

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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ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Bob Winton

AUTHORITY BY IMPLICATION

Sometimes the Bible tells us what to do or not to do by making a **direct statement**. In other cases, it provides us with **examples to imitate**. Another method is by **implication**. To say that something is "implied" is simply to say that it is required by the evidence. For example, suppose someone had two sacks of grain, each weighing the same, and having a total weight of two hundred pounds. Given this information, we could of course know, by implication, that each sack weighed one hundred pounds. The information provided did not state this fact, but that conclusion is plainly implied.

The same logical principles are to be applied in the study of the Bible. The Bible does not expressly say that the people who heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2) believed that Jesus is God's Son. But given the knowledge that one cannot be saved without that faith (John 8:24), and knowing that these people were saved (Acts 2:36-47), we can deduct that they believed on the Lord. We know this by implication.

The Bible does not expressly say that Saul of Tarsus repented during his conversion (Acts 9), but knowing that one must repent to be saved (Luke 13:3), and knowing that Saul was saved (Acts 22:16; 1 Tim. 1:13), we can therefore know by implication that he repented.

The Bible does not expressly say when Christ's church was estab-

lished. We know it was not before Matthew 16 and not after Acts 2, because prior to the events of Acts 2, the church is spoken of as being still in the future ("I will build by church," Matt. 16:18). But it was established by the end of Acts 2 for people were added to it on that occasion (Acts 2:41,47). Therefore, by implication, we can know that the Lord's church was established on the Pentecost day of Acts Chapter Two.

The Bible does not say that Crispus heard the Gospel (Acts 18:8), but since the Record says he "believed," we know he was taught the Gospel beforehand, because belief comes only through learning the Gospel, God's word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7).

When an action, fact or teaching is absolutely demanded by Biblical information, without being specifically stated, then that action, fact or teaching is an implication. What is taught by a genuine implication is just as binding as those things which are taught by direct statement. But much caution must be exercised to make sure that a conclusion is absolutely demanded by the facts, otherwise the *implication* is only an *assumption*.

AUTHORITY BY EXPEDIENCY

God expresses his authority through the Bible by making *direct statements*, by giving *examples for us to imitate*, and in providing *clear implications*. Bible authority can also be established by the principle of *expediency*. An "expedient" is any-

thing which assists in the carrying out of our spiritual obligations without changing the nature of those obligations or the end results. It speeds up, or aids, in fulfilling a God-given duty. There is no expediency where there is no obligation. A matter of expediency cannot be made a matter of law. It is as great a sin to make an optional matter required, as to make a required matter optional.

Christians have the obligation to assemble for worship, but the New Testament makes no requirements as to the place of assembly. When God does not specify how or when a command is to be carried out, it becomes a matter of human judgment, a matter of expedience. Hebrews 10:25 makes assembling mandatory. Other passages make the first day of the week the day to assemble (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). The *time* on the first day of the week to meet and the *place* of assembling are not specified, thus are matters of expediency. We could meet in a private home (Col. 4:15), in a public building, or in the open.

The building is an optional expediency which is authorized by the passages which require us to assemble. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to the lost (Mark 16:15). Printed material, radio and television, public teaching, and private studies are all expedients to that end. We are told to baptize penitent believers (Acts 2:36-38), thus a bap-

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Biblical Authority...



Editorial...

MAN SAYS, GOD SAYS

Garland M. Robinson

There are different opinions concerning what people believe. Some say that sincerity is enough. But, the Bible is the proper standard of judgment. It is the final word. My opinion or your opinion does not matter. What matters is what God says, not what we think or feel. There is a vast difference between judging according to one's own standard (Prov. 14:12) and making judgments according to God's standard (John 12:48). As the Lord's people, we are to make "righteous" judgments (John 7:24)! We are to recognize, respect, accept and follow God's judgments. Notice the difference between what man says and what God says.

Man says: "The important thing is whether or not one loves God, not keeping commandments." God says: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). If we do not keep God's commandments, how can we please God? Why did He give His holy word if it's not to be kept? Man is the one who says we don't have to keep God's commandments. God doesn't say that.

Man says: "Thank God for the many churches so that man may find the one that best suits him." God says: "There is ONE body...ONE faith" (Eph. 4:4-5). Christ "is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). He will save his body and no other (Eph. 5:23). Those in his body, the church (Col. 1:18), will be saved and those not in his body (Eph. 1:22-23) will be lost. Are you in the one body, the one faith, the church?

