



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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SOMETIMES TO BUILD UP YOU MUST TEAR DOWN

Marvin L. Weir

Godly elders are watchmen of the flock and will never allow those who do not respect and fully proclaim God’s word to occupy the pulpit.

The mentality that allowed each person to do “that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25) during the time of the Judges is the same warped mentality that afflicts not only this world but also many of God’s people today. In fact, this anti-pattern, anti-God, type of thinking continued to afflict the Israelites long after the period of the Judges. The saying is absolutely true that “sin is long-lived and deep-rooted!”

King Josiah was convinced that in order to receive God’s blessing, Judah would have to live and worship according to God’s pattern. There are numerous lessons we can learn from Josiah’s edicts that are recorded in 2 Kings 23.

First, **All the people were required to hear the word of God!** *“And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD”* (2 Kings 23:2). It is the word of God that enables people to make decisions that are **right**. Without hearing the word of God, one will not know what he needs to do in order to please the Almighty (cf. Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12).

Second, **Josiah ordered the priests to “bring forth out of the**

temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven.” He burned them in the fields of Kidron and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el (2 Kings 23:4). The objects made by the hands of men that did not glorify God and were contrary to His word had to be purged from the temple. An instrument of music is such an object today and instead of condemning such, we have many congregations now clamoring for such instruments to compliment their worship assemblies. “Dedications” and “testimonials” are now common occurrences in many worship assemblies, and those who prefer to please themselves love to have it so. If elders would read, believe, and vow to abide by the Holy Scriptures, a tremendous purging would occur in most congregations today.

Man simply does not have the authority to declare what is acceptable or unacceptable to God! A *“thus saith the Lord”* is essential if one is to worship according to God’s will. The mindset and actions of Josiah are sorely needed in the Lord’s church today!

Third, **King Josiah “put down the idolatrous priests”** (2 Kings 23:5). The king knew the priests were a great influence on the people. He did not begin at the bottom and work his way up. Josiah started at the top with those who had responsibility to see that God’s word was respected.

The idolatrous priests “had to go” if the people were ever to please God.

The same is true with “turncoat” preachers today. Godly elders will never allow those who do not respect and fully proclaim God’s word to occupy the pulpit. Why? Because what comes forth from the pulpit is going to have a tremendous affect upon who is sitting in the pew. Many brethren sit wringing their hands and complaining that they do not understand what is happening to the Lord’s church. What has happened again and again is that liberal preachers and youth ministers have been paid to lead both the old and the young astray! Those who are supposed to be serving the congregation as elders have failed miserably by not warning the congregation and immediately removing those peddling the devil’s doctrine. Those who serve as elders are the “watchmen” of the flock and are obligated to sound forth a warning when sin rears its ugly head. God’s Word declares that an elder is to hold *“fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”* (Titus 1:9). Coffman correctly states regarding the above verse: “This has been taken by many to be a commentary on 1 Timothy 3:2, in which Paul states that the elder must be ‘apt to teach;’ and that view would appear to be correct.

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Build Up — Tear Down...



Editorial...

FINANCING THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Garland M. Robinson

The church of Christ is a divine institution — ordained of God before the foundation of the world. It was spoken of as a kingdom throughout the Old Testament (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In the New Testament it is referred to not only as a kingdom, but as the church (Matt. 4:17; 16:18-19). By faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, sinners are forgiven and translated into the kingdom/church of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). The Lord's church is holy. It is the saved (Eph. 5:23). It is that which will be handed over to God the Father at that last great day (1 Cor. 15:24).

The church is the body of the saved (Eph 5:23; Acts 2:41). All who obey the Gospel are added to it by the Lord (Acts 2:47). It is not a body to which we have been added and wherein we simply await our entrance into heaven someday. The church is alive, active, thriving, functioning, busy at doing the work God has given it to do.

