



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 ARE WE LOSING OUR CHILDREN?

James W. Boyd

Young people who are trying to do right, and parents who are trying to train them right, meet with the most aggravating opposition from other “Christian” parents and young people who are content to follow the world.

We properly make great efforts to take the Gospel to the whole world. Many noble deeds and sacrifices are being made by many people in this effort. God will bless them for it! At the same time, while it is not true of all, many are losing their children. Leaders in the church have suffered such losses. Compare the number of small children in Bible study with the number of young people in the teenage and young adult classes and you can see that somewhere along the line we have many “dropouts.” Faithful brethren who labor among the youth warn of the increasing apostasy among the young: the lack of genuine spirituality, a growing Biblical ignorance, disrespect for Biblical authority, and either the inability or unwillingness to stand for the truth even when taught. Again, we want to say this is not an indictment of all. But it is true of many, even many who have been reared in what we consider Christian homes.

From what are they being lost? To what are they being lost? They are being lost from the church, truth, efforts to restore New Testament Christianity in every generation. They are being lost to other religions, denominations, non-religion, anti-religion, atheistic and worldly pursuits. Many who are retained are lukewarm and indifferent. Some

have estimated that as high as fifty per cent of our young people, “reared in the church,” are leaving. What is being lost are precious souls. These are souls with a good opportunity to go to heaven, settling into a course of life that leads to hell.

Why is this drain taking place? Can we plug it before others go that way? Some years ago I spent several months inquiring, reading, interviewing, questioning young people, parents, teachers, anyone who has much to do with the spiritual life of the young, seeking answers to this problem. An analysis of my findings show there are a number of factors that are contributing to the loss of our young.

IT STARTS IN THE HOME

Basically, the attitude and action of the home dominates the scene. The fault lies there more than any other place. We like to blame every body and every thing other than where the blame really lies. There is no profit in that approach. The home is not the sole cause, but it is probably the prime cause of the loss of the young. We need to take this medicine and do something about it. Parents cannot “play church,” putting other things first, and then expect their young to put God first. It seldom happens. Parents have failed so often to teach by

word and example what a Christian should be.

God placed the prime responsibility of spiritual training of a child on parents (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:19; Deut. 11:19). We need to study, not just passively read, these verses. The first business of every parent is to see to it that the child knows God and his duty to God.

Parents display such attitudes that are sickening and disgusting. “They are young only once. Let them have their fun and good times.” We need to learn that no time is a good time that does not put God first. To indulge the young is detrimental to them. They become ill-equipped to meet their sacred duties. This attitude implies that it is unpleasant to serve God. It is just a deprivation. It suggests that there is plenty of time someday to learn about God. To say they are young only once suggests that possibly God does not know that. Yet God says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1).

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

Can we rear a child fifteen or so years in the atmosphere where God, the church, truth, Christianity,

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Losing Our Children...



Editorial...

THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM #1

Garland M. Robinson

When is Jesus in our midst? When does he promise to be with us? When are we assured He is there? It is when we do his will.

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

The context of the Lord’s statement in Matthew 18:20 begins in verse one. The Lord’s disciples ask him a question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus answered with a barrage of both action and words in verses 2-6. He speaks of the sincere attitude and humility that those who seek to follow him must exhibit. If we desire to be great in the kingdom and in his sight, we must be sincere, having no impure motive. We must be meek and humble. Our heart is kind and seeking only to do His will. We do not try to take advantage of others. We love and care for others. We wish them well just as we desire to be well. We want to be accepted of the Lord and we want those around us to be accepted as well. When we do this, while humbly obeying his will, we are great in his sight and in his kingdom.

Jesus speaks in verse seven about “offenses” and how it must be that they will occur. An offense is a matter that causes another to fall or stumble. Things like this will happen, “but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” Our goal is to never be one who contributes to the downfall of another. If and when we do commit such offenses (sins), we must repent of them, ask forgiveness and make it right so they will not be charged against us.

In verses 8 and 9, He tells of the drastic measures one must take in order to be a faithful disciple. He uses the figure of cutting off a hand

or foot or plucking out an eye if such causes us to stumble in our Christian service. He is not commanding us to mutilate our bodies. This is a figure of speech, a hyperbole (exaggeration). The point is that we cannot allow *anything*, even the most precious thing to us, to hinder our service to God. Nothing can stand between us and our devotion and commitment to the Lord. We must seek the Lord and His kingdom “first” (Matt. 6:33). All else is secondary in comparison.

