

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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IN WORSHIP, DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHAT WE SING?

Marlin Kilpatrick

Churches of Christ have for many years been known for their acappella singing. The blending of human voices, without the use of mechanical musical instruments, is a most pleasant and rewarding experience. God desires sincere, heart-felt worship (John 4:23,24). The musical talent of the worshiper is not the crucial element of our singing of praises to God, rather it is the singing of songs that are scripturally authorized.

What *kinds* of songs are authorized in the Scriptures? The Scriptures limit us to the use of three kinds of songs in our worship. These songs consist of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The use of any other kind of song is without Scriptural authority. Since we are to have Scriptural authority for all we do, including the singing of songs in worship, it follows that the use of any other kind of song in worship is sinful (Col. 3:17).

What about the lyrics we sing? They, too, must convey Scriptural concepts. There is such a thing as poetic license which, by its nature, prohibits placing a literal interpretation on the words. However, words are signs of our thoughts, and our thinking must be in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures. A couple of songs will illustrate the point being made.

A popular song often sung at

many places is entitled, ***"Just A Little Talk With Jesus."*** The musical arrangement is fine; it's the lyrics that are unscriptural. Jesus never accepts an alien sinner unless he obeys the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). In this song, Gospel obedience is simply ignored. Furthermore, this song encourages the sinner to pray to Jesus. The Scriptures nowhere tell the sinner to pray for any thing. Prayer is a privilege of God's children (I Peter 3:12). And, "just a little talk with Jesus" never made any thing right. The only way an alien sinner can be made right with Jesus is for him to obey Jesus (Heb. 5:8,9). In the case of an erring Christian, he must repent of his sin and pray for God's forgiveness (Acts 8:20-24).

Another song that is quite popular is ***"Jesus Is Coming Soon."*** This song is slanted towards the premillennial theory. We can name at least two objections: First, we do not know when Jesus is coming (Matt. 24:36). To say, "Jesus is coming soon," implies we know something we cannot know. True, the word "soon" may be used in a relative sense, but ten, one hundred, or a thousand years cannot hardly be thought of as being "soon." Husbands, if, as you leave your residence, your wife should ask, "Honey, when will you be back?," and you reply, "soon." Do you think she would expect you back next year? Hardly! Why, then, can we not see

this when it comes to singing this song? Second, this song mentions so-called "signs" of our Lord's return. Brethren, there are no signs of our Lord's approaching return. The signs mentioned in Matthew 24 were given for the benefit of those first century Christians relative to the coming destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70. The Scriptures teach that the return of Christ will be like a thief's coming in the night (II Peter 3:10). How does a thief come? Does he give warning signs of his coming? No, he does not! And neither should we sing about such "signs" of our Lord's return when none have been given.

What about the singing of *patristic songs* in our worship? Remember, if the song is not a psalm, hymn or spiritual song, we have no Scriptural authority for singing such a song. Into which category could you place "America the Beautiful?" I love my country and have always enjoyed singing this song, but does my love for my country justify using it in our worship services?

What should be our attitude towards these matters? Surely, it's not enough to say, "Well, we've been singing these songs for years." The fact we've done any thing for years does not prove the doing of that thing

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Does It Really Matter?...



Guest Editorial

CAN WE AFFORD BIBLICAL IGNORANCE?

James W. Boyd

There are so many Scriptures dealing with the necessity of Biblical knowledge that we must confine ourselves to but a few in any one study. If the amount of Scripture pertaining to a subject is any measure of emphasis on the theme, then the knowledge of the Bible is one of the most emphatic teachings of the Bible. We shall center our thoughts on whether we can afford the “luxury” of not knowing the Bible. Is knowledge of the Bible an optional, take-it-or-leave-it matter? Can we afford it as an individual or as a nation? There is a price that must be paid to have knowledge. Are we willing to pay it? There is also a price to be paid for ignorance. Are we willing to pay that?

Isaiah and Hosea were prophets of God during the same historical period some seven to eight hundred years before Christ. But they labored in different geographical areas. Isaiah worked in Judah in the south while Hosea was in the northern area of Israel. They faced common problems and their messages were similar. The same sins existed in both nations. They received about the same reaction from the people. The most prevalent sin among the people and at the root of their problems was ignorance of the will of God.

