



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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DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

Lloyd Gale

One would have to be willingly ignorant today not to recognize that religious leaders may be found teaching anything and everything that might gain a following. But worse than that is the fact that so many are willing to be led by such blind leaders. However, such is nothing new. When it was brought to the attention of Jesus that He had offended the Pharisees by exposing their false doctrine, here was His answer. *“Every plan which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”* (Matt. 15:13-14).

False teachers do, on occasion, accurately teach a portion of the Scriptures. I chanced upon a religious program that was doing a pretty good job of exposing some of the fallacies of organic evolution while upholding the Biblical account of creation. But then at the end of the program came their man-made doctrine. The preacher said that those who desired to be saved should say a humanly concocted prayer for salvation. This directly contradicts what Jesus and His Apostles taught. We have in the New Testament, clear teaching as well as a number of examples of what one must do in order to have their sins forgiven and not one time does it involve prayer to become a Christian. Prayer cannot reach the saving blood of Jesus Christ. Prayer is, however, involved in restoring a fallen Christian.

We have the example of Saul who was sent into Damascus by Jesus

where he spent three days in prayer and fasting but still was a lost sinner. It was not until Ananias came and instructed the believing and repentant Saul to *“arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* that Saul's sins were forgiven (Acts 22:16). Therefore **faith, repentance, confession and water baptism** were required for the remission of Paul's sins.

The second chapter of Acts gives an account of the first Gospel sermon ever preached and supplies the answer to the question of what a believer in Jesus Christ as Savior must do in order to be saved. The question of the believing Jews was: *“What shall we do”* (Acts 2:38)? If saying a prayer would save them, then that is what the Apostles should have answered. However, that was not what the Apostles told the believing Jews to do. They were told to **“repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”** The answer is the same today for all who desire to be saved.

We plead for people to understand that we are not going to be judged by any or all of the human creeds and doctrines of men, but by the words of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48).

This is why every Gospel preacher should say and teach that one should not take any man's word

concerning salvation; but should only seek to know and follow the words of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to study and rightly divide God's word. Now that we have the final and complete teaching of Jesus Christ, we know the exact standard by which we will be judged. There is no excuse for us to be unprepared for the day of judgement (Heb. 9:27). This is why here at Powell Grove where I labor much of the teaching is in expository form. A word by word, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and book by book teaching of the words of Jesus Christ and his ambassadors the apostles. Today, many members of the church of Christ are led astray due to the fact that they are willingly ignorant of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Bible study for many has been replaced by social activities and entertainment.

God's people are specifically instructed not to be conformed to this world but rather to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

The teaching of Jesus Christ is by three means: 1) *Direct statements*, 2) *The examples of the Lord's Ambassadors, the Apostles*, 3) *That which is clearly implied*. All things that we do as the Lord's church must have His authority (Matt. 28:18; John 14:6). To do that which Jesus has authorized will require all of our means. Again,

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Don't Take My Word For It...



Editorial...

IF YOU LOVE ME...

Garland M. Robinson

IF you love the Lord, THEN you will keep his commandments. And, IF you do not keep his commandments, THEN you do not love the Lord! It's that simple.

In John 14:15 Jesus said, “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” We can safely say that IF we love the Lord, THEN we will keep his commandments. The *American Standard Version* words it exactly this way: “*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.*” Short, but simple. Brief, but profound.

IF...THEN, suggests a full and complete picture of conditions and consequences — requirements and results — specifications and outcomes. The “if...then” proposition is so numerous in the Scriptures that it would take a great amount of time to count them all (there are hundreds of them). Even without both words (if...then) being found in the immediate context, the idea and concept is logically there in multitudes of passages.

The way of “right and wrong” is grounded firmly in the proposition of “if...then.” God is saying, IF you do (choose) “this or that,” THEN you can expect to receive certain reward(s). IF you obey God’s will, THEN a heavenly reward awaits you at the end of life’s way. IF you remain in ignorance and rebellion (sin), THEN eternal damnation with the devil and his angels awaits you when this world is over. We all have a choice: light or darkness, good or evil, heaven or hell. What choice are YOU making this very hour? That’s a very sobering question isn’t it? Are you ready to examine your heart and life and be honest about the answer?