In verses 12-13, Jesus tells of a faithful shepherd having a hundred sheep and how that if even one goes astray the shepherd will search diligently until it is found. More rejoicing is made over the one that is found than over the ninety nine that are safe. Souls are precious in the sight of God (cf. Psalm 49:8)! “*Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish*” (v.14). These words also speak of our attitude toward the weak and downtrodden. Our whole function as servants of the Lord is to be as our Master. When we are so, we are like Him.

In verses 15-17, Jesus gives instruction on what to do when a brother trespasses against us. The word “trespass” means we have been sinned against. This is not a trivial matter wherein someone has hurt our feelings. One has sinned against us and their soul is in jeopardy. It’s a matter that cannot be swept under the rug and we just let it slide. This person needs to know the error they committed and they need to repent. We are obligated to try to resolve the matter with them. Because it is a personal offense, against me and me

alone, we go to them privately. If the matter is resolved (in the repentance of the offender), forgiveness is extended and the matter is laid to rest. No one else ever knows anything about it. If, however, the person does not repent, then we are to take one or two more with us as witnesses in a further attempt to get them to repent. If they repent, we have prayer together and the matter is not brought up again — it is forgotten. No one else has to ever know about it. If the offender still does not repent, then the matter is to be brought before the whole church. This shows the seriousness of the offense and brings pressure upon the offender to repent. If their stubbornness prevails and they do not repent, the whole church is to see this brother as wayward, unfaithful, and no longer in fellowship with the Lord and the church. He is counted as a “heathen man and a publican” (v.17). When the saints follow the Lord’s instructions to resolve matters such as this, we meet with the Lord’s approval. We have the assurance that He is in our midst.

The text of Matthew 18:15-17 is mis-used when applied to a situation where error has been publicly taught/preached. It is said that the error cannot be examined (corrected, rebuked) publicly until the person who taught the error has been approached privately. This is false. It ties the hands of faithful brethren and hinders the defence of the Gospel. It says that the truth must be silent while error is taught. Such is not so. The Gospel is always to be presented while error is rebuked and corrected. Consider Rom. 16:17-18, 2 John 9-11, Eph. 5:11, Gal. 2:11-14.

The Lord and His way is not a way of division. It is a way of unity, harmony and peace. If we want the Lord to accept our service and worship, then we must comply with His commands.

THE LORD IS WITH US

When we live as the Lord requires, doing those things pleasing in his sight, having an attitude and disposition that is like His, He is in our midst. Notice the words of Matthew 18:18-20: “*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and*

whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Verse 18 shows that the apostles bound and loosed those things that had already been bound and loosed in heaven (cf. Matt. 16:19). They did not speak of their own will, they spake God's will. Jesus did the same (John 12:49) and so did the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).

Verses 19 and 20 show that when we stand together in doing the Lord's will, He is with us — He is in our midst. We are one with Him.

A very common application that is made of verse 20 is that when two or three are gathered together in the Lord's name, then He is with them. It is thought that this applies to the assembly of the church. Some say that when two or three get together at the lake, then that constitutes the Lord's assembly. And, for this cause some forsake the assemblies of the saints on the Lord's day and excuse themselves to do whatever they want to do. That's not what this verse is talking about! It's not talking about the assembling of the church. It's talking about the fact that when we do the Lord's will, following His word, then He is with us. He is in our midst.

Both Old and New Testaments show that the Lord is with His people — His church. He is in our midst. Psalm 22:22 is quoted in Hebrews 2:12: "*Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the **midst** of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*"

In Revelation 1:13, John saw "...in the **midst** of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." This is an obvious reference to the Lord Jesus. Seven verses later in verse 20, it is revealed that the seven *candlesticks* are the seven *churches*. The point is made clear, Jesus is in the midst of faithful congregations, not just when they assemble, but when they act in following His divine will.

The seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3 serve as an example

(both good and bad) for us today. The obvious point made in these two chapters is that the Lord walked in the midst of these churches. He did so to govern, to watch and to rule over them. Verse one of chapter two says he "*walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*" (cf. Rev. 1:13). Five of the seven congregations are given stern warning that unless they repent, their candlestick would be removed (2:5). They would no longer be a light bearer. They would cease to be a shining example. The Lord would depart from them. He would abandon them to their own selfishness and conceit. If they would not listen and take heed, there would be no reward.

When is Jesus in our midst? When does he promise to be with us? When are we assured He is there? **It is when we do his will.** If we are servants of God, faithful and true, the Lord is with us.

In the great commission, Jesus said, "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 alway*, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20). But, if we are not faithful, if we hold ill-will toward others, if our heart is not right, if our conduct is shameful, we cannot expect the Lord to stand with us. Such a life is repulsive to the Lord. He does not promise to be with us. Instead, He promises to take vengeance against us at the last day (cf. 2 Thess. 1:8).

Having the Lord's favor and approval is needed above all else. He is the judge (John 12:48). If we desire and expect to go to heaven, there's only one way to get there; and, that is

to do his will. Jesus said, "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*" (Luke 6:46)? "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*" (John 15:14).

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With this issue we are announcing a change of oversight in regards to "Seek The Old Paths." I have accepted the invitation to work with the Leoni (pronounced Leona) Church of Christ, near Woodbury, Tennessee — a faithful congregation with three fine elders, four dedicated deacons and good faithful members. I have been preaching for them since August 2011 while they were looking for a preacher. They extended to me an invitation to accept the work, and after much thought and prayer, I've decided to work with them. It does not require a change in my personal residence; but, does involve a change of oversight and a change of address. You can start sending all correspondence and contributions to: **Leoni Church of Christ**, P.O. Box 7506, McMinnville, TN 37111

Preparations are underway to get all the necessary things in place for moving the equipment, office, etc. The transition is going smoothly and you should not see any interruption in the paper (with the exception we're already experiencing because of equipment problems). As always, I request your prayers in doing the greatest work on earth — preaching and teaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Elder's COLUMN

For Deeper Study...

TRY, PROVE, TEST THE SPIRITS

Stephen Wiggins

An abundance of false teachers circulated among the brotherhood of God's people during the first century. It was therefore necessary for biblical writers to frequently call attention to this phenomenon. One writer who repeatedly warns the brethren was the apostle John. In one of these statements he declares: "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1, ASV).

God's people must heed this same warning today. As false teachers saturated society within the first century, it is no less true in the twenty-first century. The Lord's church today is assaulted on every side by those teaching destructive heresies. It is incumbent upon God's people to take seriously their responsibility as guardians of the truth. God expects and demands this of us.

Following, is an exposition of 1 John 4:1. An appreciation for this divine directive will help motivate us to "test the spirits" in order to determine whether certain doctrines originate with God or man.

FALSE PROPHETS

The phrase "false prophets" translates a single term in the original, a compound word composed of *pseudo* and *prophetes*. The term occurs 11 times in the New Testament. Its first occurrence is when Jesus warned the disciples of the deceptive nature of false teachers — "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves*" (Matt. 7:15). Within the biblical context, a "prophet" is a proclaimer of the divine will which could not ordinarily be known except by special revelation. The true prophet was an inspired spokesman for God.

The term *pseudo* is often prefixed to words in the New Testament to denote the spurious (false) character of the one mentioned or the deceptive nature of the thing referred. For

example, besides "false prophets" there are "false Christs" (Matt. 24:24), "false teachers" (2 Peter 2:1), "false apostles" (2 Cor. 11:13), "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4) and "false witnesses" (Matt. 26:20). The apostle Paul even prefixes *pseudo* to the noun *logos* (word) to characterize the false teacher as a *liar* (1 Tim. 4:2). This latter sort is especially dangerous because through "hypocrisy" they are "like actors who play parts so well that their words have the ring of truth" (BDAG, 1096).

Thus, the false prophet is the counterfeit whose claims are bogus concerning himself and his message. He is a fraud who pretends to speak by inspiration of the Spirit, or at least on God's behalf, but in actuality preaches a message of human origin. His message does not comply with God's word. When one preaches that which is not in harmony with divine revelation, that person is a false prophet. This kind must be rejected. Association on a spiritual plane cannot be extended because his efforts are detrimental to the cause of Christ. Those who sympathize with and support a false teacher becomes a "partaker" (fellow-shipper) of his corrupt works (2 John 9-11).