Man says: "Join the church of your choice." God says: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). "Let there be no divi-

sions among you" (1 Cor. 1:10). The Bible says nothing about joining a church. It says God adds, man doesn't join. Where does God give man a choice? This may sound good, but cannot be supported from the holy Scriptures.

Man says: "Each person should follow the way that seems right to him and that honesty and conscience direct." God says: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "...The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). When man follows his own way and conscience, he will not be following God's way. Man's feelings and opinions are not the standard. God's word is the standard. We must accept God's judgments and honor his commandments.

Man says: "Faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." "By 'faith only' is a man justified." God says: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ... But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:17,20,24,26). "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

Man says: "Baptism is not necessary for one to be saved" and has "nothing to do with salvation." God says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). "Baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21). At water baptism, one is "...then made free from sin..." and becomes a

servant of righteousness (Rom. 6:3-6,18).

Man says: "Baptism is an ordinance that can be administered by sprinkling or pouring as well as by immersion in water." God says: "We are buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4). "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). "They came unto a certain water...and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-39).

Man says: "Do not let religion go to your head, make sure you get enough recreation and do other things you would like to do." God says: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). We must count the cost and pay the price of discipleship. Luke 14:26-33 makes this very plain. That means we put first things first.

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Biblical Authority...

(Continued from page 81)

tistery is an expedient to that end. We are told to teach the church (Matt. 28:20); it is expedient to teach different age groups separately, hence we regularly study the Bible in classes.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). “In the name of” Christ means “by the authority of” Christ. We **must** have Bible authority for all we believe and practice in spiritual matters. If we believe or practice an item without Bible authority, we go beyond the teaching of Christ (2 John 9). To operate without this divine approval is to invite the wrath of God (Rev. 22:18,19; Heb. 20:26-31).

The only ways to establish Bible authority for religious beliefs and acts are by (1) direct statements, (2) approved Bible examples, (3) clear implications, and (4) expediency. Anything that is not authorized by one or more of these ways is an addition, and thus is forbidden.

DIRECT BIBLE STATEMENTS

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). *“Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not (to go) beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other”* (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV). *“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son”* (2 John 11, ASV).

The above passages show the fact that Bible authority must be had in spiritual matters. But how are we to establish Bible authority? How can we know whether a certain belief or practice is authorized? There are four basic sources of Scriptural authority, one of which is the **Direct Statement**. These direct statements of the Bible may provide either generic or specific authority. That is, a statement may authorize actions

without giving the specific detail of how those actions may be done. This is generic authority. Specific authority is in the cases where the statement not only authorizes an action, but specifies how it is to be done.

A Biblical statement containing both generic and specific authority is Mark 16:15: *“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”* This direct statement authorizes evangelism. It is a direct statement which requires taking the Gospel to the lost. Two actions are involved: going and preaching.

The command to “go into all the world” is generic authority in that it does not specify the manner of going. It does not require going on foot, by horse, or by boat. It authorizes going, but does not specify how to go. The command to present the Gospel to everyone is specific authority in that it identifies what is to be preached. Followers of the Lord may “go” in any honorable manner they choose, but they are not free to preach anything they choose. That which is to be preached is the Gospel (Rom. 1:16).

The view that anything not expressly forbidden may be done, is a false view of Biblical authority and opens the floodgates for every conceivable error. Rather, we must have Biblical authorization for all that we believe, practice, and teach. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”* (Col. 3:17; cf. Matt. 28:18; Acts 4:12; Heb. 1:1-4).

AUTHORITY BY EXAMPLE

Most of us regard the Bible as the inspired, authoritative word of God, and that we are to have the authority of the Bible for what we believe and practice as followers of Jesus. But how does the Bible express its authority? One item already noted is authority by direct statement. To this we add *Authority by Example*. An example is an account of an action that was taken by someone. It is an example for us to follow if it was done by divine authority and was done to fulfill a God-given duty.

Consider the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The Bible reveals the Lord’s command to eat the Supper (1 Cor. 11:24-25). But the command

does not state when it is to be observed. The early Christians ate it on the first day of the week: *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...”* (Acts 20:7). If the day to eat the Lord’s Supper was unimportant, why did the inspired historian even mention it? The grammatical construction in the Greek text indicates that this was a continuous, habitual practice.

The Lord’s Supper is definitely linked to the first day of the week (Sunday). The example of the early Christians gives us the divine authority for eating the Supper on the first day of the week. We have no Biblical authority for eating it on Thursday night, daily, or on any other occasion. It is to be done only on the first day of the week. There are some circumstances in the example of Acts 20:7-8 that are permitted, but not required. Those disciples met in an upper room, but that is not a binding circumstance. The place is unimportant (John 4:19-24).

