



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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MAHERSHALALHASHBAZ GOD'S SIGN TO A SINFUL NATION

Tom Wacaster

The Bible has been banned from our schools while Islam is received with open arms. It has become politically incorrect to question the doctrine of Islam, but politically correct to bash God, the Bible, and Christianity. As in the days of old, the divine instructions have not been heeded and God's people once again find themselves in the throws of a major apostasy.

Don't let the name scare you. Punctuation marks help us get the right pronunciation: "Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz." But the name meant something: "Hastens to the prey." Here is the setting...

When Tiglath-pileser III took control of Assyria, he immediately made his bid for world domination. His westward movement struck fear in Syria and Israel [keep in mind that this was during the time of the divided kingdom, hence Israel, the Northern Kingdom]. With a common enemy in mind, Israel and Syria sought alliance, and then sought to bring Judah into that alliance. Ahaz is on the throne in Judah and Pekah in Israel. Ahaz feigns piety and loyalty to God, but despite the warning from the prophet Isaiah, this weak and wavering king sets his sight, not on God, but on worldly alliance with the apostate Israel and the heathen nation of Syria. Apparently the people loved Ahaz's intentions, and so Isaiah gives the people a sign in two parts. Before his son is ever born, the prophet posts the words in a public location, leaving the people to read and study for themselves. When Isaiah's son is born, he is instructed by God to give him this most significant name: Mahershalalhashbaz (Isa. 8:3).

Syria and Israel would be destroyed, Assyria would turn toward Judah, and the people of God would suffer utter defeat. Assyria was "hastening to the prey."

This brings us to Isaiah 8:11 where God speaks to the prophet with a "strong hand," and warns the prophet not to walk in the way of the people. Don't make a confederacy (8:12), don't be afraid of their fear, sanctify God, and let Him be your fear and dread (8:13). Herein lay the fault of the people and their king. They would not listen to the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, faithful proclaimers of God's word, were treated as traitors and trouble makers. Some of these faithful prophets of old paid dearly for their faithful proclamation of God's word. But alas, their message fell on deaf ears. Rather than fear God, Judah feared the nation of Assyria. Rather than trust God, they placed their trust in a heathen nation and followed in the footsteps of their apostate brethren in the Northern Kingdom. The result was defeat at the hands of the enemy and the beginning of a journey into spiritual apostasy that would eventually lead to their being carried away into Babylonian captivity.

There are two applications I want

to make for your consideration.

First, this Old Testament example teaches a truth that is clearly set forth in God's word and is applicable to every nation, in any generation: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). "Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah" (Psa. 33:12). "The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God" (Psa. 9:17). Solomon's admonition to "trust in the Lord thy God" (Prov. 3:5) is as applicable to nations as it is to individuals.

While Judah of old may have received a miraculous sign, it does not take a miracle to awaken the discerning mind to the danger that confronts our nation today. The simple fact is, America no longer trusts in God. "In God We Trust" may still be engraved on our coins, but it takes more than a stamp by the United States Mint on our coinage to demonstrate a nation's trust in God. What this nation needs is another Mahershalalhashbaz; a clear and concise warning that should America not repent, God will raise up a nation that will hasten to the prey! America desperately needs to recap-

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Mahershalalhashbaz...



Editorial...

DIVORCE, BAPTISM, EUNUCH

Garland M. Robinson

I recently heard it said that “if a person wants to obey the gospel, but has been married before and is now in another marriage, that person has to divorce before he can be baptized.” This was new to me. I’ve never heard that — that someone in a second or third, etc. marriage must automatically divorce in order to be baptized. Let’s see what the Lord has to say on this subject. He has the authority, not man (Matt. 28:18). His words will be used to judge us (John 12:48), not man’s words.

In order to be baptized according to the Scriptures, one must **believe** (John 8:24), **repent** (Acts 2:38) and **confess** (Acts 8:37). The focus in this lesson is **repentance**. One must repent of every sin, all sin (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). If a person has committed adultery or is living in adultery, he must repent of it in order to be scripturally baptized. This is true regardless of the sin. The Bible does not say you must repent of all your sins except adultery before you can be baptized.