MANY ARE GONE OUT

The term "many" relates the numerous amounts of false prophets operating at the time the apostle wrote this epistle. John says "even now have there arisen *many* antichrists" (1 John 2:18). In his next epistle he continues to assert that "*many* deceivers are gone forth into the world" (2 John 7). This high quantity of false teachers agitating the brotherhood was anticipated by Jesus: "And *many* false prophets shall arise and shall lead *many* astray" (Matt. 24:11). Paul states there were "*many* adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9), "*many* corrupting the word of God" (2 Cor. 2:17), "*many* enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18), and "*many* unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers" (Titus 1:10).

Notice that the ratio of those misled by doctrinal error is proportionate to the abundance of false prophets. The existence of *many* false teachers results in the deception of *many* innocent people. These are the percentages Peter had in mind when he wrote, "And *many* shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:2). Sadly, we have a large class of brethren today who do not believe there are *any* false teachers. But the Bible clearly depicts that there were *many* in existence even while the apostles were still living. A quick survey of doctrinal deviations dispensed throughout the land suggests there is no reason to believe their tribe has decreased in modern times.

The phrase "gone out" translates a single verb. Grammatically, the form is a *perfect* tense which may be the most exegetically significant of all the Greek tenses (Moulton, 140). Since the perfect is employed less frequently than the present, aorist, future, or imperfect tenses, when it is used there is usually a deliberate choice on the part of the writer. The force of the perfect is that it describes an event completed in the past (in the indicative mood) which has results in the present time (i.e., in relation to the time of the speaker/author). The *resultant state* which proceeds from the past action is presented as a *continuous state*. It is a combination of the aorist and present tenses. In this sense, the perfect relates a completed action with continuous, existing results (Wallace, 572-573). Another describes the perfect tense as indicating a "present state of affairs" resulting from a past action (Zerwick, 96).

The specific use of this tense here is called an "intensive" (or "resultative") perfect. This kind of perfect is used when the writer wishes to *emphasize* not so much the past event but rather the *results* or *present state* produced by the action of the past. It is not that the use of the

perfect excludes the notion of a completed act, but rather that the *focus* is on the *results* which follows. The significance of this is that John wants to call special attention, not merely to the fact that false teachers had gone forth into society (a past event), but specifically that the insidious influence of their error was presently continuing to affect the brotherhood of God's people at the very time he wrote this warning to the brethren (Vincent, 2:355). Although the difference is subtle, the KJV (followed by the ASV) captures this nuance better than the modern translations — “many false prophets *are gone out* into the world” in contrast to “have gone out” (NIV, NRSV, etc.). This is not surprising. Reputable scholars are on record as acknowledging the KJV's “superior rendering of the Greek Perfect over many modern translations” (Wallace, 575).

A comparison of the passage under discussion with 1 John 2:19 where the apostle says the false teachers “went out from us” and 2 John 7 where he says they “are gone forth into the world,” results in some grammatical dividends. In all three passages the apostle employs the same verb to describe the going forth of the false teachers, but in the latter two passages he portrays this action with the aorist tense rather than the perfect. This is significant because often the choice of tense used by the speaker/writer is made for the specific purpose of describing the specific kind of action he wishes to portray. The significance of the perfect tense is that John wants to call special attention to the fact that the influence of the false teachers was presently continuing to affect the brotherhood at the very time he wrote this warning to the brethren.

But with the aorist tense, John is concerned more with emphasizing the simple fact that the false teachers have left. This is done with the aorist which is the way an action is portrayed in summary form; the action is portrayed as a whole, including both the beginning and ending point. The whole occurrence of the false teachers' exit from the faithful is viewed as a single entity regardless of its internal make-up. This is not to deny that the false teacher continued to influence God's

people in a negative way as portrayed elsewhere with the perfect tense. There is simply a different emphasis underscored with the use of the aorist. The fact that the false teachers “went out” is given in snap shot form by the aorist tense — the false teachers *have left* (“they went out from us”). The significance of the aorist tense here is that with it John articulates that now *the false teachers are gone, they have left, and are no longer to be considered a part of the fellowship of God's people* (Fanning, 255-256).