Christians are required to give as prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2), but the Macedonians give us an example which shows it is permitted to give more than we have been prospered (2 Cor. 8:1-5). We must not give less than prospered, but we are allowed to give more than prospered. We know this by their example.

Whether an example is binding in the sense that it is required, or whether it is simply permitted, must be determined by considering all the Bible has to say on the subject at hand.

The examples which fulfill permanent commands are obligatory to us. This is the case with Acts 20:7. Examples which are unnecessary to the fulfillment of a command are authorized but not required. This is the case with the Macedonians who gave more than they were prospered.

The fact that the Bible gives an account of some action does not mean that example is intended as a binding example. Some actions were temporary (such as miracles, 1 Cor. 13:8-13), and some actions were sinful (Acts 5:1-11). These kinds of examples, therefore, are not to be considered as binding actions for us to follow.

464 Ridgewood Dr.
Manchester, TN 37355

Elder's COLUMN

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

James W. Boyd

While many are interested in church membership, there exists a mass of unwarranted and unnecessary confusion on the subject. This, like most other religious matters, is because people consult just about any and every source for information except the Bible. People use the words “members of the church” so flippantly and unscripturally, with little understanding of what the Bible teaches about it.

Are you impressed with the importance of being a member of the church? Many are not. It is second to none in matters of importance, and when we learn what Scripture teaches about it, we cannot escape that conclusion. But so many take it so lightly. They consider it as something comparable to being a member of some club, a friendly association, fraternal order, professional group, or something no more important than that. They do not consider it to be very useful or necessary in serving God if you choose not to belong. As a result, they do not make good church members.

On the other hand, some appear to think that having your name on some roll that designates who are the members of the church is all that matters. As some do not give the matter sufficient importance, others place too much confidence in simply being considered a member of the church.

Our motive for being a church member must not be simply to please other people, or for material gain and good business. What we do in matters of religion must be done with the motive of pleasing God regardless of what others say, do, or think. We must be church members from conviction, not just because it may be convenient, or the accepted thing in some circles of society.

NOT JUST A CHURCH

Church membership, according to the Bible, does not mean being a member of just some church, any

church, or a church. It means being a member of THE church. This point is where many stumble. They have comforted themselves in the fact that they belong to something called a church and have concluded that is what matters. But this is false. Christ built only one church. “*Upon this rock I will build my church*” (Matt. 16:18). Please note the word church is singular. He is the head of the body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22,23), and as is true of all normal bodies, the church has one head and the head is over one body. “*There is one body*” (Eph. 4:4), made up of many members. “*We are members of his body*” (Eph. 5:30). “*But now are they many members, yet but one body*” (1 Cor. 12:20). Who are these members? They are not denominations. You read nothing in the Bible presenting the Lord’s church in terms of denominations. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth and identified the members, “*now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12:27). “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Rom. 12:5). The church is composed of people, but a very distinct people.

BRIDE OF CHRIST

The church is called the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23). Christ is the bridegroom (John 3:29). As there is one husband and one bride, so there is the one Christ and His one church. There are many churches in existence, but not by the authority of the Lord. Christ is no spiritual bigamist with many brides. His church began on the first Pentecost after His resurrection (Acts 2), and is revealed to us in the Bible. There is only one body for which He died (Eph. 5:25), and only one that He will save (Eph. 5:23). Therefore, we are interested in membership in the Lord’s church. This truth that there is only one church is a barrier that many have not been able to overcome. Having

been reared in a denominational context all their lives, they find it difficult to accept what the Bible teaches about the singularity of the church. But acceptance or rejection of the truth does not alter it.

CHILDREN OF GOD

Let us consider now the significance of church membership. As members of the church, we are the spiritual children of God’s family. First Timothy 1:15 defines the church as the “house of God.” This means the family of God. God is the Father and we are His children (2 Cor. 6:18). Christ is our elder brother in this analogy, and we are joint-heirs with Him (Rom. 8:16,17). How important is it to be in God’s family? Can we be saved and not be God’s child? Certainly not. So the significance of church membership is obvious.

IN CHRIST

To be a member of the church means we are in Christ. Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Salvation is by no other than Christ. “*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). There is no way to be in Christ and outside His body. But to be in His body is to be in His church because the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23). So being in Christ is to be in the church.

