

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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PROVE ALL THINGS

Stephen Wiggins

The Christian is commanded to repeatedly keep on testing religious messages while constantly holding fast only to those which receive approval.

Paul articulates a succinct statement of only six words in the Greek New Testament. The statement encapsulates a divine mandate which twenty-first century churches of Christ would do well to heed. Read it: *"prove all things; hold fast that which is good"* (1 Thess. 5:21).

This directive was written to the church at Thessalonica. Paul arrived in this city on his second missionary journey where he established the cause of Christ by proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 17:1-4). Later, he penned two epistles to this congregation which have been preserved in the New Testament as 1 and 2 Thessalonians. From these letters one learns the apostle was concerned about false teachers leading the brethren astray, especially as it pertained to the time of the second coming of Christ (1 Thess. 5:1-3). He specifically told the brethren that they were not to allow anyone to "beguile" them in this matter (2 Thess. 2:1-3).

The term *beguile* translates a word used to describe the deception utilized by Satan in the Garden of Eden (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). Paul employs the same word to depict the mode of operation by false teachers when using "smooth and fair speech" in order to "beguile the hearts of the

innocent" (Rom. 16:17-18). Occurring only six times in the New Testament, the term always conveys the concept of causing someone to accept false ideas or erroneous views concerning the truth, to *deceive* or *cheat* (BDAG, 345; Louw/Nida, 367).

From this it seems clear the apostle was concerned over whether his converts at Thessalonica would remain true to the Gospel in view of the deceptive errors being propagated in their community. It was therefore necessary for Paul to direct the brethren to scrutinize doctrines in the sermons they heard in order to be able to discriminate between truth and error. Only by evaluating the teaching presented to them could they know what to embrace as God's word and what to reject as false. Thus, the divine mandate is pronounced — *"prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

ALL THINGS/THE GOOD

Contextually, "all things" and "the good" should be understood as doctrines in light of the prophetic revelations just mentioned in the preceding verse ("despise not prophesyings"). These prophetic utterances were the inspired teachings revealed through the miraculous gifts which the early church was endowed with

in order for the totality of God's word to be progressively revealed within the first century. Paul urges the brethren to evaluate all the teaching they hear and to only embrace that which is in harmony with God's inspired revelation. It was necessary to do this in view of the fact that there was a proliferation of "false" (pseudo) prophets and apostles during this time period who were claiming to speak by inspiration of the Spirit on God's behalf (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:12-15). The parallel today is that many Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers falsely claim to preach under the direct impulse of the Spirit.

These instructions from Paul were probably initially given for those in possession of the spiritual gift called the "discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29; *MacKnight on the Epistles*, 420). This gift miraculously allowed the true prophet to discriminate between the bogus and genuine. Only authentic truth was to be embraced. This gift was essential during the time before the New Testament was written down in completed and permanent form. Prophecies and teachings were not to be blindly accepted as infallible revelation from

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Editorial...

WHAT MUST ONE UNDERSTAND IN ORDER TO BECOME A CHILD OF GOD? #3

Garland M. Robinson

One must understand that **BELIEF** in Jesus is essential to become a child of God. There are a number of things that one must believe about Jesus.

One must believe that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” (John 20:31), “*Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11), “*the Christ of God*” (Luke 9:20), “*the Messiah, which is...the Christ*” (John 1:41), “*indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*” (John 4:42), “*this is the Christ*” (John 7:41), “*God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36), “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 11:17), “*Christ Jesus*” (Acts 19:4), “*his son Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom. 1:3).

One cannot be saved without faith in Jesus the Christ. Jesus said, “*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*” (John 8:24). “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). “*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John 3:18). “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). It can’t be any plainer than that! No salvation is found in Mohammed, Buddha, Brahman, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, or any other.

Heaven says, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6). The jailor in Philippi was told that if he wanted to be saved he had to believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). Jesus said, “*He that believeth*

and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

Belief (faith) in Jesus is essential in order to be saved, but “faith alone” will not save. The one who tells you it will is telling you a lie. James 2:17-26 disclaims this fatal error. John 12:42 shows one can believe without enjoying God’s pleasure. There’s far more to being saved than believing in Jesus. Is your belief alive or dead? The difference between the two is heaven or hell.