Those who “love the Lord” are those who “keep his commandments.” They keep his words. Just six verses later in John 15:21 Jesus said, “*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*”

And then in verses 23-24, “*Jesus answered and said...If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.*”

As we have been given the commandment to follow the Lord’s example (cf. 1 Peter 2:21), then we will do what the Lord did. What did Jesus do? He obeyed God. Look at verse 31 of John 14. Jesus said, “*But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.*” This was his example on every occasion. “*Jesus saith...My meat (work/job) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*” (John 4:34). “*...I do always those things that please him*” (John 8:29). “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love*” (John 15:10). Notice the words of Jesus as he was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, “*...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou [wilt]*” (Matt. 26:39).

OBEDIENCE TO GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE TEST OF GENUINE LOVE FOR GOD

How tragic it is for so many to say they love the Lord, but in actuality they do not. Scores of people say they love the Lord and are obviously sincere about it, but it is evident they don’t love the Lord — not the kind of love the Lord is talking about. We are able to tell who these people are. Though we can’t read men’s hearts, we can judge their actions as the Lord said, “*by their fruits ye shall know them*” (Matt. 7:16,20). John 14:15 pro-

vides the TEST by which we can tell if we (and others) love the Lord. What is that test? How can we KNOW we really love the Lord? Our love for the Lord is verified to be genuine *when we keep the Lord’s commandments*. Because IF you love the Lord, THEN you will keep his commandments. And, IF you do not keep his commandments, THEN you do not love the Lord! It’s that simple.

The apostle John provides words of inspiration as to how we can tell if we genuinely/truly “love” and “know” the Lord (according to His standard, not ours). We read these words in 1 John 2:3-5, “*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. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*” Also, 1 John 5:2-3, “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*”

Jesus also said, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”

Notice these verses from both the Old and New Testaments that show God has always required obedience to his Word and will accept nothing less. Remember, “*faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ... Faith without works is dead. ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” (James 2:17,20,24,26).

Exodus 20:6, “*...shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*”

Deuteronomy 4:39-40, “*Know therefore this day, and consider [it] in thine heart, that the LORD he [is] God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: [there is] none else.*”

Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong [thy] days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Deuteronomy 5:10, “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and *keep my commandments.*”

Deuteronomy 7:11, “Thou shalt therefore *keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.*”

Deuteronomy 26:16, “This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: *thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.*”

Joshua 22:5, “But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

1 Samuel 15:22-23, “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from [being] king.”

1 Kings 3:3, “And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father....”

2 Kings 18:6, “For he clave to the LORD, [and] departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.”

Psalms 119:4, “Thou hast commanded [us] to keep thy precepts diligently.”

Proverbs 19:16, “He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; [but] he that despiseth his ways shall die.”

Matthew 7:24, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house

upon a rock.”

Luke 6:47, “Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like.”

Luke 8:15, “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep [it], and bring forth fruit with patience.”

John 12:26, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: *IF any man serve me*, him will [my] Father honour.”

John 15:10, “*IF ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*”

2 John 1:6, “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

Revelation 22:14, “Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

IS YOUR TOP PRIORITY TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR BEING?

Marvin L. Weir

A large vocal number desire to remove God and His Word from society. They do not desire to submit to and respect the Word of God and neither do they want anyone else to do so. They demand that everyone accept, honor, and bow down to their ungodly way of life. This is clearly seen in the current sodomite movement.

Much is said about priorities. At the beginning of a New Year, resolutions are made that must fall somewhere into one’s priority list. Does it really matter how one chooses to prioritize, and if so, how does one know that he has made the correct choice? The wisdom of men may not place God and one’s fellowman at the top of a priority list, but the Holy Scriptures surely do. Let us learn from God’s Word about priorities, and the need to prioritize correctly in order to save our souls.