Jesus is very clear on the subject of divorce and remarriage in **Luke 16:18** when he shows the principle (law) of divorce and remarriage. “*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from [her] husband committeth adultery.*” Mark 10:11-12 makes it applicable to both husband and wife. The word “committeth” is present tense and shows “continuous action.” In summary, when one puts away their spouse and marries another, they are both living in a constant state of sin/adultery. Just as same-sex partners live in a constant state of sodomy (sin), heterosexual partners live in a constant state of adultery (sin) when one or both have previously been married and divorced. This is the principle or rule laid down by heaven. If the Lord’s instruction concerning divorce and remarriage stopped here, no one could ever divorce and marry another with God’s approval, period. However,

the Lord has more to say in **Matthew 19:9** where he gives an exception to God’s law of divorce and remarriage. “*...Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*”

Except means “if not for.” In summary, the force of Matthew 19:9 says that when one puts away their spouse because of their spouse’s fornication and marries another, they are not living in adultery. So, the question is a rather simple one when answering whether or not one’s current marriage is approved of God. The husband and/or wife must answer this question, “Did you ‘put away’ (divorce) your spouse because of their fornication?” If you did, then you had the right to marry another. If you did not, then you did not have the right to marry another. Often the reply to this question is, well, I, uh, umm, this happened, or that happened, and any number of scenarios and circumstances are presented. But, the bottom line is, “Did you divorce your husband/wife because of their fornication?” If you did, then you were free to marry and if you did not, then you were not free to marry. If this is not the case, then the Lord’s words mean nothing in Matthew 19:9.

Regarding those who are free (eligible) to marry, it must be remembered that one can only marry someone who also is free to marry. If you marry someone who has been married before and did not divorce their mate because of their mate’s fornication, then you both will be living in adultery as long as you are together. Paul reminded the brethren in the church at Colosse that before they became Christians, some of them had “lived in” fornication (Col. 3:5,7). One can commit fornication, adultery, idolatry, evil desire, etc. in a “one time” action, OR in a “continual action,” that is, an on-going process. Being married to someone you had no right to marry involves you both in an on-going state or process of adultery.

Adultery, like any and all sins, can be forgiven. Such a person must repent of their sins and be baptized in order to be saved (Acts 2:38). If you are already a Christian and commit adultery, then you must repent and pray (Acts 8:22). Repentance means you change your mind (thinking). A changed mind leads to a changed conduct (life). You vow to not continue the sin(s). For example, the thief who repents vows to never steal again, but cannot keep that which he has stolen. If I steal a car and repent of it, can I keep the car? That would be nice wouldn’t it? If I steal your wife and repent of it, can I keep her? Many things we cannot change from our past, but some things we can. If I am a drug user, I can repent of it and vow to never do it again, but it’s not likely that I can fix the things I did while taking drugs. I would love to go back and fix things I did while living in that culture, but so many of those things cannot be changed. I can tell people I’m sorry and ask their forgiveness, but cannot “undo” what has been done. When those who are guilty of sodomy (homosexuality, same-sex partners, so-called “gay”) repents, can they continue with their ‘partner’ after being baptized? Can one who has been baptized continue their sodomy? Or, must they separate from their homosexual partner? Obviously, such a person must separate. You can’t continue in sin after repenting of it. The answer to this question is shown in Romans 6:1, “*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.*” Adultery is the same way. If I divorce my spouse and it’s not because of their fornication and then marry someone else, I’m living in adultery. I’m living in a sinful relationship — an adulterous marriage. Jesus is very clear in saying that one can “live” in adultery (Matt. 19:9; Col. 3:5-7). To repent means I have to stop the sin and never return to it. Does that mean I can keep my partner with whom I’m committing adultery? God forbid (Rom. 6:1). If I’m married to someone to whom I have no Bible right to be married to (because either myself or the person to whom I’m married did not divorce because of their spouse’s fornication, Matt. 19:9), then I cannot continue that sin (that partnership) with God’s approval. This is exactly what Romans 6:1 is talking about. Can you think of any sin we can repent of but continue in that sin after repenting of it? Why would adultery be

the exception? Of course, it's not.

