

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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WHY I LEFT THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH #1

Dan Goddard

Members of the church of Christ need to realize that it is not just the use of the mechanical instrument of music that separates the Lord's church from the Independent Christian Church.

I was a member of the Independent Christian Church (also known as the Conservative Christian Church, the Church of Christ-Instrumental, and the Christian Church) for over twenty years.

It was while I was preaching for the Bell Gardens Christian Church in Southern California that I began to question some of the practices of the Independent Christian Church, as to whether they were Biblical. After several months of study with various preachers from the Independent Christian Church and the Church of Christ Non-Instrumental, my wife and I decided to follow New Testament Christianity in a more perfect way and to identify ourselves with the church of Christ Non-Instrumental (the Lord's church).

It was in 1973 while I was preaching near Los Angeles, California, that Nancy and I began to question the practices of the Independent Christian Church. I kept asking myself questions like, "Why do we practice things not authorized in God's Word?" or "Is

this New Testament Christianity?" But I would always comfort my soul by saying, "We've always done it this way, so it must be alright."

I knew of several men who were thinking as I was, but did not know what to do about the situation. What would they do for an income if they stopped preaching? Who would they turn to for help?

The one event (among others which will be listed later) that caused me to seriously consider leaving the Independent Christian Church was our special "Fill-A-Pew" Sunday. The building was packed to overflowing with entertainment provided by a hundred member choir and a forty piece orchestra. The one who brought the most people got to hit the preachers in the face with cream pies. As I watched the events begin to unfold, I asked myself, "Is this New Testament Christianity - a rock 'n roll church service and a jungle beat that filled the auditorium drowning out all the singers?" I asked myself again, "Is this New Testament Christianity?"

From that Sunday forward I began to make a list of practices I could not find authorized in God's Word. I began to share this list with other preacher friends. Comments were made including "Well, Dan, you've done your homework." "Be careful who you show that list to." "If word gets out about this list, or this list falls into the wrong hands, your effectiveness among the Christian Churches in Southern California is dead."

These were matters that just weren't talked about. Everybody was doing them, but nobody wanted to show book, chapter and verse to authorize such practices. Whenever I would ask someone why we did a certain thing, or practiced a certain event, the pat answer that I always seemed to get was, "We have always done it" or "What harm could it cause even if the Bible doesn't authorize it?" For example, we had an elder that had never been married. When I showed the other elders

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Why I Left...

Guest Editorial...

SOLEMNITY OF WORSHIP

Gilbert Gough

The worship of God is a most solemn occasion. Solemn means "deeply earnest; serious, grave: Of impressive and serious nature" according to the American Heritage Dictionary. Worship of the Creator of the universe is a very serious activity. When one reads the worshipful Psalms it is advisable to take notice of the seriousness of those who wrote the Psalms. The praise, adoration, gratitude, humility, and submissiveness of man for God are so outstanding in the Psalmists' inspired thoughts. Take time to read the Psalms, especially chapters 29, 84, 95, 96, 97 and 99.

When Jesus was teaching His disciples to worship God in prayer, He taught them to pray after this manner: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). God's name is hallowed! The Father's name is holy, sanctified, set apart from the names of mortal men. Worship in prayer is not to be done in a frivolous manner, but with reverence and awe. It is a solemn period with our minds focused on the Most High.

JESUS' TEACHING ON WORSHIP

In John 4, Jesus was speaking with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in the city of Sychar in Samaria. During the course of their discussion, the woman brought up the subject of worshipping God. She explained there was a discrepancy between the place where the Jews worshipped God and where the Samaritans worshipped God. Jesus responded by emphasizing that the time was coming when the location of worship would no longer matter, but

presently the Jews were right in worshipping God in Jerusalem. He said, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (4:22). Jesus said the Samaritans were worshipping ignorantly. However, He went on to speak of the time when it matters not whether you worship in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim (place of Samaritan worship). He said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (4:23, 24).

Jesus emphasized to the Samaritan woman three important truths regarding worship of God after "the hour cometh" when the kingdom (church) of Christ would begin. First, God is the object of worship. God the Father, who is Spirit and not bound by space and time, "...seeketh such to worship him." Second, God desires everyone to worship Him "in spirit." To worship God "in spirit" means to worship God with the right disposition of heart. Third, God desires everyone to worship Him "in truth." To worship God "in truth" means to worship God in the right way according to the pattern of worship presented in the last will and testament of Christ, the New Testament. So, in Jesus' teaching of the Samaritan woman, He sets forth what the true worship of God will be in the Christian age. It is a solemn matter to worship God "in spirit and in truth."