The Purpose Of Man! God did not create humans in order for them to do as they please. In Isaiah 43:7, the Bible forthrightly states that God made man to call upon his name and created him for his glory. Even though speaking of Israel, God’s people of promise, the principle thought contained in this verse is applicable to all. God does not need man’s wisdom, reasoning, intellect, strength, or resolve to rule capably and completely

in this world. But man needs God, and man’s chief purpose on earth should be to glorify God in all things!

The Top Two Priorities For All Mankind Are Easily Identified! We live in a world where a large vocal number desire to remove God and His Word from society. They have no use for godly moral principles — “*the wisdom that is from above*” (James 3:17). They do not desire to submit to or respect the Word of God and neither do they want anyone else to do so. This is clearly seen in the current sodomite movement. They are not content to engage in their sinful behavior quietly and among others of like kind. They demand that everyone else accept, honor, and bow down to their ungodly way of life. The faithful to God will never do so just as darkness will always continue to hate the light (cf. John 3:18-20).

A Pharisee who was a lawyer sought to ensnare Jesus with this question: “*Teacher, which is the great*

commandment in the law” (Matt. 22:36). The Master answered, “...*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*” (Matt. 22:37-40). The Pharisees undoubtedly thought Jesus would be forced to answer by picking a single command from the Decalogue. They could then accuse Him of exalting one command above another or reason that some commands are inferior or not as important as other commands. The Lord did not answer as His enemies expected, and for good reason! There are no commands less important or optional with God. To love God with all of one’s being is what must come first in order to faithfully comply with obeying all of His laws! If one without hypocrisy loves God supremely, he will then humbly submit to all of His teachings. One who does such will then treat his neighbor or fellowman like he would desire to be treated (cf. Matt. 7:12).

A person might have what he refers to as a good relationship with his friends and neighbors without having fellowship with God. But one cannot have fellowship with God without striving to have the proper relationship with other people. In other words, one cannot be acceptable to God while hating and mistreating his fellowman. Think of the multitude of problems that would be instantly solved if all people truly loved God with all their being and loved their

neighbors as themselves!

Arranging Our Priorities In Proper Order! It is not wrong to have a list of priorities, but one must make certain that his top priority is correct. God will not play “second fiddle” to anyone or anything. Moses instructed God’s chosen people, saying, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*” (Deut. 6:4-5). Jesus taught the same principle in saying, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...*” (Matt. 6:33).

To make loving God with all our being our top priority, provides the answer to other so-called problems. It is the answer for:

- 1) Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25).
- 2) Failure to give cheerfully and as prospered (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7).
- 3) Failure to study and grow in knowledge of the Word of God (2 Peter 3:18).
- 4) Failure to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).
- 5) Failure to flee fornication and all other immorality (1 Cor. 6:18).
- 6) Failure to flee from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14).
- 7) Failure to worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
- 8) Failure to obey the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).
- 9) Failure to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).
- 10) Failure to defend the Gospel (Phil. 1:16).

- 11) Failure to “be faithful unto death” (Rev. 1:10).

OLD TESTAMENT WORTHIES WHO HAD A PROPER TOP PRIORITY!

Abraham — who by faith “...*when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went*” (Heb. 11:8). He left his family, friends, land, and home behind in order to put God first and honor Him (Gen. 12:1).

Noah — who resisted the majority and was a “*preacher of righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:5). He built the ark according to God’s instructions (Gen. 6:14ff). It is said of him, “*Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he*” (Gen. 6:22).

Joshua and Caleb — who found themselves a minority voice but nonetheless stood firm in following God (Num. 14:6-10). As a result of following God, Joshua and Caleb were the only two above 20 years of age that were permitted to enter the promised land.

One who does not love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30), will not put God first in his life and will lose his soul. A Christian must not forget Paul’s plea to the church at Colosse, “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*” (Col. 3:2-3). One’s top priority will determine the eternal state of his soul!

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PRINCIPLES LEARNED FROM AN OLD AND YOUNG PROPHET

Johnny O. Trail

A troubling event during the reign of Jeroboam is recorded in First Kings chapter thirteen. An otherwise unnamed young prophet received the word of the Lord and denounced the iniquitous practices of Jeroboam and the other idolaters in the land. As a part of his prophetic duty he was told to not eat,

drink, or return by the same way after leaving the court of the king (1 Kings 13:9).