Those living in adultery must get out of their adulterous relationship — their adulterous marriage. It is not sinful to repent of sin. It is not sinful to get out of a sinful relationship. If I have a partner in crime, to repent of my crimes does not allow me to continue the partnership I've formed. When one has divorced (without the fornication of their partner) and married another, they each have formed an adulterous partnership. To repent of their sin, their partnership, means they must dissolve their partnership. They never had a God-given right to form such a partnership in the first place. Obviously, it is not sinful to get out of it.

The only scripture that gives a divorced person the right to enter another marriage is Matthew 19:9; and it says the innocent mate can divorce the mate guilty of fornication, and then the innocent mate is free to marry again. There are only three categories of people who have a God-given right to marry: 1) Those who have never been married (Heb. 13:4), 2) Those whose spouse has died (Rom. 7:2-3), 3) Those who have put away their spouse because of their fornication (Matt. 19:9). In each case, the one whom they marry must also have a God-given right to marry. There are no other categories. A fornicator who has been divorced because of their fornication is not free to marry. No scripture authorizes it.

When Malachi 2:16 says God hates putting away, it is talking about a God-sanctioned marriage — a God-approved marriage. God hates those who do not obey His word in "putting away" their spouse for any and every cause. But, God does not hate the innocent spouse who divorces their mate who is guilty of fornication (Matt. 19:9). He gives the one "not guilty of fornication" (the innocent one) the right to marry again with his approval. These individuals can repent of all their past sins (divorcing is not one of them) and be baptized and continue with their new spouse because their marriage is approved of God — they are not living in adultery. On the other hand, those who divorce and remarry, without the cause of fornication, makes their new marriage an adulterous marriage. There are now four people living in adultery. The individuals who have done this can repent

and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, but cannot continue in their adulterous marriage. Romans 6:1 says, "God forbid."

Divorce for any cause can be forgiven when one repents of it, but no passage of scripture allows that person to marry again. Rest assured, such a person can be forgiven, live a faithful Christian life and go to heaven, but they must live with the consequences of their sin, they can't marry again. There is no passage that says so. Remember, we must have authority for all we say and do (Col. 3:17).

Jesus' disciples understood the seriousness of the Lord's words in Matthew 19:9 and exclaimed, "*If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry*" (v.10). The Lord then explained that some, if they want to go to heaven, must live their life as a eunuch, that is, a life of not being married. Verse 12, "*For there are some eunuchs, which were so **born** from [their] mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were **made** eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have **made themselves** eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive [it], let him receive [it].*" Jesus says there are three categories of individuals who cannot marry and function as married couples do. As a result, they live as eunuchs: 1) Those who are born a eunuch (a birth defect) — without the ability of being able to function in the marriage relationship, 2) Those who have been physically (surgically) made a eunuch and therefore cannot function in a marriage relationship, and 3) Those who make themselves a eunuch, that is, they live single the rest of their lives for "the kingdom of heaven's sake." Jesus is not talking about mutilating your physical body, but living "as" a eunuch. This third category refers to those he speaks of in verse nine who are divorced for any cause other than fornication. They have forfeited the privilege to be married. If they desire to go to heaven, they certainly can, but they cannot ever be married again. Heaven is more important than marriage. Do these words of Jesus mean nothing? Do we just dismiss them, ignore them, and do what we want to do? Not without eternal consequences!

Let it be clear that someone who divorces their spouse because of their spouse's fornication and marries

another is acceptable with God (Matt. 19:9), as long as they marry someone who is also eligible to marry. Such a person is now in a second marriage. They can become a Christian and live a faithful Christian life in their new marriage with the Lord's blessing. They do not have to separate from their spouse because their marriage is sanctioned by God. BUT, those who have NOT divorced their spouse because of their spouse's fornication and married another are living in adultery and must get out of that sinful relationship (marriage) in order to receive forgiveness and eternal life in heaven.