EARLY CHURCH PRACTICED SOLEMN WORSHIP

In Acts 2 when the church

began on that Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, it began with the conversion of "about three thousand souls" who "gladly received his (Peter's) word" (which was inspired truth) and "were baptized" for the remission of their sins (2:41; cf. v.38). Then Luke records in verse 42, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They "continued stedfastly" worshipping God. These new Christians and those who would become Christians (cf. Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; etc.), worshipped God with the right disposition of heart according to the pattern by praying (Acts 2:42; I Thess. 5:17), singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), partaking of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; I Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-29), giving (I Cor. 16:1,2; II Cor. 9:6,7), and teaching God's word (Acts 20:7; II Tim. 4:2) especially and of necessity upon each first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2).

Since the Bible teaches there is true worship of God - worship of God done in the right way with the right attitude - then this implies there are wrong ways and wrong attitudes in worshipping God. The consequences of worshipping God not according to God's authority is to transgress God's law and that is sin (I John 3:4), for all things including Christian living and the worship of God is to be done with heaven's authority (Col. 3:17).

WHEN WORSHIP IS NOT SOLEMN BEFORE GOD

The Bible describes various kinds of worship that are not acceptable to God.

First, there is **ignorant worship** that is not acceptable. Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well that the Samaritans "worship ye know not what" (John 4:22). Obviously, the Samaritan's worship was not acceptable to God. When Paul spoke at Mars' hill, his inspired words to the people of Athens were, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO

THE UNKNOWN GOD. *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you*" (Acts 17:23). Paul set forth the One (God) he declared unto them as the right object of worship, and rightfully accused them of ignorant worship. It is a serious, solemn matter to worship God with knowledge of who God is and how He requires it done.

Second, there is **vain worship** that is not acceptable. The Jewish people, whom God had given the law of Moses to guide them on how to worship God until the Christ would come and establish His kingdom, involved themselves in vain, empty and faulty worship. Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah and applies the prophet's words to the Jews. "*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matt. 15:7-9). It is a serious, solemn matter to worship God with sincerity and with the right attitude.

Third, there is **will worship** that is not acceptable. The apostle Paul addressed this problem in the church at Colossae and warned the brethren of its evil. "*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*" (Col. 2:23). Will worship was employed by men who desired to impress people with their own will and way. Nadab and Abihu were involved in will worship when they offered strange fire (unauthorized fire) before the Lord and this insubordinate act cost them their lives (Lev. 10:1,2). It is a serious, solemn matter to worship God according to His will and way.

Fourth, there is **corrupt worship** that is not acceptable. All acts of worship may be corrupted by man and not according to the truth. The *Lord's supper* may be desecrated like the time when the Corinthian church turned it into a common

meal and not into the spiritual, solemn supper it was supposed to be (I Cor. 11:17-34). *Prayer* may be violated when addressed to Jesus rather than to God the Father as Jesus instructed (Matt. 6:9; John 16:23). *Singing* may be defiled when mechanical instruments of music are used in worship to God for which there is no authorization from heaven (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16,17). *Giving* may be disgraced when one holds back his contribution or when one fails to give cheerfully (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:7). *Teaching* the gospel of Jesus Christ may be perverted when the truth is not presented and error is espoused (Gal. 1:6-9). Many other examples of corruptions of the acts of worship may be cited. All of the acts of worship may be corrupted by not doing them according to the pattern and not with the right disposition of heart. It is a serious, solemn matter to worship God according to truth and with the right frame of mind.

Fifth, there is **disturbed worship** that is not acceptable. It is so easy to be distracted, but when we worship God, our attention must not be diverted. Every time the church is assembled for worship there are distractions. It could be brethren who have stayed up all Saturday night and come in late for worship. It is understood that there are times when being late cannot be helped, but we speak here not of the exception but the rule. We are talking about those who are habitually late without regard to those who they distract, disturb and bother when they enter late. Tardiness is habit forming. With most employers tardiness is not tolerated, and what is so amazing is that some of the habitual late comers to worship are never late for work!