ISAIAH 1:2-6

In Isaiah 1:2-3, *“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know: my people doth not consider.”*

The ox and ass are among the least intelligent animals. Yet, the ox knew his owner and the ass knew the source of his supply. But the people of Judah were not only ignorant of the will of their Father, but were unwill-

ing to be otherwise. They “doth not consider,” that is, were not concerned.

The mistake they were making is the same mistake that many are making today. As Isaiah and all the prophets showed, the people were too busy in a society of relative plenty, enjoying their pleasure, centering their lives on earthly affairs, having neither the time or interest in being students of God’s holy precepts.

Their rebellious attitude and ignorance of the Word of God had its results. Isaiah 1:4-6, *“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”*

They had forsaken the Lord, provoking His wrath. Rather than making progress as they had deceived themselves into thinking, “they are gone backward.” Does this not picture so much around us, even the liberal apostasy among some in the church in our time? The “head is sick, and the whole heart faint.”

In their ignorance, Isaiah was inspired to write that they would revolt more and more. Those who know not the truth of God have no deterrent to their continued rebellion. The ultimate result is seen in verse seven, *“Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.”* He went on to tell how their land would become as Sodom and Gomorrah.

ISAIAH 1:10

Not only was Judah’s problem presented in this first chapter, but also the solution to their problem is found there. Verse ten, *“Hear the word of the Lord...give ear unto the law of our God.”* God did not want their assemblies while they were partaking of their sins. He did not want their sacrifices while they remained in their abominations. Rather, Isaiah 1:16-20, *“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”*

Knowledge, coupled with obedience, would bring blessings just as surely as ignorance coupled with rebellion spelled their doom. Do we learn the lesson now, or do we learn it later in our destruction?

HOSEA FOUR

In Hosea four, this tenderhearted prophet preached to his people in Northern Israel. He probably lived to see Israel humiliated, swallowed by the invading Assyrians, and taken into captivity that permanently removed that nation from the scene.

Why did this happen? Hosea 4:6, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forsaken the law of thy God. I will also forget thy children.”*

This was the nation that had heard such great prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Amos and others. Admonitions, instructions, warnings galore had been sounded throughout the land for generations. There was no excuse for their ignorance. Opportunity to return to God had been theirs repeatedly. Their ignorance was willful and deliberate.

Again, we need to be reminded why they were so willing and deliber-

ate in their ignorance. It bears repetition because it is not unlike many today. Verse seven, *“As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.”* In their prosperity we see what low levels of living they had reached. Hosea 4:1 says there was no truth in the land, no mercy, no knowledge of God. Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, blood-letting, were their characteristics. When the knowledge of God’s truth makes its exit from a people, the door is opened for the entrance of anything and everything vile and corrupt. Shades of our time!

The prophets would plead, *“Hear the word of Jehovah.”* But the people gave no heed. The national pulse grew weaker and weaker until the death of the nation was inescapable. What a high price to pay for ignorance of God’s will! Ignorance demands its price and will extract it from those who are content to remain so.

ONLY TO THE WILLING

A working knowledge of God’s will comes only to those who are willing to pay the price in study, work, meditation, research and devotion. No generation has had a monopoly on Biblical ignorance. But it is blatantly obvious that Biblical ignorance is at flood-tide in our time and that is probably the most damning influence in the land, yea, the world. Biblical ignorance is the reason atheism exists. It is the foundation of the “new morality.” It supports rebellion against authority, the rioting, drunkenness, prejudice, hatred, and uncontrolled crime. It all finds fertile soil in minds which know not and care not for the will of the Lord.

The conditions in Northern Israel as cited by Hosea, and those in Judah mentioned by Isaiah, are disturbingly similar to reports being published concerning our land today. The law of God, being unalterably true, must be learned, respected, and obeyed. Seeking God’s forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ, and resolving to let His way be the way we will go is the one and only preservation for our people. Unless we, the people, cease striving for pleasure, riches, satisfaction of the flesh above the holy and sacred things of God,

how shall we escape what has overwhelmed nations of the past? Can we walk the pathway of desolation and degeneracy and not experience the same results that others have experienced who preceded us? Is there any real reason to believe that we shall somehow be the first people to successfully repeal the law of sowing and reaping? (Gal. 6:7-8; Prov. 14:34)

FIRST CORINTHIANS AND ROMANS

Two passages from Paul’s inspired pen convey a similar thought. First Corinthians 10:11, *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”* Romans 15:4, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.”*

Will we become simply another land, another people, worse than the ox and ass and pay the high cost of low living that comes from Biblical ignorance? Does it not concern us that even our governmental agencies, the educational systems, the various elements of the media, are attempting to crush from the minds of all they can reach, the good influence of the Biblical message? Even religions are joining forces with admitted servants of the devil to retard knowledge of the Bible.