Consider this, what sin (which sin) can one commit, repent of it and be baptized according to Acts 2:38, but continue in that sin and expect God to accept it? Romans 6:1-2 says, "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*" Some of the church members at Corinth had been involved in very sinful actions and relationships before becoming Christians, but not any more. Paul reminded them of it but told them they had been forgiven. "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And **such were some of you:** but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Shall one continue in adultery that grace may abound? God forbid. One who obeys the Gospel has died to adultery. He cannot live any longer therein. John told Herod, "*it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*" (Mark 6:18). Verse 17 says Herod had married Herodias. They were living in adultery. John told him their adulterous/sinful marriage was not right and he was beheaded because of it.

No one can live in adultery and expect to go to heaven. Such a person must repent of it and get out of it. Those who repent and live faithful will one day hear the Lord say, well done thou good and faithful servant.

Elder's COLUMN

THEY LET THE PREACHER GO

Victor M. Eskew

The words “they let the preacher go” have been spoken in almost every congregation at some point in time. As the overseers of the flock, the elders made the decision to dismiss the preacher. When the news gets out, all begin to whisper, saying: “They let the preacher go.”

Letting the preacher go is not an easy decision in most instances. There are numerous reasons why the decision is difficult.

First, the decision is going to put the preacher and his family in a state of confusion. Preachers try to settle into their works. They make their “present place of abode” their home. When the decision is made to let him go, he and his family panic because they must move from their home. The next several months are going to be spent searching out a new work. The process of settling in, making friends, and establishing a home is extremely stressful.

Second, the decision to let the preacher go is difficult because it will have an impact on all the members of the congregation. In general, churches do not like change. They enjoy that which is regular and dependable. In addition, some have grown very close to the preacher. He has been in their lives during marriage, pregnancy, sickness, family turmoil, and in death. They have sought his counsel. They have developed a deep bond and friendship. Letting the preacher go means the church is going to be in upheaval for a period of time. Friends are going to have to separate from one another.

Third, the decision to let the preacher go is hard because it causes talk in the community. One of the questions constantly asked is: “Why did they let him go?” The community has also established ties with the preacher. He may have been involved in many good works. He may have established friendships with some in the area. Both the “rumor mill” and the severed friendships within the community put stress upon the local congregation.

Yes, letting the preacher go is a very difficult decision. However, an eldership has the right to ask the preacher to step down from his position. As the bishops over the local congregation, they are the church’s overseers. To the elders of Ephesus, Paul spoke these words: *“Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). These men have the responsibility of taking care of the church of God (1 Tim. 3:5). They are the ones who “rule” the local congregation (1 Tim. 5:18). There are times when these men see the need for a change of preachers. The reasons for this change could be many. Note this point: they do not need what some call a “scriptural reason” to let the preacher go. In other words, they do not have to prove that the preacher has engaged in sin or has proclaimed false doctrine in order to let him go.

What should the church’s reaction be when the preacher is let go?

First and foremost, they should submit to the decision of the eldership. This includes the minister who is being let go. He is under the oversight of the presbytery just like all other members. Hebrews 13:17 is clear on this matter. *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.”*

Second, they should properly grieve the loss they feel. Tears and depression are common when loss is experienced. Anger is also a common emotion experienced in the grieving process. One needs to remember that *anger* can be a devastating emotion. Thus, all must watch it closely so sin is not committed (Eph. 4:26-27). Last, they should make the transition period as smooth as possible for the sake of the body of Christ.

Letting the preacher go is a diffi-

cult thing to do. Elderships have been criticized and ridiculed severely when it’s been done. Churches have been split when it is done. This is sad, shameful, and sinful. It has always been interesting to this writer that preachers are free to leave a congregation whenever they desire. They can also leave for any numbers of reasons. So why don’t elderships have the same right? Most preachers know they do. It is one of the “hazards” of the ministry. Most ministers take it in stride. They calmly and pleasantly leave the congregation when asked. They leave with dignity, respect, and honor. This is how it should be. If any wrongs are done against them, they accept them (1 Cor. 6:7).

How the minister departs shows whether he operates out of earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom (James 4:14-16); or, with the wisdom that is from above (James 4:17-18). The same can be said with regard to the actions of the members.