The church may be engaged in singing when the late comers arrive. The brethren trying to be considerate interrupt their "*making melody*" in their hearts to the Lord by handing the late comers a songbook, or to show them the page number, or move over to make room on a pew. Those

brethren, who were on time, involved in serious, solemn worship, are disturbed by those who cannot seem to be on time.

Worship may be disturbed by the "clangers" and "clunkers." These folks rattle the change in their pockets, or clip their finger nails, or drop their song books into the racks loudly, or allow their children to play with noisy toys, or crumble up paper they have been scribbling on. We could go on and on with what the clankers and clunkers do in worship. We understand a song book may be accidentally dropped or the turning of a page in a Bible may be a little too loud, but again we speak of the exceptions not the rule. We need to be more conscientious about clanging and clunking in worship so as to not disturb the solemn occasion of worship.

Sometimes children disturb the worship of God. Now everyone loves children. Children need to be in worship observing and learning. But they need to learn how to behave and be quiet so they will not bother those around them and not disturb those who are leading the worship. They are so cute and they do funny things, but folks, don't play with the children, make faces at them, and get them to thinking they are funny during worship. That would be wrong for two reasons: 1) When you are playing with the children, where is your mind? Upon what are you thinking? It certainly is not on the worship of God in truth and in spirit. 2) You are hurting the child by helping him/her think worship is a time to play. From a very early age children need to learn that worship is a solemn, serious time.

If your child misbehaves or becomes upset during worship and you cannot calm them down within a few seconds, then please take them out and apply the necessary treatment. If the child needs the "rod of correction," then apply it. If the child needs its diaper changed, then change it. BUT, do not remain out of the assembly and allow the child to play. You need to bring the child right back into the assembly

and let them see you resume worshipping. Children are not dumb! They soon learn if they squirm or fret a little, mommy or daddy will get up, take them out, and then let them play in the nursery. When this pattern develops (and it has, because this author has seen it happen), the child fails to learn that worship of God is a solemn occurrence.

Oh yes, don't allow your children to get into the habit of getting up and going to the rest room during the sermon. This action can be

very distracting to worshippers and the preacher! Encourage them to visit the rest rooms prior to the time worship begins and let them know they will not be allowed to get up during worship. (This writer has seen as high as eight children getting up and going out during one sermon, then returning to their seat. It was observed that people were constantly looking around to see who was leaving and returning.) This habit is one of the most distracting during worship.

Another distraction in worship

is how some people dress for worship. Some need to learn how to dress for worship especially those who may usher or who may be leading the worship. It is true that the trend in our society is toward casual to sloppy apparel accompanied by the attitude that one may act as they please. This societal influence has taken its toll on our brethren's dress in worship. It has affected the way brethren think. Worship is a time of offering our best to the Lord without gaudiness and show. So, we ask, "When men and women come to worship wearing casual, sloppy clothes, is that your best?" Why is it when loved ones pass from this life we understand the solemnity of the situation? We will wear our best out of respect for our family member or friend who has departed this world. Yet, when we surround ourselves around the Lord's table and commune with the Lord who died for us to save us from our sins, we think it not disrespectful to wear casual, sloppy clothing? Men who lead the worship of God ought not to wear T-shirts with distracting words, pictures and advertisements or wear a shirt with it half unbuttoned. Is that kind of dress conducive to the solemnity of worship? It is appalling that some brethren have no qualms about wearing shorts to worship, and parents who will dress their children like they are going to the park to play. When women's clothing is too tight, too short or too revealing, they need a good Christian woman to take them aside and explain the solemnity of worship and the proper apparel of the Christian. Immodest apparel is very distracting!

The worship of God is too meaningful to possess a flippant attitude when God wants us to worship Him *"in spirit."* The worship of God is too important to pervert the acts of worship when God wants us to worship Him *"in truth."* The solemnity of worship must not be overlooked for it will have everlasting consequences.

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CAFETERIA RELIGION

DuWayne McNaughton

I enjoy eating at Morrison's Cafeteria. I especially enjoy their coconut pie, it is delicious! One of the main reasons I enjoy eating at Morrisons, is because I get to choose what I want to eat. I simply get a tray and go down the food line. "I'll take some of this, I'll have some of that, no thank you, I wouldn't care for any broccoli or brussel sprouts!" Yuck!!! This is what I call eating cafeteria style. I get to pick and choose what I like to eat, and what I don't like, I leave off.

