



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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TEN WAYS TO RESIST TEMPTATION

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Anyone who calls himself a “Christ”ian is claiming to follow the teachings and example of Christ, the one who never sinned (1 Peter 2:21-22). We could not be saved without Him (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 2:9; 5:9), but there is also a sense in which we must “save ourselves” (Acts 2:40). None of us deserve salvation, but we must be faithful to God to obtain salvation and keep it (Matt. 7:21; Phil. 2:12; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 John 1:6-2:6; Rev. 2:10). A critical part of faithfully following Christ is resisting temptations (James 4:7-10). Though we have all sinned in the past (Rom. 3:23), God commands us to be holy and to do our best to live by His Word (Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 1:15-16). To do so is described as a war: “...abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). When a child of God stops fighting this war against sin, he dies spiritually (James 1:15; 5:19-20; 1 John 1:6-2:6). Therefore, we must resist!

Everyone is tempted by something (1 Cor. 10:13), and even Jesus was tempted in every way we are, but without sin (Heb. 4:15). There is nothing wrong with being tempted, but choosing to go beyond temptation into sin is deadly (James 1:13-15). In fact, sin can be just as deadly after converting to Christ as before conversion. The account of Simon the sorcerer becoming lost in sin after his baptism/conversion is one of many sobering passages teaching that (Acts 8:20-24), and most warnings regarding sin in the New Testament were addressed to

baptized believers, not atheists or pagans. Sin can be eternally deadly to anyone, but God has promised to bless children of God who resist temptation: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James. 1:12; cf. 1:13-27). With all this in mind, following are ten ways those who love God can resist temptation:

1. Resist by Remembering God’s Word. Followers of Jesus should do what Jesus did when He was tempted — use the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Matthew chapter four records Satan tempting Jesus three times, and Jesus replied each time with “It is written.” The psalmist wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). Knowledge of God’s Word enables a person to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, righteousness from wickedness, and one who regularly studies and meditates upon God’s Word is much more equipped to fight temptation (Hosea 4:6; Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:12-14).

2. Resist by Remembering There is a Way Out. Christians are never forced to sin without a choice. Even if someone puts a gun to a Christian’s head and tells him to deny Christ or die, there is still a way out — death. It would be better to die than to commit willful sin: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you

into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Christ chose to die rather than sin, and so should we (Luke 9:23-24). Paul wrote that there is always a way to avoid sin: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Christians need to be like Joseph — find the way out and flee the temptation! (Gen. 39:7-12).

3. Resist by Readiness. Daniel “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Dan. 1:8). That is a great example to follow. We should purpose in our hearts beforehand that we will not give in to temptations. Be prepared by thinking about what temptations may present themselves on a particular day and get ready to resist!

4. Resist by Removing Stumbling Blocks. If there is something repeatedly tempting you, get rid of it! Jesus said even if it is your right eye or right hand. Remove it if it will cause you to burn forever (Matt. 5:27-29; 18:7-9). Such a shocking statement is meant to emphasize the dangers of sin that so many today trivialize. Paul said to “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom.

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Ten Ways To Resist Temptation...



Editorial...

REMEMBER GOD NOW

Garland M. Robinson

Remember God when we're young, young adults, middle age, old age. There is no time when it's acceptable to not remember God!

Amos 4:12 reminds of a great principle — “prepare to meet thy God.” The vast majority of individuals who depart this life are unprepared to meet God. They are not ready. Are YOU ready? Won't you make preparation to be ready? All humanity will stand before the righteous judge of all the earth some day to give an account of how they lived. Romans 14:12 makes this clear in saying, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” It does not matter if you believe it or not. It does not change the fact of it. Judgment is real! It is in our future.

The time to make preparation is NOW. There is no promise of tomorrow or next week or next year. Though most young people make it to adulthood does not mean all will. Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

God expects us to remember Him NOW, especially in youth. “Remember now thy Creator **in the days of thy youth**, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1).

WHY SHOULD WE REMEMBER GOD?