One must understand that **REPENTANCE of sins is essential to become a child of God**. Without a person repenting of their sins, there is no forgiveness of sins. Jesus said, “*...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3,5). It could not be any plainer! This also shows the foolishness of the doctrine of “faith only.” If “faith only” were true, then repentance would be excluded. But, Jesus most assuredly included it in his plan of salvation.

The word repent means “to think differently or afterwards, i.e., reconsider, to change one’s mind, to change one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins.” Repentance is in the mind. It involves a “change of mind.” When one changes their mind, it shows itself in a change of action or life.

To simply change one’s action is not repentance. For example, a thief may be placed behind bars which obviously means his action has changed (he no longer steals). But, when released, he continues stealing. However, if a thief changes his mind toward stealing, he will not steal, whether he is placed behind bars or not.

The message of John, Jesus and the apostles was one of repentance. “*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of*

Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:1-2). “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt. 4:17). “*...I am... come to call...sinners to repentance*” (Matt. 9:13). “*And they went out, and preached that men should repent*” (Mark 6:12). “*I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*” (Luke 15:10). “*Then 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). “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...*” (Acts 3:19). “*God...commandeth all men every where to repent*” (Acts 17:30). “*...The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*” (Rom. 2:4).

Unless a person humbles himself before God and repents of every sin in his life, he cannot be forgiven of his sins. Repentance, like water baptism, always comes before forgiveness of sins. Acts 2:38 is so plain that a child can understand it. As a matter of fact, men need help to misunderstand it! And, there are plenty false teachers that offer their help.

One must understand that **CONFESSION of faith in Jesus as the Christ, the savior of the world, the Son of God, is essential to become a child of God**. There is no salvation in any other name. “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Jesus plainly said, “*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 10:32-33). “*For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*” (Rom. 14:11).

The apostle Paul reminded the brethren in Rome “*that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salva-*

tion. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom. 10:9-11).

The man from Ethiopia understood the teaching about forgiveness of sins and asked Philip if he could be baptized to receive forgiveness. “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, **I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**” (Acts 8:37). He immediately was then baptized.

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 1:7). “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43).

Though confession of faith in Christ is essential, it is not all that is required. Unless it is preceded by *faith* and *repentance* and followed by *water Baptism*, it is simply “words in the air.” Do you believe? Will you publicly confess Christ?

One must understand that **WATER BAPTISM** is essential in order to become a child of God.

Baptism is immersion in water. That is what the word “baptism” means. Bible baptism is a “burial,” a “planting” (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4,5). Sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. Sprinkling and pouring are from the mind of men, not God. Men have always substituted their own plan in place of God’s plan. Have you or your church substituted sprinkling for baptism?

Baptism puts one INTO Christ. “For as many of you as have been **baptized INTO Christ** have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Salvation is found IN Christ (2 Tim. 2:10), not OUT of Christ. Therefore, if you are not IN Christ, you are lost in your sins.

Baptism puts one INTO the death of Christ where contact is made with His saving blood. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized **into Jesus Christ** were baptized **into his death**” (Rom. 6:3)? We have redemption through His blood (Eph. 1:7).

Baptism is for the REMISSION (forgiveness) of sins. This is made clear in Acts 2:38, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins...**” One’s sins are destroyed in baptism (Rom. 6:6). We are made free from sins in baptism (Rom. 6:18). This is in perfect accord with the whole New Testament. The baptism performed by John the Immerser was “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Whenever one was questioned regarding salvation, baptism was always the point referred to. This is true in Romans 6:1-18 and Acts 19:1-5. So many do not like God’s plan and go to great lengths to circumvent it. Nonetheless, what Jesus said one had to do to be saved in Mark 16:16 remains the same, “**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**” It’s amazing how many people, and especially preachers, think they know better than the Lord!

Baptism puts one INTO the body of the saved — the Lord’s church. The Lord adds those who are baptized to the church (Acts 2:41,47). It is this Body He is going to save (Eph. 5:23). Those outside the church/body will not be saved. Will you believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16)?

One must understand that **living a FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE is essential for those who desire to be saved.** Jesus said, “...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Surely, no one would be so naive as to think that once you become a Christian you do not have to live the Christian life. Repentance, which precedes forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), means to turn away from wickedness and do what is right. Repentance demands a changed life — a life lived for God in faithfulness.

