



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 35, No. 8

August 2024

WOLVES IN SHEPHERD'S CLOTHING

James E. Rogers

When “wolves” put on shepherd’s clothing, the congregation is in trouble. Instead of protecting the sheep, the shepherd will be destroying the sheep.

Sometimes “wolves” from one congregation will influence people in another congregation. Before long, some of the false teaching from the “wolf-infested” congregation is being heard at home.

Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15, ASV unless otherwise noted). Jesus stated these wolves could be detected, though they were in disguise, by the fruits they produced (7:16-20). The disciples of Jesus were to be on guard so they would not be devoured by these false prophets. The “wolves” were there to make prey of the “sheep.”

Paul warned the “elders of the church” (Acts 20:17) at Ephesus about such wolves. He stated, “I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (20:29-30). It was the case that some of these wolves would arise from within the eldership, that is, some of these “wolves” would wear shepherd’s clothing. This would make it easier for them to draw away disciples because the disciples would not suspect error to come from their shepherds. They would have their guard down and the “wolves” would devour many of them before they were aware of what was happening.

These “wolves” are described as “grievous.” They would burden the church with their false teaching. Their manner of operation is the speaking of “perverse” (*diastrepho*, “turned aside, corrupted...”)1 things. The intent of these “wolves” is to draw away (*apospao*, which is used “of drawing away disciples into error”)2 disciples after themselves. They will teach corrupted doctrine and draw away disciples into error.

This same type thing happened among God’s people in the Old Testament. Jeremiah warned Judah that “*the shepherds are become brutish, and have not inquired of Jehovah: therefore they have not prospered, and all their flocks are scattered*” (Jer. 10:21). He further, observed, “*Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness*” (12:10). Jehovah’s punishment upon these shepherds would be destruction (23:1-4; 25:34-38). Jeremiah wrote, “*The wind shall feed all thy shepherds, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness*” (22:22).

As Paul warned the Ephesian elders about disciples being led away by

these “wolves” in shepherd’s clothing, so Jeremiah stated concerning Israel: “*My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting-place*” (Jer. 50:6).

Instead of feeding the sheep the truth of God’s Word, these shepherds were more concerned with drawing a following to themselves. Ezekiel wrote: “*Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep*” (Ezek. 34:2-16)?

Jude warned about false teachers and described them as “*they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots*” (Jude 12).

These warning signs were sufficient for God’s people to be aware of

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Wolves In Shepherd’s Clothing...



Editorial...

MANY THINGS SAVE SINNERS, PRAYER IS NOT ONE OF THEM #3

Garland M. Robinson

Thus far in this series we've pointed out there are "many" things that are involved in sinners being saved from their sins — not just "one" thing by itself. Denominationalism says "**Faith Only**" is what saves; but the Bible says that is not true. God knew men would pervert his word and claim salvation is by "faith only." So he made it clear that salvation is NOT by "faith only." James 2:24 is very clear when it says: "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*" But countless numbers of men, like Pharaoh of old (Exodus 8:15,19,32), harden their heart and refuse to see, believe, and receive the truth that they might be saved.

In the June and July issues we've taken note of several things the Bible says that are involved in salvation: 1) God's **Love** for all mankind (John 3:16), 2) God's **Grace** extended to every man (Eph. 2:8; Titus 2:11-12), 3) man's **Faith** in Christ (Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6), 4) God's **Mercy** (Titus 3:5; Luke 1:50), 5) Christ's **Blood** (Eph. 1:7), 6) being "**Born Again**" of water [baptism] and the Spirit [teaching of the Spirit] (John 3:3-5), 7) the **Gospel** (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), 8) Hearing and obeying God's **Word(s)** (Acts 11:14; John 6:45), 9) **Works** of obedience [what God commands men to do] (James 2:21-24), 10) **Love of the Truth** [God's word] (2 Thess. 2:10), 11) **Obedience to the Truth** [God's word] (1 Peter 1:21).