Initially, he was fully convinced of the need to exactly obey the word of the Lord. When Jeroboam asked the man of God to stay and eat, he refused. He tells him in 1 Kings 13:8-9, “*And the man of God said unto the*

king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water; nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.” If he had done this, the story would not have had a tragic ending!

After the young prophet revealed his charge to the king, he started his journey to Judah. As the narrative reveals, an old prophet heard about his exploits and sought out the young prophet for fellowship (1 Kings 13:15). Initially the young prophet refused, but a lie contrived by the old prophet convinced him to return to the old prophets abode and eat with him. First Kings 13:18 says, *“He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.”* This tragic story teaches the children of God many important lessons. For a few moments, we should consider a small number of them.

One should learn to trust God and obey only His word. The young prophet trusted in the words of the old prophet to his destruction. It is easy to listen to “religiously” minded people and be completely wrong. The only sure source of truth we have is the word of God. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* Saul of Tarsus was a religious and devoted man as he sought to imprison and murder Christians, but he was absolutely wrong. After his conversion to Christ he became Paul the apostle.

Religious people can and will mislead others. The Old prophet purposely hoodwinked the young prophet even though he knew he was lying. The old prophet said that “an angel spoke to him” and countermanded the commandment of God. History is replete with religious people who say that “an angel spoke to them.” Entire religious movements have been established upon this principle. Galatians 1:6-9 says, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man*

preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” An angel of God would not contradict the word of God that was “once delivered” (Jude 3).

Selfishness can cause otherwise godly people to contravene the commands of God. The Scriptures do not reveal the motivations of the old prophet; but whatever his motives, he was selfish in his desires to fellowship with the man of God. Selfishness is a problem that all people wrestle with in every type of situation. Philippians 2:3-8 says, *“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. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* The world would be a better place if we all had the servant heart of Jesus.

Selfishness is antithetical to the sacrificial nature of Christ and His followers. Ephesians 5:25-27 says, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* Christ’s example of living and dying for others should be our manner of living.

Tragic things happen when one disobeys God. For his disobedience, the young prophet died. First Kings 13:24 says, *“And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass.”* While some may make it through life without suffering for the consequences of their sin, there will be a day upon which all people will stand in judgment before God. Revelation 20:12-15 says, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead*

were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Godly people can suffer consequences for other people’s sins. While it is true that we do not bare the moral burden for the transgressions of others (Ezekiel 18:20), it is wrongheaded to assume that the innocent are not impacted by the sinful behaviors of others. The old prophet’s lie caused the man of God to suffer a terrible fate. First Kings 13:26 says, *“And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.”* The old prophet lied and the young man of God died!

The Old Testament is replete with stories that still apply in a practical sense today. Romans 15:4 says, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”* We should seek God’s counsel and accept nothing else in matters that pertain to eternal life and godliness.

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LOVE THE TRUTH

There’s nothing a person could do in life more important than obeying God. In order to obey God, one has to know the Truth revealed in the Bible. Jesus said “IF ye continue in my word, THEN are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). When people refuse to believe the truth, God allows them to believe a lie “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

— Editor

Elder's COLUMN

THE "YOUTH APPROACH" TO PREACHING

Victor M. Eskew

In our efforts to teach others the Gospel, it is essential that we make ourselves all things to all men. This was definitely the approach the apostle Paul took. In First Corinthians 9:19-23, he discussed this aspect of evangelism. *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."*

If we are striving to teach another, we must meet that person where he is. However, we must be careful in how far this approach is taken. Paul understood this. He said that when he went to the Gentiles, he became as one "without law," but he did not end his comment there. He qualifies it with this parenthetical statement: "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). Even though Paul was ministering to those who were not under the Law of Moses, he did not forget that he was still bound to the law of Christ.

