



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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THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD VS. THE WISDOM OF GOD

Roger Campbell

Why do some people not receive the truth about Jesus and His wonderful redemption? People who think they are wise tend to trust in themselves.

Humanity is not on God’s level. It never has been and never will be. The Lord God is the Creator and we are the created. When it comes to comprehension, the Bible says God’s “*understanding is infinite*” (Psalm 147:5). Man’s knowledge cannot compare to the Almighty’s. The Lord affirms that His ways and His thoughts are above those of man’s (Isa. 55:8-9). Simply put, man does not always think and see things in the same way that the God of heaven does, and our thinking is no match for His.

The first-century city of Corinth was located in Greece. Folks who lived in that culture put a premium on philosophy and human wisdom. Paul penned the letter to the saints in Corinth which we know as “First Corinthians.” In the opening portions of his message he spoke often about wisdom. What kind of wisdom? He mentioned the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. How different those two are!

Consider these depictions of the human wisdom that was so prevalent in Corinth when Paul wrote to the church in that city. The apostle called it:

- “the wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor. 1:19)
- “the wisdom of this world” (1:20)
- “wise according to the flesh” (1:26)
- “human wisdom” (2:4)

- “the wisdom of men” (2:5)
- “fleshly wisdom” (2 Cor. 1:12)

Each of those terms points to human wisdom. And, just what did/does the Lord think about the wisdom of this world? The Bible says, “*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*” (1 Cor. 3:19).

As we stay in the divine message of 1 Corinthians, we learn some truths about the wisdom of this world.

- 1) **Worldly wisdom mislabels things.** When it came to the cross of the Christ and the salvation that comes via His death, man’s wisdom labeled that message as “foolishness” (1:18,21,23).
- 2) **Human wisdom cannot stand against God.** He affirmed, “*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise*” (1:19).
- 3) **Worldly wisdom is made foolish by the Lord, as He inquired,** “*Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*” (1:20).
- 4) **By its own brand of wisdom, the world does not know God** (1:21).
- 5) **The wisdom of the world cannot compete with God’s,** for His so-called foolishness is wiser than men (1:25).

In that same context, in contrast to the world’s wisdom, Paul pointed out that God’s power and wisdom are on display through the Christ. Per

God’s plan and wisdom, the cross is the power of God (1:18). The Christ is called “*the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1:24). God uses the “foolish” and “weak” things of the world to accomplish His purposes (1:27). That is, He does things His way, even if the world counts His approach as foolish or weak.

Paul also stated this sad reality: “*...not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble*” accept the Gospel message (1:26-28). Why do such people not receive the truth about Jesus and His wonderful redemption? People in those categories tend to trust in themselves. They trust in their own might, in their own intelligence, and in their earthly success and achievements.

Concerning the church of God in the city of Corinth, let’s look at a few specific topics that show the clear distinction between the viewpoint/position of worldly wisdom and God’s wisdom.

- 1) The wisdom of the world said *fornication* is good, but God’s wisdom said to flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18).
- 2) Man’s wisdom said it was good to *worship idols*, but God’s wisdom said to flee idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). Corinth, employing earthly wisdom, was well-known for combin-

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Wisdom...



Guest Editorial

DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH

James W. Boyd

Paul did not hesitate to name names. Some are apostates and not only could, but would influence others in the wrong direction and cause them to lose their souls. To depart from what Jesus taught is to depart from His purpose for coming.

This lesson should begin with reading the following passages from your Bible (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Gal. 5:4; Acts 20:30-31; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Cor. 9:27; John 5:19-20; Matt. 10:22; Luke 17:32).

These passages affirm two pronounced points: 1) the *possibility* of departing from the faith, and 2) the *reality* of departing from the faith. Consider several Biblical persons that did depart from the faith.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Some falsely claim Judas was never in the right relationship with Christ. But that defies revelation. He was an apostle (the one who kept the bag, John 12:6; 13:29). He was sent to preach the coming of the kingdom under what is called the Limited Commission — just to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was equipped with miraculous powers. He was privileged to hear Christ preach His doctrine about the Old Testament prophecies, His parables, the fundamentals of the new covenant. He could testify of miracles. He had close association with other apostles. He was with them in the upper room.