As every member of the church has work to do; every local congregation of the church has work to do. We don't just assemble on the first day of the week, sing a few songs, pray a few prayers, hear a lesson from the Bible, partake of the Lord's supper and make a financial offering when the plate is passed around. We are to be busy working for the Master. What we do is either right or wrong, good or evil. Obviously, it is essential that the works we do are righteous — approved, acceptable unto God. That being the case, we must make sure we do what God authorizes us to do. We don't have a right to do just anything we want to do, what we think is good, or what we think will advance the Lord's cause.

Colossians 3:17 lays out the principle we are to follow. *"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."* The

phrase "in the name of the Lord" reveals that we are limited to do only that which the Lord authorizes us to do. Everything we SAY and everything we DO must be in accordance to God's Word. We must have a "thus saith the Lord."

The work the church of Christ is authorized to do is categorized into three areas: **Evangelism, Benevolence, Edification.**

EVANGELISM is paramount in the work of the Lord. Jesus gave us the order to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every soul. Jesus said, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 18:18-20).

We may clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the suffering, but if we neglect the spiritual food their soul so desperately needs, we have missed the whole point of the Savior's death on the cross. The Lord said, *"ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good"* (Mark 14:7). But, the salvation of their soul is more important than the needs of their physical body.

We must be busy in teaching and preaching the Gospel to every person in the whole world! *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16). We read of the saints being scattered because of the persecution of Stephen. As a result *"they...went every where preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4).

We have great advantages today that did not exist in the first century. We evangelize by means of radio, television, newspaper, internet, printed

materials, door to door, etc. What a blessing to have this means and opportunity.

The Lord's work requires money, lots of money. Souls are perishing. Our task is to teach them of their sins and the availability of forgiveness through faith and obedience to the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. This is what evangelism is all about.

BENEVOLENCE is compassion, goodwill, charity toward those in physical need. The churches of Galatia were told: *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10). In Acts 11 we read of a *"...great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea"* (11:27-30).

In Romans 15 we read that it pleased the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia to send a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-26). Likewise, the brethren at Corinth were told their contribution *"...not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men"* (2 Cor. 9:12-13). The church at Philippi sent Paul financial help *"once and again"* (Phil. 4:15-18).

A sad picture of the judgment day shows many were not benevolent in this life. Consequently, they will hear these words: *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not"* (Matt. 25:41-43). *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment"* (Matt. 25:46).

EDIFICATION involves teaching, instruction, education. Sinners are forgiven and become members of the church through faith and obedience (cf. Acts 2:38; Rom. 16:17-18). They must then continue in the faith. Paul and Barnabas went through the cities where they had earlier established congregations, *"confirming the souls*

of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith...” (Acts 14:22).

To congregations everywhere we read: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Faithful saints will be presented “...holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...” (Col. 1:22-23).

We grow and mature by being EDIFIED: instructed, taught, directed in the way of the Lord. We are to seek to be edified and to edify one another (1 Cor. 14:12; 1 Thess. 5:11). “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor 14:26). The early church had apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Their mission was “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:11-12).

We are built up in the faith by growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18). This makes us fit for the master’s use. The stronger we are the better we are to weather the onslaughts of our great enemy the devil.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IS NOT:

In this category we need to keep in mind a distinction between the work of the church and the work of the home. Many combine the two, but they are not the same. In the work of the home, I can play ball with my children, take them fishing, go on vacation, make a contribution to fight cancer, educate them in how to make a living, and other such like things. The home is authorized to do many things the church is not authorized to do. Whereas, the work of the church is limited to: evangelism, benevolence, edification. The home on the other hand is responsible for rearing a family that a church is not tasked to do. In its work of benevolence the church

can financially assist a needy home as was done in Acts 4:32-37, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:1-14, Romans 12:13, 15:26-27.

Sometimes congregations involve themselves in activities that’s not a work God authorized them to do.