Before one becomes a Christian he should “count the cost” of what’s involved in being a faithful Christian. Jesus said, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intend-

ing to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and **counteth the cost**, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ... Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand. ... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-28,31,32).

Living a faithful Christian life is so serious, Jesus used the figure of cutting off your hand or foot or plucking out your eye in order to spare the soul from eternal damnation (Matt. 18:8-9). When anyone or anything interferes with us living a faithful Christian life and we yield to temptation and become unfaithful, our spiritual condition is then worse than it was before we became a Christian. “...The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment...” (2 Peter 2:20-21).

The exhortation of heaven is, “...be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). That demands faithfulness. Nothing short of it will do.

Are you ready to believe, repent, confess and be baptized in order to be saved from your sins? Why not today?

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Hear the Gospel — Rom. 10:14-17

Believe the Gospel and in Jesus the Son of God — Heb. 11:6; John 3:16; 8:24

Repent of sins — Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30

Confess faith in Christ — Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37

Be **Baptized** for the forgiveness of sins — Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21

Be **Faithful** to the Lord all your life — Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22; 1 Cor. 15:58

Prove All Things...

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God, but to be tested to see if valid and in harmony with the truth. Discrimination was to be used in regard to any doctrine heard.

Miraculous gifts have now ceased and are no longer in the church (1 Cor. 13:8-10). We possess the completed New Testament scriptures by which we are to continue to evaluate all religious teaching and practice (John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). If a doctrine is not substantiated by the Bible then it should not be accepted as being from God. What was accomplished in the first century when inspiration resided in men, is now accomplished by our adequate and proficient use of the inspired scriptures, the Bible (Acts 17:11). The principle of determining whether a doctrine is true or false is the same, though the result is arrived at in a different way.

Everything pertaining to religious doctrine is to be critically examined. If a particular teaching is not in harmony with “the good” it is to be repudiated as erroneous (note that the article precedes the adjective “good” making it substantival; cf. “the good doctrine,” 1 Tim. 4:6). Today, we properly speak of religious doctrines as being biblical, scriptural, or “sound” (2 Tim. 4:3), in contrast to error, or that which is unscriptural and unbiblical.

PROVE

The term translated “prove” involves two things: first, there is the testing or critical evaluation of the thing in order to determine its authenticity; second, there is the approval or acceptance of that which passes the test (BDAG, 255). Another apostle uses the term in a context where he directs Christians to critically examine false teachers and their doctrine for the purpose of determining whether or not their teaching originates with God or from a man-made source — “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* (prove) the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The instruction entails not

believing everything one hears from a person who claims to be a preacher. At least not until the message he proclaims is evaluated under the light of divine revelation. Once the teaching is examined and it passes the test of being scriptural then, and only then, should it receive approbation as truth from God. The Lord does not want his people to be naïve. He does not want us to accept religious teaching just because it comes from someone who claims to speak for God. The first century had a proliferation of false teachers circulating about disseminating their errors. It is no different today in the twenty-first century. Every sermon heard no matter who preaches it ought to be received and appreciated only after it passes the test of biblical soundness.

This does not mean one is to be a skeptic or doubter. Nor does it mean one violates other divine directives where judgment is prohibited [e.g., “judge not that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1-5) where the kind of judgment forbidden is hypocritical judgment; God demands that we exercise righteous/honest judgment when using discrimination whereby decisions must be made (John 7:24); the fact is that we could not even function responsibly as Christians without using some judicious discrimination toward people and things]. Rather, it means the Christian is responsible for evaluating religious teachings. God does not want us to be gullible by blindly accepting anything with a religious tint. Discretion is to be employed in a healthy way that we might not accept those doctrines which are bogus. We are to be the type of people interested in embracing the genuine and authentic while repudiating error and avoiding the wrong. Counterfeit prophets must be detected and exposed. God says so.

HOLD FAST

The end result of testing is now stated both positively and negatively — “hold fast the good” and “abstain from every form of evil” (v.22). Doctrines are to be accepted wholeheartedly or rejected decisively as a result of the test. The words “hold fast” translate a single term in the original language. It means to adhere firmly to one’s beliefs in the sense of

retaining them faithfully in one’s memory with the implication of compliance and continued practice of those convictions (BDAG, 533; Louw/Nida, 372). Paul uses the term elsewhere when commending the Corinthian congregation for “*holding fast* the traditions (teachings)” and “*holding fast* the word” which the apostle had initially “delivered” and “preached” to them when in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:2; 15:2). The language in these contexts set forth the responsibility of every Christian to “hold fast” the truth of God in belief, teaching, and practice.