Sadly, he covenanted with Jewish leaders to betray Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15) — the price of a slave. He sold his soul to the devil.

Later, he grieved over what he had done and admitted he had betrayed innocent blood (Matt. 27:4). He was sorry how things turned out but not sorry enough to make amends. He hanged himself (Matt. 27:5). Today

his name lives in infamy. It would have better if he had never been born (Matt. 26:24).

DEMAS

Demas is mentioned only three times in Scripture but we can piece together his life. In Philemon 24 he is listed alongside the most stalwart companions Paul had in proclaiming the Gospel with special commendation. In Colossians 4:14 his name is mentioned along with others and every name received commendation except Demas. Was he slipping? In 2 Timothy 4:10 we learn what happened to him. He departed from the faith, forsook Paul and their labors together, turned to the love of the world and left Christ. We cannot love the world and the Lord at the same time (1 John 2:15; James 4:4). His focus was on the “here and now” to the neglect of spiritual matters and the life to come.

SEVERAL NAMED BY PAUL

Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14) did much evil against Paul and had not remained loyal to the faith.

Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1:19-20) was delivered unto Satan along with **Alexander** because they made shipwreck of the faith.

Philetus is mentioned alongside **Hymenaeus**. Both were described as a “canker” (2 Tim. 2:17). They rejected the resurrection and contended it had already happened. (That sounds much like some today and theories on AD 70).

Phygellus and **Hermogenes** (2 Tim. 1:15) had turned away from Paul

much like Demas.

Please note that Paul did not hesitate to name names. These men were apostates and could influence others the wrong direction. The reason people depart from the faith may vary, but there is never a justification for it even though we may have an explanation of it.

UNNAMED DEPARTURES

We know there were those of whom Paul warned whose names are not listed but who walked disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6); not according to the tradition handed down by the apostles. Faithful brethren were to have no fellowship with them.

Romans 16:17 calls for marking (identifying and branding) those who cause division by teaching false doctrines. Their names are not listed but those who first received the epistle would know them. The same action must be taken today.

Acts 20:27: Paul warned of some elders who would draw away disciples after them and were called wolves in sheep’s clothing. What could be more dangerous to sheep than a wolf among them that looked like he was one of them?

Peter warned of unnamed false teachers (2 Peter 2:1) who would bring in damnable heresies.

2 John 9-11 spoke of those who transgressed the doctrine of Christ with a different doctrine. Such did not have God. Faithful brethren were not to bid them “God speed” lest they also be counted guilty of spreading false doctrines.

There is the unnamed brother in Corinth who was living immorally and who had to be disciplined (1 Cor. 5). That discipline effort was successful and we learn he was restored (2 Cor. 2:1-11). To have allowed that to go uncorrected would have cost many souls to be lost. That departure from the faith was very costly.

JUDAIZING TEACHERS

Who were they? They were the ones who were teaching that the Gentiles had to keep the Law of Moses, especially circumcision, to be saved. Paul said they taught a perverted Gospel (Gal. 1:7; 5:4). This was a challenge to the authority of Christ. Some were leading brethren away from

Christ back into Judaism that cannot save.

THE CHURCHES IN ASIA

Christ sent seven letters to seven churches in Asia, most of them correcting some faulty teaching or behavior that had been adopted. They were not completely departed from the faith but were on the way there. The letters were efforts to prevent that from occurring. The letters prove the possibility of apostasy. Ephesus would have their “candlestick” removed. Philadelphia was called a synagogue of Satan. Thyatira permitted “Jezebel” to conduct her evil work. Laodicea was lukewarm and contemptible. These situations show apostasy is possible.