Let's continue to not only examine what the Scriptures teach concerning salvation, but accepting what they teach as well. So, by what are sinners saved?

OURSELVES — but not ourselves alone. Many on the day of Pentecost "...were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 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. ... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, **Save YOURSELVES** from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:37-40). "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them" (Acts 15:32). The jailor at Philippi asked, "what must I do to be saved? ... 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" (Acts 16:30-33). Paul preached in Thessalonica, "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (1 Thess. 17:4).*

There are many other things that are involved in sinners being forgiven of their sins in order to become a Christian. Let me point out again that God extends salvation to ALL men, not just a few (Heb. 2:9; John 3:16-17). However, man must respond to God's offer of salvation by faith and obedience to God's will. God's offer of salvation is a gift, but only to those who BELIEVE and OBEY Him! (Heb. 2:9; Matt. 7:21-23; 12:50)

OBEEDIENCE — but not by obedience alone. How many times does the Holy Spirit (in the Bible) have to tell us something before we believe it? Many argue with God and lead men away from the truth by smooth words and fair speeches (Isa. 30:10; Rom. 16:18). What does the Bible tell us about obedience? "Though he (Jesus) were a Son, yet learned he OBEEDIENCE by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him" (Heb. 5:8-9). "Seeing ye have purified your souls in OBEYING the truth through

the Spirit..." (1 Peter 1:22). "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being THEN made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). What doctrine had they obeyed from the heart? It was the doctrine spoken a few verses earlier in this chapter (vs.3-6). "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Note also what the apostle John wrote about obedience. "By this we know that we love the children of God, WHEN we love God, and KEEP his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we KEEP his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2-3).

WATER — but not water only. Regarding Noah and his family on board the ark, we read: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by WATER" (1 Peter 3:20). The next verse (v.21) makes the comparison of Noah being saved by water (the flood) just like water "...baptism doth also now save us." Water saved Noah and water baptism saves us. You'll have to go around the world a few times to come up with something different. Lest anyone miss the point, the Holy Spirit says that baptism is not for washing away the dirt on our skin, it is for washing away our sins. This is exactly what Ananias told Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He was calling on the name of the Lord by being baptized. Saul had been praying and fasting for three days. That's the way sinners react when they learn of their sinful condition. They are dis-

traught! Ananias taught him what to do to be saved and Saul did it. Those who have been saved are not miserable, they rejoice!

Denominational preachers don't know what to do with the Holy Spirit inspired words of 1 Peter 3:21 or Acts 22:16. They can't dismiss these verses! In their mind, they think they "know" water baptism can't have anything to do with being saved. So, in desperation, they attempt to explain these verses away and in doing so, contradict what the Holy Spirit said in these two passages. When we "rightly divide" the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), we understand these verses are in perfect harmony with the rest of the New Testament.

Concerning Saul, it is claimed he was saved on the road to Damascus and that Ananias baptized him because he was already saved. If that is so, it means we will have to take Acts 22:16 out of the Bible and tell Ananias he did not know what he was talking about. If Saul was saved while on the road, he did not know it! He did not eat a bite, drink a drop or sleep a wink until he learned WHAT TO DO to be saved and then did it in order to have forgiveness of his sins and become a Christian. He was then added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:38,41,47).

Concerning Noah being saved by water, denominational preachers don't know how to deal with that either so they come up with an idea saying "baptism does not save, it's a "good conscience" that saves." The truth is, Saul wasn't saved by a good conscience. A good conscience comes AFTER one obeys (is saved), not before. Noah was saved by water (1 Peter 3:20). Sinners are saved by water (1 Peter 3:21). That is in perfect harmony with every other verse that speaks of what to do to be saved.

There is nothing special about the water involved in baptism. It's not holy water. It's just water, plain water. The water itself is not what washes sins away. It is the blood of Christ that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5). The question is, WHEN does the Lord's blood wash away sins? The Holy Spirit makes plain that it is in the act of water baptism when sinners contact the blood of Christ. Jesus shed his blood in his death, was buried in a tomb, and was raised up from the dead. Sinners die to their sinful life (Rom. 6:2), are buried in water (Col.

