conclude that “faith alone” is all that is required by God. This series of articles examines the verses they often refer to. We will quote the verse(s) and then answer their arguments.

Acts 13:38-39, “*Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*”

This is not hard to understand. Believing in Jesus is the basis, the foundation, from which one humbly approaches God in obedience. Jesus said salvation is extended to those who, in faith, obey the will of the Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21-23). It is not extended to those who believe without obeying. Many during the Lord’s ministry believed on Jesus, but they will not be saved. John 12:42-43 makes this abundantly clear. Why not? Because these chief rulers believed in Jesus, but did not obey him. They had “faith only.” Faith only is a dead faith, a useless faith, a vain faith. This was so during the first century and the same is true today. Faith only keeps people in ignorance and damnation because it does not bring about remission of sins. Not one person in all of history has ever been saved by or through “faith only.” God has always required action on the part of the sinner. Not a man’s own works, but by acting upon God’s commands (works).

Acts 15:11, “*But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*”

Same as above. God’s grace makes salvation possible. If we don’t believe that, we can’t be saved. In

this verse, “believing” stands for all that God requires — including obedience to God’s Word. But by “belief only,” one will remain in their sins. I notice again the absence of the phrase “faith only” in this verse.

Acts 20:21, “*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

This is a good verse. I love it. It doesn’t say anything about faith only. “Faith only” is not found in any reliable Bible.

Romans 1:16, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*”

Same as above. Those who believe the Gospel, those who have an active belief, will show it by their obedience to it. Nothing is said here about believing only.

Romans 3:22, “*Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.*”

Justification is by faith. That’s been explained in all the passages above. There is no disagreement on that. However, this verse doesn’t say the righteousness of God is by faith “only.” Where do you read that? The answer is, people who believe it, make it up. It’s not found in the Bible. They would like it to be there, so they invent it and try to pawn it off on gullible souls. Let’s show how this works. Someone reads a passage that is connected with salvation (justification, everlasting life, etc. etc.) and then conclude that it involves ALL that God requires a sinner to do, even though it doesn’t say that. Look at Matthew 9:13. This verse says Jesus came to call “sinners to repentance.” Luke 13:3 says without

repentance, salvation is impossible. So, does that mean that repentance is all that a sinner needs to do since the verse does not mention faith or anything else? If they can add the word “only” to faith, I ought to be able to add the word “only” to repentance. But, Jesus did not say he came to call sinners to “repentance only” (plus nothing, minus nothing).

We learn from other passages that repentance without faith is vain (such as Mark 16:16). Repentance without baptism is vain (such as Mark 16:16). Thousands in Acts two wanted to know what they needed to do to have forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:37). Acts 2:38 gives them the answer, “repent and be baptized.” Nothing is said about faith. Shall we conclude that all one needs to do is repent and be baptized? Why can’t we add the word “only” to repent and be baptized? We can’t add the word “only” because that would be man’s doctrine. If God wanted the word “only” in that verse he would have put it there. Besides that, the word “only” would make it conflict with other verses. So, salvation is not by “repentance only” or “baptism only” any more than salvation is by “faith only.”

First Peter 3:21 says “baptism doth now save us.” Is that true? Of course it is. Heaven said so. Can we put the word “only” in there and say that “baptism only” saves? If they can put the word “only” with faith, why can’t I put the word “only” with baptism? The point is, neither of us can do that because it would be false doctrine. It would be adding to God’s word. It would not be loyal to the teaching of the Lord and the apostles. Baptism only is as dead and vain as faith only. The devil loves the doctrine of “baptism only.” He loves the doctrine of “repentance only.” He loves the doctrine of “faith only.” He knows that all of these doctrines keep people out of heaven.

Romans 3:26, “*To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”

The Lord justifies those who believe in him. It does not say he justifies those who “believe only” or have “faith alone.” Where did you come up with that? As I’ve said multiple times above, the word “faith” sums up all

the actions of those who obey the Lord. Obedient faith is a living faith, a saving faith. "Faith only" is a dead faith, a damning faith.

Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Same as above. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). One is made "just," that is, "right" in the eyes of God, by faith. One is not made right before God by faith only. The verse does not say that. By the way, the "deeds of the law" has reference to the law of Moses, the Old Covenant. No man can be justified by the Old Testament law. There is an old law and a new law, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Obedience to the law of Moses does not save. Obedience to the law of Christ does save. This is clear in Matthew 7:21-23, Hebrews 5:8-9, Romans 8:1-2. I don't read anything about "faith only" in this verse.

more to follow...

– Editor, Garland M. Robinson

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Anonymous	\$100
Beginning Balance	\$10,480.58
Contributions	\$16,510.00
Debits	
Postage	\$1,434.77
Supplies	\$119.90
Ending Balance	\$25,435.91

Liberation Theology...

(Continued from page 81)

interest groups who are in bondage to the rich, powerful, and those considered to be "racially superior."

The approach of liberation theology toward Bible interpretation is a warped and perverted approach. Those who use it are described by Peter as being "unlearned and ignorant." They "wrest" the Scriptures "unto their own destruction" (II Peter 3:17). The ends of their doctrines show just how perverted this approach to Bible interpretation really is:

- Jesus is seen as a non-white liberator instead of the Savior of all men.

- Political freedom is exalted above the salvation of the soul.

- Social reforms are more important than spiritual conversion.

- Personal sin is acknowledged, but it is said to exist because of oppressive political and social structures.

- The Bible is interpreted in light of social "class" struggle.

- Groups of men are pitted against each other under the descriptive terms of righteous versus unrighteous. These words really stand for poor versus rich, black versus white, lowly versus the powerful, and moral versus the immoral.

- The church is viewed as a political institution designed to assist with political and social reforms.

- The pulpit is used as a political platform to incite the masses against the prevailing class, race, and administration that is oppressing the poor.

- The pulpit preaches rebellion and insurrection against the oppressors instead of subordination to the higher powers.

- Inequality is an evil, except when the special interest groups are in power.

If an individual is part of one of the special interest groups, it is easy to get caught up in liberation theology. The theology is designed to lift one out of his immediate misery and affliction. Too, it has the appearance of being rooted in the Scriptures. However, it is a warped and slanted interpretation of God's Word that is geared toward the social and economic needs of the masses.

There is no doubt that God is concerned about the poor. The psalmist wrote: "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor" (Psalm 140:12). It is also true that the righteous are called to assist those in need. "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy" (Psalm 82:3). This being said, it must be understood that the Gospel of Christ is not focused solely upon this issue. In fact, this concern pales in significance to the spiritual plight of mankind. Any theology that misses this point has missed the aim of God in sending His Son into the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

God has not called His people to be political activists. He has called us to be preachers and practitioners of the Gospel of Christ. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). If something is not done to bring mankind out of sin, God's wrath will come upon them all (Rom. 1:18; 6:23). The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). It must be taught boldly and continuously to the lost, giving them the opportunity to respond to its call to redemption. This is the mission of God's people (Mark 16:15-16).

The poor will be with us always according to Jesus (Mark 14:7). Their physical plight will end at death. On the other hand, if mankind's spiritual condition is not addressed, their eternal misery will begin at death.

Dear readers, let's embrace a liberation theology that frees man from sin and wrath to come in the realms of eternity.

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[EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is not saying that all blacks or those in special interest groups believe in or subscribe to liberation theology. Not all do. This article simply examines this man-made teaching and philosophy in light of what the Bible says. This is what I John 4:1 commands us to do.]

SHAKE HANDS WITH OR HUG THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU

Rusty Stark

We've all seen it. Perhaps we've even done it ourselves. A congregation is gathered together and the person making the announcements or the preacher asks everyone to turn around and shake hands with the person next to them; or hug someone, tell them you love them and let them know you're glad they're here. What exactly is the purpose and value of such "group greetings?"