BELIEVE NOT EVERY SPIRIT

John uses a couple of imperatives to set forth the obligation which God's people are to implement toward false teachers. The first comes negatively whereas the second takes the force of a positive command. The apostle has just referenced the commandment to “believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). He then offers an immediate contrast at 4:1 with the first of two imperatives — “*believe not every spirit.*” While there are several uses for the imperative in biblical Greek, the primary usage is to set forth a command. Here, this one takes the form of a prohibition. An action is being forbidden. Since the imperative is the mood of intention, it moves in the realm of volition which involves one imposing their will upon another. In this context, God imposes his will upon his children by commanding them *not to believe* certain doctrines even though they fly under the banner of a religious message. As in any command, it sets forth an obligation and not an optional choice. It might initially seem strange that God would command his people not to be gullible or naive in doctrinal matters. Yet, this is exactly what this prohibition entails. There are some doctrines God absolutely forbids people to believe.

When God says “believe not every *spirit* but prove the *spirits*,” the meaning is that one is not to believe any religious teaching without proper discrimination. The term “spirits” is an allusion to the prophets and their messages. This is indicated by the immediate reference to “prophets” in the second half of this verse. The Holy Spirit miraculously inspired prophets in the first century

church so as to progressively reveal truth through them. These inspired prophets were called “spirits” (2 Thess. 2:2) or “spiritual” (1 Cor. 14:37) because they possessed the spiritual gift of prophecy. But the term “spirit” can reference “an activating spirit that is not from God... [and] Because there are persons activated by such spirits, it is necessary to test the various kinds of *spirits*” (BDAG, 836). This being the case, the term *pneuma* (spirit) in the passage under consideration is used as “metonymy of the cause.” This is a figure of speech whereby the term is put for the prophets and special revelation communicated through them (Bullinger, 543). The sense of the passage, then, is as follows: “believe not every spirit [i.e., every doctrine spoken by a prophet presumably inspired of the Spirit], but prove the spirits [i.e., doctrines supposedly given from prophets inspired by the Spirit], whether they [i.e., the presumably prophetic doctrines] originate with God.” To test the “spirits” then, was in effect, to test the particular *pneuma* under whose impulsion the prophets spoke — the “Spirit of truth” (cf. John 16:13) or the “spirit of error” (v.6).

PROVE THE SPIRITS

The second imperative complements the first — “*prove* the spirits, whether they are of God.” One is to reject (believe not) certain doctrines, but only after those teachings have been evaluated in light of God's inspired will and found to be in non-compliance with revealed truth. The term “prove” relates this evaluative process. Paul uses the exact same imperative form — “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The word can express a couple of different nuances of which both may be embedded in its meaning here. First, it means to make a critical examination of something in order to determine its authenticity, *put to the test, examine*. Second, it signifies to draw a conclusion about something as genuine or worthy on the basis of that testing, *to prove, approve* (BDAG, 255; Louw/Nida, 364).

This evaluative process cannot

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Try, Prove, Test The Spirits...

Losing Our Children...

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morality are secondary to school, games, television, pleasure, movies, etc. and expect them to be grounded in first things first (cf. Matt. 6:33)? Children are taught at home what is of prime importance.

Can we allow children to pursue social interests, conform to the crowd, seek popularity, engage in unchristian recreation, lascivious behavior, filling their minds with the moral trash produced by the degenerate minds of the movie, magazine, and television industries, and expect them to love the pure, noble, moral and clean things of life?

Can we hold out to them the idea that “success” is financial success, acceptance, worldly recognition, and expect them to follow the Christ who never sought such things?

Too many parents have neglected to teach and demonstrate in their own lives the loyalty God expects from a Christian. Yet somehow, they think their children will seek what is good above all else. Yes, the problem of losing our young is first and foremost, above all else, a reflection of the home.

OTHER SITUATIONS

Some young people are lost when they enter into circumstances that discourage Christianity. Sometimes it may be unavoidable, such as when they might be forced from home into the armed forces. The trials are hard and they need every encouragement and prayer. Many are lost, or at least show their lack of concern for Christ, during the years when they seek higher formal education at colleges and universities where God and His will are considered irrelevant and stupid. Take a young boy or girl out of high school and sit him/her at the feet of some “wise” scoffer and mocker who take shots at God all the time, teaching infidelity as if he knew everything, it certainly has a detrimental effect on many youths. They hear the truth ridiculed and they do not know enough truth to resist the error, nor are they in a position to be able to defend it even if they were informed. The devil has many of his servants in the chairs of learning in

our educational systems.