Or, shall we determine that we shall learn, follow and propagate the message of God to the world whose head is sick and whose heart is faint? The hour is late, and we are already seeing the price of Biblical ignorance being exacted in our society. It just takes one or two generations for truth to be removed from the minds of a society. We are already down the road of disaster a long way in many, many circles. What this means for our children and grandchildren should concern everyone. The only solution is Christ, and the only ones who shall proclaim Christ are those of us who say we believe He is the Son of God.

In what way will you contribute to the advance of the cause of Christ among those around you?

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WHY TEACHERS ARE VALUABLE

Once upon a time, a congregation was looking for teachers for children, pre-schoolers and youth.

And some adults said, “I don’t want to leave the sweet fellowship and study in my adult class.” (But the drug pusher on the street said, “Not even the threat of jail will keep me from working with your children.”)

And some adults said, “I could never give the time required to plan and go to teachers’ meetings.” (But the pusher, the porno dealer, and the movie producer said, “We’ll stay open whatever hours are necessary to win the minds of the kids.”)

And some adults said, “I’m unsuited, untrained, and unable to work with children, pre-schoolers, or youth.” (But the movie producer said, “We’ll study, survey, and spend millions to produce whatever turns kids on.”)

So the adults stayed in their classes and enjoyed the sweet fellowship and absorbed the good Bible study, and could go out of town often on the weekend and were available to do whatever was good to do on Wednesday or Sunday nights instead of teachers’ meetings.

And when Sunday came, the children came to their classes and no one was there except those going from one room to another trying to assure them that someone would surely come to teach them some Sunday soon. But no one ever came and the young children soon quit coming because they had gone to listen to others who did care about the things they did and what went into their minds.

The Coldwater Courier

CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Douglas Hoff

Though some give lip service to God, thankfully there are many followers of Christ who call Him Lord and do what He says.

People interested in obeying God are familiar with the phrase “calling on the name of the Lord.” That exact wording is found only in Acts 22:16. However, variations such as “call(s), -ing, -ed) on the name of the LORD” are plentiful and attest to the importance of this expression. The first instance is found in Genesis 4:26 where Moses recorded, “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.” The context does not explain exactly what this means. A study of other passages using this phrase give a better indication of what is meant.

The second occurrence of the phrase is in Genesis 12:8. Here we read of Abram. “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.” This shows worship is connected with calling upon the name of the LORD.

Other passages show it refers to making a request of God. When Naaman the leper was instructed to wash in the Jordan seven times he remarked, “Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper” (II Kings 5:11). Psalm 99 clearly shows prayer is meant by this expression: “Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them” (Psalm 99:5).

Calling on the name of the LORD includes praise, thanksgiving and service. The following three passages demonstrate this: “O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the

people” (Psalm 105:1). “And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted” (Isa. 12:4). “O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people” (Psalm 116:16-18).

In the Old Testament, calling on the name of the Lord is likewise associated with salvation. “Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD” (Psalm 116:4,13). “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call” (Joel 2:32).

In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord is also linked to salvation. On the day the church was established, Peter was preaching the Gospel of Christ. In his discourse he cited Joel 2:32 and proved Jesus is the Savior (Acts 2:21ff). Peter’s preaching was interrupted when his audience asked, “What shall we do” (Acts 2:37)? The implication is, “What shall we do...to avoid God’s wrath for crucifying His Son” (Acts 2:36)? By inspiration of the Holy Spirit the apostle declared, “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” (Acts 2:38; cf. 2:4).

Paul wrote that calling on the name of the Lord brings salvation (Rom. 10:13). But, what does this

mean? Does it mean the alien sinner need only pray for forgiveness? Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul, learned prayer was insufficient to obtain salvation. After fasting and praying for three days he heard Ananias say, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16; cf. Acts 9:9-11). Today, the lost sinner calls on the name of the Lord when he repents and is baptized.