RECREATION and ENTERTAINMENT. Such activities are fun, relaxing, and can refresh our bodies, but they are part of our physical life and do not benefit the soul. Helicopter rides and a clown show may thrill us for a moment, but does not add to our spiritual life. Consequently, they are works of the home, not the church. The Holy Spirit made this distinction with these words to Timothy: “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

SECULAR, SOCIAL or ACADEMIC EDUCATION. These are works of the home. The Lord’s work is spiritual. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Timothy’s instruction was to focus on things eternal, not physical. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES are not the work of the church. Man thinks he has devised a better way of evangelizing than what God authorized. These “societies” are man-made bodies which usurp the work God gave the church to do. They make up a separate entity that stands between the church and its work. They are organized with representatives from various congregations contributing to them. Receiving money from churches, they choose their own preachers and send them wherever “they” want. They take over the work God gave the church to do. As a consequence, churches are divided which causes great harm to the brotherhood.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES are not the work of the church. They are a more recent development in departing from the faith. Following in the path of Missionary Societies, they have set up their own independent “body” that stands between the church and its work — claiming their way is more efficient than God’s way. There is no such arrangement mentioned in the New Testament. Local congregations

do not work through organizations or societies masquerading as the “churches of Christ.” Churches cooperate in benevolence, just as they do in evangelism. They do their own work, not through man-made entities that supersede the local church.

Jesus had something to say about adding to and/or subtracting from his holy word (Rev. 22:18-19). The Lord’s church is far superior than anything man can come up with! “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

GOD’S ARRANGEMENT TO FINANCE THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The Scriptures authorize the financing of the work of the church by means of the collection that is taken up in every congregation on the Lord’s day. By inspiration, Paul wrote the church at Corinth. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come**” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This order (commandment) was not just given to the church at Corinth or the congregations scattered throughout Galatia. What Paul taught at one place, he taught in every place (1 Cor. 4:17). There is no other Scripture that authorizes the church to obtain its funds to do its work.

There are several points to notice in these two verses: 1) What? A collection is to be taken, 2) Why? It is an order, command of God. 3) Where? In the church (every congregation), 4) When? On the first day of week, 5) Who? Every member, 6) How much? As each has been prospered. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

WHAT IS NOT AUTHORIZED

Since God tells us what the work of the church is and how the church receives its funds to do that work, any other arrangement or means of collecting or receiving funds is not according to a “thus saith the Lord.” In short, if there’s no authority from heaven, there’s no approval of God.

None the less, men have devised many other means of obtaining funds.

1) Begging or soliciting funds by means of radio, television, newspaper, internet, etc. Money is welcomed from the general public, including businesses and individuals of the community.

2) Business adventures of various kinds, even including operating motels and wineries. The Lord's church is not in secular business. It's in the soul-saving business.

3) Selling of any and every kind, purchased, hand made or donated.

4) Charging admission to church services. Can you imagine the apostles charging admission to hear them preach? If this method is authorized, then every congregation can charge admission to attend their Gospel meeting. Just because people are willing to pay does not authorize it.

5) Fund raisers of various

kinds: auctions, benefits, car washes, yard sells, rummage sells, celebrity entertainment (singer/speaker), etc.

6) There's no end to what will be next!

The Lord's church, its work, and means of obtaining funds to do its work, is of divine origin. Man has no authority to alter it, whether adding to or taking from. Let's be busy about the Father's business and according to his authority.

EVOLUTIONISTS HAVE NO ANSWER

Jon Gary Williams

The idea of organic evolution is not only contrary to science, but it obviously contradicts Biblical creation. Life did not evolve into existence!

A careful look at the theory of organic evolution reveals that, at best, it is nothing more than science-fiction. Though cloaked with claims of so-called "science," beneath this superficial veneer, lays a giant mass of deception.

From top to bottom, evolution is plagued with unanswerable problems and all attempts to reconcile its flaws continue to fall short. Even in the day of its hero, Charles Darwin, inherent flaws in his theory were obvious and through the years many, even more serious, flaws have been discovered.

