



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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TRUTH, DOES IT MATTER?

Lloyd Gale

Does truth matter? Only a fool would say it does not.

I hasten to say that Truth Does Matter! Yet we live in a time where multitudes say, as did Pontus Pilate, “What is truth” (John 18:37-38)? Standing before Pilate when he ask this question was the embodiment of truth, the Lord himself. Jesus had stated that He had come to this world to bear witness unto the truth. What, in fact, did Jesus bear witness to? Among many other things, he was witness to the fact that “God is:” 1) God is the God of the living and the dead, 2) God has power over death and can raise the dead, 3) God has made salvation available to all mankind for those who will believe on Him and obey Him, 4) There will be a day when the place of our eternal existence will be determined. Yes, truth matters!

Is it the case that men do not believe there is such a thing as truth — absolute truth? Men do believe in truth when it suits them. Did men send some men to the moon and back to earth safely? Did such an undertaking require the employment of a multiplicity of facts (truth) to accomplish such a task? Were all of the components carefully tested and tried beforehand? Did such require a belief in that which is true?

Men design sky scrapers and build bridges over long spans to support huge amounts of weight. Do they not first determine, by mathematical truth, if their design will work? Yet some of these same people glibly deny that moral and spiritual truth are

absolutes. We have a society that actively promotes the foolish notion that anything and everything believed is of equal value. The fact is, they have no respect for God or His Holy word. Anyone who has eyes to see should understand that such a concept as “unity-in-diversity” is a way to discount God altogether.

Many Christians today have a “go along to get along” attitude toward truth — a just “leave it up to God and don’t get involved” attitude. The fact is, we cannot all simply “go along to get along” any more than God and Satan can do so. Sin is like a giant octopus whose tentacles wrap around one’s heart and squeezes out one’s life. God, by means of His universal truth, has provided a way of escape from the deadly octopus of sin. Sin is seductive because it tells people what they want to hear. The taste of sin is sweet but its results are bitter indeed. Think of the words of judgment, “*depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*” (Luke 13:27). Bitter fruit indeed!

W. P. Strickland, in an introduction of a book written by A. Wilford Hall entitled *Universalism Against Itself*, wrote these very truthful words. “Whenever the heart pleads the cause, the understanding is a very lenient and partial judge. That which men wish to be true, they require but little evidence to convince them of its truth and on the other hand, what they do not wish to be true, scarcely any amount of evidence will convince them

of its truth.”

Is it not the case that far too many who claim to be servants of the Master are content to live in their world of complacency with a do not disturb sign about themselves? How many Christians today are engaged in the battle for the hearts of men and women and against the powers of evil? Don’t make waves, don’t get involved, just leave everything up to God. We sing, do we not, “Who is on the Lord’s side, who will make reply, I am on the Lord’s side, Master here am I.” God has always required man to do his part. Yes, he delivered the children of Israel out of bondage and to the promise land, but those who entered the promise land had to do their part. As we well know, few of them entered the promised land.

A WORLD OF EDUCATED FOOLS

Paul was inspired to write to Timothy these words, “*Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tim. 3:7). A great example of these words of truth may be observed when Paul arrived in Athens, Greece. He was greatly disturbed because he no doubt expected something better than what he found there — “*the city wholly given to idolatry*” (Acts 17:15-17). This city, which in that day was known around the world for

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TRUTH...



Editorial...

FORGIVENESS

Garland M. Robinson

*God's forgiveness comes with conditions.
Man has a part.*

God gave man a conscience that either approves us or condemns us. When we believe we've done well, our conscience is clear — we feel good. When we believe we've done wrong, our conscience condemns us — we feel bad, stressed, uncomfortable.

While it is good that man has a conscience, it is not always a safe guide. It is possible to have a clear conscience when in fact we've done wrong. It is likewise possible for our conscience to condemn us, when in fact we've done right. Our conscience is determined by what we have learned or perceive to be right or wrong. Therefore, we must educate our conscience. We must make sure it is in harmony with God's Word.

When we feel we've done wrong, our conscience pricks our heart. We are miserable, troubled, afflicted, distressed. We desperately desire for that feeling to go away. The desire to clear our conscience motivates us to do right.