PRESENT-DAY DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH

There are almost endless examples of departures. Many who were once faithful have decided to join those who wish to “update” the church and make it more acceptable to our age. They scoff at the faith they once proclaimed. They have cast their lot with the denominational world in joint services and fellowship. Their attitudes toward worship are more in sympathy with entertainment than reverence. They teach false doctrines regarding salvation, worship, marriage-divorce-remarriage — to accommodate the present society. They even adopt so-called “Bibles” that distort the *virgin birth* of Jesus Christ. They deny the *verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures*. Some have openly boasted they no longer have an interest in *restoring the New Testament church* because it is irrelevant for our time. They preach “*unity-in-diversity*,” which is not unity at all. Those who preach it do not desire unity, but fellowship in spite of division. Who can doubt for a moment the possibility and reality of apostasy from this abundance of evidence?

CONCLUSION

Men may depart. Who thinks that changes the will of God? This is not a pleasant theme, but a notation of a dark and growing cloud over the brethren. To depart from what Jesus taught is to depart from His purpose for coming the first time. Departure

can happen. Even Paul realized it could happen to him. “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*” (1 Cor. 9:27). We are responsible and we shall give an account

(Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Let us not depart from the faith. Let us sing sincerely, “I’ll never forsake my Lord.”

*A Burning Fire, Vol. 19
(published this year)*

*It can be ordered on Amazon
Search for James W. Boyd Vol. 19*

IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Let us all study diligently to make sure we are not living in sins of ignorance...

First John 2:16 lists three categories of sin: “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*” These are ways Satan tempts men to sin against God (Gen. 3; Matt. 4), but the Bible also speaks of another category of sin — **sins of ignorance**. Many have sinned against God in ignorance without being motivated by selfish desires of the flesh, lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. Even so, ignorance does not excuse disobedience to God, so the saying, “Ignorance is bliss” is not a Biblical concept.

Under the Law of Moses God had specific requirements for people who had sinned in ignorance to be forgiven, clearly implying that ignorance did not automatically excuse their actions or lack thereof (Lev. 4, 5; Num. 15). In the New Testament Peter told the Jews that he knew they were in ignorance when they denied Jesus and desired a murderer to be set free instead, but he still commanded them to “*Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*” (Acts 3:13-19; cf. 2:38).

Saul of Tarsus was not motivated by selfish, sinful desires when he was persecuting the Lord’s church. After his conversion he said, “*I did it ignorantly*” and “*in all good conscience*” (1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 23:1), but ignorance was no excuse, and he still had to repent and be baptized to be forgiven (Acts 22:16). Paul later told the pagans in Athens that he knew they were worshiping in ignorance, but now God commands all men everywhere to repent, because judgment is coming, and ignorance will not be excused (Acts 17:30-31; cf. 14:16).

The Great Commission itself is proof that God wants all men to learn how to be saved through Christ, and that they will not be saved in ignorance (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). If people could be saved in ignorance, why would Christians bother traveling all over the world teaching them to repent and obey God for salvation? God has plainly stated that those who do not know Him and do not obey the Gospel will be separated from Him forever in Hell (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 1 John 2:3-6). Man has a responsibility to seek God (Acts 17:27; Heb. 11:6), and those who do not believe in Him and serve Him are “*without excuse*” (Rom. 1:19-22; Psalm 19:1).

Sadly, there are many sincere religious people today who honestly believe they are faithfully serving God, but, like Paul before his conversion, they are mistaken and are still in their sins (Prov. 14:12; Rom. 10:1-3). In the Bible, even after people became Christians they were commanded to keep studying so as not to be led astray by false teaching in ignorance (1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 2 Peter 3:15-18). Let us all study diligently to make sure we are not living in sins of ignorance, and once we find and obey the Truth, let us labor tirelessly to reach and teach those who do not know God or His requirements for salvation (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9).

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THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Let us be content to do the things God has told us to do.

Let us do them in the way God has told us to do them.