2:12), and are raised up out of the water to "walk a newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

BAPTISM — but not baptism only. "...*The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 3:20-21). Who will stand up and deny what the Holy Spirit said in these verses? I don't want to stand before God and try to explain why I tried my best to dismiss what the Holy Spirit said about water baptism. Saul was told, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Make sure you carefully read the preceding point about WATER above.

HOPE — but not hope only. Paul reveals to the church at Rome, "...*we are saved by hope...*" (Rom. 8:24). The word "hope" means to "anticipate, expect." We expect and anticipate to go to heaven, not because of our own goodness and ability, but because God promises heaven to those who trust and obey him. Paul commended the brethren at Thessalonica for their "*work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope*" (1 Thess. 1:3). In the parable of the talents the Lord said to his faithful servants, "*well done...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*" (Matt. 25:21,23). Sinners who believe and obey the Lord become Christians and are the only ones who have hope in Christ Jesus. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. ... Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls*" (1 Peter 1:3-9). The Scriptures reveal to us that "*denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that*

he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:12-14). Let us always remember the Lord Jesus Christ is our "hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). 3 of 3

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Beginning Balance	\$21,195.07
Contributions	\$3,950.00
Debits	
Postage	\$2,278.25
Paper	\$426.70
Supplies	\$131.53
Ending Balance	\$22,308.59

Wolves In Shepherd's Clothing...

(Continued from page 57)

the nature of false teachers and avoid them. There would be no reason for the “wolves” to have their way with the sheep because the sheep would be on guard and protect themselves.

We are facing serious problems in the church today because “wolves” have put on shepherd's clothing. Bishops in Crete were to be “*holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that [they] may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers*” (Titus 1:9). The work of elders is important because they defend the congregations where they serve against false doctrine. As they hold to the “faithful (*pistos*, “to be trusted, reliable”)3 word,” they will protect brethren from the “wolves” who attack. Notice that the elders are to be able (*dunatos*, “signifies powerful”)4 to exhort and convict. They must know the Word of God so they will recognize error when it arises and know how to convict (*elencho*, “signifies (a) to convict, confute, refute, usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame”)5 the gainsayers (*antilego*, “to contradict, oppose”)6. They are the ones who “watch in behalf of your souls” (Heb. 13:17).

Faithful elders are to “*take heed unto [themselves], and to all the flock...to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). They must be aware that “*there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers...whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not...*” (Titus 1:10-11). If they “rule well” they should “*be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching*” (1 Tim. 5:17). They are to be men who are known for speaking “the word of God” and as such those whose lives may be imitated (Heb. 13:7). Faithful elders are about the business of tending “*the flock of God...exercising the oversight*” and making themselves “*ensamples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:2-3). These kind of men will deal correctly with a “wolf” who tries to put on shepherd's clothing.

When “wolves” put on shepherd's clothing, the congregation is in trouble. Instead of protecting the sheep, the shepherd will be destroying the sheep.

This often happens when a man is appointed an elder who does not meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. This individual does not know his Bible and when something comes along that is not in harmony with God's Will, he does not recognize it. This type individual is used and manipulated by the unsound members to promote their liberal agenda in the congregation. Sometimes, one will campaign to be appointed as an elder because he is a “wolf” and wants the shepherd's clothing to allow him to promote his agenda. He reasons that, if he is an elder, no one will question him as he goes about introducing and promoting error.