The need of forgiveness is strong within us. Just to know we've been forgiven helps us. Forgiveness, therefore, is one of the sweetest words known to man. Everyone is in desperate need of forgiveness. To die unforgiven is the greatest of all the tragedies man could ever face. How can we have forgiveness? What must be done?

God had a plan from the beginning for man to be forgiven. When Adam and Eve sinned, God began unveiling that plan (Gen. 3:15). A blood sacrifice was required and we find Abel doing as God commanded (Heb. 11:4). "And Abel...brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. 4:4). Through the centuries, God required the blood of bulls and goats to be shed, but even then, it was not the full and complete payment for sin. Hebrews 10:4 says, "...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." The New

Testament reveals it would take the precious blood of Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son of God to atone for sin once and for all (cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:12,28; 10:10).

The Bible makes clear that everyone sins — none are exempt. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10,23).

Both sinners and saints stand in need of forgiveness. God's great love and mercy makes forgiveness possible. God is willing to forgive. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psa. 86:5; cf. 103:8). "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" (Isa. 55:7).

Jesus came to die for sinful man. "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" (John 3:16). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Jesus had to die in order to make it possible for man to have forgiveness. He said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

Jesus was willing to forgive. On the cross, he said "...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Though God is willing to forgive and Jesus went to the cross in order that we might have forgiveness, it is not automatic. Man has to obey the

Lord. Forgiveness is conditional.

Forgiveness of sins depends upon one's relationship to God. God has one plan for alien sinners and another plan for Christians.

GOD'S PLAN FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS

Those who are not Christians (having never obeyed the Gospel) must obey God's will/word to become a child of God. A sinner, therefore, is required to **HEAR** the Gospel. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath **heard**, and hath **learned** of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). Every person on the face of the earth must hear the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the last commands Jesus gave his disciples was to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Men and women everywhere must hear what God's will is for them.

A sinner is required to **BELIEVE** the Gospel and what it says about Jesus the divine and only begotten Son of God. Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). "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" (John 3:16). Without "faith," it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

A sinner is required to **REPENT** of their sins. "...Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). God "...commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a "change of mind." When the mind changes, it leads to a "change of life and action." Without this conversion, there is no forgiveness.

A sinner is required to **CONFESS** faith in Jesus — that he is the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Philip told the man from Ethiopia that he had to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God before he could be baptized to wash his sins away. The man confessed

saying, “...I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). Paul wrote, “...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10). Nothing is said about confessing your sins. For alien sinners, the confession made is that Jesus is the divine Son of God.

A sinner is required to be **BAPTIZED** in water for the forgiveness of sins. Peter told those on Pentecost, “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16). Saul of Tarsus was told, “...arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Just as Noah and his family were saved by water, the inspired Peter wrote, “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Peter 3:21).

Notice what happens when a penitent, confessing sinner is baptized. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, **that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.** ... But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. **Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness**” (Rom. 6:3-6,17-18).

Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. It is an immersion in water. Jesus told Nicodemus that one must be “born again” (John 3:3-5). One is born into the family and household of God.

GOD’S PLAN FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNFAITHFUL CHRISTIANS

Those who have obeyed the Gospel as stated above, are Christians. When Christians stop obeying God, they fall

away. God has a plan for them to be forgiven and restored to faithfulness.

God’s forgiveness offered to Christian’s who have fallen away is tied to their repentance. God says, “...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel” (Ezek. 33:11)? “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

A Christian, therefore, must repent of their sin(s) and pray for forgiveness. Peter told Simon, who had been converted from sorcery but sinned when he wanted to buy the power to pass on spiritual gifts, “**Repent** therefore of this thy wickedness, and **pray** God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. ... Then answered Simon, and said, **Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me**” (Acts 8:20-24).

A Christian who sins publicly (a sin that is widely known by others) must repent publicly. How else could brethren know such a one has repented and desires to be counted among the faithful unless it is publicly acknowledged?

A Christian who sins against another person (known only by that person), must repent and ask forgiveness from that person. There is no need for the knowledge of that sin to be made public (cf. Matt. 18:15-17).

A Christian may even sin in their heart (cf. Matt. 5:28). This would be known only to God and therefore must be repented of to God (as all sins). Sins must be repented of as widely or privately as they are known.

