



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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A STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS 2:10-12

Bob Winton

A love for the truth could have led them to salvation, but since they did not love the truth, they are doomed to banishment from God in eternity.

Second Thessalonians 2:10-12: *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because **they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.** And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

The ones involved in the great apostasy, personified as *the man of sin*, would use deceit of every kind in order to gain followers and retain authority over them. These are themselves deceived, and they deceive any who will listen to them. But despite their being deceived, they are responsible for their evil actions and words. They and their dupes face the penalty prescribed in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: *“...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”* Ignorance and deception will not erase disobedience.

The deception involved leads inevitably to unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is a failure to obey the will of God. One can fail to obey because either he does not *know* or has been *deceived*. But in either case, he has been disobedient, for which a penalty

is prescribed by the immutable will of God. Many warnings against being deceived are recorded in the Bible. *“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”* (1 Cor. 6:9). *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:3).

These who are being described by Paul did not have a love for the truth. A love for the truth could have led them to salvation, but since they did not love the truth, they are doomed to banishment from God in eternity. The truth of which Paul speaks is God’s word. As Jesus said, *“ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). The truth is precious: *“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”* (Prov. 23:23). The truth can be known. It is attainable.

Even a Christian can depart from the truth and lose his soul. *“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (James 5:19-20).

Error and those who espouse error can be identified. Those who preach error are to be rejected along with

their false doctrines. Israel of old was warned, *“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, ... to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee”* (Deut. 13:1-5). First Thessalonians 5:21-22: *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”* First John 4:1: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”*

Because those spoken of in 2 Thess. 2 did not love the truth, God would send them a strong delusion so that

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A Study of 2 Thess. 2:10-12...



Editorial...

LIBERALS & LIBERALISM #2

Garland M. Robinson

The New Testament plainly foretold of a great apostasy from the faith. **“...Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”** (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica concerning the Lord’s second coming and said, **“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. ... Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things”** (2 Thess. 2:3-5).

Paul met with the elders of the church at Ephesus and said, **“Take heed therefore 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. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears”** (Acts 20:28-31). Sadly, this text reveals that even elders of the church would be among those who lead the way into apostasy. Sad, sad indeed! Not much has changed in the last 2,000 years. The same is going on today in the Lord’s church in so many places. If it’s not where you are, it’s in your back door or just around the corner.

The “left” is referred to as “liberal” or “progressive.” More and more individuals and congregations are becoming progressive. When liberals use the word progressive, they have nothing good in mind. They have “change” and

“transform” as their mission as opposed to maintaining things as God has legislated. They have no love for the Truth even though Jesus said the truth would set men free from sin (John 8:31-32). They desire to employ and advocate what they call more “enlightened” ideas. They do not intend to be bound or limited by the Scriptures. They want to progress beyond the limits of the Scriptures. However, maintaining things as they have always been (divine tradition), is a good thing. It’s ordained of God! Why do they think they have a better plan than what God has given?

Every Christian and every congregation is obligated to keep the decrees and traditions **“...that were ordained of the apostles and elders”** (Acts 16:4). We are to hold to and maintain God’s doctrine, teaching, ordinance, law, rules, requirements, etc. Liberalism/progressivism says to throw it all out the door, it’s not important, we can’t understand the truth anyway, we serve a loving God (as if that means He will overlook disobedience). Thayer’s definition says the word decree (*dogma*, gk) carries “a suggestion of severity and of threatened judgment.” All of God’s Word is to be respected because it’s divine (from heaven). It’s holy. It’s truth.

To deviate and digress from God’s Order carries strict and severe penalties. By inspiration Paul wrote these words, **“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...”** (Gal. 3:1)? That’s what liberals do to those who are gullible enough to listen to them. They bewitch, charm, persuade, trick, and fascinate with false representations. To follow their ways makes one’s religion vain (v.4). To follow liberalism’s course will cut you off from God (cf. Gal. 5:4)!

The error of liberalism is described as pernicious. It’s lethal/deadly. Second Peter 2:1-3 describes liberals. **“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false**

teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” Don’t buy into their lie. God demands respect to his word.