One of the grave concerns that leaders in the church have involves the loss of our young people. Many youth leave the church when they leave home and go to college or enter the work arena. This exodus has caused some to reevaluate their approach to young people. It is believed that we have not "become all things" to our youth. With this in mind, a new approach has been taken to our youth, especially when it comes to the proclamation of the Gospel. I have styled this new approach as the "Youth Approach" to preaching.

As one listens to the "Youth Approach" to preaching, there are sev-

eral ways it can be described. First, it is new and modern. Second, it is fresh and hip. Third, it is fun and enjoyable. Fourth, it is soft and non-offensive. Fifth, there is no error, but there is no Bible. Not all of these things are bad. They may make an older crowd somewhat uncomfortable, but they are not sinful.

There are some words of warning, however, that need to be applied to the "Youth Approach" to preaching. First, it is very easy for speakers who use this new approach to become flip-pant and irreverent in their proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Just because certain words and phrases are used among our children does not mean they should be used in preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. In Acts 26:25, the apostle Paul described his words as "words of truth and soberness." Barnes describes Paul's words as words "that evinced the most perfect self-possession and command of his feelings, and who uttered sentiments deep, impressive, and worthy of the attention of all mankind" (Barnes, e-sword.com). The message of God is holy and divine. It deals with things eternal. It involves the most precious possession of man, his soul. Its delivery should not be mingled with the fluff and slim of the world just to make it palatable for young people. Speakers need to teach sobering thoughts to our children.

A second warning involves the soft, non-offensive messages that are often proclaimed to our youth. Some refer to them as "feel good" lessons. Occasionally, a message of this sort may be warranted. However, we live in extremely dangerous times. Satan and his army are on the march. The precious things of God are under attack. The minds of our youth are being assailed on every front. To protect them, calls for stern, "to the point," messages. The enemy must be exposed. Our children must be told how to overcome the evil one. They must be exhorted to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). The minister of the Gospel needs

to remember the words of God spoken to the prophet of God long ago: *"Son of man, I have made thee a watchmen unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me"* (Ezek. 3:18).

The last warning involves the content of the preacher's message. Peter told Jesus: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68). These words still exist today. They are found in the pages of God's Word. These are the words that lost man needs to hear. These are the words the church needs more than ever. Ministers of the Gospel need to fill their lessons with a *"thus saith the Lord."* Paul told Timothy to *"preach the word"* (2 Tim. 4:2). He told Titus to *"speak thou the things which become sound doctrine"* (Titus 2:10). Peter wrote: *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11). Gospel preachers, regardless of the age of their audience, have a responsibility to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

This writer understands the need to meet people where they are. In so doing, however, we must not refuse to tell people what they need to hear. Nor should we soft-soap the powerful message of the Gospel of Christ. Truth is what sets men free (John 8:32). The Word of God enables men to be sanctified (John 17:17). Growth comes by partaking of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2). And, it will be the Word of God that will judge all men, including youth, in the last day (John 12:48). Let's address our youth and their problems, but let us do so from the divine perspective, not from the human "feel good" approach.

May our "Youth Approach" to preaching harmonize with the Bible greats of the past. We close with Jeremiah's words to Israel of old: *"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein"* (Jer. 6:16).

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Don't Take My Word For It...

(Continued from page 81)

you need not take my word for it. You must take God's word for it. Jesus said, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:26). These words were spoken by Jesus to His Apostles. They contain a two-fold promise. It was that they were to be given the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to have a perfect memory of everything that Jesus personally taught. And second, they would be guided into "all truth." Therefore, when the New Testament was completed, everything that God desires that we know, believe, teach and practice is contained in God's perfect revelation, the New Testament. We are instructed *not to add to, take away or modify anything* contained therein. Just who would want to do so? Satan and his agents of course!

Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit wrote, *"All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It takes a lot of arrogance on the part of man to attempt to change the terms of salvation, the God approved acts of worship and/or the nature and character of the Lord's church.

Men have established humanly originated churches, written their own creeds and doctrines, called their churches by unauthorized names and have corrupted the work and worship of the Lord's church. They appeal to the fleshly desires of their followers rather than the instructions of Jesus Christ and their followers falsely believe that they are accepted of God.