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WE ALL HAVE A PART IN...

Teaching. *“They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4).

Giving. *“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea”* (Acts 11:29).

Working. *“...Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work...”* (Col. 1:10).

Influence. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16).

Helping. *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27).

— Editor, Garland M. Robinson

SALVATION BY GRACE

It is God's desire, according to the apostle Paul, that all men everywhere be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). God, as it is stated in 2 Peter 3:9, "...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is evident therefore that God does not want anyone to be lost.

God, by His grace, has provided the way by which we can be saved, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Paul declared, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). In Ephesians 1:7 we have these words, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." In Ephesians 2:8, these words, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." It is impossible for anyone to be saved apart from the grace of God.

Because the Bible declares that we are saved by the grace of God, does that mean our salvation is whol-

ly by God's grace apart from any acts of obedience on man's part? NO! NO! Nowhere within the Word of God is it taught that salvation is by "grace alone." The idea that we are saved "wholly by grace" is the Calvinistic idea of God's grace and stands in conflict with what the Bible teaches concerning the grace of God.

If salvation is by "grace alone," then that rules out the necessity of man obeying any commands in order to be saved (bring about salvation). Salvation by grace does not exclude man having a part in his salvation. Peter exhorts the people to "save yourselves" (Acts 2:40). Man does have his part in his own salvation.

Salvation by grace does not exclude the necessity of obedience upon man's part. When we obey the commands of God in becoming a Christian, that does not nullify God's grace.

Jesus emphasized the necessity of obedience in Matthew 7:21 when He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that

doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The New Testament teaches that we cannot be saved without obedience to God's Word. According to Acts 10:35, only those who "...feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In Hebrews 5:9 we learn that Jesus is "...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." To obtain salvation offered by God's grace means that we must **believe** in Christ (John 8:24), **repent** of our sins (Luke 13:3), **confess** Christ (Matt. 10:32-33) and be **baptized** (Mark 16:16).

Yes, salvation is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). But, just because salvation is a gift does not mean there are no conditions that must be met by man. Neither does it mean that it ceases to be a gift when we obey the conditions stated. We must accept God's grace and not reject it (Acts 13:43-46).

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Mahershalalhashbaz...

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ture the culture of a bygone era; a culture where men and women trusted in God and demanded that the leaders they sent to Washington do the same. America needs to return to a time when those who clung to their Bibles and their faith in God were a majority, and not considered the "radical right"! Unfortunately, like Israel of old, our electorate clamors for smooth words from her so-called prophets, and a religion that is non-judgmental and palatable to the moral whims of every new vice that might come down the pike.

The speed with which America is casting off her trust in God is dizzying. The present generation seems to be intent on destroying themselves by placing their trust in government, science, humanism, or any institution that can meet their physical needs, lessen dependence on God, and provide for their self indulgence with lit-

tle or no restrictions when it comes to deviant behavior. The problem is compounded by a lack of knowledge of God's word. The Bible has been banned from our schools while Islam is received with open arms. It has become politically incorrect to question the doctrine of Islam, but politically correct to bash God, the Bible, and Christianity. Oh yes, beloved, America needs to repent, remember, and return to her first love!

Second, there is a spiritual application as well. Lest we think the lesson of Mahershalalhashbaz applies only to nations, consider the following. The Lord's kingdom (the church) is splintered and divided. Rather than trust in God and His Word, some have abandoned the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) for an alliance with the denominations. Hand in hand with spiritual heathens, they march forward toward a presumed victory that shall only end in utter defeat. Those who still preach the old Jerusalem Gospel are pressured on every side to join them in their unholy alliance with other

religious groups to defeat the onslaught of Satan. Sadly some, under the leadership of weak and wavering elders, capitulate (surrender). Thanks be to our God, there are still faithful preachers and proclaimers of God's word. But as in the days of old, the divine instructions have not been heeded and God's people once again find themselves in the throws of a major apostasy. Rather than listen to the word, too many capitulate.