God’s power to save is in the inspired word — the Bible. **“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”** (James 1:21). Liberals are ashamed of the divine word, but faithful servants of God are not. Paul wasn’t ashamed of it and said so. **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for IT is the power of God unto salvation...”** (Rom. 1:16). When you take the Word away by perverting it, you take away God’s power to save! **“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”** (1 Cor. 1:18).

The Holy Spirit said a man qualified to be an elder in the Lord’s church is one who is able to hold **“...fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”** (Titus 1:9). Elders will rebuke liberalism/progressivism and all who espouse it. They will put a stop to it because of the evil it upholds in seeking to turn people’s heart away from the truth — the very means of salvation. If elders won’t do it, they are pawns in the devil’s hands. They are like Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses in resisting the truth (2 Tim. 3:8). Such are **“men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”** Heaven’s will is that **“...they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was”** (v.9).

The unity of God is stated plainly in holding on to God’s Word, **“...let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing”** (Phil. 3:16). Jesus warns everyone, **“Take heed lest any man deceive you”** (Mark 13:5). Brethren, don’t be deceived by liberalism! Hold on to God’s unchanging word. That’s the only way to be saved!

GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN #1

Bill Boyd

In the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, at the end of the Beatitudes, Jesus promised a reward in heaven. *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matt. 5:11-12). We have joy when we think of being with the prophets in heaven. We will also be with the patriarchs; Jesus said, *“Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 8:11). Jesus said again in his Sermon on the Plain, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven”* (Luke 6:22-23). When Paul wrote to the Colossians of *“the hope which is laid up for you in heaven”* (Col. 1:5), he said we would be *“partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”* (Col. 1:12). Those *“saints in light”* include the prophets and patriarchs. Paul called this, *“the hope of the gospel”* (Col. 1:23), and *“the hope of glory”* (Col. 1:27).

Renewed earth advocates tell us that we have been reading this all wrong. They tell us that none of this means that we are actually “going” to heaven. They say that our reward is only in heaven for safekeeping, that Jesus will bring it with him when he returns, and he will let us have it on earth. The currently popular theologian of the Church of England, N. T. Wright, explained it like this: “If I say to a friend, ‘I’ve kept some beer in the fridge for you,’ that doesn’t mean that a man has to climb into the fridge in order to drink the beer.” (N. T. Wright; *Surprised by Hope*; pages 151-152). I am glad that some of my brethren who advocate for a renewed earth are embarrassed by this beer illustration. I have seen them temper it by saying that Jesus will come with a drink instead of a beer, but we know where

they learned this. I read Wright’s whole book. Renewed earth advocates warned me that I may find Wright tedious, and I did. He was long on his theology and short on scriptural exposition. It was as though he thought that if he explained himself well he made his point, but a good explanation of a bad idea is still a bad idea. The biggest “surprise” to me is how many who have read his book seem glad that they are not going to heaven.

Wright’s illustration about the beer is a comic absurdity, and he must have intended it that way. I would not expect a man “to climb into the fridge in order to drink the beer” unless he is already drunk. It is not an adequate illustration of his doctrine. In Wright’s illustration, the refrigerator is heaven, but according to Wright, Jesus is going to bring heaven to earth (Wright, 104). So it is not just the beer; he will have to lug along the whole refrigerator. Wright also says that heaven and earth will be “joined together” (Wright, 19,191). If you are on the couch waiting for your beer, then the couch and the refrigerator will become one. I call that cold comfort. Some renewed earth advocates will not approve of my poking fun at an illustration they consider iconic, and at a theologian who has a near celebrity status for them, but from what I can tell of N. T. Wright, he has a better sense of humor than some of his disciples. This humor deficit among us is understandable; I do not always appreciate Wright’s humor myself. When he wrote facetiously of those who believe Jesus will “come to this world, invading it like a spaceman” (Wright, 120), I cringed.

Jesus preached in his great ser-

mon, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matt. 6:19-21). This makes the beer analogy harder to take. Jesus makes heaven sound better than earth. A renewed earth is not in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. The great “reward” of Matthew 5:12 is the “treasure” of Matthew 6:21; it is “in heaven,” and “not...upon earth.”