1) We need to remember God because of our SIN against Him. “There is none righteous, no not one...all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:10,23). Our sins separate us from God. “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) — eternal separation from

God. The only way to escape eternal death and damnation in the hell prepared for the devil is to be forgiven. For the individual who truly feels the tragedy of their own sins, forgiveness can hardly be imagined. How can a holy, righteous God forgive such a debt? But, the Bible tells us that God is not willing for anyone to perish. Instead, he desires all to come to repentance and obey the Gospel (cf. 2 Peter 3:9). The obedient, the faithful to God, are forgiven! Should we not serve Him? We can only begin to appreciate forgiveness (salvation) when we realize the weight and burden of sin that has been lifted from our soul.

2) We need to remember God because we need GUIDANCE. We can't “go it alone” and think we will meet God's approval. It's impossible without God. Jeremiah 10:23 says it is not within man's ability to direct his own life. There are so many ways that “seem” to be right in our eyes, but contrary to our own belief, they are the ways that lead to eternal separation from God (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Philip was sent to the man from Ethiopia to teach him the Gospel. He found the man reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked, “...Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:30-31). As a result of being shown the truth, the eunuch was baptized (immersed into water for the forgiveness of his sins). This is exactly what those on Pentecost were told to do. “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). He went on his way rejoicing.

3) We need to remember God

because He loves us. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ... God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6,8). We cannot imagine such love. We are unworthy, undeserving. Our sins and iniquities are as filthy rags. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6). Oh, if it were only so that multitudes would comprehend such love! “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Young people, appreciate the love of God on your behalf. It is real. It is genuine. It is for YOU and the whole world.

4) We need to remember God because He gives purpose to our lives. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Countless numbers of young people are aimlessly wondering through life with no clue of their purpose, no goal for their life, caring not what their life will be like tomorrow. They live only for the moment — for the “buzz” of a high. There's more to life than the fleeting days of youth. If they would only learn that lesson now. Untold numbers of those who have reached the wisdom of years see the uselessness of the time wasted and the tragic end of the indiscretions of their youth.

5) We need to remember God because there is a reward awaiting us. “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may

be also” (John 14:2-3). “...*There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,*

shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Is heaven worth it? Oh, multiplied millions of times over, it is worth it. An eternity will prove it!

Ten Ways To Resist Temptation...

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13:14). If trying to quit alcohol, pour out the vodka bottle that is still in the cabinet. If trying to quit smoking cigarettes, why keep any in the car?

5. Resist by Relationships.

Much said in the previous point can be said here. If someone is repeatedly tempting you to sin, avoid that person as much as possible, or you may be deceived into a sinful state that leads to Hell: “*Be not deceived: Evil companions corrupt good morals*” (1 Cor. 15:33). Some people such as spouses or coworkers cannot necessarily be avoided, so the Christian must do his best to preserve his salvation (Phil. 2:12) and help lost sinners find their way to Heaven through the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:5,16; 1 Peter 3:1; 4:17-19; 1 John 1:7-9). Beware that those we love the most have the biggest influence on our decisions (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13). It is therefore wise to surround ourselves with those who love God and love us enough to help us get to Heaven. That is surely one of the main reasons God commands Christians to assemble regularly — to encourage one another to be faithful (Heb. 10:24-25).

6. Resist by Requests in Prayer. Those baptized for the purpose of becoming forgiven have been added to Christ’s one church, having been born of water and of the Spirit (Acts 2:38-41,47; John 3:5). In repentance they “died to sin,” burying the former sinful person in water to arise and become children of God (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:26-27; Titus 3:5). These new children now have the right to pray and say, “Our Father in Heaven” (Luke 11:1-4; Eph. 1:3). One of the great blessings of prayer is that it can help in time of temptation, as with Christ and His disciples in Gethsemane: “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*” (Matt. 26:41). Calling upon God while Satan is trying to ensnare us will help bring our focus back to the holy nature of God and how He desires us to be holy like Him (Titus 1:16; 2:11-12; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

7. Resist by Remembering Redemption’s Price. Christians would do well to remember the price that had to be paid because of sin. The sinless Son of God was tortured unspeakably, mocked, spat upon, and crucified in terrible agony, so that “...*His visage was so marred more than any man...*” (Isa. 52:14; 53:3-11; Matt. 27:1-56). Every time Satan presents temptation before us as a beautifully wrapped gift waiting to be opened, our minds should go to the horrors of the cross. If not, and we give in to temptation, we shame our Lord. Those who sin willfully after becoming followers of Christ “*crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Heb. 6:6; cf. 10:26-31). The very thought of bringing shame to Christ beyond that which He has already suffered and bringing grief into the throne room of Heaven should halt the desire to sin (Gen. 6:6; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 3:10,17).

