



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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CHURCHES DISPLEASED WITH GOD

Marvin L. Weir

Many people give lip-service to the Bible while ignoring the Scriptures as they faithfully follow their own opinions, religious creeds, and family traditions.

To be displeased with God is evil and sinful, and yet the number of people who do so grows larger every year. The Old Testament character, Naaman, has often been referenced to represent people who trust more in their own thoughts than in the Word of God. Naaman was a great and honorable man, but he had the dreaded disease of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1). Elisha, a prophet of God, sent word to Naaman with instructions for the cure of his leprosy (v.10). The remedy was clear and easy to understand. The message from God: *“Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”* Naaman was displeased, not only with the messenger sent by the prophet, but also the method of the cure. Instead of obeying God’s instructions, Naaman gave his opinion as to **how** and **where** the healing should take place. The text reads, *“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage”* (2 Kings 5:11-12).

The *“behold, I thought”* mentality (v.11) that leads to men wondering

why a substitute for God’s specific commands will not be just as productive (v.12), is alive and well today. Many people give lip-service to the Bible while ignoring the Scriptures as they faithfully follow their own opinions, religious creeds, and family traditions. The principle and truth taught in both Old and New Testaments cannot be stated often enough. God said to Israel, *“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you”* (Deut. 4:2). In closing out the words of the New Covenant, the Lord warned, *“I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Rev. 22:18-19). In words that are clear, simple, and easy to understand, the Lord declares one will lose access to the tree of life and the holy city who **adds to** or **takes from** the inspired Scriptures!

There are many churches today that are displeased with the Bible verse that says, *“Let your women keep*

silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34). These churches also reject 1 Timothy 2:12 which states: *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”* (1 Tim. 2:12-14). God’s prohibition in the above verses of Scripture has nothing to do with intellect, ability, or inferiority. People who are not happy with the Creator’s reasoning will use any “smokescreen” to try and circumvent truth. God gave His reasons for women not having a leadership role over men in the church, but many today are displeased with God, and are of the same mindset as was Naaman!

Numerous churches today are displeased with the Lord adding those who are saved to his church (Acts 2:47), and thus think they should vote on people for church membership. Listen carefully to this revealing quote: *“It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but ‘one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,’ and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the*

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Churches Displeased...



Editorial...

THE SCRIPTURES CANNOT BE IGNORED

Garland M. Robinson

MYRIADS are the excuses people use in a futile attempt to “get around” God’s eternal Word. However, God’s Word is everlasting. His “*righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth*” (Psa. 119:142). “*The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant*” (Isa. 24:5). Nonetheless, God’s Word is to be taught to “*them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*” (Rev. 14:6).

Though the Bible is plain and true, men go to great lengths to circumvent it — dismiss it at every turn. But, men may do their best to cancel it, but it cannot be done successfully. They seek to get around it, but it can’t be done.

I don’t know how to get around Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus said, “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*”

Far from accepting these verses, men say “oh no, that’s not correct. We’ve got to accept everyone, even those who have a different opinion.” The growing belief today is “I’m ok, you’re ok. We must love everyone and accept them just as they are.” The practice of this philosophy is this, if you’re an adulterer, fornicator, homosexual, lesbian, you’re accepted. Some even use (actually misuse) 1 Corinthians 7:20, “*Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*” Their interpretation is that if you’re an adulterer or homosexual, then you should abide (remain) in that calling (when you became a Christian). Come as you are and stay as you are and you’ll be accepted is the cry of our day. They twist and distort this verse to make it unrecognizable in an effort to get around it. Peter mentioned the

practice of some corrupting Scripture when he wrote by inspiration of those who are “*unlearned and unstable*” and how they “*wrest*” the Scriptures “*unto their own destruction*” (2 Peter 3:16).

The context of 1 Corinthians 7:20 concerns the conversion of those who are involved in beliefs and practices that are not in violation of God’s word. If it were speaking of those involved in immoral and ungodly practices, it would contradict other plain passages. But as we see in Matthew 7:13-14, the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction (hell) and many are rushing along that way. You may close your eyes to the truth but it won’t take away the consequences of a sinful life.