When a young man came to Jesus seeking eternal life, Jesus said to him, *“Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven”* (Matt. 19:21). The young man already had treasure on earth. Jesus did not tell him to sell his treasure on earth so he could have more treasure on earth. Jesus said we would *“inherit eternal life”* (Matt. 19:29) as a *“treasure in heaven”* (Matt. 19:21). In the parallel accounts he said we would inherit eternal life *“in the world to come”* (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30). That makes heaven the world to come. Jesus did not tell the young man to wait in this world while he went to bring eternal life to him like a beer. The hope of the renewed earth advocates is to stay on the earth and to have Jesus bring them their heavenly reward when he returns, but in the second part of this article (next month), I will show you something better.

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they would believe a lie. *“That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (vs.1-2). The truth provides salvation. Falsehood provides condemnation.

If one genuinely loves the truth,

he will obey its demands. *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (1 John 5:2-3; cf. Luke 6:46).

When one learns the truth, but, through indifference, procrastination, or influence of others, does not obey it, its appeal to his heart will gradually

lessen. God will permit him to accept a way of his own choosing which will lead to his damnation (v.12).

“There are two words Paul used for ‘strong delusion’ or ‘working of error.’ The first is *energo*, from which we get ‘energy.’ Just as the Word of God ‘works’ in us (1 Thess. 2:13, *energeo*), so now God gives them an energetic delusion. Regarding the second word, *plane* is used. The ancients looked into heaven and noted that some stars moved. They called them planets or ‘wandering stars’ for *plane* in Greek means to wander. When these sensualists love pleasure and despise Truth, God sadly says, ‘All right. I will let you do as you wish; I will give you an energy-filled mind of wandering and let you spend your time roaming hither and thither, straying in the wilderness of wrong opinion and religious error.’ Their pleasure is not *hedone*, gratification of the natural desire. Nor is it *apolausis*, enjoyment. It is *eudokia*, ‘literally, good pleasure (*eu* well, *dokeo*, to seem) ...with the idea of a resolve...’ It is the pleasure in doing whatever seems good. They are resolved that ‘if it feels good, do it!’ That is the philosophy of most in our day. What can God do with fellows like that? It is no use; He may as well become their adversary and be done with it. He gives them what they are bound and determined to have in spite of all” (Moffitt, ADL, pp.254f).

When men and societies reach a certain level of rebellion, God turns them over to their own foolish notions. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman,

burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:21-28).

The Northern Kingdom of Israel had corrupted itself with the abominations of idolatry. Since they were beyond the pale of teaching and repentance, God turned them over to their own foolishness. “*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”* (Hosea 4:17). “*That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thess. 2:12).

If one desires to learn and do the will of God, he will be able to do so. “*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine...*” (John 7:17). “If a man at heart desires to do the whole will of God, God’s will in its fullness will be opened to him that he may do it. God does not cast pearls before swine. When a people desire not to do the will of God, God withdraws the knowledge of himself from them. We may infer that when men wish to do only a part of his will, he permits only partial knowledge of himself to be known. This doubtless explains why so many professed Christians seem never able to see portions of the will of God; they do not desire to do it all. They see only what they wish to do” (Lipscomb, p.101).

Hebrews 5:12-14: “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*”

Acts 13:44-46: “*And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have*

been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”

Those the apostle is describing in the context of 2 Thess. 2 did not have a desire to know the truth; they did not love it and would not believe it. Therefore, they would be condemned. Jesus 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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matt. 7:21-23). Matthew 25:30: “*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” “*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41). Second Thessalonians 1:8-9: “*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*”

Rather than believe the truth, and obey it, they had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had greater desire to gratify their own selfish appetites, than to do the will of their Creator. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*”

Compare: “*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Heb. 11:24-25).

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ROMANS 8:19-23: DELIVERANCE AND REDEMPTION #2

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

The previous article (April/19) took a long, lasting look of these five verses in a negative approach, inclusive of some errors injected into these controversial verses. This current article will reflect a positive focus.