NOT TALKING ABOUT SIN!

It is not wrong to greet one another. It is not wrong to encourage a group to greet one another. Greetings are important in the church. Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, Philippians 4:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:14 all command us to greet one another.

Of course, such group greetings are not part of our worship, and we should take care not to confuse our greetings with an act of worship. It is also important to keep our worship assemblies orderly. But we openly acknowledge that it is necessary and important to greet each other when we come together.

NOT A QUESTION OF MOTIVES

We do not want to question the motives of those who ask others to "turn around and hug someone." This can be done from the best of motives, for the purpose of encouraging greater closeness and interaction and fulfilling the above commands.

IS THIS REALLY THE ANSWER?

This gets us to the real question: Do these group-greetings actually cause greater closeness and love between the saints? Can they possibly be the fulfillment of God's commands to "greet one another?"

Are we to believe that a loving congregation needs to have a "group greeting" in order to greet one another?

What exactly is the need that is met by such collective greetings?

If a congregation doesn't greet each other except in a collective way when prompted by the announcement maker, they have big problems that won't be solved by a group greeting. Christians are to "consider one another" (Heb 10:24) and have love as a "perfect bond" between them (Col 3:14). If we are distant and cold in our dealings with each other, how can "all men know" our discipleship by the evidence of our love (John 13:35)?

If we are not really cold and distant from each other, if we regularly and consistently make a sincere attempt to greet and acknowledge one another, what purpose is served by encouraging these types of stilted and artificial group greetings?

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO MAY FEEL LEFT OUT?

It is true that sometimes people feel left out. It is true that sometimes we get busy and we don't greet everyone. And sometimes this can be misinterpreted as a lack of love and concern. Sometimes people feel slighted. We all have heard complaints of a lack of friendliness, and such criticisms are not always unfair or unwarranted.

But, are we to understand that a person may be sitting in our assembly, feeling unnoticed, left out, and even slighted, and somehow he will feel better because the person next to him turns and greets him only after being prompted to do so? Does this even come close to filling the "friendliness gap" that we sometimes inadvertently have? Would you really feel loved and greeted if those around you only greet you when they are reminded and told to do so?

THE REAL ANSWER

We should address ourselves to the real problem. We need to be

reminded to love each other, to greet each other, to give up self-centered attitudes and cliques that interfere with loving interaction. And, we need to teach people not to feel slighted just because someone fails to greet them. After all, there could be any number of reasons this happens.

But if we learn the lessons of love, if we pattern ourselves after the one who showed perfect love, stilted artificial, awkward group greetings will be totally unnecessary.

We need to consider these passages:

Philippians 2:1-4. *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

Ephesians 4:1-3. *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

Ephesians 4:32-5:2. *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."*

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IS OUR WORSHIP RIGHT WHEN OUR HEARTS ARE WRONG?

Jimmie B. Hill

Our worship is not wanted by God if it comes while we are holding a grudge and unwilling to go the second mile in order to make things right with our brother.

Worship, in the church of our Lord, is one of the highest functions of which we are capable. It certainly must not be entered into lightly. Our worship to God must be done according to the truth of God's word and with a proper heart. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Similarly Paul wrote, "every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (II Cor. 9:7). The word "purposeth" here is from the Greek *proaireo* and is used only in this verse in the Greek New Testament. Its meaning is "to bring forward, bring forth from one's stores; to bring forth for one's self, to choose for one's self before another, i.e., to prefer; to purpose." There are two primary thoughts given in this word, namely, that we are to reflect seriously on the amount we are giving and, that no one else can do this reflecting for us. The amount we give and the spirit in which we give it are to be determined by the following conditions in the verse, that is, "...not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." This principal can be aptly applied to all other facets of our work for and worship to our God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23,24). The Law of Moses encouraged the Jews to bring voluntary gifts to the altar to be consecrated to the Lord. This act was to show how much the giver was devoted to the Lord. These gifts were expected to proceed from the pure heart. However, if one refused to make a matter right with a brother who had a complaint against him, such a gift would be considered no more than mere rit-