It is not enough merely to apply the test and offer approval of doctrinal truth. But once they are approved, the truth God has revealed must be maintained through obedience and continued practice. Like the early church was commended for “continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”, so the same must be done by the Lord’s church today in order to receive God’s approval (Acts 2:42). One must faithfully persist within the perimeters of the “doctrine of Christ” through loyal adherence and practice to the truth of the Gospel. Failure to do so will result in one severing their relationship with the Father and the Son — becoming an apostate in the process (2 John 9).

The preceding is in direct opposition to the mentality which often permeates our society, and even our brotherhood, where way too many suppose it really does not matter what one believes or even if they faithfully adhere to a set body of doctrinal truth. Way too many think that as long as they are sincere in their religious opinions, God is bound and determined to accept their aberrant views. One will have to search elsewhere than the scriptures, however, to find any semblance of legitimate support for such a mentality.

It is also taught here that those doctrines which, when tested and found in noncompliance with God’s truth, cannot be approved. Rather, they must be rejected as false (“abstain from every form of evil,” v.22). Keep in mind that within the context of that which we here speak, a false doctrine is nothing more or less than a religious message which the Bible does not authorize. For example, the bodily assumption of Mary, while believed and taught by

millions of Catholics universally, is false by virtue of the fact that it was never a part of “all truth” into which the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit; and which truth we have embodied in written form on the pages of the New Testament (John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

TWO OBSERVATIONS

Concerning the two terms just discussed above, there are a couple of significant matters from a grammatical viewpoint which are worth mentioning.

1) Both terms are in the *imperative* mood. There are several reasons why a biblical author might use an imperative. The primary reason to do so in the New Testament, however, is to set forth a *command*. That is what Paul does here. He gives two commands — the first is to “prove all things” and the second is to “hold fast the good.” He is not making a mere suggestion. He is not offering brethren an optional choice for them to decide whether or not they want to do it. Far from it. The apostle is setting forth a divine mandate that is just as much a command as the act of baptism is in initial Gospel obedience

(Acts 10:48). The point is this: in order for Christians to obey God today we must be testing every religious doctrine that comes our way while holding fast to that which is true and rejecting what is found to be false. To fail in this regard is to disobey the command of God.

2) Both terms are in the *present* tense. Not always, but many times (when determined by the context) the present tense relates that the action of the verb is progressive and ongoing. It is this continuous aspect that is conveyed in the passage under discussion. Technically, the use of the present here is called the “iterative present” which conveys an action repeatedly happening (Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 520). The idea is that there is a repetition of the same verbal action over and over (Richard Young, *Intermediate NT Greek*, 108). The Christian is commanded to repeatedly keep on testing religious messages while constantly holding fast only to those which receive approval. One must also keep on repudiating those doctrines which do not pass the test of being in compliance with the revealed word of God. Once again the point seems clear enough: there will

never be a time this side of the judgment when God does not expect and demand Christians to always be testing and examining religious doctrines in light of what the Bible teaches. It is a continuous effort that will never end as long as the Devil is allowed to influence others through false teachers.

Following is my own paraphrastic translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, which is intended to reflect the mood and tense of the verbs in this passage: “*I command you to continuously and repeatedly test everything which comes to you in the form of religious teaching; and further, I command you to continuously and constantly hold fast only to the good doctrine which meets your approval as being in compliance with God’s revealed word while repudiating that which is found to be false.*”

Brethren, may we be encouraged to be about the task of proving all things and holding fast to the good as the great God we serve expects and demands of us. The salvation of our souls, as well as the souls of others, depends upon our diligence in fulfilling this God-given responsibility.

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THE PURE IN HEART

J. C. Watkins

“*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8). The Psalmist declared, “*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart*” (Psalm 15:1,2). Scripture teaches, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (Prov. 4:23). God’s inspired word tells us, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee*” (Prov. 23:7).