Calling on the name of the Lord is clearly more than just praying for forgiveness. The Lord Jesus indicated some who acknowledge him as Lord will find their profession is in vain. Jesus taught, “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” (Matt. 7:21-23). Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord is telling the truth. On another occasion Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)?

Though some give lip service to God, thankfully there are many followers of Christ who call Him Lord and do what He says. These are the ones who really call on the name of the Lord. They prove it as they worship in spirit and in truth, by their fervent and sincere prayers and through their praise, thanksgiving and service they render as they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

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SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

James E. Farley

We often see these words on church bulletins. It is an effort, no doubt, for congregations to let those who visit them know that the motive behind what they will hear on the Lord's day is love. This is good and right, for we should have love as our motive for teaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are to be seen as people who love!

There are three good points in this short phrase (Eph. 4:15) from the Bible:

1) **The truth must be spoken.** Our religion is a *taught* religion (John 6:44-45). People must hear the Word taught in order to have faith in God and in Jesus the Christ (Rom. 10:17; Acts 4:4; Acts 18:8). Therefore we are commissioned, *"Go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). The early Christians did just that (Acts 8:4-5), and within a thirty year period *"every creature which is under heaven"* heard the Word (Col. 1:23). We still have the great obligation of taking the Word of God to a lost and dying world. God still has preaching as His plan for saving those who will believe (I Cor. 1:18-21). When you investigate a faithful congregation of the churches of Christ, you will find a people who are dedicated to taking the Word to the world.

2) **That which is to be spoken is "the truth" ... "the Gospel of Christ."** It is the truth that will set men free (John 8:31-32). In that context it is obvious that "the truth" is the Word of God (compare John 17:17). Paul called it *"...the word of the truth of the gospel"* in Colossians 1:5. It is God's power to save mankind, for it reveals God's righteousness — God's right ways (Rom. 1:16-17). We are instructed in God's righteousness through the verbally inspired Word given by God's marvelous grace (II Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). It must be spoken, preached, taught to every nation (Matt. 28:18-20). The unbelieving Philippian jailer asked what he must do and was told *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be*

saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). But the Bible does not stop there. The very next two verses state, *"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized; he and all his straightway."* The Word of God must be spoken! Churches of Christ believe that the Word must be sowed as seed in this world (Luke 8:11; cf. Matt. 15:13).

3) **Here is the motivation.** We must love God, Jesus, the Word, the church of Christ, and the souls of all men everywhere. Too many people have a wrong idea about real Bible love. As one has put it, "They seem to think love is a feeling they feel when they begin to feel like they have never felt before." When people have this idea of love as some kind of feeling-good emotion, you often hear them criticize sound preachers and Bible teachers for being "too harsh." We hear them say things like, "You need more of the spirit of Christ... You talk about hell too much, and this does not show forth the loving spirit that Jesus had." But friends, real love always will sound out a warning of danger! The Word teaches, *"Open rebuke is better than secret love"* (Prov. 27:5). No, we do not ever want to be mean-spirited, but we must sound out warnings about the danger of folks being lost when they will not abide in Christ's doctrine (II John 9-11).

God loves us (John 3:16), but He certainly warns of danger (Ezek. 3:17-21; Acts 18:6; Acts 20:26-31). God will not accept our claim that we love others, if we do not warn others of hell. Jesus gave STRONG warnings of danger! Someone has suggested that Jesus spoke 13 times more about hell than about heaven. Does this suggest that our Lord was unloving? Read Matthew 13:41-50, 15:7-14, 23:33, Mark 9:43-44. Did Jesus express a wrong spirit here? To those who were blinded by the world's riches, Jesus taught about Lazarus and the rich man. Strong warning! Wrong spirit? NO! The God of love has

placed into our hands His revealed mind, the Holy Bible. In the Bible we read such passages as II Thessalonians 1:7-10, Revelation 20:15, 21:8. These things are not pleasant, but people need to face the facts! There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun!

Churches of Christ are resolved to keep preaching the Truth on these matters by speaking the truth in love. We will do it *"in season and out of season...reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"* (II Tim. 4:2). We fully realize that some won't like it, but we must do it anyway! (Compare Gal. 4:16). Love sounds out a warning of danger (II Cor. 5:10-11).

Friends, let us know how we may help you in your obedience to the Lord. We are here to serve you. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments concerning what I have written.

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Does It Really Matter?...