Receiving forgiveness from God is also tied to our forgiveness of one another. If I expect God to forgive me, then I must forgive others. Notice these passages. “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13). “Blessed are the merci-

ful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22). “...Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26). “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ... ¹⁴For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:12-15). “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. ⁴And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). See also Matt. 18:23-35.

Another point to be made is that we cannot forgive others unless they repent and desire forgiveness — God can’t even do that. Luke 17:3-4 says, “if he repent, forgive him.” We must, however, be willing to forgive. We must be eager and long for others to repent. Our desire is to extend forgiveness and we are ready to do so when the Biblical conditions have been met. On the cross, Jesus said, “...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). This did not automatically forgive everyone involved. They had not met the conditions of forgiveness that the Lord himself had given (cf. Luke 13:3,5). Jesus was showing the willingness to forgive. He died for every man, including those who crucified him (Heb. 2:9). Some of these same people heard the Gospel preached on Pentecost (Acts 2:23). Those who repented and were baptized were forgiven (Acts 2:38,41).

Are you forgiven? Have you forgiven others?

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intellectual accomplishment, was in spiritual darkness. It was the Silicon Valley of its day. Paul bluntly declared their idolatry to be based upon ignorance and superstition. Superstition is defined as belief in supernatural things; reverence based upon fear. Fear of their self created gods. The word ignorance means a lack of knowledge.

What do you believe the apostle Paul would have to say today about our places of higher learning? How many know the true and living God? How many bow at the altar of evolution, secular humanism, materialism and such like? Choosing what they want to believe, they violate the very laws of nature. The law of "cause and

effect" states that for every effect there must be a sufficient cause. This world marvelously made and all forms of life are the effect of what? Men search for the answer in all the wrong places. They grope in the darkness of their ignorance and superstition. Yet before them exists the Bible, the Oracles of the true and living God (cf. 1 Peter 4:11). The holy Bible is a document that begins by revealing the origin of earth and all life forms. This "one of a kind" document contains information that far preceded human discovery and has been proven to be 100% accurate. A document which has been examined, tested and has passed every test. When men have disagreed with the Bible, it has without exception been found that men were wrong and the Bible right. Time and again archeological discoveries have confirmed the accuracy of the Bible and left egg on

the face of the doubters. Yet they are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth because they are looking in the wrong place for the truth. The Bible is the only document in human existence that was authored by the Creator of heaven and earth.

WHERE SHOULD WE LOOK FOR THE TRUTH?

We are reminded of the fellow who had lost his wallet and was looking for it under the street light. Someone asked him what he had lost and could he help find it? His reply was that he had lost his wallet with all his money and important papers. Is this where you lost it, he was asked? No, but there is more light here.

It does not require an intellectual genius to conclude that no matter how long or hard one looks, if you look in the wrong place, you will never find what is lost. God will not be found in human wisdom. God must reveal Himself to man and He has done so through His word and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus the Christ. The place to look for God is in His Word. Man is lost without God (Eph. 2:1-10; Matt. 16:13-17). Men cannot know who Jesus is by human wisdom. It had to be revealed by God the Father that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. Jesus prayed to God the Father, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*" (John 17:17).

Jesus was that truth in bodily form while here on earth. He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). "*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*" (John 3:19).

Why do so many today wish to silence God's word? It is because they do not want their sins exposed, because they are in the grasp of the octopus of sin. Yet we must keep the word of God before them because it is their only hope. Truth matters! "*Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction, and understanding*" (Prov. 23:23).

Does truth matter? Only a fool would say that it does not. Truth is eternal!

DOES DRAMA CONSTITUTE WORSHIP?*Joel Wheeler*

Over the course of church history, man has often determined to change the way he worships God. We must remember that God has set the standard for worshipping Him. Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). It seems that "drama-groups" have woven their way into the worship of many liberal congregations. Many, who are not satisfied with God's instructions for worship, have taken it upon themselves to add theatrics to the assembly. Those that promote such believe that they are changing the worship services for the better. Are they correct? Should we act out the Scriptures? What would be wrong with doing so?

