

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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A TRAGIC TREND ON THE ROAD TO APOSTASY

Lloyd Gale

There seems to be a pattern that describes the state of God's people throughout history. It begins with commitment to obey God in all things, but in process of time, complacency erodes the original fervor. This complacency opens the door to compromise which invariably results in corruption.

Consider once again the Biblical example of Israel's sorry plight in Egypt. They had forgotten their God and only remembered Him when life became unbearable. God in His infinite love and mercy sent Moses to deliver them from their bondage. Given victory over their oppressors, they worshiped God in a song of thanksgiving and praise. Yet three days later, when they could find no good water to drink, their commitment began to wain. Once again by God's grace the bitter waters were made sweet and Moses challenged the people to harken to the voice of God and said that He would protect them.

Again their commitment was brief and people began to murmur against Moses and Aaron who were God's representatives. How soon the people had forgotten God's grace and mercy. They were degenerating from commitment to complacency as they recalled the flesh pots in Egypt. They were considering compromise for fleshly advantage. The Lord then rained bread from heaven upon those wavering Israelites and provided quail in abundance. For forty years God provided all of the needs of the children of Israel.

Three months after their delivery from Egyptian slavery, Moses was called up upon the mountain to meet with God. The people gave their solemn word that they would do whatever God required. However, in their short attention span, when Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain, their complacency quickly became compromise and resulted in their corruption. They demanded an idol, a false god of their own invention, lust like those false gods the Egyptians worshiped. God had delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, but Egypt was still in the Israelites. The idol was fashioned and the people bowed down and corrupted themselves and offered burnt offerings to the golden calf. God's word says, *"the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play"* (Exodus 32:6).

You say, just how could the people be so foolish and so ungrateful. And I say, just take a look at many congregations of the Lord's church today. God's people today have so much more to be grateful and thankful for. The promised Messiah has come and His kingdom has been established. God's people have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet many prefer to lust after the idols of the denominational world. It appears that many elders and preachers do not have a clue as to what constitutes Biblical authority. Many church leaders today look to the gimmicks and tactics employed by man-made religious organizations to attract a crowd. I can recall how

the statement was made often that just because the denominations go in and out the door, we, (members of the Lord's church) do not have to jump out of the windows. This statement was made in order to justify stealing denominational methods, and boy, did many blind leaders of the blind steal their methods. Did it draw a crowd? Yes, but what sort of a crowd? It did not draw a multitude of people who know and respect the authority of our Lord. It drew a crowd of people who look upon the church as a place of social gathering and a place for entertainment. Why should those so attracted believe anything else? Some built large play houses (gymnasiums). Some serve coffee and donuts for their so-called Bible classes. One church we know about began to have Saturday services and brought in instruments of music. Others instituted two separate worship services: one called "contemporary" and the other "traditional." Some copied the denominational practice of "children's worship." Many congregations have their own recreational vehicles to take groups to various entertainment venues. Many have copied the denominational practice of providing a "youth minister" which they no doubt found authority for in the second chapter of the book of Jude.

Seriously, brothers and sisters in Christ, could anyone recognize such churches as the one they read about

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A Tragic Trend...



Editorial...

SOUND PREACHERS ARE NEEDED

Preachers are essential according to Romans 10:13-15. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ...as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”*

God is the one who chose preaching as the means through which His saving Word would be proclaimed. *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (I Cor. 1:18-21).

Worldly men think preaching is foolish and cannot have anything to do with being saved. To them, preaching is too simple and elementary. They think that salvation must come about by some grander means. However, Paul did not say that God has chosen to save man by “foolish preaching” nor did he say that preaching is foolish. Notice the wording again, he wrote that “it pleased God by the foolishness OF preaching” — that which men counts as foolish. The significance of this phrase is that God has chosen, through the means (mode, method, practice) of preaching, to save those who believe his word and obey it. God could have chosen another way of saving men, but he did not. He chose the method of the proclamation of his word. This is also made clear in John 6:44-45. Jesus said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”* God draws men to him by means of hearing his word, which is done by preaching it (cf. II Thess. 2:14). No wonder Paul wrote to the church at Rome, *“For I am not ashamed of the*

gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Preaching, therefore, is not outdated and will not become outdated. It will and must continue until the Lord comes again.