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to be right. A man may have stolen chickens all his life, but if he keeps on stealing chickens, he's still a thief. Again, as I was once told when I pointed out these matters, "If you can't sing these songs, just don't sing, but we're going to continue singing them, as we've always done." Such an attitude displays an ignorance of God's word and possibly a disregard for the necessity of having Scriptural authority for all we do, which includes our worship in song.

Brethren, it does make a difference what we sing. The songs we sing will either be pleasing or displeasing to God. The only way to please God is to remain faithful to his Word. There are numerous songs in most of our books which, in their lyrics, are either in part or wholly unscriptural. Let's remain vigilant, less we sing a lie. Think about it.

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AM I BECOME YOUR ENEMY BY TELLING YOU THE TRUTH?

Marvin L. Weir

*The best thing the devil has going today is the attitude that desires to **please** folks instead of **save** folks.*

The apostle Paul knew what it was like to have people detest and despise him. Five times Paul received thirty-nine stripes from the Jews, three times he was beaten with rods, and once he was stoned and left for dead (II Cor. 11:24-25; Acts 14:19). All these things happened to this faithful servant of the Lord because he loved the souls of men. That's right, Paul loved folks with a fervent, genuine and Biblical love. He knew that people would lose their souls if they lived and died in sin.

Hatred of truth is an age-old problem. Do you remember Moses making those ten special trips to tell Pharaoh God's truth? Pharaoh stubbornly refused to accept the truth and finally said to Moses, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself; see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well. I will see thy face again no more" (Exodus 10:28-29). Many people today will do as Pharaoh and die rejecting the truth that could have saved them!

King Herod and Herodias so despised God's truth that they had John the Baptizer beheaded for preaching it. What was the message that cost this great prophet his life? King Herod had decided to marry his brother's wife. If some of our well-educated and liberal-minded apostates in the Lord's church had been with John they would have advised, "John, it is not adultery that Herod and Herodias have committed; it is only "covenant-breaking." John then could have told this adulterous couple, "Each of you need to repent of 'covenant-breaking,' and then I will wish you well in your new marriage."

But John was loyal to the Master and he loved the souls of men. Thus,

John said the **only** thing he could say, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. 14:4). Now the **truth** did not set well with Herodias and she was determined to have her new **"enemy"** put to death. Now notice this most important point. John told Herod it was not **"lawful"** to take Herodias for his wife. What law did Herod violate? It surely was not Roman law! In the very beginning God taught, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The Hebrew word "cleave" means to stick to, like glue. John was simply teaching what he knew the Savior would be teaching — the truth. When they asked the Lord if a man could divorce his wife for any cause He answered, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ... And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:6,9).

The cry is being heard today that was heard in Isaiah's day. The people said "to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Man's great problem has always been that he desires to **change** the Bible to accommodate his ungodly lifestyle.

You have heard it said, "Just preach the Bible and don't offend anyone." One can preach on Galatians 5:19 but he must not offend the fornicators, drunkards, idolaters, etc. Be sure and preach on 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, but whatever you do don't condemn "the abusers of themselves

with men." These are what the morally bankrupt today call "gays," but God calls them "sodomites" (I Kings 14:24; cf. Gen. 19:5-13; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27).

Others loudly cry, "Don't preach a negative gospel." What's that? **"Don't!"** I suppose it is well and good for one opposed to negative preaching to be negative.

The best thing the devil has going today is the attitude that desires to **please** folks instead of **save** folks. Godly standards are lowered to lure and draw folks — all in the name of **love**. The apostle Paul described quite well the attitude of most toward truth in saying, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). Nonetheless, young Timothy was told to "preach the word" — the truth (II Tim. 4:2).

The words of Paul again ring loud and clear, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). Paul proclaimed the **one** and **only** Gospel regardless of who it offended. Both he and John the Baptizer would rather go to Heaven than be "politically correct."

The ACLU and all other morally bankrupt perverts of truth must not go unchallenged. Let them become incensed! As Paul also said, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)?

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A Strong Pulpit

Jimmy Ferguson

Most faithful brethren would affirm that we do not hear the kind of preaching we heard as we were growing up. Oftentimes, more attention is paid to *how* something is said rather than *what* is said. Attracting large crowds is emphasized more than preaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). In many congregations today, when plans are being made for a youth function or Gospel meeting, the criteria for selecting speakers is not, “Is he sound and does he teach and uphold sound doctrine?” but rather, “Is he dynamic?” and “Can he draw a crowd?”