Those who call for the old paths are despised and labeled as traitors and trouble makers. Edward Young has noted, "Throughout the history of the church, those who have sought to call the church back to her God-given mission and away from her man-made 'programs' have been treated as trouble makers." But the message is still, "Mahershalalhashbaz"! There is a judgment coming, and God's wrath is "hastening to the prey."

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FRIENDSHIPS

Ronnie Whittlemore

***Real friends are friends in bad times as well as in good times.
It is a great blessing to have friends who support, comfort
and help in times of tragedy.***

There are a great number of problems and troubles in this world. Psychologists have their hands full with various types of mental illnesses. Many people are the victims of some kind of abuse. Other people have “chemical imbalances” and need medication. Yet others have suffered “mental and nervous breakdowns” for one reason or another. There is no way of tabulating what portions of these problems are: 1) physical (chemical imbalances), 2) mental (from the aspect of not having a good mind) or 3) self-imposed illnesses because of doing the wrong things or neglecting to do the right things. Sometimes sin makes a person appear “mentally off.” One’s crazed behavior (temper tantrums, anger, or silence) results from allowing sin to take control of your life. But regardless of the problem and the need for seeing a psychologist or counselor, oftentimes *loneliness* is a contributing factor. Very few people can go through this life playing the part of a loner and not have some kind of difficulty. The Lord stated, “*It is not good that the man should be alone*” (Gen. 2:18).

FRIENDSHIP is a very valuable asset to any person. But who is a friend? The dictionary defines “friend” as: “a person whom one knows, likes and trusts; any associate or acquaintance; a favored companion; one with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause; a comrade; one who supports, sympathizes with or patronizes a group, cause or movement.” A friend is someone with whom we associate. These friends may be neighbors, co-workers or classmates. They may be friends from high school or college days. They may be other Christians.

Even though Jesus did not have much in this world (Matt. 8:20), He did have *friends*. He chose twelve men to be His apostles. They would be near Him at all times. They

walked and talked with Him. They listened to His preaching. They observed His miracles. Among those twelve men, there were three who were very close to the Lord. Peter, James and John made up the “inner circle.” They did not have more authority than the other apostles, but they were close friends for whatever reasons.

Most people have friends. But what kind of friends are they? Does it matter? What is the value or worth of friends? How does one obtain friends?

WRONG KIND OF FRIENDS

A friend may be described as: “someone who possesses certain qualities that one accepts.” Notice the use of the phrase: “that one accepts.” Friends may not necessarily have good qualities. They should have good qualities, but often people adopt low standards concerning their friends. It is interesting that parents want their children to have the right kind of friends. Yet as adults, these same parents may not require the same from their own friends.

The Bible lists many examples of people who chose the wrong kind of friends. Israel was often guilty of associating with the heathen nations around them. God warned them concerning their evil influence (Num. 33:55). These enemy nations were dangerous because of their practice of idolatry. Hebrew history is filled with occasions of God’s people turning to idols as a direct influence of their heathen neighbors (1 Sam. 8:5; 1 Kings 11:1-2; 15:30; Exod. 32:3-4). The Bible warns about the dangers of being in the wrong crowd (Exod. 23:2; 1 Cor. 15:33).

RIGHT KIND OF FRIENDS

There are certain qualities that *good* friends will have. They will be:

1) *kind* (Col. 3:12; 2 Peter 1:7), 2) *honest* (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 3:7; Phil. 4:8; 1 Peter 2:12), and 3) *cheerful* (Matt. 1:27; Acts 23:11; Acts 27:22, 25). Surely one does not like to be around people who are pessimistic and negative in their attitudes. People like to be with those who can put a smile on their faces. Perhaps the best example of friendship in the Bible is that of Jonathan and David. Jonathan had little to gain and much to lose in being David’s friend. His father, king Saul, was jealous of David and tried to kill him. Yet, Jonathan befriended David whom his father counted as an enemy. Even in the darkest hour, Jonathan was there for David. Real friends are friends in bad times as well as in good times. It is a great blessing to have friends who support, comfort and help in times of tragedy. David also reciprocated this friendship toward Jonathan. After Jonathan’s death, David showed kindness to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake (2 Sam. 9:7).