A MAJOR DRAIN

Others are lost by **disregarding the Lord’s teaching regarding marriage**. They marry outside the church and are further drawn away from the truth. They ignore God’s laws on marriage and divorce (too often having been led astray by false teachers in the church regarding this subject), and once finding themselves in a bad circumstance, they remain there rather than please God and repent of their sinful state and come out of it. Often young people are subjected to a divided home religiously, or to one or both parents being indifferent toward God. This has destroyed the faith that could and should have been nurtured.

Still others become the victims of **those who constantly berate the Lord’s church, criticize it, belittle it, and reduce it to nothing more than a denomination among denominations that needs restructuring**. These liberal, lying, “new lights,” often speak of the church as being out-of-date, answering questions nobody is asking, lacking love, full of tradition, hypocritical, stagnant, etc. How can any person constantly hear that Satanic barrage and have respect for the church? They lose interest when they are convinced of such harangue. Such critics often cater to, adopt, and admire the message and methods of denominations. They like to impress the young with their sensationalism, emotionalism, promotionalism, “jive talk,” unorthodox dress and conduct. They create and then exploit what they call the “generation gap,” and wean the young away from the wise counsel of faithful parents, godly elders and sound Gospel preachers. They call for an abandonment of the past, whatever it was, and an adoption of the “new” even if it is not true.

NEGLIGENT OLDER PEOPLE

Parents and church leaders and teachers too often sit idly by, complacent, gullible, naive, even cooperating with such things, and uproot the sound and solid religious heritage our young deserve. That heritage includes faith in God, love for family, love for the church of the Bible, the

sanctity of the home, conformity to God’s standard of morality. Too many young are being served huge helpings of modernism, immorality, compromise, permissiveness, foul speech, Marxism, anarchy, rebellion, “down with everything, and up with nothing.” The “do your own thing” attitude has captured the souls of many, and this “go along to get along” sickness that is often evident among some older people has taken many of the young away from God.

These critics of God’s way are sometimes politicians whose personal lives are in shambles, educators who worship at the altar of their own wisdom, the social gospel clergymen who do not have much regard for the soul of man or his eternal destiny. Some act more like brotherhood “fun and games” directors who are called “youth ministers,” who think it is the work of the church to provide playgrounds, gymnasiums, pleasure trips, etc., and put their emphasis there. Many “youth seminars” have been little more than sessions to convince the youth that the elderships, Gospel preachers and parents who hold to the Word of God, are “irrelevant.” The efforts of godly and determined Christian parents have no more deadly enemy among the young than these flighty, flippant, “cute,” know-it-all youth workers who constantly ape liberal digressives and degrade the Lord’s church and ridicule the nobility of the past.

The church has a role regarding parents and youth. It is the same role that it sustains to all people, young and old. It is not to assume the work of the parents and home, providing recreation, secular education, etc. It ought not coddle and condone sins regardless of who is involved. Rather than thinking the answer lies with singles classes, single again classes, youth seminars where brainwashing goes on, week-end retreats that take the young away from Lord’s Day congregational worship in favor of “lake-side worship,” the church has the God-given task of preaching and teaching the same saving Gospel to everyone. To “preach the word” by reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is the work of the church. Ignorance of the Word of God and the lack of respect for it is at the heart and base of the loss of young people. It would be better to study the Word rather

than engage in “problem solving” where participants share ignorance. The church deserves the full support and cooperation by every home in assisting in such efforts.

DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THIS?

We must add that parents have a duty to other parents. It is sinful to place stumbling blocks before young people. Parents and their young are responsible for their influence. It is not merely “my own business” what my young people do, where they go, how they dress, what they are allowed to do. Inasmuch as young people influence one another, and peer pressure is heavy, parents have the responsibility to see to it that their young set a good example. It is not unheard of that young people who are trying to do right, and parents who are trying to train them right, meet with the most aggravating opposition from other “Christian” parents and young people who are content to follow the world. We have heard it said, “It’s nobody’s business but ours if my children attend the dance.” That is as false as a three dollar bill. Every member of the church, parents, children, elderships, preachers, all are effected adversely. We need to ask if the influence of our home is contributing to the cause of Christ and encouraging Christ-like conduct, or is it as often as not, like the influence of the sinful world?