There are two who want to control the hearts of mankind, one for their good and one for their condemnation. The two are God and Satan! God is the Creator of mankind. All God has ever done was for the benefit of mankind. Satan is God’s adversary and he is the adversary of mankind (1 Peter 5:8,9). Even though man has been influenced by Satan to sin, God still loves His creation. He has proven that love by sending His only begotten Son to this earth as a

human being to die on the cross for the benefit of mankind! Man must decide who will control his heart! Will it be God or will it be Satan? Christ told Peter that Satan desired to have him (Luke 22:31). Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). He wants to fill the heart of every soul to reject the love of God and be lost eternally.

It is the heart of man which controls our actions. God teaches us to think on that which is true, honest, just, pure, and lovely (Phil. 4:8), to keep our heart pure. It is simply a matter of whom we let control our heart! If we give our heart to God and let Him control it through His inspired word, we will be pure in heart. Remember, Christ taught that only the pure in heart will see God. Satan will lie, deceive, and do anything he can to keep you from seeing God. Ephesians 6:10-18 teaches us to stand against the wiles of the devil. Be pure in heart! [White Oak Transmitter, 11/13/05]

Elder's COLUMN

GOD, SPORTS AND WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH

Ivie Powell

I enjoy sports as well as anyone, especially hunting, and of course, football! For several years, God and sports have become center stage in America. Whether it be football, baseball, basketball, soccer, prize fights or cage fighting, participants will point heavenly and give the “sign of the cross” thanking God for the victory. A few years ago, a denominational preacher gave the invocation at the opening of NASCAR. During his “prayer” he said “We know you (God) are a big fan of NASCAR.” Really? Many years prior to this, a “gospel” preacher (now deceased), while giving the invocation at a football game, in effect, petitioned God as follows: “We’ve practiced hard for this game and we want You to help us win.” The reducing of God to a “sports fan” and calling upon the High and Lofty One to “give us a win,” trivializes The Almighty and betrays a lack of respect and honor due Him! Furthermore, such blasphemous statements are an attack upon the very nature of God! The fact is, God could care less about sports! The Bible teaches that God is not interested in sporting activities of any kind. One British newspaper published a letter to the editor entitled: “Leave me out of your petty games — Love, God.” While I certainly do not agree with making a statement as if it came directly from the Almighty, the point is well taken! Paul made reference to various sporting activities, such as running a race and receiving a prize (1 Cor. 9:24-26), bodily exercise (1 Tim. 4:8), or fighting a good fight (2 Tim. 4:7). But it was always in reference to spiritual matters, not man’s trivial pastime!

The craze for worldly activities brought about gymnasiums in the Lord’s church. Exercise rooms and other worldly activities are offered to meet the needs of “the whole man.” So in tune are many to the world that they will move the evening service to accommodate a Super Bowl party! That which is conspicuously absent

by proponents of such activities is biblical authority (cf. Col. 3:17)! Brethren need to be reminded that recreation and entertainment are not works of the church. They are works of the home.

While it is not considered a “sport,” winners of the “Miss America” contest are paraded as role models in many publications. Last year *The Christian Chronicle*, which is a vehicle promoting the ungodly “unity in diversity” movement, featured on the front page a member of the Lord’s church that won the “Miss America” contest. A brochure sent out last year by *Arms of Hope* showed a picture of “Miss America” visiting some young ladies at *Boles Home*. Not one word was written condemning immodesty (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9)! So in tune are many members of the church with the world that one congregation, several years ago, had a crowning of the King and Queen at their home coming! Brethren, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6).

In light of these and other occurrences in the Lord’s church, how can any deny that worldliness within the Lord’s church is plunging many down the path to eternal damnation! The Bible plainly declares: “*Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed...*” (Rom. 12:2).

How does God view worldly Christians and congregations? James pointedly answers that question: “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*” (James 4:4). Children of God are instructed “*to keep himself unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27). Therefore, when a congregation becomes worldly in its outlook and practice, they are an enemy of God! All of the shouting, “Oh, how I love Jesus,” and “look at our good works,” to the contrary! Furthermore, when elders and preachers lead congregations to conform to the world, unless they repent, they will

soon become, “*...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*” (2 Tim. 3:4-5).

Every generation of the Lord’s church is in danger of being engulfed and swept away, thus, the need to constantly remind brethren to, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph. 6:11-12).

Love for the world and the things of the world have always been one of Satan’s greatest weapons to draw away disciples of Christ. Satan, who is the “god of this world,” is ever working to blind the minds of the Lord’s people. When this takes place, “*...the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...*” (2 Cor. 4:4) will not only be hidden, if not careful, extinguished!