NO FRIENDS

It is hard to believe that some people have no friends. They go through life without the friendship of others. They have no one to talk to, associate with, share their sorrows or joys or to help them in times of grief and tragedy. Why is it that some do not have friends? Solomon wrote, “*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly*” (Prov. 18:24).

Some people have the idea that friends “just happen.” The Lord explains that there must be effort put forth. It may be unconscious effort sometimes. But nevertheless, one usually waits for others to give him some kind of indication that he wants to be friends. Therefore, if a person wants friends, he must be a friend.

Sometimes a person’s manner

and conduct drives a wedge between him and possible friends (cf. Prov. 16:28). Sometimes people may have certain good qualities, but a person cannot get close to another because of: 1) *pettiness* (who likes to be around others who are easily offended), 2) *gossip* (who wants to be with someone who will mistreat him by his speech, and 3) *dishonesty* (no one wants to be friends with someone who can't be trusted).

If one practices the “golden rule” (Matt. 7:12) toward all people and be honest with them, he'll have friends.

PEOPLE WHO ARE FRIENDS

There are some people who always seem to have friends. They're never alone. They are always in the company of others. Consider the reasons why: 1) They are *friendly to others*; 2) They will *help in times of need*;

3) They *bear the burdens of others*; 4) They are *courteous*; 5) They are *approachable*. One does not feel like he is a bother to them; they are always hospitable. In short, they put forth the effort to be friends. They expect nothing in return. They simply want to do good for others.

What kind of friends do you have? Are you in the right crowd — a crowd that influences for good? Do you have friends? If you don't have friends, then why not? The first place to begin looking for that answer is with SELF. Are you the kind of person you should be? Have you put forth the effort to be a friend to someone else? As a friend to others, does this describe you? “*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*” (Prov. 17:17).

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HOW SHALL THE YOUNG SECURE THEIR HEARTS?

Bill Boyd

The title of this article is the title to a song I remember singing at youth rallies. It was one of those songs that was easy for me to sing without really thinking about it. The answer to the question raised in the title and the opening line is found in the first verse — “**Thy word.**” It is the word of God that “secures” (protects) our hearts and “guards” our lives from sin. The song was inspired by Psalm 119. The question asked in verse 9, “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*” is answered in the same verse, “*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*” There it is again, “Thy word.” And, it goes on to say in verse 11, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*” It keeps the conscience clean.

The song continues to draw from the 119th Psalm in the second verse saying, “Tis like the sun, a heav'nly light, that guides us all the way, and through the dangers of the night, a lamp to lead our way.” Echoing the thoughts of Psalm 119:105, “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*”

Because the song begins with the young, I assumed it was a song for young people. It is, but it does not stop there. “That holy book shall guide our youth, and well support our age, and well support our age, and well support our age.” Consider Psalm 119:152, “*Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever.*”