The meaning of “autonomy” is independent or self-governing. The church we read about in the New Testament is made up of autonomous congregations. The word “church” means “the called out.” It is used to describe God’s people who have been called by the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). They have been called out of the world and into the service of Christ.

The word “church” is used in the New Testament in only two senses. First, it refers to *the called out people of Christ in all the world*. This is the **universal** sense. When Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18: “*Upon this rock, I will build my church,*” He was including all believers in all the world in His church. Thus, He was speaking of the universal church.

Second, the word “church” is used in the **local** sense. When Paul addressed the First Corinthian letter to “*the church of God which is at Corinth,*” he was speaking to a group of Christians in Corinth who met together to worship and serve God (1 Cor. 1:2). The universal church is made up of all the local congregations everywhere. Paul referred to this when he said: “*The churches of Christ salute (greet) you*” (Rom. 16:16).

The word “church” is never used in the Bible in a denominational sense. A denomination, by its own claims, is not the universal church. Most denominations claim to be a part of the universal church along with all the other denominations. Therefore, a denomination is smaller than the universal church. But most denominations are made up of many congregations. Therefore, a denomination is larger than the local church. An organization smaller than the universal church but larger than the local church is not found in the Word of God! Denominations were established by men. They exist without the blessing of God for they are completely unknown in God’s Word!

Churches of Christ are autonomous in government. Each one is independent of all others. Each one has its own leadership. We read in the New Testament of churches in a district or re-

gion such as “*the churches of Galatia*” (Gal. 1:2). However, there was no district organization. Each of the churches in Galatia was self-governing.

It is easy to see that God’s plan for His church was for each church in each place to be self-governing. Their rule of government is from the Lord in heaven, not men on earth. When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey, they visited the churches they had established. They appointed “*elders in every church*” (Acts 14:23). Every church had its own eldership. When Paul wrote to the church of Christ in Philippi, he addressed his letter to “*all the saints in Christ Jesus...with the bishops (shepherds, elders) and deacons*” (Phil. 1:1). The apostle Peter commanded elders to “*feed (tend, shepherd) the flock of God which is among you*” (1 Peter 5:2). They were not to feed other flocks, but they were to shepherd the flock which was among them. This is the local congregation where they were members.

Paul wrote to Titus: “*For this cause (reason) I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you*” (Titus 1:5). The Lord told John to write letters to each of the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (Rev. chapters 2-3). The church at Jerusalem had its own elders (Acts 15:4). The church in Ephesus had its own elders (Acts 20:17). The church at Philippi had its own elders (Phil. 1:1).

In each local church, we always read of more than one elder. Paul and Barnabas “*appointed elders in every church*” (Acts 14:23). Never do we read in the New Testament of a church having only one elder! In order to serve as an elder, a man must have the qualifications God has given in His Word (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). It is wrong to appoint men to serve as elders who are not qualified!

Congregations can cooperate with one another in doing the Lord’s work. We have examples of this in the New Testament. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to help the church in Antioch

(Acts 11:22-26). The congregation in Antioch sent help to the churches of Judea when they were in need (Acts 11:27-30). Paul received support from other churches in order to be able to preach the Gospel to the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8). Titus and another brother were chosen by the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to take a contribution from them to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:16-24). These churches cooperated with one another to do the Lord’s work. However, they did not form a separate organization apart from the local church. There was no city, province, state, or regional organization. They recognized their headquarters is in heaven.

God’s wisdom is seen in the way He has organized His church. If a window is made of a single piece of glass, just one stone hitting the glass will break the whole window. If the window is made up of several panes of glass, a stone hitting one pane will break only that one pane. The rest of the window will not be broken. The same thing is true of God’s church. If there is a central organization of all the churches, and false teachers come in, all the churches will be led astray. If there is no central organization, then false teachers might lead one congregation astray, but the others will not be harmed.

God’s way is best! The church belongs to the Lord. He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Often men are not happy with the way God has organized His church. They think they can improve upon it. They must understand they have no right to change what God has done (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19). If they change the organization, name, worship, or work of the Lord’s church, they are disobeying God, not man. Let us be content to do the things God has told us to do. Let us do them in the way God has told us to do them. Let us call them by the names God has given in His Word. When we do this, we can be sure we are pleasing the Lord (John 14:15).