CONTEXT IS VASTLY IMPORTANT

Romans 8:17-18 form the immediate background of the five verses in review (vs.19-23). Romans 8:24-25 are the follow-up verses to these five verses. These two verses constitute hope as the main theme. Hope, in the Bible, is not past or present, but is future in direction. In hope we have *expectation* and *anticipation*. In a positive listing of the precious “ones” in Ephesians 4:4, hope enjoys one of the seven. Hope here is single — not many.

These four verses read (17-18, 24-25): “*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and jointheirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ... For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*”

WHAT IS TAUGHT IN THIS PAULINE PASSAGE?

1) In verse 19 we read, “*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*” How is “creature” used in this verse? We are assured that the saint awaits the manifestation of God’s sons (Christians). Plants, shrubs, trees and the animal kingdom do NOT await this marvelous manifestation; they do not possess immortal spirits as do human beings. The foregoing are not sinners in God’s sight who have come short of God’s glory (cf. Rom. 6:23). Jesus Christ did not come to save animals or the plant

kingdom. Furthermore, the dedicated creature awaiting such a beautiful blessing does not include the arrogant atheist, the prideful agnostic or any daring unbeliever. Revelation 21:8 and 22:15 picture the certain destiny of these scoffers. The faithful child of God is the waiting one with high expectations of that better realm — heaven.

Is the word “creature” used in the Bible to portray the faithful child of God? Most assuredly! In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul stated so beautifully, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” The marginal reference in the ASV has “new creation.” Paul informed Ephesian saints (of the Most High God) that they were God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for the performance of good works (Eph. 2:10).

2) Verse 20 reads, “*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.*”

Genesis 1-2 are the only chapters in Jehovah’s Divine Book portraying man and woman as sinless. Sin began its slavish reign within human hearts in Genesis 3 — one of the saddest chapters in all Holy Writ. Eve fell first and Adam followed her into the web of sin. The remainder of the Bible (Genesis 4 through Revelation 22) treat man as a fallen being. He was not created in sin nor any of his descendants have been born as sinners. Yet a well known atheist during the last century daringly stated that man has not fallen; he has risen. He scoffed at what Moses wrote in Genesis 3 and what the remainder of Biblical penmen inscribed. John Calvin and many others have contended for original sin — that each person born comes into the world with his/her soul tainted by inherited sin. NOT SO! We become sinners when we become accountable and transgress the Law of God. This is the ancient background of Romans 8:20. Man is the creature — not plants or animals. God’s glorious

Gospel never had these in mind in the Scheme of Human Redemption. Plants and animals live and die, but not because they have sinned against God. All Adamic descendants die because we are separated from the tree of life. This is why babies die, why people in their prime of life die and why the aged die. Out of the teeming billions who have lived on earth, only two have escaped meeting the death sentence — Enoch and Elijah. “And he died” is stated again and again in Genesis 5. This is the Bible’s longevity chapter. Some lived beyond the nine hundred mark and yet, with the exception of Enoch, all met nature’s final debt. Unless Jesus comes back in our lifetime, these words will be pronounced upon all of us with a just pronoun change for women, “and she died.” Hebrews 9:27 affirms death has passed on all humanity. You and I will be no exception to this universal decree of death.

3) Verse 21 states, “*Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*”

Who is the object to be delivered from the bondage of corruption? The answer is: not plants, not animals and not even ALL humanity. Far too many live in rebellion to God and die in disobedience to the demands of God’s glorious Gospel. Infidels possess no hope. They are like those depicted by Paul in Ephesians 2:12. This was their status prior to Gospel obedience. Acts 19 is the background of the Ephesians epistle. Such people have not entered the realm of rich redemption or the sphere of the saved as Luke informs us in Acts 2:47. All of us are subject to physical death but not all are possessors of precious hope or of heaven. This is very sad but true nevertheless.

4) Verse 22 reads, “*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*” Doubtless the “whole creation” refers to all of humanity. Babies die. The godless die. Righteous people die. We

all live in a vale of tears, a world of woes, a place of pain and the sphere of suffering. Sadly, most of humanity never looks up to God with a desire to do His bidding and die in the warm embrace of heavenly hope! They never learn from David (or whoever penned Psalm 119) these vital truths, “*Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word...it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*” (vs.67,71). James touches more of the same in James 1:2-4.