8. Resist by Remembering the Source of Sin. Some would say that Satan is the source of sin, but he is not really the source of our sins. Although Satan is called the tempter (Matt. 4:3), he cannot force anyone to do anything. He is neither omniscient nor omnipotent. Satan is called our enemy (1 Peter 5:8), but each person is responsible for his own choices, not Satan. “...*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*” (James 1:13-15). Christians should realize that we can be our own worst enemy if we are not careful. It would therefore be wise to know ourselves very well. Being aware of our own weaknesses will help us avoid sin and fortify ourselves against temptation.

9. Resist by Remembering the Results of Sin. Disobedience to the Creator is the cause of all the sickness, pain, and death in this world (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12). Sin can be a leaven that spreads to others, endangering their souls, and sometimes results of sin can linger even after forgiveness is received. Living in sin leads to the worst result of all — eternal torment involving eternal hopelessness, crying, darkness, and being trapped with Satan and his angels,

“*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:43-48). To choose sin is to choose eternal punishment instead of eternal bliss, darkness instead of light, filth instead of purity, and to be with Satan instead of Christ.

10. Resist by Remembering the Reward. The greatest place of all awaits the faithful! No more pain, sickness, sorrow, or death! Heaven is where God wants everyone to be (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). In fact, God wants us in Heaven so badly that He paid the greatest price to make it possible — sending His only Son to endure the suffering and death that we deserve. He did not have to do that (Rom. 5:8-10). We did not do anything to deserve it, and we never will deserve it (Luke 17:10; Eph. 2:8). Even so, blessings beyond what we can currently understand are awaiting the faithful. Since a relatively small amount of information about Heaven is revealed in the Bible, it seems that God is waiting to surprise His faithful in ways not yet fully revealed. Consider this: The God who created this incredible, beautiful universe, the God who gave us the ability to feel emotions such as deep love and tremendous joy, has even better things prepared for us! Just to be in the presence of God will be greater than anything man can experience in this universe. Christians should be extremely excited about going there!

All of this should motivate men to love God and serve Him faithfully, but if a properly baptized child of God does commit a sin, he should immediately repent and pray to the Father for forgiveness in Jesus’ name (John 16:23; Acts 8:22-24; 1 John 1:7-9). It would be tragic if children of God stopped taking sin seriously. Resisting temptation must be the Christian’s fight until death, and, like Paul and so many others, through Christ we can prevail! (Rom. 8:31-39; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Heb. 11).

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SEND US YOUR
CHANGE OF ADDRESS

MARRIAGE IS... #1

Bill Boyd

God knows that godly children come from godly homes with godly fathers and godly mothers who share a godly love for one another.

Marriage is something God loves. Malachi 2:16 tells us, "...the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." Flip that over and we learn that God loves marriage. The better we understand why God loves marriage the better we will be able to understand why God hates divorce.

Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament. He prophesied at the end of the time often called, "The Period of Restoration." This is a good name for this period, for Israel had been restored to their homeland after the Babylonian captivity, they had restored the walls of Jerusalem, and they had restored the temple and its services. But too much of this restoration was only of outward things. For many, what was missing was a restoration of the heart. They were worshiping, but the worship was weariness unto them, and the Lord said, "neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (Malachi 1:10). Neither was the way they were living acceptable. They were breaking covenants (Malachi 2:10). God had made a covenant with their fathers that they would be a separate people. They were profaning that covenant by putting away their wives, who were the sisters and daughters of their brethren, and taking to themselves hot young heathen women.

We learn from Malachi that divorce is treachery, an abomination, and the cause of tears, weeping and crying out. Divorce profaned the holy covenant and rendered their worship vain. It was covenant breaking, a failure of the spirit to govern the passions, violence, shame, and evil. God hates it.

Flipping this around, we learn from Malachi that marriage is holy. The prophet said, "Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god" (Malachi 2:11). Adam Clark suggests this means they had profaned the marriage covenant that God loved.