First, there is no authority in the New Testament for drama in the worship services, neither by example nor command. Whatever is done must be done by the authority of Christ and the approval of God (John 4:24; Col. 3:17). We read of *Singing* (Eph. 5:19), *Giving* (1 Cor. 16:1,2), *Praying* (Acts 2:42), *Preaching* (Acts 20:7), and the *Communion/Lord's Supper* (1 Cor. 11:20-29), but never "drama-worship." Did Peter, Paul or any of the other apostles act out the crucifixion or ascension? We never read of them so doing!

Second, the purpose of worship is to bring glory to God and not to self. Performing drama and play acting biblical accounts leads to self-glorification. Men are praised for their acting ability. Theatrical performances are done for self-praise and self-glorification. On several occasions, Jesus condemned the works of men that are done "to be seen of men" (Matt. 6:1; 23:5).

Third, God chose preaching to save the lost, and not play acting. Paul wrote, "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:18). The church is told to "preach the word." Preaching is to be done for the purpose of reproof, rebuking, exhorting, and convicting (2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 4:12).

"Drama groups" and "worship-drama" can only provide entertainment and boost the ego of the "performer." It is obvious that the liberal element in the church is ignorant of the Scriptures. Both Old and New Testament characters used visual aids to make a point. But never did the primitive church use drama productions to propagate the Gospel. The inventions of men never have the approval of God (Matt. 15:7-9).

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LESS THAN 0.01% WILL KILL YOU

Douglas Hoff

If you look at a box of rat poison you will find there are only a few ingredients. A typical mix is mainly filler such as wheat along with a little sucrose as a sweetener and propylene glycol as a solvent. Less than 0.01% is poison. Rats like to eat the harmless stuff. They will not eat the bait if the poison is too obvious. They would be able to detect it in the taste and quit eating. Though it may take several ingestions over a period of time, less than 0.01% eventually gets the job done.

There are some obvious spiritual applications of this principle. For example, how much spiritual poison does it take to kill a soul? The devil knows just a little will get the job done. If there is too much obvious error in what is being taught, most people would “smell a rat” and not partake.

However, Satan can introduce a little error here and there and get souls accustomed to something that may be only 97% true. Such a transformation may not happen quickly but that old serpent (Rev. 20:2) knows how to wait. He has been injecting some into the word of God since the Garden of Eden.

Think about what the tempter did with Eve. First, he asked a seemingly innocent question, “*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden*” (Gen. 3:1)? Eve correctly answered that God had forbidden eating the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden (Gen. 3:2-3). According to Genesis 2:9, both the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were in the midst of the Garden of Eden. The Lord God told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17).

What was Satan’s purpose in asking his first question? It may have been intended to have Eve question the goodness of God. After the serpent’s question she “*saw that the tree [was] good for food, and that it [was] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make [one] wise*” (Gen. 3:6). So, what could be so bad about eating fruit from that tree?

After Eve answered the question, the devil injected his first dose of spiritual poison. He told her a lie by adding the word “not” (just a three letter

word). The devil said, “*ye shall not surely die*” (Gen. 3:4). God had told Adam, “*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*” (Gen. 2:17). What did Satan add to the truth to make it a lie? Just three letters: N, O, T!

Remember, rat poison is mostly harmless filler. Some of what the serpent said was true. Genesis 3:5 records Satan’s words, “*God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*” Sure enough, their eyes were opened (Gen. 3:7). After eating the forbidden fruit God declared, “*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil...*” (Gen. 3:22).

Additionally, there was an element of truth in the serpent’s declaration that they would not die. Remember, the Lord specified death would occur in the day that you eat of it. Did they die physically that day? Obviously not, and yet God does not lie (Titus 1:2).

However, they died spiritually that day. Spiritual death is a separation from God because of sin (Eph. 2:1). Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24). With access to the tree of life cut off, physical death occurred hundreds of years later (Gen. 5:5).

Please consider one of Satan’s biggest lies. The inspired apostle Peter wrote, “*baptism doth also now save us*” (1 Peter 3:21). Many are willing to change just one letter, from a W to a T, making it a lie, “*baptism doth also NOT save us.*”

It has been observed that if a lie is told often enough, some (perhaps many) will eventually believe it is true. Many religious beliefs are not based on the truth of God’s word but simply what people have been told many times. While a tiny amount of poison may not kill immediately, the cumulative effect is deadly.