IN THE BODY

How does one get into Christ or into His body? Galatians 3:27 teaches, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ did put on Christ.*” We are baptized into Christ. Again, 1 Corinthians 12:12,13, “*For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,*

whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” By the instructions given through the Spirit, we are baptized into the one body, the church. Baptism puts us in Christ. The same one baptism puts us in the church. Again, it is obvious why church membership is important. We cannot be saved out of Christ and to be in Christ is to be in His body, the church.

THE CALLED OUT

The word “church” comes from the word meaning “the called out.” The Lord’s church is composed of people who first have been called. We are called by the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). We have been called out of a life of sin into a life of righteousness. We are called to be saints (1 Cor. 1:2); called to liberty (Gal. 5:13); called to hope (Eph. 4:4); called into the one body (Col. 3:15). “*For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*” (1 Thess. 4:7). “*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess. 5:9). “Wherefore come ye out from among them,” is the call of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:17). We are called out of the world and into the realm of the saved. The church is composed of such people.

THE SAVED

We must keep before us the fact that to be in the church means to be one of the saved because the saved is the church. The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). The church is that body that Christ has promised to save (Eph. 5:23). He offers to save everyone, but only those in the church will be saved.

NEW CREATURE

To be in Christ means to be in the church, but to be in Christ also means to be a new creature. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). We are born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-5). When one is born, he is a new creature. From these verses we see that being in the church, being in Christ, being in the kingdom, being a new

creature, are all the same state or condition. Could one expect to be saved as the old man of sin, or as a new creature in Christ? The answer is plain, “We must be born again.” Therefore, I see the significance of being in the church, just as I see the significance of being in Christ, being in the kingdom of heaven, being a new creature.

IN THE KINGDOM

Being in the church is being in the kingdom. In Colossians 1:13 Paul told those Christians that God “*hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*” Those delivered from darkness are those in the kingdom. They were the ones who were in the church, or who were in Christ (Col. 1:1). The necessity of being in the kingdom is stressed in First Corinthians 15:24, where we learn that when Christ comes again He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Unless we are in the kingdom, we will not be among those delivered to the Father. That ought be easily understood. But being in the kingdom, in Christ, new creatures, one of the saved, in the church, are simply varying ways of expressing the same thing. How can one miss the obvious significance and importance of being a member of the church?

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

We now turn our attention to how one becomes a member of the church. In the book of Acts, a book wherein are recorded several instances of conversion to Christ, we see that the process of conversion consisted of *hearing the Gospel, believing in Christ, repenting of sins and confessing faith in Christ*, followed by *being baptized into Christ*. “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “Except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). “Repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Those who did the things mentioned above were added to the

church (Acts 2:47). They were not put forward and others voted whether they would be in the church. They were not made members by something their parents had done in the days of their infancy. They were not made members of the church by some kind of direct operation of the Holy Spirit. They did not do one thing to be saved and something extra or different to become members of the church. What they did to be saved is precisely and exactly, as well as simultaneously, what was done for them to become members of the church.

BECOME, THEN BE

Once one has become a member of the church he assumes the responsibilities that belong to living a Christ-like life. This includes work, worship, righteous living, being a light in the world, a city set on a hill, the salt of the earth. He is to busy himself to continually doing those things that are needful to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18).

Actually, the matter of church membership is not confusing nor difficult to grasp when one confines his study to the Bible and allows his conception of it to be molded by “thus saith the Lord.”

2720 S Chancery St.
McMinnville, TN 37110

BIBLE AUTHORITY

If the Bible is God’s Holy Divine Word, then it is to be respected as such. That means it is authoritative — we are obligated to follow it. That’s what Colossians 3:17 commands us to do. We must be able to point to a verse and say, “here’s authority for us to do what we do and teach what we teach.” On the other hand, progressives in the church are saying the New Testament is simply a “love letter” — written from a collection of notes and interviews. That’s non-sense! It was written by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Respect for Bible authority is essential in pleasing God.

— editor

IT'S NOT WHAT HE SAID, IT'S HOW HE SAID IT

Jon McCormack

It is a regular occurrence for a preacher to receive feedback from the sermons he preaches. Often the comments are very encouraging. It's always nice to hear when brethren appreciate hearing the Truth. At other times the comments can be disappointing. Consider one such event in this preacher's life.