Their covenant with God was holy, but the marriage covenant is also holy. This is why we talk of holy matrimony. It is holy because it came from God (Gen. 2:23-24). Marriage is "What God hath joined together" (Matt. 19:6).

Marriage is for companionship.

The prophet said, "yet is she thy companion" (Malachi 2:14). Malachi wrote of how "putting away" bought tears, weeping, and crying to the altar (Malachi 2:13). It is as though the fires of the sacrifices were being quenched by the tears of their wives against whom they had dealt treacherously. A godly companion can bring us closer to God. In Genesis 2:18 we read that God made woman to be a help that is suitable for man.

Poets have waxed eloquently on the joy that Adam must have known in Eve. Solomon wrote in his song: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 2:16; 4:10; 5:16; 6:3), and in his Proverbs, "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and the pleasant roe; let her breast satisfy thee at all times" (Prov. 5:18). The joy of that companionship is part of the purpose of marriage.

Marriage is a covenant. The prophet said, "yet is she...the wife of thy covenant" (Malachi 2:14). God hates divorce because divorce is the breaking of a sacred covenant, the failure to keep a vow, a broken promise. Sometimes it is said, "We do not love each other anymore." Those who say this do not know the meaning of love.

There are two words in the New Testament for love, one is *philao*, and the other is *agape*. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, but sometimes distinctly. **Philao is the love of joyful friendship. Agape is a love of unselfish commitment.** The love God wants us to have is *agape* love for our marriage partner. What does someone mean when people say they do not love their partners any-

more? Does that mean they have become so self-centered they are willing to abandon their commitment? *Philao* can be nurtured, but to walk away from a marriage commitment is to violate the law of God.

Marriage is for a godly seed.

The prophet said, "And did not he make one? ...And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed" (Malachi 2:15). Children are a blessing in a marriage. "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children" (Psalm 113:9); "Children are the heritage of the Lord... Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). God knows that godly children come from godly homes with godly fathers and godly mothers who share a godly love for one another.

Marriage is also spiritual. The prophet said, "Yet had he the residue of the spirit... therefore take heed to your spirit" (Malachi 2:15-16). The exact import of these words may not be certain, but it is certain we are made in the spiritual image of God (Gen. 1:26); and, we are to walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-14). Marriage is for spiritual men and women; it is not for animals. Marriage is a spiritual choice.

Other relationships that are close to us are blood relationships that we have without choice. We are given to our parents, our children are given to us, and with this comes brothers, sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews. The affection we have in these blood relationships is a natural affection. The relationship that takes priority over all of these is the one we choose. That is why the marriage relationship is the relationship for which we are the most responsible, and for which we are most accountable. We enter that relationship by choice, and we maintain that relationship by choice, "therefore take heed to your spirit."

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THE LIGHT THAT WILL NEVER GROW DIM

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*Christ pleads with His followers to be the
“salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16).*

Las Vegas, Nevada is known as the city that never grows dark because of the abundance of neon lights. But one day those lights and all other lights in this world will never shine again! There is a light, however, that will never grow dim nor be extinguished. Most people today are putting their faith in artificial light that man has created while steadfastly rejecting *“the light of the world”* (John 8:12) which is Jesus Christ. He was the only source of complete *“light”* while living on this earth (John 9:5).

After Jesus’ death, it was by His power, purpose, and glory that through the inspired preaching of His apostles this light would continue to shine forth as long as this world exists. Upon the death of the last apostle, God’s revelation to man was once for all time completed. Such was announced by the apostle Paul in saying, *“Love never faileth: but whether (there be) prophecies, they shall be done away; whether (there be) tongues, they shall cease; whether (there be) knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away”* (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The phrase *“that which is perfect”* refers not to Jesus Christ, but to completed revelation — the Word of God. Man-made lights flicker brightly and then burn out, but God’s source of light, His Word, will continue to burn brightly and lead the obedient to eternal life. Far too many today put their trust in man-made lights (creeds) while rejecting the light that comes from above (God’s Word)!

Jesus said, *“...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12). We live in a society where “the powers that be” think they are the *“light of the world.”* They revel in their worldly wisdom, take great pride in human power, and praise indecent and ungodly behavior. When the devil’s glitter

and glamour no longer shines, all who follow him will find themselves in utter darkness.