The underlying thesis of evolution is that life began as microorganisms and from this, over multiplied millions of years, all other forms of life slowly emerged. However, this is **impossible**. Evolution cannot bridge the enormous gaps separating the well-defined, taxonomic kingdoms, phyla, classes, orders, families, genus and species. The fanciful "missing links" in the "chain of evolution" cannot fill these giant chasms; the fact is the whole "evolutionary chain" is nonexistent.

The changes between complex organic systems required by evolution defy explanation. For example: 1) the supposed evolution from the reptilian three-chambered heart to the mammalian four-chambered heart and; 2) the supposed change from breathing through the skin to breathing through the lungs.

It is almost amusing to witness defenders of evolution as they attempt to explain the enormous challenges found in their theory.

A few years ago I came across an article by a professor of Physics & Astronomy at Vanderbilt University in which he espoused the theory of evolution. I obtained his email address and asked him this question: "Can you give me at least one argument you feel is so conclusive that we cannot help but know that evolution has occurred? What have you found that puts evolution beyond doubt and irrefutable?"

He did respond, which surprised me. He said, "You ask, can you give me at least one argument you feel is so conclusive that you cannot help but know that evolution has occurred? You're asking the wrong question. There is no single argument, no single fact, that 'clinches' it. There is a mountain of evidence, a vast collection of facts, and huge numbers of interconnected lines of reasoning that all paint a very clear picture: evolution happened, evolution happens. It is known to be true beyond any reasonable doubt."

I responded: "You say I have asked the wrong question. This puzzles me. You say that no single argument can, of itself, establish evolution. However, you then say that by combining these arguments they paint a clear picture and put evolution beyond doubt. Maybe you can help me out here. Please explain how is it possible for arguments that are, of themselves, inconclusive, to lead to a clear, undeniable, factual conclusion? Surely you can see how such reasoning contradicts fundamental logic."

I then asked him, "How many of these interconnecting arguments would it take for evolution to be confirmed? Would it take three, or four, or five, or maybe ten? Please tell me just how many it would take for you to say that evolution is confirmed." It is not surprising that he ceased responding. This is what usually happens when evolutionists are put to the test and illustrates the weakness of their theory. Evolutionists are good at painting their theory with broad, inconclusive brushes, but avoid dealing with its specific flaws.

The idea of organic evolution is not only contrary to science, but it obviously contradicts Biblical creation. Life did not evolve into existence. Rather, all first forms of life were created whole and complete (Gen. 1:11-13, 24-27).

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FREE-WILL ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Tracy Dugger

When we examine the plain passages which speak of our free-will and freedom to come to God whenever we want to, as well as the plain passages which tell us we are not born depraved, then God expects us to reason about all of this correctly...

Sometimes I think I am overly consumed by why people believe what they believe religiously. Maybe I am at times. I hope the reason is because I am concerned with the souls, both in and out of the church. I realize that what we believe is often the difference between heaven or hell. It matters what we believe (John 8:24,32; Mark 16:16b).

Often in discussing a religious belief, whether a true or false one, the subject of “free-will” enters the discussion. Especially is this true in discussing Calvinism — whether it be the influence of the Holy Spirit upon an individual, the doctrine of predestination, or how one is saved. Many preachers, in trying to reconcile their religious beliefs with the Bible, struggle to explain what they believe in light of free-will. We are going to refer to the words of a very prominent individual as he tries to navigate through what the Bible says with his doctrine of Calvinism.

Some preachers believe we have no free-will (hard-core Calvinists). Others in trying to hold on to their Calvinism, affirm humans have free-will but contradict themselves in many directions — trying to reconcile their Calvinism with the idea of free-will. I want to help us see where some of our religious friends are coming from, or at the least, what they are being taught. These things keep them from seeing the truth about things like baptism and cause them to hold on to many false views about the Holy Spirit, miracles, and the “once-saved-always-saved” doctrine. This article tries to get to the heart of the matter of why they believe what they believe.