Some folks approach the Bible like I approach the food line at Morrison's Cafeteria. They kinda go through the Bible and choose what they like, and pass by what they don't like. I call this attitude, "Cafeteria Religion!" Many people practice cafeteria religion where sin is concerned. They pass by themselves and condemn others (Rom. 2:1-3). Still others, practice cafeteria religion where the commandments of God are concerned. They are quick to point out New Testament passages stressing such doctrines as the Lord's supper, Baptism, the one church, singing without using instrumental music, etc. Doctrine is important (Titus 2:1) but, too many of these same folks pass by such passages as Ephesians 4:32 *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* This is doctrine also! And, what about Colossians 3:12-14? *"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."* This is doctrine too! I guess it is just easier for some brethren to pass by these passages.

To the end that we may please our Heavenly Father, may we all strive to avoid practicing cafeteria religion! In James 2:10 we read, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* Love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness are doctrine also.

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Why I Left...

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the qualifications for elders set forth by the Word of God (one such qualification being that an elder must be the husband of one wife) and asked how this man could be an elder if he had never been married, the "Biblical" answer I received was, "He's a nice guy, and one of the good old boys. And besides, everybody likes him." He was never asked to step down.

I would like to briefly describe some of the other concerns that prompted me to leave the Independent Christian Church and seek out New Testament Christianity. Members of the church of Christ need to realize that it is not just the use of the mechanical instrument of music that separates the Lord's church from the Independent Christian Church.

1. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH: One concern that prompted our decision to leave the Christian Church was their use of women. We had women choir directors, women on the church board, women teaching mixed adult Bible classes, women educational directors, women youth ministers, and women who filled in for their husbands in elders' meetings. I began to see that such was a violation of I Corinthians 14:34 and I Timothy 2:11-12.

2. SPECIAL MUSIC: Another area of concern was "special music." We had our choirs, chorales, rock bands and orchestras - all during the worship services. Our philosophy was, "The more you entertain them, the more people will come." Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 do not authorize such practices during the worship service.

3. PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: Partaking of the Lord's Supper on days not authorized was another practice of concern. We partook of the Lord's Supper on any night we chose with the logic, "The Lord is

here, the Lord is near, so let's acknowledge this by partaking of the Lord's Supper." Where does the Word of God authorize such? Acts 20:7 authorizes first day of the week observance ONLY.

4. SPECIAL DAYS: Special days were observed almost weekly. Christmas and Easter were observed as religious holidays. Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny made appearances during the services. Paul warned about this in Galatians 4:9-11 and Colossians 2:16-17.

5. FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONS: We fellowshiped denominations. I exchanged pulpits with denominational preachers. I was a member of the local ministerial society. I accepted denominational baptism - if it was by immersion. (This was why there were no active evangelistic programs toward denominational people - we did not believe they were lost.) I supported denominational revivals, conventions, conferences, and rallies. Second John 9-11 warns us about this attitude and practice.

6. CONSTITUTIONS AND BY-LAWS: Constitutions and By-Laws took the place of Scripture. The length of the office of elders and deacons was determined by what the By-laws said - not by the Word of God (cf. II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3).

7. DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM: Congregational voting was the means used for decision making, including hiring preachers, installing elders and deacons, etc. (cf. I Peter 5:1-4). The Lord's church is not a democracy, but a theocracy, with Jesus as head.

8. THE OFFICE OF DEACONESS: Every congregation that I preached for had the office of "Deaconess." It was a voting office and there was a "head" Deaconess that was a member of the church board. We know that in Acts 9:36-43 Dorcas was commended for her good works, but this was not an authorized "office."

9. RAISING FUNDS FOR THE CHURCH: Funds were raised by means of car washes, bake sales, yard sales, rummage sales, etc. - all in the name of the church. First Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches the correct way to support the work of the church - by free-will contributions of the members.

As you can see, it is not only the mechanical instrument of music that separates us from the Independent Christian Church. An attitude exists called the "Martin Luther Principle" which basically states, "Whatever is not expressly forbidden in the Word of God is authorized." This is why many of the preceding acts are practiced in the Independent Christian Church. There is an attitude of "I want it, I like it, and I don't care what the Bible says, I am going to have it."