5) Verse 23 states, “*And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.*” Who are the ones delineated here as having the firstfruits of the Spirit who groan and wait along with others of like precious hope to receive at last redemption’s rich reward come judgment day? This royal realm is described by John so beautifully and delightfully in Revelation 21-22. John had heard the wonderful words of Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14:1-6). Doubtlessly, those with the firstfruits of the Spirit would be the apostles, one of whom was Paul. They suffered

in countless ways the remainder of their days, of their Christian pilgrimages as did many others. It is commonly believed that all the apostles, except John, died tragically for their holy faith. Heavenly redemption and adoption constituted their goal.

How richly relevant are the words of precious hope in Romans 8:24-25. Romans 8:17-18 aid in answer.

CONCLUSION

Those who contend for a renovated earth eternally for the redeemed and claim it is portrayed in Romans 8:19-23, do a great injustice to this Pauline passage. Many marvelous messages in Holy Writ describe heaven’s locale and it is NOT an eternal renovated earth. Peter refuted that in thorough fashion in his final chapter, 2 Peter 3.

Since researching so much about heaven’s location for these two articles, I have noted many of our great songs tell us where heaven will be. Faithful song composers knew better than to sing about a renovated earth. They respected what the Bible says on this matter.

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BEWARE OF T-N-T

What did you think of when you saw the title of this article, “Beware of TNT?” Was it the TNT channel on TV? With this channel, as with most others, there are programs that promote things that are not good from a Spiritual standpoint and yes we must beware of that. Or when you read the title, did you think of the chemical explosive TNT, seeing it is poisonous and toxic?

There is another TNT that deserves our attention. It is one that for sure will hurt us spiritually and cause us to lose our souls. It is something that is spiritually poisonous and toxic. The TNT we are addressing in this article and that we must always be aware of is “Trusting Not Truth.”

There are things, thinking and teachings in the world that can affect one’s soul and our relationship with the Lord (Matt. 6:24-26). Sadly too many are trusting in such rather than the Truth.

Jesus reminds us of the importance of Truth when He declared in John 8:31-32, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” The Truth is absolute, all-sufficient, authoritative and can be and must be accepted (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Col. 3:17; James 1:21-25).

The precepts and principles of God’s Will as revealed in the Truth is that which can be trusted completely for

the answer to life’s problems, purpose and to the preparation needed to plan for our future in the hereafter (James 1:1-5; Eccl. 12:13; Phil. 1:21; Matt. 7:21-23; Mark 16:15-16).

Concerning spiritual matters, Trusting Not Truth is manifested in many ways:

- Trusting in that which is popular (Matt. 7:13-14; Prov. 14:12) is TNT.

- Trusting in the philosophies of men (Col. 2:8) is TNT.

- Trusting in political leaders is TNT. Civil government is ordained of God (Rom. 13) but the president nor those who pass our laws are the answer to our spiritual needs.

- Trusting in preachers, the presidents of so-called “Christian” colleges and others placed in positions of authority without putting to the test their practice and what they proclaim is TNT (1 John 4:1).

- Trusting in publications in the brotherhood just because they at one time were “sound” without examining the Scripture ourselves is TNT (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11).

- Trusting in perverted translations of the Bible is TNT (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

Trusting Not Truth will lead to a life that is unprepared to meet God. But only by “trusting and obeying” the Truth can one have a happy and hopeful life and a home in Heaven.

Jerry Joseph, PO Box 1385, St. Peters, MO 63376

Elder's COLUMN

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Roger D. Campbell

Each year many businesses invest a great deal of time, effort, and money in leadership training. Why do you suppose they do that? Because they want their companies to be as strong and successful as possible. They know having good leaders is one of the keys to their business's present and future success.

The same is true for the church. How strong is a local church now? How strong will it be in the future? A big part of that depends on its *evangelistic effort*. Another key aspect is its *leadership*. The leadership of a congregation will go a long way in determining its spiritual strength — both now and in the future.

The church needs leadership. Leaders are people who have a following. Leaders influence others to take action, to do what needs to be done. The tabernacle did not erect itself at Mt. Sinai — Moses was leading the way. The temple did not build itself in Jerusalem — Solomon was leading the project. The walls around Jerusalem did not construct themselves — Nehemiah was leading the troops. In the same way, *“the work of the Lord,”* which is the church's work, needs to be done (1 Cor. 15:58). To do that labor effectively, the church needs leadership.