The way to heaven, on the other hand, the way that is approved of God, is strait (close, hemmed in) and narrow (troublesome, afflicted, compressed). You don’t go to heaven by accident. It is a journey that is as narrow as God’s word. Those on their way to eternal bliss must follow God’s way and his way alone. There’s no room for man’s innovations and changes.

I don’t know how to get around Acts 17:30. “*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*” These words were proclaimed to a city filled with idolatry, ignorance and immorality. No one will go to heaven who refuses to repent of their sins. Jesus said, “*...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3,5). All must repent and be converted. Repentance is not the same as converted. Conversion follows repentance. “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*” (Acts 3:19). Repentance is in the mind. It is a deliberate change of the mind. When one repents, conversion is the logical consequence that follows. Repentance results in a change of one’s conduct (life).

People act as though they can be

saved without repenting of their sins. Have you ever been to a funeral of someone that the preacher did not preach them right into heaven? You would think they were the most devout Christian that ever lived. On such occasions I’ve thought, that’s not the person I knew.

I don’t know how to get around Acts 2:38. When those who were convicted of their sins on the day of Pentecost cried out and said, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” Heaven’s answer was “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38). The answer is clear and precise. In order for one to have forgiveness of sins he/she must REPENT and be BAPTIZED. However, the vast majority say that water has absolutely nothing to do with salvation. They want to include those who are sincere and zealous in thinking they are saved from their sins. They make the way of salvation much easier than the Lord said it was. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born again...born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3,5). Unless one is born of water, the water of baptism, he CANNOT enter the kingdom (church) of Christ. Jesus plainly said, “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat*” (Matt. 7:13).

Water baptism is clearly FOR the forgiveness of sins and without the forgiveness of sins, no one can be saved. Saul of Tarsus was told to “*arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). Water baptism puts one INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:27). Water baptism saves (1 Peter 3:21). It is the defining moment when one leaves the world of sin and is translated INTO the body of the saved, which is the Lord’s church (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:13). There is no salvation outside the Lord’s church (body, Eph. 5:23).

I don’t know how to get round First Corinthians 15:58. “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” Revelation 2:10 makes a similar statement, “*...be thou faithful*

unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” These verses are powerful. They describe the way that leads to everlasting life. It is the way of continual faithfulness. They do not teach “once saved always saved” as many denominations teach. These verses teach that one must continue in faithful service to the Lord. There is no salvation to those who fall away.

There’s only one way. It’s the way of truth. It’s the way of trust and reliance upon God almighty. It’s the way by which we learn the meaning of life and our purpose in this world. It’s the way of eternal bliss that does not arise from within us. It’s the way that is up to heaven, not the way that is down to hell.

Men must learn that the way to life is to deny ourselves. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23; Matt. 16:24). But, “...if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). “Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 100:3). “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). “...We should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9).

How can men live unto themselves and not reverence and fear God? The only way to heaven is in continual faithfulness to the Lord of glory.

I don’t know how to get around 2 Corinthians 5:10. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” There is a day coming that is called the “judgment day” when all of humanity will give account of themselves before the Lord. Jesus made it very clear! “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matt. 25:31-33). “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And

shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). Sinners are in grave danger of the judgment day (cf. Matt. 5:21; 11:22; 12:36).

Denying the day of judgment of all who have ever lived will not make it untrue nor go away. I will be there. YOU will be there. Every one will an-

swer for how they have lived in this life. REPENT and obey the Lord: Believe (John 8:24), Repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), Confess faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), be Baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 22:16). Live faithful to the Lord, even if it cost you your life (Rev. 2:10).

Are you seeking to get around the inspired word of God?

HOW GOD SPEAKS TO MAN TODAY

Ivie Powell

Jesus, “the good shepherd” (John 10:11) declared, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). At the time this was said, Jesus was addressing the Pharisees. It is a misapplication of the text to state that followers of Christ literally hear the voice of Jesus or that He directly communicates to His followers apart from the inspired word of God.

As Jesus stood before Pilate, He was asked, “Art thou a king” (John 18:37)? To which our Lord replied, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). This brings up the question, “Do Christians literally hear the voice of Jesus?” The word “heareth” in the text is used in the sense of heeding what Christ says, and in so doing, obey Him. James wrote, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

Through the years there have been many claims of God speaking directly to man. To support this claim, many will cite Hebrews 1:1, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and since “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8), they conclude that God speaks to man directly today. Two observations are in order: (1) While it is certainly true that God did directly communicate with man “in time past,” one needs to read the next verse, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2). (2) Hebrews 13:8 is not discussing miracles or God speaking directly to man, but is having reference to Christ’s divine nature that is changeless!