This world we live in has plenty of “lights” that blind folks. **Some are blinded by the “light of science”** and foolishly accept every theory that comes from the mind of man. Theories such as the theory of evolution contradicts the Bible, but this is the bright light of many world renowned scientists. The fact that Adam could not find *“a help meet for him”* (Gen. 2:20) among the animals proves that God had to provide a suitable help by a special act of creation.

The second person of the Godhead (Jesus the Christ) is the creator of all things (John 1:3), but there were two distinct, special acts of creation — the creating of Adam and Eve. Evolution, organic or theistic, has neither part nor parcel in anything that was created by God! As Franklin Camp so well stated, *“If the Bible had said, Monkey thou art, and to monkey thou shalt return, then one might argue there is some basis for evolution in Genesis 2.”*

The “light of philosophy” that comes from supposedly brilliant minds blinds some folks. It seems to matter not that for centuries philosophers have been contradicting one another! Christ does not contradict Himself, and is consistent with His teaching, yet people prefer to choose fallible man over infallible God.

The “light of psychology” that rationalizes why man’s sins aren’t really sins, blinds the majority of people. The sin of adultery is called “an innocent affair.” The sin of homosexuality is an “alternate lifestyle.” A drunkard or dope addict has a “disease.” A transgender person was mistakenly born the “incorrect sex.” Can you imagine one knowingly swallowing malaria or injecting himself with cancer? Psychology has attempted to make sin a figment of one’s imagination while leading folks in a dark abyss. Christ, the light of the world is rejected while people choose to frat-

ernize with a world wallowing in spiritual darkness.

It should not surprise us that most folks stand in opposition to God. Jesus warns, *“If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:18-19). Christians will never be popular with the world! Perhaps this is the reason some have no desire to be a Christian. They love the world far too much to let it go!

This world in which we live will one day be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). What then? It is no wonder that John warns, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (1 John 2:15-17).

Christ pleads with His followers to be the *“salt of the earth”* and the *“light of the world”* (Matt. 5:13-16). The reason why people do not obey the Gospel and live Christian lives is no mystery. Christ stated it well in saying, *“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved”* (John 3:19-20).

We have fellowship with Christ and brethren of like precious faith **only** if we *“walk in the light”* of God’s Word (1 John 1:7). May we choose to follow the light that will never grow dim nor fade away!

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GOD'S GREAT GOSPEL

Roger Campbell

If we want lost souls to hear the Gospel, it is our responsibility to get it to them. Let us put forth a renewed effort to communicate the only message that can save the souls of men.

In the epistle which was addressed to “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse” (Col. 1:2), Paul commended them for their faith and love (1:4). He then spoke about their hope (1:5). What is not to like about the combination of faith, love, and hope?!

How did they have hope? It was through the Gospel. Here is what the apostle went on to write: “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:5-6). What did he show them (and us) about God’s great Gospel?

The Gospel is a message of

TRUTH. Again, Paul described it as “the word of the truth of the gospel” (1:5). Jesus said the Father’s word is truth (John 17:17). When we read, follow, and spread the Gospel of God, we have the assurance that it is truth.

The Gospel is a message of HOPE. How did people in the city of Colosse hear about hope? Through the Gospel (1:5). And that hope pointed to what location? To heaven — “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (1:5). A bit later in this same letter, Paul spoke of “the hope of the gospel” (1:23). Christians have a singular hope (Eph. 4:4), which is eternal life (Titus 1:2). Only God’s Gospel of truth gives legitimate hope to humans! Any philosophy or teaching that is founded on human ideas of any sort cannot give real hope. In particular, we need to beware of teaching which is a mixture of God’s truth and human ideas. Having genuine hope is possible only through the God of hope (Rom. 15:13) and the Gospel of His dear Son.

God’s great Gospel is FOR ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. Paul wrote about the Gospel coming/going into all the world (1:6). Such language reminds us of the Great Commission — the charge of Jesus to preach the Gospel to every creature in all the world (Mark 16:15). As the old song says, “The Gospel is for all.” There is no such thing as one Gospel for the Gentiles and a different Gospel for the Jews. There is one Gospel, period. God’s wisdom and power makes the Gospel “fit” the needs of every person of every race in every place.