The Bible is the best guidebook ever written for the young and the older we grow the better it gets.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“What’s The Hurry? Sometimes circumstances are such that it may be necessary to leave the services early, but it seems that some may be getting into the habit of leaving before the services are over on Wednesday night. Is there a good show on television you want to catch? Do you need to get to bed fifteen minutes earlier? Those who leave early miss out on hearing the Lord’s invitation, singing spiritual songs, and praying with the saints. To leave early on Wednesday night without a justifiable reason is in essence saying, ‘I am not concerned if someone puts on the Lord in baptism or is restored to the fellowship of the saints.’ Someone might say: ‘we need to get our children to bed for school the next day.’ But are they getting to bed any earlier on other nights of the week? Leaving early also may say that one does not care about news regarding the sick, shut-ins, or any deaths in a family. One also misses out on being able to greet others after the services. Let’s try to do better along this line. What’s the hurry? Wait until the final ‘Amen’ before leaving” ...**Ben F. Vick, Jr., Indianapolis, IN.** [EDITOR’S NOTE: I too have seen members leave before service is over. What precedent are we setting for our children and everyone else who knows we always leave before the service is over? Try telling the Lord we don’t have time for judgment, for heaven, to fellowship with the saints. We have more important things to do. The Lord said seek him FIRST (Matt. 6:33). Put him above all, even our family (Matt. 10:32-39). Name something that is more important than being with those of ‘like precious faith’ as we serve God together. -gmr] “We would like to unsubscribe to save postage. We will still continue to read STOP on the internet, though. We are so thankful for the work that you are doing” ...**Bobby Lane, Cookeville, TN.** “Please unsubscribe me to *Seek the Old Paths*. Thanks” ...**Jesse Quarrels, Starkville, MS.** “Please discontinue sending STOP by mail. I can now read it on my computer and hopefully save you time and money. I like it” ...**Roy Newton, Kingsport, TN.** “I would like to thank you for STOP and the writers of all the subjects I have gained info on over the past seven years. Keep up the good work” ...**Jim & Glynn Conditt, Lindsay, OK.** “Enjoy reading STOP each month and appreciate the fact that the writings stand in truth and defense of the Gospel” ...**Jack A. Blake, La Porte, IN.** “Please send to me your publication *Seek The Old Paths*. I have copied my mailing label from Banner of Truth. We miss this paper so much. Brother Pigg is missed very much” ...**Johnny Frazee, Camden, TN.** “My mother subscribed for me *Seek The Old Paths*. I have recently moved and would like to continue to receive them. Please continue to send me this publication as I enjoy it very much. Thank you” ...**Kim Verderame, Kellogg, ID.** “Please remove me from your mailing list. I no longer wish to receive your ‘seek the old paths’ publication. Your expense is much more needed elsewhere. Thank you” ...**Ron Strbenac, Richmond, MI.** “I wish to unsubscribe to the printed format of *Seek The Old Paths*. I will be viewing the articles and publication via the internet. I know postal cost continues to rise and internet seems to be one of the best avenues to spread the Gospel of our Lord. Thank you for your continued effort in this good work. I too, received the **Banner of Truth** for many years and looked forward to receiving this publication. Thank you for your tireless efforts” ...**Michael Wilk, Indian Rocks Beach, FL.** “I would like to thank you and the elders for *Seek The Old Paths* and the stand for the truth. I read STOP with interest. I sure do appreciate you and the work of the Lord” ...**Lesley & Donna Stinson, Indianapolis, IN.** “God bless you for your great work. Please remove me from your mailing list. I get it on the internet. Thanks” ...**Alene Dunlap, Smithville, MS.** “Thank you” ...**Larry Riggs, Sharon, TN.** “We enjoy STOP. Thanks for the good work you are doing” ...**Thomas Robinson, Henderson,**

TN. “Thank you for all you have done for the cause of Christ this year” ...**Maurice Brown, Rockford, IL.** “I prefer to read STOP online so to save paper and postage please remove me from your print mail list and add me to your email list. THANKS” ...**Bob Tyler, Fruitland Park, FL.** “Just found your web site and would like to receive your monthly bulletin. Thank you” ...**Janice Kelley.** “Appreciate your paper so much. Read it, then share it with other members. Excellent sound teaching! Wish everyone everywhere could read articles about the Mormons. Keep it up. Good work” ...**Ed & Bea Stelmach, Wheeling, WV.** “Great job with your fine publication. Here is a small gift to help with your expenses” ...**Robert R. Taylor, Jr., Ripley, TN.** “Please remove our name from your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Dwight Birdsong, Lane, OK.** “Would you please send your publication of *Seek The Old Paths* to the enclosed address? Thank you so much. We look forward to the ones we receive when published” ...**Nell Harris, Pinetown, NC.** “Please take my name off your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Debbie Burdine, Magnolia, AR.** “I am truly appreciative of the *Seek The Old Paths* publication. I share it with our brethren. There are many adverse situations facing us as Christians today; more than ever. There is so much information being shared with all of those who are recipients of this publication, and I can tell from the responses at the end just how much individuals appreciate it. Please keep up the good work! Thank you. I look forward to receiving future publications” ...**Name withheld by request, NY.** “Selia Wilmouth has passed away” ...**Sparta, TN.** “Thank you for this good work” ...**Johnny & Barbara Morris, Lampe, MO.** “Thank you so much” ...**Jim Lyndoe.**

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