How much poison are you willing to ingest? In physical matters the answer is “None!” It should be the same for spiritual matters. Believing a lie can condemn a soul eternally (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). Remember, by weight, less than 0.01% poison is enough to kill a rat.

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Alexandria, LA.....	\$100
Bradford C/C, Bradford, TN	\$100
Neely’s Bend C/C,	
Madison, TN	\$100
Anonymous	\$50
Jean Ware	\$30
Anonymous	\$30
Anonymous	\$10
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Robert & Luanne Patterson	
(memory of Dale Swofford)	\$50
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BEING FRUITFUL IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

Roger D. Campbell

Trees bear fruit. So do vines. In the spiritual realm, the Bible teaches there is a sense in which the Gospel brings forth fruit (Col. 1:5-6). Jesus spoke to His apostles about branches bearing fruit (John 15:1-8). We further read in many of the New Testament epistles that were written to individual saints or congregations of God's church, that the Holy Spirit speaks of Christians bearing fruit or being fruitful in the Lord's service. How fruitful are you? How fruitful am I in the Master's service? Let's look at some Bible principles and facts about children of God bearing fruit.

The Lord wants me to be fruitful. How does God get this point across? First, the message of John 15:1-8 makes this clear. Consider some excerpts from what Jesus said to His apostles in that setting: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ... Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."*

Concerning the necessity of bearing fruit, from these verses we learn that if branches (which represent disciples of Jesus), do not bear fruit, they are cast away and eventually are burned (15:2,6). God is glorified when Jesus' disciples bear fruit (15:8). And, true disciples will bear fruit (15:8).

How else does the Lord make it known that He wants Christians to bear fruit? In contrast to "the works of the flesh," which prevent people from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21), the Bible sets forth "the fruit of the Spirit," which includes joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal.

5:22,23). Indeed, this is fruit that the Lord wants each member of the church to bear or demonstrate in his/her life.

In addition, God lets us know that He expects us to bear fruit by telling us not to be unfruitful. The opposite of being unfruitful, of course, is to be fruitful. For instance, in Titus 3:14 it is written, *"And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."* Also, Christians are exhorted to add to their faith virtue, followed by knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7). Those who do such are neither *"barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1:8). By possessing such qualities (faith, knowledge, self-control...) in our lives, and in the process avoiding being unfruitful, we will be blessed with an entrance *"into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (1:11). In short, this passage makes it clear that going to heaven is conditional upon our maintaining a pattern of being fruitful! Yes, the Lord wants me to be fruitful.

The Lord wants me to be fruitful in the right things. It is not enough just to bring forth fruit or to produce something. No, the Lord wants each of us to be fruitful in the right things. What might that be? Paul prayed for the saints in Philippi to be filled with "the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11). He also prayed that the Christians in Colosse would be *"fruitful in every good work"* (Col. 1:10). As we noticed earlier, being unfruitful is put in contrast to maintaining good works in Titus 3:14. So what do we see in these verses? The Lord wants us to be fruitful in the ways of righteousness or good works. That means to be participants in what the Bible portrays as proper and good activities. That would surely include those items contained in "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Lord wants me to be fruitful for His glory. What is it that brings glory to the Father? Jesus said, *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit..."* (John 15:8). I should not be interested in doing things in order to bring attention to myself. My motive

in bearing fruit ought not be to have others praise me. The Master said that our good works should be seen by others alright, but our goal must be for those that see our good works/fruits to glorify our heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16).

In showing the Christian's relationship to Jesus, as well as to the Law of Moses, the apostle Paul wrote, *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another; even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"* (Rom. 7:4). From this verse we learn that: 1) Christians are dead to the old law, that is, it is no longer binding on us; 2) We are "married to" the Christ; 3) We should bring forth fruit unto God. Again, note that the fruit is not for ourselves, but for God, Who by His mercy allows us to escape the horrors of hell, and Who by His grace allows us to enjoy all spiritual blessing in His Son and to receive the ultimate joy of everlasting life in heaven. Yes, the Lord wants me to be fruitful for His glory.