That children of God and even congregations of the Lord’s church can go back, return or fall from grace is a constant reminder throughout the Bible (cf. Gal. 5:4; 2 Tim. 2:18; 1 Tim. 1:19; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12-4:1; Heb. 6:4-8). Of course, there are the five churches of Asia that were to repent or else (Rev. 2-3)! Remember them?

John warns the Lord’s people to, “*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, the lust of the eyes, and the pride 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). We are further reminded to “*set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2).

It is time for brethren to once again, “*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my*

people their transgression...” (Isa. 58:1)! A refusal means we will not be “pure from the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26).

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[EDITOR’S NOTE: Some church members allow their children (yea, many times encourage them) to participate in activities in school and elsewhere that are detrimental to their spiritual growth and welfare. Many times they are allowed to dress with practically nothing on even though such is condemned by God (1

Tim. 2:9-10). They wiggle, stretch, bend, twist, flip (dance if you please) in front of crowds and the gazing eyes of boys and girls, men and women. I’ve attended ball games where I had to turn my head and look the other way during certain “performances” of young people displaying their “routines” of lasciviousness, more commonly called “cheers.” This likewise is condemned by God as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). Does such activities promote pure, wholesome, thoughts in the minds of those present? Some even forsake the assembling of the church for the

opportunity to excite onlookers with gawking eyes.

Instead of encouraging and promoting their children’s spiritual demise, parents need to encourage and promote godliness, purity, morality, chastity, virtue, righteousness and the love of God, his word, his church, his way. Things of the world lead away from God. Things of holiness lead toward God. The two are worlds apart.

Where will you be found in eternity?

WHO IS CALLING?

When hunting for turkeys in the spring of the year, the proficient hunter is one who can recognize and reproduce the sounds of a wild turkey hen. The intent of the calling is to coax a large male turkey into shotgun range and then to the dinner table.

Decision time for the turkey male is when he hears the calling but cannot see the source of it. If it sounds enough like a turkey hen, he may elect to investigate, but he may [as is typical in the South] hang up 60 yards away and wait for the “hen” to come to him. He simply has one [life or death] question: “Who’s calling?”

Likewise, humans must be wary in answering the calls that surround us. The world has many voices that call, while truth has but one.

The world calls to our *ambition*, and causes us to believe that we are doing the acceptable thing in the pursuit of power, wealth and fame. But John said, “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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15,16).

The world calls to our desire

to *accumulate possessions* and causes us to believe it leads to happiness. But Jesus said, “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).

God calls us through His word (the Bible), especially from the New Testament (Heb. 1:1,2), by the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), and by those who spread the good news of the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16).

The religions of men call to humanity in direct competition of the truth, causing earth’s inhabitants to believe that one religion is as good as another, if people are sincere. Yet, the New Testament mentions nothing of a multiplicity of religions from God. Rather, we see that the New Testament informs of only one church, one faith and one Gospel.

The Bible is the single source of all-sufficient truth. Therefore, it alone should be our authority in determining whether the calling we hear is heavenly or worldly.

God calls from heaven with the words of life, while Satan calls from the world with words of deception. God provides evidence and testimony to confirm the truth, while Satan uses lies and counterfeits to distract and condemn. You have but one answer to give; therefore, consider, “Who’s calling?” —Reid Perry

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[NOTE: After the postage of about\$1,600 is paid for mailing this June issue, we will have only about \$2,500 on hand. If you would like to help us raise our funds back to a more comfortable level, it would be greatly appreciated. We’ve added quite a number of new subscribers this month. We sincerely thank each one who has made this work possible through your prayers and contributions. May God bless you richly.]