How many of the things listed above are being practiced in many congregations of the church of Christ today? Is it true where you worship? Oh, how we like to be like those round about us!

*Part 1 of 2
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[EDITOR'S NOTE: We hope in coming months to include several reviews of different denominational doctrines and churches. Many of these will be written by those who have come out of denominationalism.]

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IT TAKES TWO CROSSES TO GET TO HEAVEN

Rusty Stark

The argument we used to have with our Baptist neighbors we now often have with preachers from our own brotherhood. We insist that we must obey Christ in order to receive his blessings (Heb. 5:8-9), but we are told that Christ "paid it all" so there is nothing left for us to do. We read that it is our duty to be diligent and make our calling and election sure (II Peter 1:10), but we are informed that it is a scandalous

lie that salvation arises from any human activity. It is now being impressed upon us that the concept of grace/faith precludes the concept of law/works.

It doesn't matter what others say, Christ answered these questions with the plainest and most graphic language possible. "*Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:27). The cross of Jesus, all

by itself, is not enough to get me to heaven. The cross of Jesus, all by itself, is not enough to get anyone to heaven. If it were, then everyone would be in heaven regardless of what they do! We must hasten to say that the cross of Jesus is enough to satisfy the debt for sin, completely and fully. The cross of Jesus is precious enough to buy all of mankind back from the condemnation of sin. The cross of Jesus is enough to achieve salvation and make it available for the whole world (see Isaiah 53).

But, while the cross of Jesus makes salvation available for mankind (cf. Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20; 2:14; I Cor. 1:18; I Tim. 2:4,6; II Peter 3:9), there is another cross involved, without which, no one will receive salvation. Each one that will be saved must bear this cross - his own cross (cf. Matt. 10:34-39; 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-38; 10:17-22; Luke 9:23-26). There is something "I" must do. Salvation comes to me through the divine activity of the cross of Jesus and through the human agency of bearing my own cross. If I fail to bear my own cross I cannot be saved.

Through the glorious cross of Jesus, the veil has been parted and we now have access to the holiest place (Heb. 10:19-20). Yet, it is through my own cross that I die to self and identify myself with this Great Savior (Mark 8:34-38).

The "salvation by grace" controversy is not difficult. Jesus achieves (makes available) salvation, but each person must receive it by obedience (Matt. 7:21), and we must maintain it by diligence (II Peter 1:5-10).

Is there nothing for us to do (Heb. 5:8-9)? Does God have no law for us (Rom. 8:1-2; James 1:25)? Will we not all be judged some day by our works (Ecc. 12:14; II Cor. 5:10)?

Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free?

No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me.

(Thomas Shepherd)

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HOW TO SAVE THE CHURCH

The Lord's church today is facing some trying and difficult times. Conditions are critical. Digressions are growing at a rapid pace. If we are to turn the tide of a complete apostasy, we must arise NOW to meet the challenges that are before us. We cannot sit idly by while efforts are being made to destroy the influence of the Bible, the importance of the church and compromises of the truth on every subject. For many years this warning has been sounded, but it seemingly has fallen on deaf ears. If the church is to be saved from the evil that abounds, we must "awake" from our spiritual sleep, and walk as wise men and not as fools (Eph. 5:14-16). If we are to save the Lord's church, we must:

1) **Develop Elders Who Can And Will Convict The Gainsayer.** This is required of those that are appointed to serve as elders in local congregations (Titus 1:10). Bishops (elders) must be "*apt to teach*" (I Tim. 3:2), and as "overseers" they must watch over the flock and keep out those that would devour it (Acts 20:28-30). In the selection of elders, we must put the premium on spiritual matters and not on the popularity of the man. The elders must do all within their power to keep the church spiritually clean and sound in doctrine and practice.

2) **Teach And Train Men To Preach The Gospel.** Too much manpower is being sacrificed on the altar of secular pride and materialistic enterprise. Parents and congregations alike are failing in the responsibility to perpetuate the Gospel through succeeding generations. We must begin now to instill into our young men the urgency of preaching the Word (II Timothy 2:1-2; 4:1-4).

3) **Practice Discipline.** In order to preserve truth and to strengthen the church we must, as the Bible teaches, practice discipline within the body of Christ. When elders of a local church allow the name of the Lord to be degraded and scoffed at by worldly and insincere members, they set the church back for years and create problems that may never be overcome. Required reading on this subject is found in I Corinthians 5, II Thessalonians 3, and Hebrews 12.