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church of Christ is not a denomination founded by man nor a part of any religious organization founded by man. It originated in Heaven in the mind of God and was set up on earth in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord (Eph. 3:8-11; Acts 2). Instead of working with denominations, members of the church of Christ plead that all believers in Jesus Christ heed His prayer for unity and become one in His blood-bought body, the church (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 20:28).

The **foundation** of the church of Christ is Jesus Christ Himself (1 Cor. 3:11). A building is only as strong as its foundation. The same is true of a church. If a church is built upon a man or a human creed, it will fall. Only Jesus Christ has a right to build a church for He alone is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matt. 16:13-19).

The **belief or creed** of the church of Christ is based upon the great truth that Jesus is the Christ, “the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Just before Jesus returned to Heaven, He commanded His apostles: “Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20). Apostles and evangelists of the first century, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, wrote down the teachings of Jesus. This we have in the New Testament. We have no other law, guide, or standard of authority. This is truly a creed that needs no revision. It is perfectly suited to the changing conditions of man in all countries, cultures, and climates of the world in all the centuries until Jesus comes again (2 Tim. 3:16-17)!

The **designations** used by the church of Christ are only those which are found in the New Testament for the church and its members. In Acts 11:26 we read that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Members of the church honor Christ

by wearing this divinely given name. In Romans 16:16, we read: “All the churches of Christ salute you.” Christ said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). The name “church of Christ” simply means the church belongs to Christ for He is its purchaser and builder. Salvation is found only in the name of Christ (Acts 4:11-12).

The **worship** of the church of Christ is plainly given in the New Testament. Jesus said: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The day Christians worship is Sunday, the first day of the week, the “Lord’s Day” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). The acts of worship which are specified by God are: **singing, preaching, praying, giving, and the Lord’s Supper** (Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The **music** of the church of Christ is **singing**. This is the only kind of music which is authorized by God in His word for the worship of His church (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Singing is commanded of all Christians, not just a favored few. Choirs, quartets, solos, and choral groups are not mentioned in the New Testament. Therefore, there is no authority for such! Instruments of music such as pianos, organs, drums, guitars, et cetera are not mentioned by the New Testament either. To use such is to go beyond what God has written. It is sinful (2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19)!

The **finances** of the church of Christ are **free-will offerings** of the members as God has prospered them. They are given upon the first day of the week when the Christians meet to worship (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7). They are to be used for the work of the church in preaching the Gospel of Christ and helping the needy (Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Gal. 6:10). Other means of raising money for the work of the church such as garage sales, auctions, suppers, festivals, taxes, and tithes are not commanded in the New Testament. Therefore, they are done without the authority of Christ (2 John 9-11).

The **organization** of the church of Christ follows the simple pattern given in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church

(Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The **headquarters** of the church of Christ is in **Heaven** where the Head, Jesus Christ, is (Acts 1:9-11; 2:30-33). Christians in each community meet together to worship and serve God (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-2). Each one of these congregations is a “church of Christ” and as a whole are “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). Each local church of Christ is self-governing under Jesus Christ, the Head. They are led by men known variously as “elders” (Acts 14:23), “bishops” (Phil. 1:1), or “pastors” (Eph. 4:11). These different designations all refer to the same office (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1-4). These leaders must have all the qualifications given by God before they can serve in the eldership (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Deacons are servants of the church (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13) who also must be qualified before they can serve. Evangelists are preachers of the Gospel (2 Tim. 4:1-5). They may serve local churches under their elders or carry the Gospel into new areas (1 Tim. 1:3; Acts 8:5-40; 21:8-9).

The **membership** of the church of Christ is made up of all those who hear the Gospel of Christ, believe in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, repent of all their past sins, confess that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and are baptized (buried) in water for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30-31; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). Members who remain faithful unto death will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; Gal. 6:7-9).