Theatrical preachers who stir the emotions but leave the mind befuddled, remind one of the false teachers Jude mentioned who spoke great swelling words of vanity but were clouds without water (Jude 12,13). Many churches and preachers are guilty of promoting gimmicks, games, and gymnasiums rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*” (John 12:32). Jesus Christ and His word are the drawing power! Weak preaching has become more and more commonplace. Consider the effects of weak preaching.

Weak preaching causes a lack of genuine conversions. Since it is the word of God that sets men free from sin (John 8:32), preaching without it will cause men to remain in bondage to Satan. Some teachers tell story after story and joke after joke and do not give the people enough scripture to fill a thimble. A preacher cannot bring men to Christ when he deletes the power (God’s Word) from his sermon (Rom. 1:16). Some of our preachers play on people’s emotions just to get them “down the aisle,” and he can say, “I’ve baptized X number of people.” The preacher is not “the main attraction” — Christ is. Emotionalism is not to move sinners — the cross is.

Weak preaching causes the faith of Christians to be weakened. It is by a steady and strong

diet of God’s word that Christians are built up. Paul stated, “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32). How can Christians be strengthened if they do not hear Bible-based sermons filled with scripture? If our physical bodies are not fed properly, will they remain healthy? How then could we expect Christians to remain spiritually healthy if they are not fed from the word of God?

Weak preaching leads to apostasy. Churches are being torn asunder by every false doctrine imaginable. Why are some of our churches ready to put women in leadership roles, bring the instrument in, and partake of the Lord’s supper on any day other than Sunday? The answer is clear: weak preaching. We need more sermons on the plan of salvation, the distinctiveness of the church, the worship of the church, etc.

Weak preaching causes a lack of real church growth. One observed that weak preaching has made the church a little more “than a soup line for the distribution of loaves and fishes when we should be pointing people to eternal water and eternal food” (John 4:10-14). The church needs to be reminded of its mission: to seek and save the lost through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 19:10; Matt. 28:19,20). Real church growth will come if we follow God’s way. Christians must be taught. The souls of men are at stake.

Gospel preaching saves, and without it men cannot be saved: “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God*” (I Cor. 1:18). We need a strong pulpit and we need elders who will demand nothing less!

— *Via Highland (Dalton, GA) bulletin*

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NEW PRINTER:

Through the help of very generous brethren, we have been blessed to purchase a new printer. The cost of the new printer was \$9,351. We have already received \$5,000 toward its purchase. Since so many have requested that we let them know when we need something like this, we’re taking this opportunity to do so. If you would like to contribute any part of the remaining \$4,351, then feel free to do so. The work of Seek The Old Paths is supported by free-will contributions and sent free to all who request it. God bless you as we continue to teach the whole counsel of God.

—*Editor*



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"Enclosed is a small contribution to help keep a fine and much needed publication going. Only the truth can stop the errors and liberalism. Sound, well informed people in each congregation could stop this liberal movement. Keep exposing error and proclaiming the truth"
...Richard Smith, Hollister, MO.