How does Christ “speak” to man today? The Holy Spirit’s mission to the apostles was set forth by the Lord, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). Thus, the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into “all truth” as they and other select inspired men wrote the Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Peter affirmed this truth when he wrote, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

Friends, we have the inspired word of God which has been confirmed (Mark 16:20), and through which God communicates His will to man (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17). If one is waiting for God to speak directly to them, they wait in vain!

PO Box 92, West Plains, MO 65775

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION

Victor M. Eskew

*It is the darkest night that has ever been experienced in the history of man.
The only positive to be found in that night
is the fact that God's plan of redemption was executed.*

First Corinthians 11:23, a verse I've heard many times, caught my attention lately. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth about the establishment of the Lord's supper. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread." Most of the time, my mind is focused on the words "took bread." For some reason, the last time this verse was read, I heard the words: "...the same night in which he was betrayed." The thought that came to my mind was "the night of betrayal." From there, many other descriptions of the night before the Lord's crucifixion came to mind. Let's take a look at them.

First, let's begin with Paul's description, a *night of betrayal*. Judas, an apostle and friend of the Christ, had betrayed his Lord to the chief priests and scribes for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16). After he left the upper room where Jesus and the apostles partook of the Passover, he went to the Jewish leaders and informed them of Jesus' whereabouts. He then led them to Jesus. "And while ye yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that had betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same he is; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him" (Matt. 26:27-49). The actions of Judas that night were shameful. He had allowed a covetous heart to lead him to betray an innocent man. A friend had lifted up his heel against his friend (See Psalm 41:9).

Second, the night before the crucifixion was a *night of deep sorrow*. Prior to Judas' coming to the garden, Jesus experienced a profound sense of agony and sorrow. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter

and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death..." (Matt. 26:26-28). Jesus knew what He was about to experience. He understood the pain of crucifixion. He was aware of the hurt of rejection. He fully realized the weight of sin He was to bear. All of this brought heaviness and sorrow. Dear reader, Jesus fully understands what it means to be a man. He was a man just as we are. He hurt and suffered in like manner as we all do (See Heb. 4:15).

Third, this Thursday night was a *night of prayer*. Jesus knew how to handle inner affliction. He cast it upon His heavenly Father. "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 27:39). Three times He offered up this same prayer. It was intense and fervent. It was the expression of a sincere heart. He did not hold back His request from God. However, He was willing to yield Himself to His Father's will. Jesus prayed in faith. After He prayed, we never read of any anguish of spirit within Him again. Jesus did not waver and doubt when it came to His prayer life. He knew His heavenly Father would take care of Him. He knew the Father would always do the right thing.

Fourth, this was a *night of arrest*. The multitude that followed Judas came with one intent. They were going to arrest Jesus and try Him that very night. "Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him" (Matt. 26:50). It is "telling" when authority figures exercise great strength against one individual. They try to display strength, but their "muscle" only covers their weaknesses and fears. It also shows the lengths to which they will go to get rid of anyone who threatens their position and power.

Fifth, the night before Jesus' execution was a *night of flight* by his disciples. Matthew 26:56 tells us: "Then

all the disciples forsook him, and fled." These men had been with Jesus for over three years. They had experienced His teaching, His works, and His miracles. He had proven He loved each of them. They acknowledged He was the Messiah. Peter had confessed that He was the Son of the living God. Yet, when matters grew dire, these men preserved themselves. Courage is not an easy thing to manifest. We want to believe we still stand. We want to believe we will fight. However, when push comes to shove, many, like Jesus' disciples, choose flight instead of fight.

Sixth, when Jesus was taken before the Jewish counsel, the night turned into a *night of injustice*. The rulers of the Jews broke many laws that night attempting to rush this trial to its end. They refused to look at the evidence of Jesus' works that proved His claims. They even brought in false witnesses to testify against Him. They listened to every word He spoke hoping to find just one thing against Him. When Jesus acknowledged that He was the Christ the Son of God, that was all the council needed to hear. "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye, They answered and said, He is guilty of death" (Matt. 26:65-66). The Jews had made their decision. Jesus was to die. All they had to do is get Pilate to issue the order of execution. Laws, justice, evidence, and right and wrong did not matter to these men. They had one agenda. This would be the night they would destroy this man who brought so much controversy into Jerusalem.