Every young person is a gift from God. None can be lost without it being an eternal loss. Experience warns that many do fall away. Let us resolve that we shall make that number as small as possible. Teach the young, show the young, what being a Christian really is. Follow the teaching of the Bible, not the ways of the world. Show them how to resist the influences that are evil when they cannot avoid them. But many of these influences can be avoided with parental concern, teaching, and guidance.

There is not one young person we can afford to lose. Are you really willing for your son or daughter to go to hell? Certainly, you are not. Just how studious and diligent are your efforts, at home and in the local church, to see to it that they follow Christ?

One of the tragic realities of

recent years is how many schools, colleges, and universities operated by brethren are now more of a hindrance to faithfulness among the

young than helpers of the home to keep them strong and build them up.
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Try, Prove, Test The Spirits...

(Continued from page 21)

be accomplished without the first idea and pragmatically would include the second. Once a doctrine has been examined, if it passes or fails the test, it must then, from a practical standpoint, be approved or disapproved. Every doctrine is to be critically *examined* in light of whether or not it is genuine. But a part of the complete process involves the second definition as well — the doctrine examined now must receive *approval* when it passes the test. It is not enough to merely *test* a doctrine. It must then receive approbation if part of authentic truth. Only then should any teaching be embraced by faith and obeyed as saving truth. Our responsibility in this matter should never be taken frivolously. The eternal welfare of souls is at stake.

That John uses the imperative in the *present* tense is significant. What must be appreciated is that “time” as an element of tense is basically non-existent in non-indicative moods such as the imperative. At the forefront is “aspect” or the way in which the writer wants to portray the action of the verb. John could have placed the imperative in another tense to relate a different kind of action. He chose, however, to use the *present* tense and probably for a specific reason. While contextual considerations must always be allowed for, the unaffected meaning of a *present* tense basically relates an activity as a continuous process, without the beginning or end in view. Thus, John not only *commands* brethren to “prove the spirits” but to do so as an *ongoing* process of operation. This specific kind of present is categorized as the “iterative present” (which is frequently used with the imperative mood). Therefore the idea conveyed is that of *repeated*, continuous action. This is repetitive action in the sense that it is done over and over, again and again (Wallace, 514, 520). The implication of this is that as long as false teachers circulate within socie-

ty, the Lord’s church will continuously be under the God-given responsibility to keep on repeatedly testing the doctrines taught by those claiming to speak on God’s behalf.

John says doctrines are to be tested to see whether or not they are “of God.” A consideration of the syntax here offers some exegetical dividends. In the original this grammatical construction consists of a preposition coupled with a noun in the genitive case. It may be categorized as a “genitive of source” (origin). This relates that a doctrine must have God as its source for it to pass the test and receive approval — it must be *of God* in the sense of being *from God*. If a religious teaching does not *originate* with God (if it is not derived from a Divine source), then it must be rejected as arising from some other cause (cf. “doctrines of demons,” 1 Tim. 4:1; but not the unwarranted “taught by demons” per the NIV). Today, if a religious teaching cannot be substantiated as coming from God’s book (the Bible), it ought not to be embraced as part of the “apostles’ doctrine” or the “doctrine of Christ” (Acts 2:42; 2 John 9). A false doctrine is nothing more than a religious message which does not come from God. Likewise, a false prophet is nothing more than one who preaches a religious message which cannot be substantiated by God’s Book (the Bible). Brethren will do well to heed these matters.

Following is my translation of the verse under consideration. It is intended to be paraphrastic for the purpose of highlighting the verbal tenses and moods used by the inspired apostle: “*Beloved, I command you, don’t believe every spirit! But I command you to repeatedly test the spirits to determine whether they originate with God, the reason why is because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*”

For a list of Sources in writing this article, see: seektheoldpaths.com/stop312.htm#SOUR

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"We appreciate very much *Seek the Old Paths* and the stand for truth that you continue to make. We pray God that you will able to continue your work for many more years. We are moving to the Rio Grand Valley of Texas and seeking brethren sound in the faith with whom we can worship.

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