There are so many passages which clearly affirm human free-will that I do not know where to begin. Here is a list of some that immediately come to mind: Deut. 11:26-32; Josh. 24:14-15; Matt. 11:28; Rom. 6:16-20; Rev. 22:17; Acts 17:11-12. These are straightfor-

ward, upfront, clear passages. An honest examination clearly reveals our free-will. You have to have help to miss it — help from man-made doctrines.

If we have no free will, why did the Lord give the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16)? The very idea of “Go” implies we have a choice. Why command something that you can either obey or disobey? And, how can it be disobedience if I have no free-will? Further, why “preach” a **message of persuasion** to “every creature” (this is what the “gospel” is) if “every creature” does not have the power to choose? And, how could we be “damned” for rejecting it if we have no free-will? See also John 8:21-24. We learn at least two lessons from the giving of the Great Commission: free-will and accountability to God for what we choose.

I recently listened to one of the most prominent and influential denominational preachers in our country regarding free-will. He asks, “*Is there free will? I don’t ever use the expression ‘free will.’ Is there human will? Yes. Is that free?*” Now this is where his Calvinism gets in the way of a simple biblical teaching. He says, “*No.*” Amazing! He affirms there is no free-will. He then explains:

“It is within the bounds of its own sinfulness, free to make sinful choices. But it cannot choose righteousness in its own. It’s like a criminal in prison, sentenced and in jail. You are now incarcerated. Is there freedom? There is freedom in the walks; freedom to go there or here; freedom to think this or that; freedom to act this way or act that way. To cultivate relationships this way or that way. There is freedom but it is all freedom in the prison. There is no freedom to go out and leave.”

He goes on to explain that the inmate still has free-will; free to think what he wants; free to obey the rules of the prison; free to try to rehab himself. Remember that an illustration proves nothing. It only illustrates a point — seeks to make the point clear. This preacher is trying to use the illustration of a prison in a way that does not fit the case of human freedom in salvation. He goes on to say:

“The unregenerate person is free within the confines of fallenness; free within the confines of reprobation; free within the confines of depravity to select his categories of sin; to select the nature of his behavior. But he is not free on his own to do anything other than that which is consistent with his fallenness. So, it is a contained freedom. The only thing that breaks that freedom is the intruding, sovereign, eternal power of God. And God does that for whom He wills; when He wills — not apart from their faith and repentance, but by means of their faith and repentance which he himself generates. So, it is wholly and act of God.”

This is just double-talk; spin; all in order to defend a preconceived idea about salvation. Is he sincere? I have no reason to doubt his sincerity. He is as sincere as Saul of Tarsus; but, sincerely wrong. Because he holds a man-made doctrine, he is way off on the subject of salvation and is forced to say that we have no free-will because of God’s sovereignty but uses terms which imply the free-will of man.

When he speaks of man’s “faith and repentance” he calls it “theirs.” In other words, he believes it is owned by us. He calls that “free-will.” He holds that we choose to believe and repent. But then he takes it away from our free-will by saying God generates it. We must realize that because

God provides the motivation and means of faith and repentance does not mean that I do not have free-will in it. So, yes, this is double-talk. It is complicated in trying to understand him. But it is complicated because he is trying to talk out of both sides of his mouth — even though he does not think he is.

To say that our salvation is “*wholly an act of God*” would mean that there is no free-will. After listening to all this preacher believes on this subject, it is easy to conclude that he believes man has no free-will. But he does not want to come out and say it because it sounds so ridiculous. And, it is ridiculous to say; but he can’t help it because he holds on to his Calvinism in spite of what the Bible teaches.

He goes on to say that man gets freedom from God when God regenerates him:

“When all of a sudden the bars of the prison are opened and the sinner is turned loose into the glories of the new righteous freedom. He is now experiencing freedom in a world of beauty, and a world of wonder, and a world of righteousness. And for the first time is free to do and is able to do what is right. So the big question is, How can God hold sinners responsible for their condition which cannot be altered except by Him?”