ual. Ritualistic service to God can not be a substitute for humility and brotherly kindness. Therefore the command was given to postpone the altar service until he had made things right with his brother. What is the principle that our Lord gives here? The quality of the gift is determined by the quality of the giver. Or, the acceptability of any act of worship is determined by the acceptability of the worshiper. Our gestures of worship are meaningless unless our hearts are right with God and our brethren!

The principle of John 4:24 and Matthew 5:23,24 is also found in Isaiah 1:11. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats." The Lord was asking Israel, "What do you think you will gain by your sacrifices?" All of the items in this verse were commanded under the Law of Moses and were not innovations that were brought in by Israel. They had, however, become unacceptable to God because Israel had become so corrupt and sinful. They were doing what the truth demanded, in a sense, but their heart was not right.

We have this lesson powerfully enforced by the prophet Micah. In the middle of a heated controversy with the Lord, Israel says, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul" (Micah 6:6,7)? Note that Israel asked the questions and then gave the appropriate answers. The things mentioned would have normally

been acceptable but because of their corruption they knew they were not. Then we see the ignorance and arrogance of Israel as they go beyond what is expected by inquiring of the Lord concerning thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil. This is such an extravagant offering that only a king could bring such. Surely the Lord would be impressed. And they do not stop there. They then inquire about the offering of their firstborn thinking that not even Jehovah would doubt the sincerity of such a sacrifice.

But the Lord responds through Micah, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). Not even the sacrifice of a firstborn child is an ample substitute for genuine honesty, kindness, and humility. Again, the acceptability of the gift is determined by the acceptability of the giver.

Our worship is not wanted by God if it comes while we are holding a grudge and unwilling to go the second mile in order to make things right with our brother. Sanctimony cannot cover up an unsanctified soul. Our God guards His altar against a profane spirit presuming to make up in worship what is lacking is humility and love. Our Lord has stressed the seriousness of right relationships. Our conscience may be clear. Any misunderstanding may be wholly on the part of the other. He may or may not have the cause for the unwholesome attitude. However, it is the duty of the worshiper to go and try to make reconciliation. The gift (our worship) should be left at the altar until we first be reconciled to our brother (Matt. 5:24).

Our worship is not right when our hearts are wrong.

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THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

Alan Caudle

Failure to believe that God means what He says is the biggest mistake a responsible person can make. This is true whether one does not know God's word or refuses to obey God's word.

From the beginning of time, man has seemed to have a problem with unbelief in regard to the commands and warnings of Jehovah. The first man and his mate ate of the forbidden fruit, even after God instructed them as to what NOT to do. Apparently, they preferred the words of Satan rather than those of the Almighty. They simply did not believe that God meant what He said.

The Israelites found themselves wandering outside the promised land for forty years. Why? Because they refused to believe what had been told them by their Heavenly Father. In fact, the sin of unbelief continued to plague God's people throughout Old Testament history. Their falling away was a direct consequence of not believing God and His promises and warnings.

Things were no different during the days of Christ and the Apostles. From the early beginnings of Christianity and the Lord's warnings for five of the seven churches of Asia, to modern-day congregations that choose to ignore the Bible pattern of worship and its teaching on grace, faith, and fellowship, many of God's children still disbelieve Him in regard to what will happen if they continue to depart from His Word.

THE CAUSE OF ALL DEPARTURE FROM GOD IS UNBELIEF

Unbelief is the rejection of testimony, even though the testimony is supported by sufficient evidence — it is the closing of our eyes against the truth and refusing to accept the Word of God as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (cf. Psalm 119:105).