Seventh, this was a *night of sleeplessness*. Jesus would not sleep at all that night. He would be moved from one court to another until His guilt was "established" and His sentence was set forth. Both His mind and His body must have been tired. Add to this the brutal treatment he received by the Roman soldiers and Jesus was exhausted by the time the sun rose

over Judah. Many men could not have endured the loss of sleep Jesus experienced much less the brutal treatment He received. How He was able to carry the cross part of the way to Calvary is remarkable. This carpenter's son must have been an extremely strong man.

Eighth, this was a *night of prophetic fulfillment*. The Old Testament prophets had foretold Jesus' death. Jesus Himself had told His disciples He would be crucified in Jerusalem. That night prophecy after prophecy was fulfilled. Had these doctors of the law been watching closely, they could have seen the prophetic words coming to pass right before their eyes. But, they saw nothing. Their wisdom and understanding was clouded by their hatred and envy toward Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had told them to search the Scriptures because they testified of Him. They had no desire

to test His words. Their neglect, though, did not keep the words of the "seers of old" from coming to pass.

"Oh what a night!" It is the darkest night that has ever been experienced in the history of man. The only positive to be found in that night is the fact that God's plan of redemption was executed. The Lamb of God was about to be slain for the sins of the world. Then, early on the first day of the week following Jesus' death, darkness was turned into light. Jesus arose victorious over death and the hades realm. He crushed the head of the serpent in His resurrection. Since that day, there has been no more night. The Light of the world has shined brightly calling men to come to Him and find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:28-30).

13695 Covington Creek Dr.
Jacksonville, FL 32224

Churches Displeased...

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church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' Now it is different; and while the churches are desirous of receiving members they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons. The churches therefore have candidates come before them, make their statement, give their 'experience,' and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members." [The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, Edward T. Hiscox, p.22].

Can you believe such a statement? It is admitted that at *one* time there were no denominations and the act of baptism put one into the church. "*Now it is different*" — says who? Where does God reveal a plan of salvation that is different from the one revealed during the apostolic age? Where is the Scripture that describes *candidates* giving their *experience* and their reception being decided by a *vote of the current members*? Why has baptism changed from being "the door into the church?" Easy answer! Men became displeased with the Lord's church and the Lord's plan for salvation and worship. The "Baptists" follow Naaman — not the Lord! They reason, "Behold,

we think now it is different. Denominations are now needed, and candidates for membership must give their experience and have their reception decided by a vote of the members."

The Baptist creed states, while they are "desirous of receiving members they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons." Divine revelation is now complete. Man has been given by "*divine power...all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). How is it possible that a "vote of the current members" is more accurate than the Word of God? What if the "candidate" is rejected by a vote of 59 in favor and 60 opposed? Are the 59 people who voted favorably wrong? Are the 60 people right just because they had one more vote? What if the vote had resulted in a tie? Surely people can see that this man-made system of determining church membership is severely flawed!

Are man's plans, thoughts, and determinations more accurate than the Word of God? The wise man reminds us, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12).

Yes, many churches are displeased with God! It will not, however, change His inspired Word (John 12:48).

484 CR 44700
Blossom, TX 75416
countryboy357@hughes.net

CONTRIBUTIONS

Anonymous.....	\$20
Eric Earle (Noah C/C).....	\$20
Haidyee Z. Vaughan.....	\$75
Eddie Holt	\$50
Sharon S. Cudo.....	\$25
Midway C/C,	
Murfreesboro, TN.....	\$100
J. L. & Barbara Taylor.....	\$100
Ed Waggoner	\$50
Randall G. Gruenewald.....	\$100
Jean Ware	\$25
Baker C/C, Baker, FL.....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$75
Anonymous.....	\$20
Anonymous.....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$20
Arlington C/C,	
McMinnville, TN.....	\$50
Mexico C/C, Mexico, MO.....	\$100
Del Brantley	\$50
Smyrna C/C, Cookeville, TN	\$50
John D. Manz	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$105
Zion C/C, Cookeville, TN.....	\$25
Jared Herren.....	\$25
Northcutts Cove C/C,	
Rock Island, TN.....	\$50
Allen & Irene Tate	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$150
Alma J. Hall.....	\$100
Jason & Rhonda Toye	
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Anonymous.....	\$50
Broadway C/C, Broadway, IL	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$50
Elvin Barger.....	\$100
Srygley C/C, Tuscumbia, AL	\$500
Beginning Balance	\$20,021.58
Contributions	\$3,075.00
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Supplies	\$48.95
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LESSONS FROM THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Douglas Hoff