The church needs the right kind of leadership, which is righteous leadership. Being a leader is not enough. Ahab and Jezebel were leaders in Israel, but what a disastrous combination they were! Diotrephes was a leader in the first-century church, but was ungodly to the core (3 John 9-10). The Bible says, *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”* (Prov. 29:2). That statement applies to leaders in civil governments, but the principle also applies to leaders in the kingdom of God. The church needs *godly* men leading the way.

Elders of the church are to be men of good behavior and blameless

(1 Tim. 3:2). Deacons are to show themselves as reverent men who hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:8-9). God wants Gospel preachers to be *“a pattern of good works”* (Titus 2:7). Yes, the Lord wants leaders in His church, and He wants them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Those who serve as leaders in God's church need to have the courage of Daniel. They need to imitate the compassion of Jesus. They need to have the commitment of Paul. They need to have the tender heart of Jeremiah. They need to have the faith of Abraham. They need to have the patience of Job. Perfect men they will never be, but God-fearing, God-loving, God-imitating men they must strive to be.

The church needs to portray leadership in a positive light, making it sound appealing. We are aware of instances in which the shepherds of a local flock of God have not been treated with proper respect and Christian kindness. That has caused some other brothers who observed such a situation to conclude, *“I never want to serve as an elder. It is not worth the stress and hardship on me and my family.”* What we have just described involves two tragedies: 1) the mistreatment of God's men and 2) *“cold water”* being poured on the idea of serving as an overseer. Yes, mistakes are made by those who serve as pastors as well as by those saints who are under their oversight, but it still is God's will that every local church have mature brothers serving as its elders/overseers (Acts 14:23). Remember, the Bible says if one desires the work of a bishop, he desires a good work (1 Tim. 3:1). Brothers and sisters, let us *“talk up”* the thought of serving as a shepherd among God's people, let us speak with admiration of faithful elders, and let us take advantage of opportunities to have our families spend personal time with bishops and their wives in order to

build stronger bonds and allow our offspring to see that being leaders in the Lord's kingdom is a special, exceptional task.

The church needs leaders who have a shepherd-servant's mentality. Elders take care of the house of God (1 Tim. 3:5), serve as overseers of God's flock (1 Peter 5:1-3), and watch for the souls of the saints under them (Heb. 13:17). They are not, however, to act as bosses or dictators. They are not to see themselves as command-givers. They are to lead the church in carrying out *God's* instructions.

Jehovah appealed to the spiritual leaders of ancient Israel to act as caring shepherds (Jer. 23:1-4; Ezek. 34:1-10). Under the new covenant, God calls on elders to be overseers who shepherd His flock (Acts 20:28). They need to be men who *care about* the sheep, who *serve* the sheep, and who are *ready to sacrifice* for the sheep (that sounds like Jesus, the Good Shepherd!). It is a time-consuming task to know the sheep, know their needs, and work with them to help them be the best servants possible.

The church needs to encourage young men and those brothers who are new converts to have the aspiration of serving as leaders some day. Jesus groomed His apostles to be leaders (Mark 3:13-15). Paul trained Timothy to lead (2 Tim. 2:2; 3:11-12). We need to encourage our men to develop a servant's heart, reminding them that being faithful in small tasks helps them prepare for bigger matters (Luke 16:10). Let us take leadership development seriously!