He sees the problem he has, but he just will not let go of his Calvinism. He sees the conflict between saying that sinners are responsible for their sinful, lost condition and thus cannot do anything about it, and then saying that it is up to God (not us). He sees that the logical conclusion is that it is God’s fault that men are lost and realizes, per his doctrine, that man cannot help it.

Again, he asks, “*How can God hold sinners responsible for their condition which cannot be altered except by Him?*” His answer is simply, “*He just does. The fact that God chooses some to salvation is not about being fair but demonstrating His grace. God has every right to put His full glory on display.*” Again, double-talk!

But God does not have that right if it is against His very nature. God cannot be false to His nature and to His Word. He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God’s nature is fair and righteous

without respect of persons in salvation (Acts 10:34-35; Ezek. 18:18-20). He offers a universal invitation to every accountable soul (Rev. 22:17, “whosoever will”).

And so, this preacher wrestles with this issue, and he should. He goes on to say...

“How is it that God can condemn sinners to hell because they do not believe the Gospel when they have within them no capability to anything other than reject it? How at the same time can He hold them responsible for their rejection when He alone is the one who saves them? I don’t know how God resolves that. I just know that is exactly what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that the only people who are saved are the ones that God has chosen, that He regenerates, that He awakens, that He gives sight to, that He grants faith and repentance at the hearing of the Gospel. God has to do it all. And yet the sinner is responsible. The Bible pleads with the sinner...and holds the sinner accountable.”

I agree there are things we cannot understand. And so, this preacher not being able to explain something about God does not necessarily mean it is false. There are in fact many things we cannot explain. Many passages affirm this. Let’s consider one of them: “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law*” (Deut. 29:29). Note two things here: There are things we cannot understand. And, there are things we *can* understand that God has revealed (John 8:32; Eph. 3:3-4). When we examine the plain passages which speak of our free-will and freedom to come to God whenever we want to, as well as the plain passages which tell us we are not born depraved, then God expects us to reason about all of this correctly (1 Thess. 5:21). This is not one of those unexplainable doctrines.

Personally, I believe that one of the reasons Calvinism is believed (and all this no-free-will double-talk is accepted) is because it takes the *accountability* away from man. Oh, yes,

the Calvinist says that man is responsible and accountable but he really does not believe it. He ultimately puts it all on God. He explains that although we are condemned, that we cannot help it — we are depraved. He puts it all on God for man’s salvation. God has to be the one who forces us; who changes us. If people are not doing what is right, it is not their fault — they can’t. And then you add the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and “once-saved-always-saved” doctrine to the mix, and “Bam,” you have a religion that says we are not judged by our works and that we have no part in our salvation — it is all God and not us. This takes the responsibility away from us and puts it with God. That is blasphemous!

If people are lost or saved, it is all God! What a devilish doctrine (cf. John 8:44)! **If there ever was a devil’s lie, Calvinism is it!** Remember what Satan said to Eve — “You shall not surely die.” This is the Calvinists’ argument — “It is not you; you can do whatever; God will save you in spite of your sin. You cannot do what is right; once the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you still may not do what is right and if you don’t, don’t worry about it because it is all God and not man.”

This is Calvinism at its best or should I say at its worst! Don’t believe it! It will cost you your soul.

The Bible teaches regarding mankind’s condition and salvation:

1. Sin is real (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23).
2. Hell is real (Matt. 25).
3. There is nothing we can do on our own that will change that. Not some human devised plan:
 - Not silver and gold (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - Not the Old Testament Law (1 Peter 1:18-19; Gal. 2:16)
 - Not some system or works of our own devising (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)
4. God has provided a way out. It is through a payment of life. We call it an atonement — the giving of the life of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).
5. We have an essential part to play (1 Peter 1:21-23; Matt. 7:21)
6. We have the power to choose to believe and obey it (Acts 2:40).

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Build Up — Tear Down...