The Gospel BEARS FRUIT. Paul declared the Gospel which came to Colosse “bringeth forth fruit” (1:6). When the incorruptible seed is sown and people receive it, they are “born again” (1 Peter 1:22-23). Jesus spoke of sowing and reaping or sowing and a harvest (John 4:35-37). One “fruit” which the Gospel produces is *saved people*. A second type of fruit it produces is the *spiritual development / maturity*

of Christians. In fact, we read about this kind of fruit here in Colossians 1, as Paul said he prayed for them to be “fruitful in every good work” (1:10), which would be the same as them “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phil. 1:11). The Gospel produces God-glorifying fruit.

The Gospel is a message of GRACE. When the people in Colosse heard the Gospel, they “knew the grace of God in truth” (1:6). In Bible lingo, it is “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). God’s kindness is revealed through the Gospel, which shows humanity how to act in order to receive (and keep on receiving) God’s grace.

The Gospel MUST BE COMMUNICATED. How did people living in Colosse get connected with the Gospel? Paul said, “...the truth of the gospel, which has come to you” (1:5-6; NKJV). So, we are looking at a historical fact: the Gospel came to Colosse. The Gospel getting to Colosse was the *effect*: what was the *cause*? God’s Gospel did not get there by accident. It did not just fall out of the sky. No, the Gospel was carried to the residents of that area by human messengers, one of whom is noted in verse seven, a brother by the name of Epaphras. Brethren, if we want lost souls to hear the Gospel, it is our responsibility to get it to them. Let us put forth a renewed effort to communicate the only message that can save the souls of men.

I love the simplicity of Acts 14:7. The whole verse consists of only a few words, but they give us a plain and powerful picture of what Barnabas and Paul did in one geographic region: “And there they preached the gospel.” Thank God for His great Gospel, which still has the power to deliver souls from sin and prepare those who continue to follow it for heaven.

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THEY SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES

Johnny O. Trail

If one does not examine Scripture to arrive at the objective revealed truth, how will he know the difference between truth and error?

In the mid 1800s Hans Gustafson, a well-known glass blower from Germany, became alarmed at the number of homes that were being destroyed by fires during the Christmas season. In an age prior to artificial trees, people used live trees that were cut down and placed in homes for Christmas decorations. These trees were adorned with candles to make them “light up” in the late evening and nighttime hours. As a result of the tree continually drying, the trees would sometimes catch fire and destroy entire houses.

Gustafson sought to provide a remedy for this serious problem. He determined that glass could be blown into globes and placed on trees as decorations. The issue he had to address was the weight of the glass globes he created. Gustafson created a process whereby the globes could be blown and designed in such a way that the glass was extremely thin and light making it easier to hang on a Christmas trees. Today, an original Gustafson hand-blown ornament is worth millions of dollars and are much sought after by collectors.

At this point, the reader needs to know that the previous two paragraphs were entirely made up. The words were fabricated to make a point about research and taking someone’s word for fact without any investigation. If I had not revealed the falsity of the first two paragraphs, some might have shared this information with others and claimed it to be true based on simply trusting the writer. To be fair, I make every attempt to be truthful and accurate in any writing I produce. If I make a mistake, I correct it and offer apologies when needed.

Most responsible adults check and double check things that are important and things that have value in their lives. When one leaves home for a vacation, it is not unheard of to ask the neighbors to “keep an eye” on things. In an electronic age, many will check their bank statements many times a day to make sure their money is being handled correctly. Yet when it comes to

a person’s immortal soul, the most valuable thing they possess, they are willing to take someone else’s counsel on the matter with absolutely no investigation. Most reasonable people would not act accordingly with their finances or other valuable things.

This also exposes a fatal flaw that one readily observes in our society. Many people make accusations or statements without fully knowing or understanding the facts of a situation. In an effort to “break the story,” news outlets will make broadcasts about newsworthy reports as the information becomes available, and they leave gaps, inconsistencies, or half-truths in the reporting without any continued effort to arrive at valid, verifiable conclusions. This has resulted in riots, destruction of property, and false accusations being leveled at innocent parties.