More often than not, unbelief arises from a desire to shift responsibility placed upon us by the Word of God, which, in turn, leads us to do whatever we desire, regardless of what the Bible says. Unbelief is the

occasion of all sin and the very bond of iniquity. It darkens, destroys, and makes the world a moral desert wherein no divine footsteps are heard. Unbelief on the part of anyone closes to that person the door of Heaven, even as the door of Canaan was closed to the Israelites *"who could not enter in because of unbelief."*

UNBELIEF AND DISOBEDIENCE ARE THE SAME

The Bible is very clear concerning the future of those who do not believe God's word. Referring to *"them that had sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness,"* the writer of Hebrews continues by stating, *"And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient (believed not, KJV). So we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief"* (Heb. 3:18,19). Furthermore, it is said in Hebrews 4:6, in regard to those who shall not enter into His rest, *"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached, failed to enter in because of disobedience"* (unbelief, KJV).

It was unbelief that brought sin into the world, that filled the world with violence, that brought the flood and the downfall of Israel and will close the gates of heaven against all who do not believe God and His commands. *"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God"* (Heb. 4:3).

CAUSES OF UNBELIEF

1) An evil heart. The heart can become so set on evil as to refuse to accept the truth. The heart is evil when it cherishes evil. *"From the heart comes forth evil thoughts"* (Matt. 15:19).

2) Ignorance or blindness of mind. Those guilty of such were the murderers of Christ, along with all who shut their eyes, close their ears, and harden their hearts to the truth. It is not the case that they *cannot* believe, they simply *refuse* to accept that which they know to be right. Israel had an abundance of evidence. They had seen the power manifested by God in many ways, but they were bent on evil and desired to turn back, in spite of all that Jehovah had said and done.

3) The love of sin. The Gospel demands our all. Those who profess to be Christians must come out of the world and be lovers of God rather than lovers of pleasure. But because some do not want to give up the pleasures of sin, they refuse to believe and continue in unbelief. The reason so many are "out of Christ" is because of their love of sin and refusal to believe that God means what He says.

4) The influence of the Devil. The parable of the sower presents a powerful lesson as it explains the seed that fell by the way side: *"And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved"* (Luke 8:12). It is not that they could not understand, they simply chose to disbelieve and let the devil fill their ears with what they wanted to hear. They heard the truth, but turned away from it and refused to believe.

5) The pride of human nature. All those who love the truth believe the Bible doctrine of faith and the fact that it humbles the soul. But the love of honor and social standing leads to a refusal to accept the truth. God's word has much to say about the harmful consequences of sinful pride. The writer of Proverbs delivered the divine truth when he penned, *"Seest thou a man wise in his*

own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 26:12). Guided graciously by the Holy Spirit, James quoted from the same Old Testament book, that “*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*” (James 4:6). And lest there be any doubt as to the plight of the proud, 1 John 2:16-17 should convince us: “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory (pride, KJV) of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*”

EFFECTS OF UNBELIEF

Centuries ago, God pronounced that “*cursed*” is he “*that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them*” (Duet. 27:26) and “*cursed*” also is he “*that continueth not in all things which are written...to do them*” (Gal. 3:10). Christians are also to understand that if we profess to a part of the law, we are “*debtor to the whole law*” (Gal. 5:3); because, as is taught in James 2:10, to “*keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point*” makes us “*guilty of all.*”

Yet, so many seem to disbelieve that we are to accept and do “the whole counsel of God.” They shut their eyes and close their ears to the reality that a refusal to accept and practice even one of God’s commands will result in their being rejected by Him at the last day.

Those who are guilty of unbelief (including Christians) are joined together with those to whom Christ said, “*Ye shall die in your sins*” (John 8:24). What a terrible death that will be, because to die in sin (even one sin) is to die without God, facing an eternal torment in the horrors of hell.