In far too many cases, once faithful churches of Christ eagerly follow their example. Some congregations no longer desire to be identified as a church of Christ. Some have added human inventions of worship and work for the church. Some congregations in the process of stealing the facilities of past faithful Christians introduce two separate worship services. One they call "traditional" the

other they call "contemporary." This will last until one or the other prevails and the other is driven out of the facilities. It is usually the "traditional" (faithful) members that are driven out.

IT ONLY TAKES A SLIGHT ALTERATION TO CHANGE TRUTH INTO A LIE

The Devil only wants a slight change or variation from the truth. He knows that once men start down the self-will road, it is only a matter of time before they are his.

In Genesis 2:17, God told Adam and Eve that the day they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that *"thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 3:4). Satan quotes God's word with perfect accuracy except he adds one three letter word — "not" — "thou shalt not surely die." That slight change made all the difference in their remaining in paradise.

Sometimes Satan removes the word "not" from God's word to capture careless souls. James 2:24 says, *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and 'not' by faith only."* Yet many have been tricked and deceived by Satan's servants in accepting the notion that one is saved by "faith only." The Devil has gotten a lot on mileage out of the word "not" (Gen. 4:1-5). In the account of the worship of Cain and Abel, Abel offered his sacrifice by "faith" and it was accepted by God. Cain offered his sacrifice by "human sight" and it was rejected by God. What Cain did was set aside God's instructions for worship and substituted his own will (worship). Here we have the principle of why all humanly-concocted religion is rejected by God. It is "self-willed" and not "God directed." It is not by faith, and therefore sin (Rom. 14:23). God did not respect Cain's offering because he had "not" done as God instructed. When God questioned Cain about his brother Abel, his answer was "Am I my brother's keeper?" His implication was that he was not his brothers keeper, but of course he was and we are as well.

Noah preached that the world was going to be destroyed by a universal flood. But Satan convinced everyone, except the eight that were saved in the ark, that it was "not" going to happen.

When one looks back at the ten commandments given to the children of Israel (the principles of which are included in the teaching of Jesus), every one has been corrupted by the Devil's "Not." Beginning with the first of the ten. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The word "not" is implied, yet it has been ignored throughout the ages. Men do have their other gods. Thou shalt "not" make graven images. But men have done so. Thou shalt "not" steal. Thou shalt "not" bear false witness. Thou shalt "not" take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Thou shalt "not" commit murder. Thou shalt "not" commit adultery. God plainly says, *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you"* (Deut. 4:2). Yet all informed people know that "not" has been ignored, or for all practical purposes, removed while men wallow in their sinful conduct.

Don't take my word for it, or any man's, but do take God's word for it and love it and abide by it.

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“TRUST” is a word that should cause us to think about that which is good. It is great to have people and things we can trust. In religion, who and what can we trust? We find people placing their trust in idols, the pope, their preacher, a creed, their parents, their friends or their own emotions.

The Bible warns about placing your trust in any of these (Psa. 118:8,9; Micah 7:5; Ezek. 33:13; Isa. 42:17; Jer. 9:4).

The Bible teaches us to **trust only in God** (Psa. 25:1-5; 31:6; 1 Tim. 4:10). Trusting in God will cause us to believe and trust his holy word. Such belief and trust comes by *hearing the word* of God (Rom. 10:17). When we believe the word of God we will believe all of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament (Acts 24:14; Mark 1:15; John 17:20; 20:31).

When we trust the word of God we will *rely on it to guide us into all truth* (John 17:17). Trusting God’s word as a Christian gives us hope and security (Rom. 5:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-5). By understanding the word of God we can also know the difference between right and wrong (Heb. 5:12-14). This trust in His word will keep us from following the doctrines of men (Mark 7:7-9). When we know the word of God we will not be fooled by the smooth speeches of men (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:18; 2 Peter 2:3). This knowledge and trust in the Holy Scriptures will give us courage to test the false teachers (1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1).

Thank God we do not have to put our trust in any person or earthly possession to have a home in heaven. May we continue to study God’s word and trust it to guide us through the maze of false doctrines.

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