Although the Gospel records were written nearly two thousand years ago, they contain many valuable lessons for mankind today. This is because God's word is always relevant to the needs of man. It addresses the sin problem we all face and points us to eternal life through the Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

When Jesus walked the earth he had some who followed Him for a while and then turned back when they heard "hard sayings" (John 6:60-66). Jesus then asked the twelve apostles, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:67-69). Peter recognized the vitally important truth that salvation cannot be found except by obeying the words of the Savior even though the way may seem hard at times.

Sadly, some in the first century acknowledged Jesus had the words of life yet were unwilling to comply with his demands. A number claimed they wanted to follow Him but Jesus told them, "...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Others boasted, "...Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But the Lord said, "...The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:19-20). Clearly, it is one thing to desire to be a follower of Jesus and it is entirely another to actually submit to the will of God. In some of the cases mentioned in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it is not revealed whether the disciples did what they were told. However, there are some notable cases where we learn that the person was not willing and thus turned his back on eternal life.

The very short story about the rich young ruler is told in three of the four Gospel records. Since God saw fit to have it recounted this many times, it must be worth careful consideration. Indeed, there are many lessons to be learned from this real

man who desired eternal life yet was unwilling to take care of just one of the deficiencies in his life to obtain it. The story speaks volumes to our world today because there are many who are in similar circumstances. They also must decide if they are willing to submit their lives to the will of God. Sadly, there are still many "rich young rulers" in the world today.

The story of this unnamed man is found in Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23. From Luke's account, we learn he was a ruler (v.18) and very rich (v.23). Only Matthew records that he was a young man (vs.20,22). After he went away, Jesus warned the disciples about the dangers of riches. However, this was not the first time He did this. Earlier, He had stated plainly, "...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). It is Mark's account that tells us the problem is not riches, per se, but rather trusting in riches that will keep one out of heaven (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17). Clearly, rich people can go to heaven as long as they do not trust in uncertain riches, but in God. Rich Christians who remain faithful will lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:18-19). Nevertheless, the language about a camel going through the eye of a needle is quite the memorable warning (Matt. 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25).

A MODERN PARABLE ABOUT SOUL WINNING BASED ON THE RICH YOUNG RULER

The rich young ruler has been studied for centuries. People of every age need to be reminded about the dangers of putting anything before God. Riches and possessions can have a spiritual strangle-hold on the soul that will prevent one from entering heaven. However, in today's world with the prevalence of divorce and remarriage, there are many souls who are living in adultery. Such information is usually a shocking revelation to the ones who find themselves in such a condition since they obeyed the laws of the land, got a marriage license and went through the proper ceremony

to be married. Yet, they failed to consider God's law regarding divorce and remarriage. So, read the following parable which is based on the three accounts of the rich young ruler and see how it applies to today.

One day a certain unscripturally married man was having a Bible study with the preacher when he asked, "Preacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" The evangelist replied, "You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother. Do not covet." The young man said, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Then the man of God looking at him, loved him, and said, "One thing you lack. If you want to be perfect, go your way and forsake the woman with whom you are living for it is not lawful for you to have her (cf. Matt. 14:4). For the Lord said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery (Matt. 19:9; ASV). And come, take up the cross, and follow Jesus." Now when the young man heard that saying he was very sorrowful for he had a beautiful wife and children.

Granted, the hypothetical preacher said nothing about being baptized for the remission of sins. However, unless a man is willing to repent, baptism will only get him wet (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). When we are studying the scriptures with a person who reveals that he and/or she has been married before, it seems wise to bring up the issue of the Lord's will regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage since marriage is one of the most intimate relationships a person can enter. Far too often a person who learns he/she is in a "marriage" (as man recognizes it) that is contrary to God's will, he/she refuses to forsake his/her partner. Truly, some even get violently upset at the teacher. Others simply try to justify staying together, especially when children have resulted from the adulterous union.