The Bible speaks of but one church, the church of Christ (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). Christ has promised to save His church at the Last Day (Eph. 5:23). No salvation is promised to those out of Christ but instead they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Why not become a member of the church of Christ today so that you may have eternal life?

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SEND US YOUR
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DANGERS WE FACE

Marvin L. Weir

Many Christians have high moral standards and try to be good citizens in their community... but there are dangers they may face as they seek to live a life pleasing unto God?

There are certain sins that some people will never commit. The devil realizes this but it doesn't bother him at all. Satan knows that a person can avoid many sins; and yet, while practicing one sin, lose his soul. It is not the number of sins that condemns, but sin itself. This is the reason James admonishes, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Those who have never obeyed the Gospel are lost. Paul states this truth in saying that the Lord will render "...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" (2 Thess. 1:8-9). A failure to obey the Gospel will condemn one to eternal hell — that's what sin does.

The Bible shows that salvation is **IN Christ Jesus** (2 Tim. 2:10). The Scriptures also state, "For as many of you as have been baptized INTO Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). To have access to the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), one must be **IN Christ**.

Those who have obeyed the Gospel are admonished to continue in the pathway of righteousness. Salvation is conditional. John affirms such by saying, "...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). What if children of God choose to walk in *darkness* instead of the *light* of God's word? The Bible teaches that unless they repent and forsake their error they will be lost (cf. Acts 8:13-22).

Many Christians will never *steal, kill, curse* or *commit adultery*. They have high moral standards and try to be good citizens in their community. What are some dangers they may face as they seek to live a life pleasing unto God?

The danger of being a respecter of persons. Within the body of Christ it matters not whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white, male or female. The Bible teaches it is a sin to show partiality among God's people. James says, "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (James 2:9). If the devil can convince a child of God that he has the **right** to show partiality, then he has won a victory.

It is proper for people to have their "inner circle of friends." We have more in common with some folks than we do with others. Such is not sinful. It is wrong, however, to avoid or refuse to speak to a brother or sister in Christ. Some who profess to be children of God will not sit near, nor shake hands with a particular person or family. The cause is not a scriptural matter of fellowship but simply a show of partiality. A faithful child of God must always choose to serve and act in a manner that does not show partiality to other members of the kingdom! The apostle Paul sums up this matter well in saying, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

The danger of not using our abilities in serving in the kingdom. Many Christians use their educational training and intelligence in a remarkable way in the secular realm. They are involved and dedicated to their profession. They work long hours and stay up late at night so they will be considered successful in their endeavors. Many times the Lord's church would close its doors if it had to depend upon these same folks to work in the kingdom. There are visits to be made and Bible classes for both men and women to teach. Men are needed to serve in the assembly each Lord's Day. Satan knows he has won a victory

when he can convince folks the church needs to serve them, but they do not need to serve the church!

The danger of not seeking the kingdom first. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord stated, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Guy N. Woods comments on this verse: "This familiar affirmation of our Lord establishes, beyond doubt, his determination to have first place in the hearts and lives of those who would be his followers. Set out in it is: 1) an *obligation*: "but seek ye;" 2), the *object* to be sought is "his kingdom, and his righteousness;" 3) the *order* characterizing such seeking is to be, "first." And, attached is a *conditional promise*: If we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, "all these things" (the material needs of life), "shall be added" (literally, thrown in extra). It is thus clear that the Lord is satisfied with nothing less than top priority in our hearts and lives. To put him first means simply that if we have two places to go — one, involving our own interests, the other, His — we must make the Lord's trip first. If we have two tasks to perform — one the Lord's, the other, our own — we must take care of the Lord's task first. [Normal activities; not emergencies, MLW].

The danger of not giving as we have been prospered. God said to His people of old, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8-9). While living affluently in America, many Christians rob God every week. They simply earn **too much** to give as they have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2; cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).

May we remember the danger of any sin!

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Wisdom...