The Lord understands that His children will be fruitful at different levels. In His great Parable of the Sower, Jesus identified the good ground as representing a person that possesses *"an honest and good heart"* (Luke 8:15). Such a person hears the Gospel and receives it, then, following conversion, keeps on bearing fruit. How much fruit do such faithful fruit bearers bring forth? *"...Some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"* (Matt. 13:23). Is the one that brings forth fruit at the "100 level" more faithful to God and of greater value in His sight than the one who brings forth at the "30 level"? Not at all. God forbid.

Remember Jesus' Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30)? It contains a similar principle: regardless of what the Lord has placed into our hands, we should diligently use it in His service for His glory. If I am a "one-talent person," I can still be faithful and go to heaven. Yea, the Lord expects me to be faithful and bear fruit, regardless of my abilities. We are not, I repeat, we are not, in competition with other disciples of the Christ. My faithfulness to

God has nothing to do with what others can or cannot do in His service. I am responsible for one thing: to bring forth fruit in my life, to bring forth the right kind of fruit, and to do it for God's glory.

The Lord wants me to work diligently to bear fruit. Recognizing there are different levels of fruit bearing ability does not mean, however, that a child of God has the right to goof off in the work of the Kingdom. In fact, our goal should be to bear much fruit. That's what Jesus expected of His apostles (John 15:8). When a branch in the Christ bears fruit, what does God do with such a branch? He purges or prunes it so it will "bring forth more fruit" (John 15:3). From these statements of the Master, I cannot get around two facts: 1) My Lord wants me to bear "much fruit," and, 2) He wants me to keep on growing spiritually in order that I can bring forth "more fruit." While the masses of this world set their sights on storing up material treasures and enjoying the pleasures of life on earth, the faithful child of God focuses his attention on a personal matter that he knows is the difference between eternal joy and eternal perdition. God's faithful child strives to be counted by God as an "M & M" man: one that seeks to bring forth "much" fruit and "more" fruit — doing it all for the Lord's glory.

Some who read this may be confused. They may have anticipated that I would come "right out of the gate" talking about evangelism and teaching the Gospel to lost people as the way that God wants us to bear fruit, and yet, to this point I have not even mentioned such a concept. The truth is, in the great majority of cases where the concept of bearing fruit is noted in the New Testament, the context is not speaking about teaching others the Gospel in order to bring forth the fruit of saved souls.

Jesus did say, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). This is talking about a harvest of souls, and so in this case there would be a need for disciples to "reap" the harvest. In another instance, just before a number of Samaritans came forth and believed on Jesus, He told His apostles, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Life up your eyes, and look on the

fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:35-36). Again, in this case, Jesus speaks of the role that His followers play in sowing and reaping. This refers to the saving of souls and it involves the need for His servants to teach the Gospel.

Yet in the New Testament, being "fruitful" normally has reference to a Christian being faithful to Him and demonstrating in his/her life those qualities that God seeks to see in a

person. That would be "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22,23), "the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11), those qualities listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7, and similar matters.

Jesus said that trees are known by their fruits (Matt. 7:16-20). What kind of "tree" are you and I showing to the world by the lives we live? Let each of us make the commitment to do our best to be fruitful in the Master's service. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life" (Prov. 11:30).

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DUST IN THE WIND...

Bill Boyd

Is that all we are? There was an old rock band way back in the 70s that thought that was all we were: "Same old song, just a drop of water in an endless sea. All we do crumbles to the ground, though we refuse to see. Dust in the wind, all we are is dust in the wind." They were right about one thing; we are dust.

Have you ever heard the expression, "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust?" It is not in the Bible, but the idea is there. Genesis 2:7 says, "The LORD God formed man out of the dust of the ground." After Adam sinned God said, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). In Genesis 18:27 Abraham said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, who am but dust and ashes." Elihu scolded, "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 34:15). The preacher in Ecclesiastes 12:7 preached, "the dust shall return to the earth as it was." The Psalmist sang, "he returneth to his earth" (Psalm 146:4), and in another place, "He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone" (Psalm 103:14-16). So we are dust in the wind, but that is not ALL we are. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

When the Lord God made man of the dust of the earth he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The preacher that said "the dust shall return to the earth as it was," also said, "the spirit shall return to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). And Paul went on to write, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept...even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

Here is a song I love to sing: *A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, A never dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.* That is a lot better than, "Dust in the Wind." Peter said the material heavens, the physical earth, and all the elements of which they are composed, "shall be dissolved" (2 Peter 3:11); and the preacher of Ecclesiastes said that seeking fulfillment in things of this passing world was "chasing after the wind" (Eccl. 1:14, Which is another way to translate, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." John said, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17).