Failure to believe that God means what He says is the biggest mistake a responsible person can make. This is true whether one does not know God’s word or refuses to obey God’s word. The consequence of unbelief is eternal loss. There will be no salvation and hope of heaven for those who do not believe and obey God’s word (John 8:31-32; Matt. 7:21).

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IS GOD’S WAY TOO NARROW?

Roger D. Campbell

By His great power, the Lord God brought this world into existence. By that same power, He will one day take it out of existence, destroying it with fire (II Peter 3:10,12). In the meantime, the world stands, with over 6.5 billion humans inhabiting its seven continents.

God has revealed His will for mankind in the Bible, and yes, that will is narrow. That does not suit well with some people. As you know, the ones who think God’s plan is way too strict are those who are not ready to submit to it!

“I don’t care too much for that preacher. He said that Jesus is the only way of salvation. That’s just too narrow.” What did Jesus Himself say? “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6).

“I think that Bible class teacher is too narrow minded. He said that most people will be lost.” What did Jesus say about it? “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matt. 7:13,14).

“That booklet I read says that Jesus only promised to build one church. Can you believe that some people are so close minded?” Again, we ask, what does the Bible say? Jesus said, “*...and upon this rock will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matt. 16:18). Friend, you do not need a calculator to count up the number of churches the Master promised to build!

If you are inclined to say that God’s way is narrow, do you know what? We agree. Do you know why we agree with your conclusion? Because the Bible clearly shows that God’s revealed will is narrow. God instructed Noah to build a

single ark (Gen. 6:14). That was pretty narrow was it not? God chose Jerusalem as the single location to place His name during the Old Testament era (I Kings 12:36). That, too, was narrow, would you not agree? Per God’s decree, today all spiritual blessings, including the forgiveness of sins, are found in one location — they are in the Christ (Eph. 1:3,7). Someone had to decide where salvation should be made available, and, for our good, the Lord God made that decision. End of discussion. Yes, by man’s reckoning, that comes across as a narrow plan.

All of these biblical matters that point to narrowness cause us to raise this question: should God seek out man’s input, advice, requests, and opinions before making His decrees, or is it okay for Him to “go it alone” and decide on His own what is best for mankind? Since He is the all-knowing Almighty, the first and the last, the Creator and Sustainer of all, of course He has the right to express His will to mere mortals in the language that He desires. That revealed will is just what we have in the Bible. Regardless of whether a person counts God’s word and plan as too narrow, too loose, or just what they ought to be, the following truth remains unchanged: “*For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth*” (Psalm 33:4).

Yes, indeed, God does know what He is talking about, and His way is always best! There is no doubt about it: the way of Jehovah is narrow. But, it is not our business to critique God’s efforts or message. No, no. Our task is to accept without question what God says, obey it, and teach its soul-saving message to others.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