(Continued from page 33)

ing idolatry with fornication. In clear contrast, the Lord said that neither fornicators nor idolaters will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). In other words, both activities have horrible eternal consequences.

- 3) In Corinth, this world’s wisdom said there is no way there can be a bodily resurrection, but God’s wisdom affirms that *“the dead will be raised”* (1 Cor. 15:52).
- 4) In modern times, man’s wisdom says all religious belief systems are equally good, but God’s wisdom says that Jesus is the only Savior (Acts 4:12).
- 5) Satan’s wisdom says God accepts all churches, but God’s wisdom says He bought and possesses only one (Acts 20:28).

May each of us have the courage to *humble* ourselves, *deny* ourselves, and *submit* ourselves to the wisdom of God. We will never regret such a decision!

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SINGING THE SPIRITUAL BLUES

Bill Boyd

Sometimes when we are feeling “down and out,” it makes us feel better to sing the blues. Some say this genre of music originated with African-Americans singing about their troubles in the Deep South and was picked up by country music artists like Hank Williams. When things are not going my way I like to hear old Jimmy Rodgers sing, *“I’m going to drink muddy water and sleep in a hollow log...”* We know what his problem was; *“...women make a fool out of me.”* Some of the songs in our hymnal could be called “Spiritual Blues.” We are singing the spiritual blues when we sing, *“Tempted and tried we’re oft made to wonder; Why it should be thus all the day long; While there are others living about us; Never molested though in the wrong.”* There is a reason that song is so popular; we feel that way sometimes.

American Blues may have originated in the Deep South, but people have been singing about disappointments and heartaches around the world for thousands of years. In the **Tenth Psalm** David is singing the spiritual blues. You can hear his mournful wail in the first verse, *“Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thyself in time of trouble.”*

Taken at face value, David is wrong. God does not stand far off in time of trouble. He is not just present; he is *“very present.”* In **Psalm 46:1** David sang, *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.”* Paul is assuring the Philipians that God is always near when he writes, *“The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (Phil. 4:5-6). It is said that a metallurgist never watches the gold more closely than when it is being purified by fire. I think of this when I read in 1 Peter 1:5-7 that we are *“...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation... though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour*

and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Why then would David sing that the LORD was far off in time of trouble? Remember, the Psalms are poems. David is not presenting a proposition; he is expressing his feeling. Sometimes, in times of trouble, we may feel like God has left us even though we know it is not so.

In Psalms 10:2-11 David describes the wickedness of the wicked and how the wicked seem to get by with mocking God. *“The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor... God is not in all his thoughts... He hath said in his heart, I shall never be moved.”* Paul quotes from this Psalm in Romans 3:13-14 where he says, *“The poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”* (See Psalm 10:7). David goes on to say of the wicked, *“He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it”* (Psalm 10:11). But in Psalm 10:12-15 David prays, *“Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble... Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite... thou art the helper of the fatherless. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.”* The Psalm ends with praise. *“The Lord is King for ever and ever... Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt... judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress”* (Psalm 10:16-18).

The **Tenth Psalm** begins with weak mournful faith, but it ends with boldness, confidence and strength. Those who have been with David in times of trouble know that often the strength for which we pray comes to us even as we ask for it. We also know the healing power of singing the spiritual blues, but make sure you sing until the last verse. *“When we see Jesus coming in glory; When he comes from his home in the sky; Then we shall meet him in that bright mansion; We’ll understand it all by and by. Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine; We’ll understand it all by and by.”*