4) **Preach The Bible, Not Emotionalism.** What we have to offer men in sin is the pure message and plan of redemption. Nearly any actor in Hollywood can jerk more tears than we can, and most lawyers can do a better job of swaying an audience, but God has entrusted us with the Gospel of Salvation (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:14-16; I Cor. 9:16). When we resort to playing on people's emotions instead of "teaching" them, we are on the road to sectarianism.

5) **Do More Teaching On Church Identity.** A generation ago, gospel meetings were conducted to introduce people to New Testament principles of doctrine, worship and organization of the church. Today, these things are not taught; and people do not know the difference between the Lord's church and denominations.

- Author Unknown

Elders COLUMN

THE PLACE OF ELDERS

Jerry Joseph

In the Lord's church today there are some who are trying to restructure the church. Some want to change the mission, the message and the organization of the church. Some are constantly talking about the need for change. Certainly if there are things that are being taught and practiced that are contrary to God's Word, change is demanded. But, the cry from some today is not for that type of change. Some want to make changes in that which God has bound and loosed (Matt. 16:19). No one has the right to make such changes.

One area that is being attacked that deserves our attention is the place of elders in the local congregation. In the minds of some, there is no need for elders. Others would say, yes, we need elders but they have no authority. There are many misconceptions about elders in the church. But, what does God say about the place of elders in the local congregation?

Elders are important because they are a part of God's plan for the church. In Philippians 1:1, Paul addresses "...the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Paul told Titus to "...ordain elders in every city..." (Titus 1:5). Elders are to be appointed in every congregation. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church..." (Acts 14:23).

Elders are important because of the qualifications that must be met in order to serve as an elder. In First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-11 we have listed the God-ordained qualifications that each man must have to be appointed an elder.

Elders are important because of the importance of their work. Being an elder is not just a position, it is not an honorary position, it is not just an office to be held. It is a work of service. It is, as Paul stated in First Timothy 3:1, a good work. What is involved in that good work?

ELDERS ARE TO BE EXAMPLES

In First Peter 5:3, Peter said that elders are to be "...examples to the flock." They are to be examples to all the flock in *faith* (II Peter 1:5), in *Bible knowledge* (II Tim. 2:15; II Peter 3:18), in *godly living* (Titus 2:11-12), in *faithfulness* and *loyalty to the truth* (Heb. 10:24-25; Jude 3) and in *love* (I Cor. 13:1; John 4:19-21).

ELDERS ARE TO BE LEADERS

Notice the words of the apostle Peter in First Peter 5:2, "*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*" It is the elders who are the God-ordained leaders in the congregation. When they fail to lead or lead in the wrong direction, we know what will happen to the congregation. They must lead in the direction that God has stated in his Word.

ELDERS ARE TO BE DOERS

When you read the words of Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31, it is clear that elders are to be doers. They are to take heed, oversee, feed, watch and remember. God has enjoined upon them great responsibilities. The eldership is to be an office of action. Notice the words in Titus 1:9, "*Holding 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.*" Men who serve as elders must be doers and demonstrators of God's Word.

ELDERS ARE TO BE EXHORTERS

When you look again at Titus 1:9, notice that Paul said that elders

are to "...exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Elders are to be in the exhorting and encouraging business. We all from time to time need to be encouraged and exhorted in the Lord's work. When the elders see one who is doing or teaching something that is harmful spiritually, it is the elders that are to step forward with exhortation and offering words of encouragement to change. We need to know that the elders, because of their love, will be there when needed, to exhort and to encourage.

ELDERS ARE TO BE RULERS

In stating the qualifications for a man to serve as an elder, Paul stated in First Timothy 3:4-5 that he must be "*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*" Notice the words "ruleth" and "rule." In Hebrews 13:17 the writer said, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves....*" Yes, it is the elders that are to rule. They do have authority.