When a congregation gets a “wolf” in shepherd's clothing, often the sound members are not willing to oppose this “wolf-elder,” or may not know how to go about opposing one who is in the eldership. Sometimes, one's fellow-elders do not want to divide the congregation by opposing this “wolf.” When this “wolf” is finished, the congregation is in shambles. Many times the congregation will divide as sound members leave rather than fight the liberal element. Paul exhorted Timothy to deal with an elder who sins by reproving him “*in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear*” (1 Tim. 5:20). Charges against elders are not to be received unless they are backed by evidence (1 Tim. 5:19). However, when evidence is presented that there is indeed a “wolf” in shepherd's clothing, the faithful must take action to protect the sheep. This action may be in the form of confrontation of the “wolf” in the presence of the elders or the congregation. There may have to be a public withdrawal of fellowship if the “wolf” will not repent (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

The warnings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the Old Testament and Jesus and Paul in the New Testament are enough to put us on guard. If these things could not happen, there would not have been the warnings. We must be aware of what is happening in the congregation we attend as well as in neighboring congregations. Sometimes “wolves” from one congregation will influence people in another congregation. Before long, some of the false teaching from the “wolf-infested” congregation is being heard at home. This may result in “wolves” being formed within the local congregation.

Time may pass and, if there is not the exercise of great care, these “wolves” will be wearing shepherd's clothing. This will lead to the ruin of the home congregation.

We thank God for sound elders and preachers who are dedicated to fighting the “wolves” among us. They have gone down to the babbling brook of the Word of God and gathered smooth stones of truth. They have loaded their spiritual slings with these stones and are ready and willing to use these stones against the “wolves” who are trying to get the sheep. Of their actions toward these “wolves” it will be said, “*to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue...*” (Gal. 2:5). They are not hirelings who do not care for the sheep, but shepherds who are willing to lay down their lives for the sheep (John 10:11-13). **May we strive to raise up many more to fill the elderships of local congregations. May we work from generation to generation to have trained men to fight the “wolves” who seek the sheep.**

Realizing the devil is behind the “wolves,” may we all take heed to the warnings given in the Bible, determine to be led only by God's revelation and have the courage and wisdom to oppose those who have become “wolves” in shepherd's clothing. May we never silently sit by and allow the beautiful bride of the Christ to be ravaged and mangled by those who do not comply with Jehovah's revealed Word! Let us become “*strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph. 6:10-20).

To those faithful elders who stand, we remind you that “*when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away*” (1 Peter 5:4). To every faithful member who stands, the Lord will say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matt. 25:21,23).

ENDNOTES

1. W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1966), 3:180
2. Vine, 1:337
3. Vine, 2:72
4. Vine, 1:13
5. Vine, 1:239
6. Vine, 2:140

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FIGHTING DISCOURAGEMENT

Johnny O. Trail

It helps to know we do not bear our burdens alone. God hears and knows what our needs are. Sharing our prayer requests with our brethren also helps as we struggle with trials and tribulations.

Every person faces discouragement in their lives — even the child of God. Paul makes this evident in various places and offers solutions to the problem. He underscores the discouragement in the lives of the Corinthian brethren in his letter labeled Second Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 he says, *“We are troubled [hard pressed] on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”* The Corinthian brethren had been greatly mistreated but they had not been “in despair,” “forsaken,” nor “destroyed.” Since all people face discouragement, how can we be equipped, through God’s word, to overcome the disappointments we face in life?

The tribulations we face are short in duration as one considers the nature of eternity. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, *“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”* We must always remember that the bad in this life pales in comparison to the blessings that await God’s faithful.

To fight discouragement, **we must make sure we keep our real goal in mind.** This is exactly what Jesus did as He faced the reality of His crucifixion. Hebrews 12:2 says, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Instead of continually focusing on the object of His torment, Jesus focused on the “joy” that awaited Him as He completed the plan of redemption. We

need to remember that we are merely here for a short time, and Heaven is our ultimate dwelling place.

To fight discouragement, **we must encourage ourselves in the Lord.** King David had to encourage himself when the people were devastated by losing their families at Ziklag. The text in 1 Samuel 30:6 says, *“David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.”* In the midst of losing his own family, David’s followers wanted to blame him for the calamities that befell them. His grief and worry were compounded in this setting, but he did not lose sight of his need for God. It becomes evident from his life that David’s trust and confidence were in God. Christians would do well to have the same mindset today.