About ten years ago I was preaching a sermon on what our Lord teaches concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage. After the sermon one of the brethren came right to me and asked to see me in a back classroom. He began to chastise me for the lesson I had brought. My first reaction was to ask him what I had said that was un-Biblical. He replied, "It's not what you said, it's how you said it." He began to emotionally describe how his son was visiting that morning and happened to be in an adulterous relationship. I then asked him how I should have preached this topic. He responded by informing me that I should not have

preached the sermon at all because God will forgive adulterers without them having to separate from their current partners. Proponents of the phrase, "It's not what he said..." usually have the same mind-set as the aforementioned brother. In reality it IS what the preacher says that is despised. Take for example this very situation. To many, the words of our Lord in Matthew 19 are too harsh no matter how they are spoken. It's the doctrine that individuals have a problem with, not the method of delivery.

This attitude reminds me of the words spoken by Ahab in 1 Kings 22. In that chapter Ahab wants Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to join forces with Israel to overtake Syria. Wisely, Jehoshaphat asks that they first inquire of the Lord. The king of Judah asks this important question, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him" (1 Kings 22:7)? At this request Ahab states, "There is

yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imiah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). Sometimes people hate hearing the truth. Was it the way that Micaiah spoke that ruined him as a preacher for Ahab? Certainly not! It was the message that was preached that Ahab hated.

Let's not mistake boldness in preaching for meanness. Jesus, John the Baptizer, Paul and Peter were all bold in their preaching. Many hated each of these preachers. Was it the tone of voice that Jesus used that caused His death? Was it the rhetoric employed by John that caused him to lose his head? No, it was his courage and boldness to tell a man that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. Consider this next time a sermon angers you. What are you really angry with, the man or the message?

THE NEED TO ANSWER ERROR

Tom Wacaster

Every child of God has the sacred obligation to "be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). We are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Our Lord told us to "beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Our responsibility is no less than those Christians of the first century who were told, "believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The past twenty years have seen an ever increasing defection of once-faithful, stalwart soldiers of the cross. Men

who once stood in the gap and wielded the sword of the Spirit with skill and effectiveness have gone over to the enemy.

A once faithful brother wrote: "It is not possible to overemphasize the damage done by perverse preceptors. They not only cause division (a thing God hates), but the ultimate outcome of their treachery, whether that treachery be witting or unwitting, is eternal loss to all who are led astray by their influence."

With regard to our Lord's admonition, "beware" is a forceful word. It is a warning. It says to us, "Look out, danger, peril, jeopardy, risk, hazard." It screams at us, "Pay attention. Be on guard." We are locked in a battle with error. Truth will prevail, of that we are certain. But we must do our part to uphold that truth, moving

neither to the left nor to the right. There is always the danger that a little compromise will eventually lead to wholesale apostasy. Hence the need to answer false doctrines forcefully, faithfully and forthrightly. Time is of the essence; souls are at stake; the cause of Christ must not suffer!

Unfortunately, the ranks of those who will address the issues continue to diminish. But if we are to pass the torch to the next generation, we dare not waver in our sacred duty to uphold the truth at all costs. The late F. B. Srygley was right on target: "Fighting for the Truth is almost a lost art. Men who are enjoying the benefits of the Gospel unmixed with human error, are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the Truth. Every inch of ground from that mysterious way of being saved,

which was better felt than told, to the plain conditions of pardon as taught in the New Testament, was fought out for us by our fathers. If someone before us had not fought for the Truth, most of us might yet be in the fog of denominational teaching. This is not the time to temporize or make

friends with error. (F. B. Srygley (Madisonville, KY: *In Word and Doctrine*, Oct-Dec, 1992), page 19; originally appeared in the *Gospel Advocate*, 1928).

False teachers have been tolerated, ignored, and in some instances embraced by unfaithful elders,

preachers and members. Far too little has been done in answer to the false teachers presently assailing the walls of Zion. We only pray that it is not too late to take our stand and defend the truth.

PO Box 283
Talco, TX 75487

LOVE, THE ACID TEST OF CHRISTIANITY

Marlin Kilpatrick

Our English New Testament was originally written in *Koine* Greek. Our English word “love” translates several Greek words. The highest form of love was expressed by the Greek word *agape*. The one who possessed *agape* love fulfilled the requirements of the Lord’s will. *Agape* love always seeks the very best interest for others. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand how love, *agape* love, is the acid test of true Christianity.

In response to a lawyer’s question concerning the “first and great commandment,” Jesus said, “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...*” (Mark 12:30). Acceptable Christian service is always based upon the principle of love. It is significant to observe, all of our devotion is first to be directed toward God with such devotion being motivated by love (cf. Gal. 5:6).