(Continued from page 1)

The primary duty of elders, namely, that of watching over and protecting the flock of God, requires that they be students of the holy Scriptures, having a broad knowledge of what is and what is not sound doctrine. That he may be able to convict the gainsayers ... This shows why an elder must be apt to teach and must possess an accurate and extensive knowledge of the holy truth revealed in the Scriptures ... Such men must be prevented from achieving their evil purpose; and an eldership not having sufficient ability in the Scriptures is unequal to the task."

Fourth, **Josiah ordered that "no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech"** (2 Kings 23:10). In many instances the elders act today as if the youth and young families are run-

ning the church. Wrongdoing and a rebellious spirit are not to be tolerated in the kingdom. There is a time to say "No" and "mark" (Rom. 16:17) or "withdraw fellowship" (2 Thess. 3:6) from those who refuse to repent; and instead, insist upon corrupting true worship (John 4:24).

Fifth, **Josiah broke down the altar and high places created by men** (2 Kings 23:15). People cannot, with God's approval, continue to cherish and cling to that which is wrong. Folks today don't want to turn from error because they are concerned about hurting someone's feelings and "backlash" from family members and friends. Should not one rather fear the wrath of God? To save our souls, we must be more concerned with hurting God than hurting man!

The truth of the matter is that sometimes before brethren can "build up" they must "tear down." A proper foundation is never erected upon the sinking sand (Matt. 7:24-27). King

Josiah knew that rotten rubble had to be cleared away before the people could build properly. Brethren today need desperately to grasp this biblical principle.

May elders, preachers, and Bible class teachers do as did Josiah and use the sword of the Spirit to expose and overcome false teaching! Let us never forget that sometimes to build up we must tear down!

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KEEPING THE CHURCH STRONG

The church of our Lord is under attack from many sources. The devil certainly wants to see the church to become weak and fail in her God-given work. The denominationist, and those in the church who are directed by compromise and delight in complacency, do what they can to hinder the cause of Christ. Amid these despisers of the church, the church must determine to be "strong in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10). How must this be done?

• **Standing fast in the faith**

1 Cor. 16:13 "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

1 Thess. 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

• **Speaking sound doctrine**

1 Peter 4:11 "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

Titus 2:1,8 "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."

2 Tim 4:2-4 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

• **Striving for unity**

Eph 4:3-6 "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit."

1 Cor. 1:10 "Speak the same thing, no divisions among you; perfectly joined together, same mind, same judgment."

Psalm 133:1-3 "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell to-

gether in unity!"

• **Seeking "first things first"**

Matt 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

Col 3:1-3 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

• **Supporting church discipline**

2 Thess. 3:6 "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

Eph. 5:11 "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

Rom. 16:17-18 "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

• **Studying the word and submitting to it**

2 Tim. 2:15 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 1 Tim. 4:13; Psalm 1:2-3; 2 Peter 3:18; James 1:21-22

• **Sustaining the sowing of the seed, serving & strengthening one another**

Luke 8:11 "The seed is the word of God." Matt. 18:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 6:2,9-10; 1 John 3:17-18; Rom. 14:19; Heb. 3:13

Jerry Joseph

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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again for the excellent messages and the smiles as I read this issue. In His and at your service” ...**Mike Millican, Northside church of Christ, Lexington, NE.**

MAKING JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS

Not only is it a Biblical prohibition of judging other people, there is a very practical reason for not doing so. It is because we seldom know enough about a person to make a very reliable judgment, except where the fruit produces is evident and cannot be ignored.

Some people have the ability to keep their lives much to themselves. Unless you are exceptionally close to them, you may not be aware of the particular problems, burdens, stresses they handle every day. You may know only a few of their problems and if you were more aware you may be more understanding.

There are those who have the ability to cover up their real character. They make a fine outward appearance to many and people may speak of them in glowing terms. But again, it may be because they do not really know that person as well as they think they do.

Proper judgment is needful in many instances, but we must not be too hasty in making them. Things are not as they always seen on the surface. People are not always what you have first thought them to be.

— James W. Boyd

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