To fight discouragement, **we need to focus on the good things and not the negative.** There are plenty of things in life that are bad and create feelings of depression. To alleviate the feelings of depression, one must change their focus. When we redirect our thoughts, it can help with the discouragement we face in life. Philippians 4:8-9 says, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”*

Parallel to this concept, **we need to count our blessings.** When we consider all that God has done for us, it becomes evident that we have very little to be discouraged about in our walk of life. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 says, *“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your*

food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.” God provides us with more than we could possibly have need of as His children.

To fight discouragement, **we need to develop and maintain a regular prayer life.** Paul encouraged the Philippian brethren to turn their anxieties over to God. He said in Philippians 4:6-7, *“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* It helps to know we do not bear our burdens alone. God hears and knows what our needs are. Sharing our prayer requests with our brethren also helps as we struggle with trials and tribulations.

To fight discouragement, **we need to remember we have a High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is interceding so that we might come boldly before the throne of Grace.** Hebrews 4:15-16 says, *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* As our High Priest, the Son of Man understands what it is like to deal with problems in human terms. God is not aloof from what we struggle with in our daily routines of life.

God has sought to encourage His people in their darkest moments. We can have His assurances when life makes no sense. We can have His love when others have forsaken us. God provides the remedy for the problems we face in life if we are His Children.

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LACK OF KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO A CONTROVERSY WITH GOD

Marvin L. Weir

The Bible is bold in stating, “...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). God has revealed to mankind His Word, and it is incumbent upon each individual to understand the unchanging will of Jehovah. It is not how “I see it” or how “you see it,” but how **God sees it and said it!** The unchanging God (Malachi 3:6) has given us in His Word an absolute, objective, inerrant standard that must be believed and obeyed if one is going to save his soul (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Bible belief coupled with Bible obedience is not an option for one desiring to go to Heaven!

The Word of God enables a person to **know** what he must do to please the Heavenly Father. God’s gracious providence has provided man with the Bible: “a lamp unto [his] feet, and light unto [his] path” (Psa. 119:105). God’s Word is truth (John 17:17) and His truth is the only thing that will free one from his sins (John 8:31-32). Thus, Christians are commanded to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

A rejection of God’s knowledge is proof positive that one does not fear or respect Jehovah. Solomon was correct in saying, “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). The prophet Hosea declared that his people were “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Paul warns those who are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). How sad it is today that so many “have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). The Jews of Paul’s day failed miserably because they had corrupted the pure Word of God with human tradition. People today make the same mistake when they prefer their “traditions” and whatever supports their feelings

over the Holy Scriptures!

Far too many folks today are content to **listen** to what someone else says about the Bible. They never search the Scriptures to see if what is said is true or not (cf. Acts 17:11). These same people readily read what some **man** has said about religion, but refuse to read what **Christ** has said about sacred matters! Isaiah once said of God’s people, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst” (Isa. 5:13). People who choose to do battle with God will always lose! Unless we are willing to respect and seek after divine knowledge, we will suffer the same fate as did Israel.

The prophet Hosea forthrightly identifies Israel’s sins that led to her controversy with Jehovah. God’s faithful spokesman says, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood” (Hosea 4:1-2). Hosea’s rebuke would be right on target if preached in many congregations of the Lord’s people today.

Let us note some of the things that are as great a problem today as they were when Hosea delivered his message.

First, one will note that it was Jehovah who had a controversy with the people. People today tend to become angry with the preacher or teacher that makes them aware of God’s truth. They need to realize that their “controversy” is with God and not with man. One who faithfully proclaims the Word of God is only God’s mouthpiece.

Second, people failed to recognize and speak the truth. Isaiah wrote, “[They] say 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). Is it not amazing that regarding reli-

gious matters most people would rather be told a lie than truth? It is a sad day for society when truth cannot be found in people’s speech or actions. Truth is in as short supply today as it was in Isaiah’s day, and our country suffers greatly as a result of this sin (Rev. 21:8). God says, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). What is truth? The Word of God is truth (John 17:17).