tion" ...**Archie Ristine, Ellensburg, WA.** "Enclosed is a check as an anonymous gift to be used in the publication of the paper" ...**Name withheld, Oxford, MS.** "Dear Brethren, just a note of encouragement on your great work for the Lord. Our prayers are for you and with you. In Him" ...**Burton & Harold Wood, Paducah, KY.** "I appreciate the work you are doing with your publication. It is very much needed during these crucial times in the church" ...**Frank Harris, Clarksville, IN.** "Your article "Pro-choice is Pro-death" is very good. *"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect (not complete); and in thy book (book of life, Rev. 21:27) all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned (in the process of being made), when as yet there was none of them"* (Psalm 139:16). *"As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit (soul), nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all"* (Eccl. 11:5). *"If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life"* (Exodus 21:22-23). I enjoy STOP very much" ...**Wanda Huff, Seligman, MO.** "Please send 20 each month. Thank you" ...**church of Christ, Cooledge, AZ.** "Having been a preacher for 58 years, I appreciate good bulletins and yours is a very good one" ...**Bill Darnell, Greenville, TX.** "I would like to subscribe to your excellent paper, *Seek The Old Paths*. I have only seen one copy, but I was impressed. If you have a few sample copies that I might have as well, I will see to it that they are passed out after our worship service at the Molalla Church of Christ, Molalla, Oregon. Thank you for your good work. May God richly bless you as you labor for Him in McMinnville in service to the only real cause" ...**Thomas Broadbent, Beaver Creek, OR.** "I have moved and would like you to change my address and keep sending STOP. I look forward to getting it each month. Thank you" ...**Name withheld, AR.** "I have been receiving STOP for some time now and enjoy each and every copy to the fullest. Being a member of the Lord's church since my youth, I enjoy the fullness of the publication and the research that no doubt goes into each article in the publication. Please keep up the great work" ...**David Belcher, Jasper, AL.** "Please change my address. Thank you" ...**Charles Tedford, Brownwood, TX.** "I enjoy your paper very much. Keep up the good work" ...**Troy Smith, Jr., Hazard, KY.** "I enjoy getting the truth from papers like STOP. Thank you again" ...**Wilma Donaldson, Dickson, TN.** "Please remove my name from your mailing list" ...**Marie Harrell, Sibley, MS.** "Please take us off the Old Paths" ...**Jeff & Susie Brown, Chattanooga, TN.** "While I have enjoyed reading STOP for the last few years, I no longer wish to receive them. Please remove me from your mailing list" ...**Daniel Crosby, Antioch, TN.** "God bless his church at East End and God bless you and your family. I hope one day soon I can be free and visit East End and share the love I have come to have for all of you there. Great newsletter. I loved the article on 'Pro-Choice is Pro-Death'" ...**Douglas Kirk, Mitchells, VA.** "Thank God for your efforts with STOP! I just finished reading the last page of Truth of the March issue given to me by a good, sound brother in the Lord. The first article I read was by Roy J. Hearn, whom I was acquainted with through his writings and speaking at lectureships. That was rich reading. However, as I continued with the other articles, by men I have heard of, I was most definitely thrilled with their militant efforts in marking false doctrine and men who deliver such rot! Each article hit a vital subject matter needing attention. Thank God, and thank them for their courage. I have been preaching the Gospel of Christ (the ancient order of things) for about 57 years (and cannot stop, even though I have been 'somewhat retired' since 1995). After that, I drove to Talladega several months to preach for the Talladega church while they looked for a full-time preacher. Then for a few months I went to Oxford, Alabama, to help Oxford church of Christ while they also searched for a preacher. After that, my wife and I travelled over a hundred miles west of

here to the town of Greensboro, Alabama, for three years helping a small congregation of around a dozen members who could not financially support a preacher with a family. Since a heart attack, we haven't been back to Greensboro, but I keep sending material out for people to read. Please pray for us. As long as this 85 years old frame will survive, I intend to keep at it. Again, I appreciate your work through that good periodical. Will you please put this old warrior on your reading list? Thank you kindly" ...**Olin Warmack, Montgomery, AL.** "We need to let you know what a blessing it is to receive *Seek The Old Paths* with the great lessons that you always have in it. Some of the churches in our area leave many members starving for the sermons that were preached 'in days gone by.' One church had women taking part in the worship service. One of their elders told me that it was stopped, but it is now done again! Too many in the Lord's church don't seem to do any studying at home. There is no hunger for being fed the meat of the word. It is beyond 'sad' to see churches grow weaker and more accepting of blatant error. We would appreciate your prayers for the churches in this area. It seems church problems are growing. Friends in other states have been telling me for quite awhile about splits and preacher/congregation issues. We're so close to losing our country, and to think it's deliberate and planned for many many years is hard to imagine. We can only pray that God will still be on our side. Our entire way of life, culture and beliefs are at stake. Thank you always for STOP and all who work to write and publish it. Above all, thank you for the truth in it! Preachers who seem to think they need to have some 'sugar to make the medicine go down' instead of the meat we desperately need, are very sad to see or hear. God bless you all"

...**Name Withheld.**

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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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