To this end, the entire truth regarding a situation or Scriptural examination needs to be revealed and studied (Psalm 139:17). The Apostle Paul saw the proclamation of the whole truth as tantamount to helping the Ephesian elders combat the apostasy that was about to impact their congregation. Acts 20:27-29 says, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 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.” The truth Paul preached would enable them to refute and overcome the false teachers that would corrupt the church at Ephesus.

One marvels at the lack of provisions that are made by many in our society to determine if they are on the right path spiritually speaking. Philipians 2:12 says, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Each person is accountable for their soul’s safety, and it is not something that one should take for granted.

Scripture makes it plain that false teachers will teach perversions of the truth. II Peter 2:1-3, “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.” If one does not examine Scripture to arrive at the objective revealed truth, how will he know the difference between truth and error?

Furthermore, Scripture lauds the actions of the Bereans because they studied God’s word to affirm the message of Paul and Silas. This was the case even in light of the fact that Paul was a man inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says in Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” As a result of their study many of them were obedient to the Gospel (Acts 17:12). They did not merely take Paul’s word for the truth. Luke, in writing Acts, applauds them for examining the matter against the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

All these things make it abundantly clear that one should never accept any teaching regarding God’s word without examining it for themselves. Hopefully, the message proclaimed will mesh beautifully, completely, and wholly with God’s word. Do not take what any human being says regarding Scripture as truth if it cannot be backed by the Bible. To do so might imperil your soul.

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THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

James E. Rogers

When Jesus confirmed His deity in response to Peter's confident confession, He promised to build His church (Matt. 16:13-19). Jesus showed that His church would begin in the lifetime of some in the first century (Mark 9:1). Connected with the coming kingdom would be *power*. The apostles were to receive this *power* in Jerusalem and with that *power* they would preach repentance and remission of sins in Jesus' name (Luke. 24:47-49).

Before His ascension, Jesus told the apostles that the power would come when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:5,8). When the power came, the church was to come (Mark 9:1). So, the origin of the church of Christ can be traced to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. All of this came about on Pentecost (Acts 2).

Since Acts 2 records the beginning of the church, we would do well to examine this chapter in order to appreciate the things connected with that great church.

1. Acts 2 records the coming of the *power* (2:1-4). When the power came, the *church* came (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:5,8). This power directed the things spoken by the apostles.
2. Acts 2 records the *preaching* that accompanied the beginning of the church (2:4-36; 38-40). As one examines this preaching he will find:
 - a. It was *Spirit-directed* (2:4). If one disagrees with anything preached on Pentecost, he disagrees with the Holy Spirit.
 - b. It was *Scripture-filled* (2:16-21, 25-28, 34, 35). The prophecies concerning the church were being fulfilled that day. Application is made of the prophecies of the patriarch David and the prophet Joel. The principles concerning the church which had been introduced in Isaiah 2 and Daniel 2 are fulfilled alongside those of Joel 2 and Psalms 16 and 110.
 - c. It was *Savior-centered* (2:22-36). Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and reign are discussed. His obedience to God's will is shown in His fulfillment of that will in His life. He was "*approved of God*" (2:22), "*delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*" (2:23), "*raised up*" by God (2:24,32) and "*made both Lord and Christ*" by God (2:36).
 - d. It was *Salvation-oriented* (2:37-41,47) It called upon people to save themselves and told them how to do so. That which saved them added them to the church. The church could not have been started earlier than this time nor later than this time.

Salvation was provided and the saved were added to the church when they heard the preaching (2:14), repented of their sins (2:38) and were baptized (2:38,41). All these

actions were prompted by faith (Rom. 10:17) and included in them was a confession of that faith (Rom. 10:9,10). This is the same way people are saved and added to the church today.

3. Acts 2 records the *Pleasure of church membership* (2:42-47). As a result of the joy of being added to the church, members are steadfast in worship (2:42), selfless in work (2:43-45), single in direction (2:46) and saved in eternity (2:47).

The church of Christ had its origin on that first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus as recorded in Acts 2. It came with power. It was established with preaching and the pleasures of membership in it are presented to encourage all to become members of it. Persons today need to obey the Gospel plan of salvation in order to become members of that wonderful church.

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