Third, there was no goodness in the land. Jesus teaches that the second great commandment is to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:39). People today live in fear because evil instead of goodness reigns supreme. When the law of God and the law of man is cast aside and trampled underfoot, one can expect ungodliness and chaos to reign supreme.

Fourth, there was no knowledge of God in the land. God’s Word was not “a lamp unto [their] feet, and light unto [their] path” (Psa. 119:105). Neither is God’s Word a guide for most folks today! We live in a land where many now demand that the name of God not be heard and His Word not be seen. Respect for Deity and Sacred matters is at an all-time low in the USA. It is easy to see how very terrible a Godless, Communist/Marxist society is like, and yet we have so-called leaders among us who eagerly want to become such a society. No knowledge of God in a country has never made it successful and strong!

Fifth, swearing, breaking faith, killing, stealing, and committing adultery were in vogue in Israel. People’s rights today are no longer respected, promises mean nothing, the sanctity of marriage is spurned, and God’s moral standards are mocked. How terrible it will be to stand before God and be guilty of ignoring and breaking His laws!

All will one day give an account for not knowing God’s will (Acts 17:30). May God not have a controversy with us because of lack of knowledge of His Word!

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WHAT KIND OF PREACHING DO WE NEED IN OUR GENERATION?

Roger Campbell

The preaching done by Jesus and His disciples was plain, letting the hearers know in no uncertain terms what was what.

Have you ever heard a sermon that was presented using a chart that had been drawn or painted by hand on a bed sheet or canvas? Many of them were amazing and left a favorable impression on their hearers. A bit later, the use of overhead transparencies came along. And now? In many places, it is popular to preach sermons accompanied by Power Point slides.

Such sheets, canvases, transparencies, and slides have the potential to be helpful tools, but since they all may be “outdated” even in our lifetime, I strongly urge that we not uphold any tool or device as “the key to preaching.” The kind of preaching we need in our generation is the kind of preaching that is needed in every generation. What kind of preaching do we need? The correct answers will never change. Here are ten answers, and the order below is not significant.

Bible preaching. If we miss this one, then we have missed it all! God’s charge is, “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). The context of that statement makes it clear that “the word” is God’s word. Oh how we need lessons that are filled with a “*Thus saith the Lord!*” How we need lessons that open the Bible, examine the Bible, and cause those present to say, “He really preached the Bible today.” While some seem intent on filling their “sermons” with stories and jokes and reducing the amount of Bible they employ, God’s church and the world still need to hear what GOD says!

Preaching that carries out the other instructions of Second Timothy 4:2. Preaching the word includes, “*reproving [convincing], rebuking, exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine.*” Just as Jeremiah was charged to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build, and plant (Jer. 1:10), so God’s preacher today needs to present lessons that go to the heart and cause hearers to see where they stand with

the Lord, imploring them to make necessary corrections and encouraging them to do what is in the best interest of their soul.

Compassionate/loving preaching. Jesus preached from a heart that had compassion for those who heard Him (Mark 6:34). We need that kind of preaching today, presenting lessons that leave no doubt that the ones presenting them love the souls of those to whom they are speaking (Mark 10:21).

Passionate preaching. Do not confuse “compassion” with “passion.” One can have one without the other. We need Gospel preachers who are enthusiastic in proclaiming the Gospel, who have God’s word in their hearts like a burning fire (Jer. 20:9). Like Apollos, being “*fervent in spirit*” should characterize the way our lessons are presented (Acts 18:25). Each presenter of God’s word has his own personality, but those who hear sermons need to feel the enthusiasm of the speaker. If he is not excited about *telling* it, then he should not expect folks to be excited about *hearing* it.