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Creative financing is becoming the norm in the Lord’s church. Para organizations that receive the glory and in reality function as if they themselves were the church. Just saying something is under the oversight of an eldership does not make what is being overseen Scriptural!” ...**Wayne Brewer**. “Thank you” ...**Patty Hale, Spencer, IN**. “Hope this check will help out some” ...**Enid C/C, Enid, MS**. “Please accept this contribution to help with your expenses of publishing your Great, Sound, publication. May God continue to bless your Great Effort to present the Truth to a lost and dying world. Thank you” ...**Cubb Creek C/C, Whitleyville, TN**. “Thank you” ...**Allen & Irene Tate, Cache, OK**. “I want you to know I appreciate you-all for sending out *Seek The Old Paths*. However, we have so many different things to read! The Bible and other material. I want to cancel our STOP. Thanks for all that you do” ...**John & Melba Hargis, Pikeville, TN**. “I have been receiving your paper for awhile now and I really enjoy them so much. God bless you” ...**Mary Norris, Shady Valley, TN**. “Please accept this small gift for your wonderful publication. It is greatly needed throughout the brotherhood. Sound teaching is always a blessing. Please keep up the work of the Lord” ...**Michael Ivey, Gonzales, TX**. “We look forward to each issue of STOP and appreciate the soundness you’ve maintained” ...**AR**. “I greatly appreciate you” ...**Barbara Sperow, Prescott, MI**. “May God bless you in this endeavor. In God we trust” ...**Oakwood St Church of Christ, Smithville, TN**. “Please change my address. I don’t want to miss your issues. Thank you” ...**Glenda Rushing, Jonesboro, AR**. “Some years ago we visited the Leoni church. Since that time

we’ve received your publication, *Seek The Old Paths*. I can’t tell you how we look forward to the publication. Its teaching is so conservative and **sound**. It’s wonderful to know there are still elders and congregations who teach the sure word of God. Thank you for keeping us on the mailing list. We hope you can use this small gift to further God’s word to a world that needs it” ...**Larry & Sue McMillon, Claremore, OK**. “We’ve enjoyed *Seek The Old Paths* for many years. Thank you for all that you do to further God’s kingdom. It’s such a reliable source for one to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thanks so much. Thanks again” ...**M/M M. Cook, Adrian, MI**. “I used to get a copy of your paper from Oakey Blvd congregation in Los Vegas. Would like to receive it at my new home. Thanks” ...**Tracey Clymer, Draper, UT**. “Thank you for your sincere work in publishing true Bible information. I always enjoy reading it” ...**Alma Jean Hall, Dayton, OH**. “I would like to thank you for sending me *Seek The Old Paths* for many years. Thank you and brother Robinson for all the work that goes in to putting STOP together. I hope STOP lasts many years” ...**Chuck Richardson, Wintersville, OH**. “I used to pick up a copy of STOP where I attended, but I now go to a different congregation and want to continue getting STOP. I would greatly appreciate it” ...**Jerry A. Moody, Vinemont, AL**. “Please remove us from your paper mailing list. Thank you” ...**Geoffrey Rowe, Winter Springs, FL**. “I would like to discontinue my subscription” ...**Scott Stubblefield, Jonesboro, AR**. “Enjoy the paper and articles. Helps me a lot. God bless you” ...**Michael McCaleb, Pensacola, FL**. “I would like to receive this great publication. It is a very informative paper” ...**James Masters, Clarkrange, TN**.

WHEN WAS THE BIBLE DIVIDED INTO CHAPTERS AND VERSES?

When originally written, the books of the Bible did not contain chapters and verses. Such divisions, of course, are not inspired, yet are extremely helpful in locating biblical passages. The modern chapter divisions of the Bible were created by Stephen Langton, so-called “Archbishop” of Canterbury, and were completed in 1227 A.D.

The Wycliffe English Bible, completed in 1382, was the first Bible to use Langton’s chapter divisions. Since that time all English translations have adopted this pattern. Translations in other languages also chose to use this same chapter division system.

Bible verses were created much later. The verses of the Old Testament were developed in 1448 by a Jewish rabbi named Nathan. The New Testament verses were developed in 1551 by Robert Estienne (or Stephanus). His divisions were also used in the Greek New Testament published in 1551.

The Geneva Bible, completed in 1575, was the first Bible to include both chapter and verse divisions for both Old and New Testaments. Most Bibles published since then have continued to use this system of chapters and verses.

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