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thank you for sending me this publication. Enjoy it very much. Enclosing a small donation to help with handling costs. Thank you” ...**J. E. Williams, Sapulpa, OK.** “My husband and I have just read this April issue and loved every word of it. Thank you so much for this help. Please start sending this to my sister with this issue. It will be a great help to her. Please accept this check along with our prayers, love and thanks. But please do not publish our names” ...**Dalhart, TX.** “Please accept this letter as our thanks for past distribution of your *Seek The Old Paths* publications. However, we no longer have need for these and would request the Parkway Church of Christ to be removed from your mailing list as soon as possible. Respectfully” ...**Randy Rue, elder, Parkway Church of Christ, Springfield, IL.** “Please remove my dad’s name from your mailing list of *Seek The Old Paths*. I tried emailing to that address and was not allowed to. My father is in an assisted living facility and does not wish to be receiving publications there. We have made his request before and somehow there was a misunderstanding and his name was not removed but the address was changed to my home. I do not wish to receive it via mail or email. We know mailing is expensive and would appreciate your taking care of this. Thank you” ...**Stan Richardson (for Bill Richardson), Hartselle, AL.** [NOTE: He has been removed. Sorry for any inconvenience.] “Dear brother Robinson, I appreciate your publication more than I can express. Thank you, thank you. Please accept this small contribution and please send STOP to a sister in Christ. Please send it anonymous as well, not printing my name in your blessed publication. Thank you, thank you. God bless you!” ...**Temple, TX.** “Please discontinue the *Seek The Old Paths*. The person at this address has been deceased for 11 years. Thanks. God bless” ...**Louise Kennedy, Florence, AL.** “Please add this name to your mailing list for STOP. Thanks” ...**Bob Price, Jacksonville, FL.** “Please put me on your mailing list for *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Gerald Scheffler, Port Huron, MI.** “Please send STOP” ...**Collins, MO.** “Please change my address” ...**Dale Hubbert, Jasper, AL.** “Please take note of my new address” ...**David Barber, Jr., Sevierville, TN.** “I have been getting STOP for several years now and enjoy it very much. I have had a few added to your mailing address list. I now request one more. Could you send the May issue that I just got through reading? I always give mine to someone else” ...**Vernon Bracknell, Baldwin, IL.** “Hoping that this letter reaches you and your staff, in Christ, in the best of health. Your news letter, *Seek The Old Paths*, is great. Please put my name on your mailing list and if possible, please send me past issues of your magazine. In advance, thank you very much” ...**Isador Boags, Charleston, SC.** “I don’t recall when I first picked up a copy of *Seek The Old Paths* at a church of Christ during my travels. I do know I’ve heard brother Garland Robinson preach on several occasions and brother Robert Taylor, Jr. They both are very sound in the doctrine of God’s word and I just love to hear them preach. I’ve been blessed to have attended the Garfield Heights Church of Christ lectureship on four occasions and I think brother Robinson is who I gave my name and address to for receiving STOP. So, please continue sending it to me. It is indeed a blessing to me! I have enclosed a check to support this wonderful work and I thank God for men such as these and all brethren who love the Lord. Please remember me in your prayers, as I do you” ...**Leadale Simpson, Rockford, IL.** “Dear brother Robinson, it is with much sadness that I ask you to remove Dimple Pace’s name from your mailing list as she passed away April 25th. Dimple was a kind, loving and thoughtful Christian woman

whom I looked to for guidance and strength in living the Christian life. She set a good example for all those who were blessed to know her. She had our names added to your mailing list to receive *Seek The Old Paths*, which I have enjoyed so much. I am sending \$\$ to help with the publication of STOP as I feel it is a very worthy and needed publication. Please keep up the good work and we’ll pray for God’s blessings upon you and yours” ...**Jim & Connie Garland, Greenwood, IN.** “Dear editor and staff. I pray that this letter reaches you all blessed in your Christian walk. I love this literature of truth, *Seek The Old Paths*, and I would love to receive this monthly publication in my mail. Please, it would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for the great truths based on the Bible and your listening ear. Pray for me as I pray for you all. I am writing to request that you would please send your monthly publication to these enclosed addresses also. I know that they would be read, taken heed to, and that they would be greatly appreciated! Thanks” ...**Tracey Grant, Suffolk, VA.** “I enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths* very much. There’s so many timely articles. I failed to get the March 2011 issue. Will you please send me another one? Thank you” ...**Geneva Stark, Eufaula, OK.** “I’m writing in regards to your paper you have been sending Eunice Hedgcough. She has passed away. We appreciate you sending it. But I’m sure you would want to send it to another elderly person. Thank you very much” ...**Baxter, TN.** “Please remove from the mailing list. Thank you for your service. We are moving soon. Will send you our new address. Thanks” ...**Hixson, TN.** “Please remove my name from the STOP mailing list and do not print my name” ...**Benton, AR.**

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