All preachers are commanded to do what Timothy was told to do. *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (II Tim. 4:2-4). To Titus we read, *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee”* (Titus 2:1,15).

It is easy for those who hear to reject the Word of God. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (II Tim. 4:3-4). Regardless of how the Word is received, it must be preached without fear or favor of any man (Acts 7:50-53).

Who will preach it like it is? Will you.

ALL PREACHERS CANNOT BE TRUSTED

Even though I am a preacher, I would be the first to tell you that not all preachers can be trusted. This is true within any class of people, in any culture, in any generation. There have always been those who are not faithful and genuine. As a matter of fact, I John 4:1 says, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* Preachers today are certainly not prophets, but the principle of this verse applies today as much as it applied in the first century.

Many preach themselves, thinking they're a cut above everybody else. Their sermons are filled with “I this” and “I that.” I once heard such a preacher and counted the 40 something times

he used the word “I” in his 30 minute TV program. They are so full of themselves and want brethren to know it. These cannot be trusted. Paul said, *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake”* (II Cor. 4:5).

Many preach to please men by tickling their ears with what they like to hear. Paul said, *“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10). We are warned about this in II Timothy 4:3-4. The whole counsel of God must be preached regardless of how it is received (Acts 20:26-27)! The truth is the truth and must be preached! I didn't write the Bible and have no right to “water it down” to please men.

Many preach the doctrines and commandments of men. Jesus spake of those who *“...draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:8-9). Preachers must preach the very word of God (I Thess. 2:13) instead of the errors of man. We stand before the Lord in judgment, not man.

Many preach for popularity and notoriety. I once heard a preacher say his goal was to preach for the largest congregation in the brotherhood. He somehow imagined that success was climbing the ladder up through the ranks of the brotherhood and if he could do that, he could be on top. But, on top of what? This is not what gains the approval of the Lord. Paul wrote, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”* (Gal. 6:14). He wrote to the church at Corinth and said he *“...determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”* (I Cor. 2:2). Paul was happy to simply be a humble servant of the Lord. James 4:6 says, *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”*

Everyone must search the Scriptures daily to make sure what they are being told is the truth (Acts 17:11). And, when it is not, they must not accept it. Preachers are essential in God's plan, but let us test them to see whether their message is from God.

A Tragic Trend...

(Continued from page 53)

in the Bible? We know that the Lord's church began with great commitment as the new Christians sold their possessions for the furtherance of the Gospel. Some were beaten, stoned and imprisoned, but many would not compromise their faith in Christ. But even in the time of such fervor and conviction, the apostles sounded out the warning of coming apostasy.

In the process of time, the commitment of many eroded into complacency, then compromise and eventually corruption. The apostasy eventually led to the Roman Catholic church with its man-made creeds and doctrines. While the Lord's church did not cease to exist, it became a small remnant of once faithful believers for many years. The gates of hell had done its best to eliminate the Lord's church, but our Lord had promised that such would never occur (Matt. 16:18).

First there was, on the part of some, an effort to reform the Roman Catholic church, but it was not to be. In protest, men withdrew from the Roman Catholic church and wrote their own creeds and doctrines. It was a step in the right direction but did not go far enough. The result was the birth of Protestant denominationalism.

Later, many began to see the folly of so many churches, all wearing different names, with different creeds and doctrines. Men in various parts of the world began to ask why can't we set aside our various creeds and doctrines and have a "thus sayeth the Lord" for all we believe, teach and practice? This gave rise to what was called the "restoration" movement. Many once again committed themselves to the pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and His church. The church once again grew and multiplied in many parts of the world.

Then, as time passed, commitment was gradually replaced for many with complacency which led to compromise and then to the corruption of many Christians and congregations. This time, it was the false doctrine that "anything not specifically forbidden may be allowed."