"Thanks for the good work being

accomplished with the broadcast of www.pioneerpreachers.com over the internet. We in Pennsylvania are basically in a missionary state, with congregations of the church being few and far between. The average congregation has about 30 in number. Some of the congregations in metropolitan areas are becoming increasingly denominational in their organization and teaching. How sad it is to observe this departure from the faith by many brethren and congregations. Thank God for all your efforts in reaching the lost and strengthening the faithful with this endeavor" **...William J. Coates, Summerville Pennsylvania church of Christ.** "I read a page or two in your magazine at my mother-in-law's when I was visiting. I was so impressed with the truths that were written. I just want to be one among the many that's enjoying so much Biblical truth. Please add me to your mailing list. May God richly bless you" **...Tracy & Kelvin Jackson, Covington, GA.** "I am a member of the church of Christ in Van Horn, Texas since I was a child. I really love studying the word and enjoy reading printed sermons or lectures of fellow brothers in Christ. I was told to write you a letter requesting a copy of your *Seek The Old Paths* and to be placed on your mailing list for it. So, please place me on your mailing list and God bless you always. Thank you" **...Alfredo Martinez, Hondo, TX.** "Please remove from your mailing list" **...Shannon Oaks Church of Christ, Sulphur Springs, TX.** "We will be glad to send you a check for your paper. We enjoy reading and learning more from it. We used to get your paper but have not been getting it in some time. Fred and Betty Trost are also members of Gladwin Church of Christ. They have enjoyed your paper. Also, please send them one. He has been an elder for many years here. Thank you" **...Dan and Pat Boren, Gladwin, MI.** "My husband and I enjoy your monthly publication *Seek The Old Paths*. We thank you for your dedication and hard work" **...Karen Reed, Pleasant Hill, MO.** "Our church receives your newsletter and I have been very impressed with it" **...Ruth Graves, Odessa, TX.** "I appreciate the good lessons in *STOP*. I pass it on to family and friends. God bless your good work" **...Leona Thomas, Cookeville, TN.** "My husband, Edd Foster, died five years ago. My eyes are so bad until now I cannot read much. Please stop sending the paper. Someone else would love to have it. *STOP* is a wonderful paper. Keep up the good work you are doing. May God bless" **...Kathleen Foster, Pontotoc, MS.** "Dear brethren, I appreciate the work you are doing in publishing *STOP*. Keep up the good word and don't become discouraged at the criticism you are receiving!" **...Frank Harris, Clarksville, IN.** "Appreciate you sending me *STOP* and I know I am going to enjoy many fine articles true to God's word. In the July Issue of *STOP*, C. J. Rimmer of Southgate, MI, wanted removed from your mailing list and then stated that it would be better if you had a prayer list of all the false teachers so people could pray for them. I do not know about you but I have prayed many times for those brethren he mentions to come back — forsaking their false ways. I would probably not be too far off in saying you have done the same. I hope he is doing what he suggests others do! Keep up the good work" **...Tom Forrest, Sr.** "Would you please put me on your mailing list to receive *STOP*? I have been borrowing one of my brother's copies each time he receives one and am interested in keeping up with the things which threaten the Lord's church today. I really appreciate your work in this area and hope publications such as yours will help us to rise up and defeat it" **...Gary Labeth, Burneyville, OK.** "Please do not send any more *STOP*. I'm really amazed at the hatred of your articles. The love in the text of God's word toward his children is not reflected in your letters. How do live Christ's glory in your community?" **...Harry & J. Scott, Belton, TX.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: We don't have to wonder what their reaction would be to the Lord's condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Jesus called them hypocrites, children of hell, fools, blind, blind guides, whited sepulchres, children of them that killed the prophets, serpents and generation of vipers. He accused them of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. He declared they were full of extortion, excess, hypocrisy, iniquity and that they would receive the greater damnation. Our Lord and savior did not say these

things in meanness, hatefulness and delight. He said them with compassion in His heart and tears in His eyes. In Matthew 23:37 He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Plain words do not indicate a mean spirit! Paul asked, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)? People must be made to see the error of their way and the way that is of God so they may repent and obey before it's too late. —gmr] "I just came across your website on the internet. I want to tell you how happy and thankful I am about the work you are doing there. I must confess it makes my heart sing. I am so filled with delight over your broadcast that I will be telling everybody I talk to about it. I don't know how long you have been broadcasting, but my prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless you in this effort. Praise be to the Lord. The world has no more excuse. You are a diamond in the ruff. God bless you all" **...Betty Israel Chandler, Jacksonville, FL.** [NOTE: The Gospel can be heard 24/7 at www.pioneerpreachers.com and www.aburningfire.net.] "Thank you so much for all the issues you have sent me" **...Sam Costa, Inverness, FL.** "Please delete my name and address from your mailing list for *Seek The Old Paths*" **...Erman Cronney, Thayer, MO.** "My son recently visited a neighboring church of Christ and picked up your issue of Vol. 16 No. 7 and brought it home to me. I had no knowledge of such a magazine and read it with interest. I rejoice in seeing another publication such as this circulating through the churches of Christ helping to stem the drifting that prevails in some areas" **...Olaf Bohannan, CA.** "Please remove me from your mailing list. Thank you" **...Bert Singletary, Sun City, AZ.** "Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you" **...Terry & Shirley Sigle, Dardanelle, AR.** "We love the paper. Thank you" **...Rodney and Charlotte Rhea, Tyler, TX.** "Everyone really loves reading *STOP*" **...Ralph and Nancy Hammett.**

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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