Yet though we know these things, it is easy to become distracted by the dust. The Psalmist confessed this when he sang, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust..." but he quickly followed, "...quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:25). Peter knew where spiritual life was found; he said to Jesus, "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

I think we have room for one more song; "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life..."

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I'm writing about congregations who are looking for a preacher and what they 'pay' those who come and 'try out.' I find that often there is not enough pay to even cover the expenses of the men who come to check on the work. Please brethren, when you invite a preacher to come for an interview and talk about the work, please make it worth his while to come. He often comes from several hundred miles away. Don't expect him to pay his own expenses for motel, gasoline and food. These items can add up to a considerable amount and often he and his family can't afford it. Many times he is in-between congregations and has no salary at all to live on. He either has to borrow money or dip into his life's savings to make the trip. The Lord tells us the laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7), so support the Lord's work by supporting this good man. If you're far enough along in the interview process to invite him, don't make him come crawling on his hands and knees begging for a few morsels from your table. The 'many' families in the congregation can bare the expenses far better than this 'one humble family' can. Consider this plea and help the Lord's cause by helping his servants who preach the unsearchable riches of Christ" ...**Palacios, TX.** "We attended worship on August 23rd in Unity City, TN and picked up one of your *Seek The Old Paths*. It was well written and very interesting. Would you please put us on your mailing list. Thank you very much" ...**Udale & Ginny Ware, Dinuba, CA.** "Please remove my name from your mailing list. I can get one from the congregation I attend. They receive a bundle each month. No need to waste postage. Thank you for a great publication and all your hard work. May the Lord bless your efforts" ...**Robert Grove, Leesburg, FL.** "I am a long time reader of STOP and I have learned a lot from it. I share my copies. Thank you" ...**Bettye Haynes, Murfreesboro, TN.** "Thank you for your faithful work with this paper. It has been profitable to me. I can read it online. May our God continue to bless this effort" ...**Toby White, Longbranch, TX.** "Please remove the Newsome Street Church of Christ from your mailing list for *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you" ...**William Clark, Hahira, GA.** "Thanks" ...**Benjamin Cooper, N. Charleston, S.C.** "I really enjoy my copy of STOP and wish you would sent it to a friend. I appreciate the work the church does there. Keep up the good work. Thanks so much" ...**Vivian Dorman, Burkeville, TX.** "We would like to receive the "*Seek the Old Paths*" publication. Thank you in advance" ...**Rudy and Susan Coats, Burlison, TN.** "Thank you" ...**Roy Smith, Oak Grove, MO.** "Thank you for all the hard work you put into this publication" ...**Peter DeGraff, Ft. Oglethorpe, GA.** "Please remove me from your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Connie Latner, Woodstock, GA.** "I would like to subscribe to *Seek The Old Paths*. Thanks" ...**Edward Slaughter, Memphis, TN.** "Refused" ...**Jerome Griesman, Columbus, NE.** "Keep the good work up. God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble (Psa. 46:1)" ...**Mable Carter Maddux, Baxter, TN.** "Keep up the good work" ...**Sue Winningham, Harrisburg, AR.** "I enjoy *Seek The Old Paths*. Thanks so much. I share some of the papers with others" ...**Patricia Baugus, Columbia, TN.** "Thanks very much for printing STOP publication. It is such a great work in the spreading of God's precious word" ...**John Stevens, Corinth, MS.** "I have been receiving *Seek The Old Paths* for several months and enjoy it very much. Thanks so much" ...**Garland & Myra Barnwell, Bradford, AR.** "I have appreciated STOP for several years. Thank you for standing for the truth. May God bless you" ...**Franklin, KY.** "Thank you" ...**Bonnie Barnett, Eufaula, OK.** "Thanks for providing this truth filled publication. The articles are relevant and informative. God bless you all"

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