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thank you for *Seek The Old Paths*. It has been a blessing to me and I want to contribute a small amount to the efforts you are making. May God continue to bless this good work” ...**Name withheld by request, AL**. “I truly enjoy STOP and wish to have it sent to some other brethren” ...**Leland & Donna Reed, Pleasant Hill, MO**. “Refused. Please remove from your list” ...**Ruty Kiser, Calera, AL**. “Glory to God for Randy Kea’s statement near the end of his article on page 5 of the Jan/19 issue. He said, ‘Paul, by inspiration, is contrasting inspired men with uninspired men, not Christians and non-Christians.’ The ‘natural man’ of 1 Cor. 2:14 is the uninspired man. When Christians make the ‘natural man’ the sinner, they are teaching Calvinism. They want the sinner to get his heart right before he can understand. The word is just not good enough to convert the soul. They think they are getting something from the Holy Spirit, so why not the sinner! They want the truth plus something. These are the same brethren that believe in an influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives separate from the Word of truth. ‘The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple’ (Psalm 119:130). Psalm 119 repeats this principle over and over. Those who love the truth stay in context. Starting in 1 Corinthians chapter one we see the battle fought between inspired men and uninspired false teachers leading the church away from the truth. ‘That in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you’ (vs.5-6). Paul, speaking of himself and inspiration, continued this thought into chapter 2:12, ‘Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.’ Utterance, knowledge and confirmed in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 is inspiration, revelation and confirmation. The first century church received the truth through inspired men that could confirm the word with signs following (Mark 16:20). They did not have a New Testament or even parts of it for many years after Acts chapter 2. We now have an inspired, complete revelation from God. I pray we will grow to love it more, defend it more, and teach it more. Keep up the good work. God bless you” ...**Edward K. Marable, Trenton, GA**. “Vonnie Hamblett has passed away” ...**Tyler, TX**. “Please take me off the mailing list and don’t send any more pamphlets, *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**Roger & Barbara Anderson, Sparta, TN**. “We enjoy getting your paper each month, as it gives us articles based on the Bible, not man’s gospel” ...**Ronald Mason, Dresden, TN**. “I want to thank you for the paper you send me each month: *Seek The Old Paths*. I enjoy this very much. Many blessings to you and my prayers” ...**Mavis Tate, Moody, TX**. “Sharon Higginson has passed away” ...**Henderson, KY**. “My I please receive any free Bible studies you offer through postal mail” ...**Debra Brinson, Gaston, SC**. “We came across your paper and would very much like to have a copy of the previous five issues before Dec/18. We are especially interested in the articles regarding ‘Dangers of Modern Translations.’ We would also appreciate future issues of this noteworthy periodical. Thank you for your help. We will send additional funds as we are able” ...**Melonie Masih, Bedias, TX**. “Brother Gale Yoho introduced me to *Seek The Old Paths*. I would like to receive this publication. I would also like to receive all of the back publications that have the articles dealing with the different translations of the Bible. I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you very much. I pray that God will continue to bless the work that you are doing in his kingdom” ...**Don Schuler, Wheeling, WV**. “Thank you brother Garland for your very valuable work in defending the

truth totally! God speed!” ...**James L. Nicholson, Mammoth Spring, AR**. “Return to Sender” ...**John Stephens, Green Valley, AZ**. “Billy Tarply has passed away” ...**Merkel, TX**. “Thank you very much for sending us the *Seek The Old Paths*. Our congregation has really enjoyed the paper. Please reduce the number you send” ...**Kerry Hueter, Imboden Church of Christ, Imboden, AR**. “This country needs God’s Truth. Keep preaching God’s Truth” ...**Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK**. “Dottie Dodson has passed away” ...**Moss Point, MS**. “Thank you Garland and staff for the good work you’re involved in at Leoni. God bless you all” ...**John Stevens, Corinth, MS**. “I do appreciate the paper and am very distressed when there is a cancellation. I pray that your efforts and that of others will continue to inspire believers and convict non-believers” ...**Anna Ritzenthaler, Brockport, NY**. “Thank you for *Seek The Old Paths*. I have enjoyed reading it very much. At the age of 92, it is hard for me to see the small print, but I still try. Please send STOP to some friends. Thank you” ...**Mary Ella Fudge, Madison, AL**. “Please stop mailing the old paths. I read them online. Thank you” ...**James W. Rogers, Leoma, TN**. “*Seek The Old Paths* is much appreciated and truthful. Thanks” ...**Floyd & Maxine Meeks, Corinth, MS**.

All 6 issues of Randy Kea’s “How We Got The Bible” (Jan-June/2018), and all 9 issues of “Dangers of Modern Versions” (July2018-March2019) have been combined into 2 separate files. They can be downloaded at: seektheoldpaths.com/pdf/articles.html. They are under the heading of “Translations.”

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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