As Christ loved the church, so the husband is to love his wife (cf. Eph. 5:25). Marital discord, which often leads to divorce, would be entirely eliminated if *agape* love existed between husbands and wives. No Christian woman would object to being in submission to her husband if he always sought the very best for her. It is when husbands misuse their role as “head of the wife” that homes are often destroyed. When there is genuine love between parents, the children will sense this love and will have proper role models after which to pattern their lives. Fathers who love their children will not provoke them to wrath (cf. Eph. 6:4a). Instead, they will “...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”

(cf. Eph. 6:4b). Love is so powerful!

Jesus also taught, “...*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...*” (Mark 12:31). Not only must Christians demonstrate *agape* love towards one another, they must also show the same kind of love towards their neighbors. Biblically speaking, our neighbor is anyone who is in need of help and we have the opportunity and the means to render such assistance. In the parable of “the good Samaritan,” the occasion and need for help was there, but only the Samaritan took the time to assist the man who had fallen among thieves (Luke 10:30-37). *Agape* love will not allow us to “pass by on the other side” (Luke 10:31,32).

The importance of *agape* love is seen in the words of the apostle Paul. The Corinthian church was plagued with many problems, among which was jealousy over the use of certain spiritual gifts. Paul settled the matter when he wrote, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, (love, MK) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, (love, MK) I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, (love, MK) I am nothing*” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). In brief, Paul simply tells the Corinthian brethren they misunderstood the real purpose of their spiritual gifts. No matter what gift one Corinthian brother may have had, if his motive for service was not love, his spiritual gift would amount to nothing.

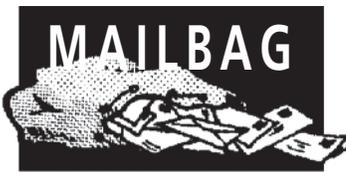
While today we do not have supernatural spiritual gifts as did the church prior to the completion of inspired revelation, we must still be motivated by love in all that we do; else our service is unacceptable to God. The motive (why we act) is so very important. While it is true, we must render the “obedience of faith” (cf. Rom. 16:26), it is not enough to just obey our Lord’s commands. Our obedience must be prompted by the right motive — love. When brethren “bite and devour one another” (cf. Gal. 5:15) in disputes over matters of opinion, and consequently divide the church, they demonstrate a lack of *agape* love.

I am almost seventy-one years old. I have been preaching the Gospel for almost forty-seven years. In all my experience, I have never seen such lack of genuine love as is demonstrated by some brethren toward each other as we see in our brotherhood today.

There are far too many factions among us. We have divided and splintered into so many warring factions until it’s almost a joke to tell our denominational friends about the sin of division among God’s people. I fully understand the need to “earnestly contend for the faith” (cf. Jude 3), but in some cases I fear that our actions are not out of love for lost souls, but a desire for the preeminence among brethren. What do you think?

May the words of the Hebrews writer speak to each of us, “*Let brotherly love continue*” (Heb. 13:1). In reality, this is our only hope. Think about it.

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who care so much for their spiritual siblings. Thank you for everything" ...**Don Smith, 516-110 Unit 5B, PO Box 7010, Chilliocthe, OH 45601**. "Hello and greetings to the saints! I was reading the September issue of STOP and come across a note from the editor that you have an ample supply of back issues going back many years. Please send a whole bunch to me. My support to STOP will be ongoing if the Father in heaven allows me and us to remain for a time that we can support the kingdom of God and have joy in seeking those that are also seeking the kingdom of God. Thank you for the many years of STOP" ...**Jerry Jones, Memphis, TN**.

EVIDENCE FROM ANATOMY

The stomach is a remarkable organ. It is a bag-like structure that serves as a temporary holding tank for food. The average adult stomach can hold about one and one-half quarts of food for three to four hours. During this time, the food is bathed with gastric juices which flow from three types of glands in the wall of the stomach. Amazingly, the stomach digests foods made of materials much tougher than itself. Scientists found we would have to boil much of our food in strong acids at 212°F to do what our stomach and intestines do at the normal body temperature of 98.6°F. One of the most amazing things about the stomach is that it does not digest itself! Some of our stomach acids are strong enough to dissolve metal, yet they do not harm our stomach. The primary mechanism which keeps us from dissolving our own stomach is a thin gastric lining which continuously oozes a mucus coating. This coating forms a barrier between the acid and stomach wall. The mucus, somewhat alkaline, neutralizes the acid at the stomach wall and helps keep the stomach from digesting itself. The lining of the stomach sheds one-half million cells every minute and replaces them so quickly that we have what amounts to a new lining every three days. The stomach truly shows evidence of design.

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.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**

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