ELDERS ARE TO BE SOUL-WATCHERS

"...For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account..." (Heb. 13:17). As they watch for our souls they watch for dangers and problems that may creep in that will cause our souls to be lost. They will therefore, become stoppers of that which is false (Titus 1:9-11) and supporters of that which is faithful to God's Word. As Paul warned the Ephesian elders of problems to come, he them told them, "*Therefore watch...*" (Acts 20:31). Yes, God-ordained elders are soul-watchers.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

publication costs. May God bless your efforts to speak against the liberal views of some of the people of this day and time. Those of us at our age tremble at some of the "progressive thinking" that is thrust upon us" ...*L. O. Woodruff, Lindsay, OK*. "We all thoroughly enjoy and look forward to receiving this publication from month to month. It is one of the truest pieces of literature that is being printed. Our many thanks for a wonderful publication and for mailing it free of charge" ...*R. W. Zimmerlee, Las Cruces, NM*. "I appreciate the good you are doing and our prayers are with you" ...*Harris McCaleb, Tarrant, AL*. "I love this paper and it is the only way I can keep abreast of false teaching in the church. Keep up the good work" ...*Ronald Greenman, Lake City, FL*. "I find the material to be refreshing and edifying. We use the videos from lectures in lieu of a located preacher which we cannot afford yet. Keep up the good work" ...*Loran Gearhart, Cheyenne, WY*. "I'm telling the brethren that we must be informed. That we must teach the Truth, ALL truth, stand on the Truth and expose all sin, error and false doctrine wherever it is found. Keep up the good work" ...*Fred Bogle, Orlando, FL*. "Since my husband passed away this is one way I can keep informed on what is going on in the church and what preachers are still staying true to the book" ...*Celina, TN*. "I enjoy reading S.T.O.P. very much. I wish your paper wasn't necessary but unfortunately it is. I appreciate very much the stand for truth by the writers in S.T.O.P. Keep up the good work" ...*Kenneth Frazier, Pulaski, TN*. "Keep up the good work few are doing. Some times I read it all before I lay it down" ...*Nova Davis, Indianapolis, IN*. "Keep up the good work you are doing. False teaching and teachers are abundant in our brotherhood and we must "contend for the faith." It is so easy to follow the "broad way" as it is so popular today but the "narrow way" always has been and always will be the way to heaven" ...*Bob Wagner, Tallahassee, FL*. "We truly appreciate your commitment to truth and exposing error" ...*M/M Luther Stewart, Sumner, TX*. "I enjoy reading it. It helps me in my work for the Lord. For your soundness, I thank God. Thank you very much for the help I have received through S.T.O.P." ...*Joe Frost, Luverne, AL*. "Keep plugging away" ...*Toby Miller, Paulding, OH*. "May God bless you in your great work" ...*Raymond Exum, Crystal Lake, IL*. "Keep up the good work. A paper like S.T.O.P. is much needed in our brotherhood" ...*Mordecie Kadil, Athens, MI*. "Thanks for standing for the Truth" ...*Jesse Russell, Buena Vista, GA*. S.T.O.P. encourages me in knowing that some Christians are not forgetting our "first love" and your work for Him is helping to keep the courage and strength to persevere and stand on my convictions in what the scriptures teach me. After all, the one I want to please is God, and would hopefully be an example for "souls" who need to hear about His good news. Pray for me as I will always pray for you, and the success in your work in and for his name. Thank you very much for all of your teaching and encouragement. I always look forward to my copy of S.T.O.P. and share it with my daughters" ...*Jonesboro, TX*. "We enjoy your paper" ...*Handley C/C, Ft. Worth, TX*. "Thank you for your stand against liberalism" ...*Wards Chapel C/C, Manchester, TN*. "You are indeed a rare breed in today's church/world. May the good Lord continue to bless your work" ...*William Wheeler, Nashville, TN*. "Thanks so much for earnestly contending for the faith! Your publication is a very, very valuable asset to the brotherhood" ...*Stacey Grant, Macon, GA*. "Don't you dare cancel my prescription. I may not let the sun go down on my wrath if you do. No, I didn't mis-spell subscription as I find it to be an excellent prescription for knowledge and informative re; brotherhood problems. Keep up the good work" ...*Richard Wineinger, Guin, AL*. "We appreciate you and the congregation there for standing for the truth. Keep up the good work" ...*Virgil Cretsinger, Shady Valley, TN*. "I believe it to be the best publication in print today. May God bless the good work that you brethren are doing" ...*Jimmy Young, Jonesboro, AR*. "We appreciate the work you are doing" ...*Donna Zink, Bloomington, IN*.

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