Preaching that points to the Savior. Man’s greatest problem is sin, meaning that man’s greatest need is salvation from that sin. The only way to be saved is through Jesus the “*Savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14). Preaching that does not keep the Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2) at the forefront, does not stack up to the preaching of the first-century church (Acts 3:12-26; 8:35; 17:2-3; 18:28).

Preaching that explains how to walk with the Lord. How much are we really helping people who hear our lessons if we do not get down to it and show them what they, on an individual basis, must do in order to be in the right relationship with God? That means we need to give the Bible answer to “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30-33; 2:36-41). It also means we need to preach to let

Christians know how to “*walk in the light as He is in the light*” (1 John 1:7) in order to remain saved.

Preaching that points out the uniqueness of God’s people. Under the new covenant, God’s people, that is, His children, are in the Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10; Gal. 3:26-28). They comprise the “one body” (Eph. 4:4). Along with that privilege comes the responsibility for each follower of Jesus to come out from the darkness of the world and live a holy, separated life (2 Cor. 6:17). The church and the world need to hear that!

Preaching that comes from a heart that longs to please the Lord, not people. If someone hears a sermon and it makes him/her happy, that is fine. A preacher’s ultimate goal, though, is to present a sermon whose content and delivery please *God*. Brothers who preach need to have the mindset of the apostle Paul: “*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts*” (1 Thess. 2:4).

Practical preaching. This is preaching that reaches home with the listeners, that causes them to see how to use God’s message in their own lives (Acts 3:19; 7:51-53; 1 Tim. 4:11-12).

Clear preaching. It is fruitless and frustrating for hearers when they hear a sermon and are unsure exactly what is said or what the point is. The preaching done by Jesus and His disciples was plain, letting the hearers know in no uncertain terms what was what. Look at how Jesus spoke about worry, Paul spoke about the God of heaven, and Peter spoke of salvation (Matt. 6:25-34; Acts 17:22-31; 2:36-28).

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"IRREDUCIBLE COMPLEXITY" (EVOLUTION)

The principle of "irreducible complexity" provides a death blow to the so-called theory of organic evolution. But what is irreducible complexity? Simply stated, irreducible complexity means that the complexity of a functional system cannot be reduced without destroying the system itself.

The common mousetrap, though simple in design, is an example for it has a degree of complexity. It is made up of a platform, a spring, a hammer, a holding bar and a catch, all of which must function properly in order for the mousetrap to work. If any of its parts are removed or rendered incomplete the mousetrap is useless. Hence, every part must be in place and fully functional. The complexity of the mousetrap cannot be reduced without defeating its purpose.

Throughout the living world animals and plants contain an innumerable number of complex systems. As with the mousetrap, in order for these systems to function, every part of them must be complete.

Consider the system of sight in man. Human sight is made up of the eyeball (containing the cornea, the lens, and the retina), the optic nerve, the midbrain junction, nerve fibers and the occipital lobe. With all these parts working together man is provided with the remarkable ability to see. However, if even one of these parts is removed or rendered incomplete there can be no sight. Every part must be in place and fully functional. The complexity of the system of sight cannot be reduced without disabling its purpose — *irreducible complexity!*

However, this is the very thing that evolution requires — reducible complexity! Looking at evolution in reverse, it presumes that if the system of sight evolved, at some point in the past, the parts of this system must have been

reduced and, hence, less complex — meaning the system itself would be useless. There is no escaping this conclusion!

And remember, the principle of irreducible complexity applies to all of man's organs — the brain, the heart, the lungs and so on. None of these systems could function if their complexity was reduced — but this is what evolution says should have been the case.

And then, when applying this principle to the entire organic world, the problem for evolution is multiplied many trillions of times over.

There never could have been a time when any of the complex systems of the living world were less complex? Hence, evolution could never have happened. It is just that simple!

On several occasions I have challenged evolutionists with this argument. In every instance, they had never heard of it and were at loss to give a response.

The sad truth is that evolutionists must face the fact that evolution and the principle of "irreducible complexity" are mutually exclusive. End of story!

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked "not for publication." The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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