Let's continue the examination of the parable where we left off. The

Bible teacher then said to the man, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for an unscripturally married person to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for such a person to enter the kingdom of God.” When the man heard it he was greatly as-

tonished saying, “Who then can be saved?” The preacher reminded the man that “there are people who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Matt. 19:12). He continued, “Assuredly, those who have left husband or wife for the gospel’s sake shall receive in the age

to come eternal life.”

What about you? Are you putting anything or anyone before your relationship with God? He who loves wife or husband more than Jesus is not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37).

12631 Route 208
Marble, PA 16334

“HE SAVED OTHERS; HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE”

Roger D. Campbell

Yes, Jesus could have come down from the cross that day.

Yet, He chose not to do so. Why?

Who said those words? About whom were they spoken? What were the circumstances under which they were said? Were those words accurate or false?

The occasion was the crucifixion of our Lord. Because the place where Jesus was crucified was located near the city of Jerusalem, many people went out to “have a look,” as we say (John 19:20). Among the onlookers were unbelievers who spoke words of sarcastic blasphemy. Some folks said to Jesus that day, “*Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross*” (Mark 15:29-31)!

What else was said? “*Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him*” (Mark 15:31-32). So, it was the chief priests of the Jews who said that Jesus was not able to save Himself. Those pitiful men mocked the sinless Son of God. Such mockery will be absent when they bow before Jesus, the King of kings, on the Day of Judgment!

What those chief priests said about Jesus, was it true? Did He really save others? He came into this world to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and He was successful in that mission. He *did* save people from their sins (cf. Matt. 1:21).

What about the other part of the chief priests’ statement? Was it true that Jesus was unable to save Himself? Think about three possible aspects of Jesus saving Himself.

First of all, in the sense of saving Himself *from sin*, Jesus had no sin (1 Peter 2:22). He came to save sinners, but He was not a sinner, so He had *no need* from which to be saved. So, in the spiritual sense of delivering one from sin, no, He did not save Himself.

A second matter to consider is this: Could Jesus have saved Himself in the sense of avoiding the cross altogether (like we say “save” ourselves from facing a type of trouble)? Could He have “saved” Himself from such horrific suffering? When Judas brought a mob to seize Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Simon Peter took out a sword and started slashing it to protect the Master. Do you recall what Jesus told Him? “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels*” (Matt. 26:53)?

How large was a legion of soldiers among the Romans? It is thought to have been around 6,000 men. Thus, the Christ was saying that, if He so desired, He could summon over 70,000 angels to His aid so He could avoid pain and death. Jesus did not choose that form of salvation; that is, He refused to take such “a way out.” His willingness to sacrifice His life is seen in these words: “*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father*” (John 10:17-18).

But what about when He already was hanging on the cross? Did Jesus have the power to save Himself by getting Himself off the cross, which is

what the mockers called on Him to do? Of course, He did! The One Who miraculously fed large multitudes of people, raised the dead, and calmed the sea certainly had the power to come down from the cross. It was not a question of *power*; it was a question of *plan*. It was God’s plan for Jesus to drink the cup of suffering and death, as Jesus said, “*the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it*” (John 18:11)?

Yes, Jesus *could* have come down from the cross that day. Yet, He chose not to do so. Why? Number one, because He came down from heaven to do the Father’s will (John 6:38), and He was one hundred per cent committed to doing what pleased His Father. In God’s eternal plan for our salvation, Jesus’ death was essential. Jesus knew that and was committed to doing what was required of Him. Number two, He went to and stayed on the cross because of His great love for you and me. Selfless, unconditional love caused Jesus to do what He did.

Do you know what else is amazing about Jesus’ love? He went to the cross and endured its unthinkable pain all the way to the end; and, He did so even for those who mocked Him that day! Do you suppose that some of those mocking priests were among the large group of priests who, after Jesus returned to heaven, obeyed the faith and had their sins forgiven by God’s mercy (Acts 6:7)? Despite those men’s evil intent as they chided the crucified Christ, God’s door of salvation still was open to them. How amazing is that?!

120 Fawn Dr.
Cleveland, TN 37412



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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** — seektheoldpaths.com

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