However, those who remained faithful to the Biblical principal that Christians must have authority for all we believe, teach and practice (Col. 3:17), would not accept the unauthorized innovation of the employment of instruments of music in worship and the establishment of a Missionary Society. But, in spite of the efforts of the faithful, the apostates carried away most of the churches and private schools that brethren had established.

In our present time, there is a lack of knowledge and respect for the church that was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world — the church which Jesus promised to build and which He established and purchased with His precious blood. Many today see the church as a place for social activities. A place where the worship services must entertain and incite the emotions. Some congregations have built gymnasiums and sponsor ball teams that compete with other churches. The church in many places has become a baby sitter and a student activity center.

Church bulletins are filled with notices of upcoming "golf scrambles" and "game night at the church building in the Tea Room." One bulletin suggested that the 6th to 12th grade "devotional" was to be held after Sunday evening worship and due to the distance they must travel to a private home, that they should leave services during the singing of the closing song. Just what is it that a child may learn at a "devotional" that they may not learn during worship services under the oversight of the elders and their parents?

Brother Gooble Music wrote a book entitled "BEHOLD THE PATERN." With such activities as those cited above and many more like them, just where is the pattern to be found for them? May we today abandon "pattern theology" and pattern ourselves after the false religions all about us? Is this not exactly what the rebellious Israelites did at Mt. Sinai? "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:6). They patterned themselves after the Egyptians.

Is it too late for many congregations to ask themselves just what is the purpose and work of the church? Does God judge the faithfulness of a congregation based upon the number

of members, the size of the contribution and the multiplicity of activities? Such was not the standard by which the Lord judged the seven churches of Asia. The standard was faithfulness to the Head of the church (Jesus Christ) by submitting to His authority in all things. "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

When Jesus saw the disrespect the people had toward the temple, in righteous indignation He fashioned a whip and physically drove out the money changers, overturning their tables and declared; "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:16). What would Jesus do today with the corruption found in so many churches?

The Lord's church was not established to take over the work of the home or the government. It was not established to entertain or provide physical recreation. It is the place where God's people are commanded to assemble on a regular and faithful basis to worship and serve their Lord. It is the pillar and the ground of the truth. Its work is to *preach the Gospel, edify the church and practice works of benevolence*. When Christians assemble as the church, they do so to give praise and thanksgiving for all that God continually does for them. They assemble to fellowship and to feast on God's word, to jointly pray together, to sing songs of praise, thanksgiving and edification, to commune with Jesus Christ in observance of the Lord's supper, and to return joyfully, and liberally a portion of the material blessings that God has so richly bestowed upon them. When Christians assemble with the right attitude they will find the worship services rewarding and fulfilling.

Is it wrong for Christians to enjoy the company of other Christians? Not at all. Is it wrong for Christians to want to engage in recreational activities together? No. But **we should understand that common meals and recreational activities are not the work of the church.** They are what the family or home may properly do. When did we forget this?

The Roman Catholic church

desires to dictate to governments and the results are tragic. Too many congregations of the Lord's church are attempting to do the work of the home. God in His infinite wisdom gave mankind three divine institutions: the first being the home, the second was the government and the last is the church. When each divinely established institution minds it's own business, mankind prospers. The church has all it can possibly do by being the church.

A WORD OF ADVICE TO PARENTS

I believe that most parents want the best for their children. So what should they look for when choosing a church? Do not look for a church with a multiplicity of social activities. If you do, your children will grow up with the wrong impression of what the church is. God has provided your children with two youth directors, they are mother and father or the person or persons who serve in that capacity. Parents have the responsibility of knowing what their children

are being taught and by whom. Parents must not depend upon schools or teachers to teach their children the way to heaven. It is the parents' responsibility. Seriously consider the question; "Where will my children be for eternity?" If you honestly evaluate this question, it will change your life and then theirs.

Look for a church where the preacher and teachers know, love, and live God's Word. It may not be the largest congregation in the area, but it should be a congregation who loves the Lord and one another. Become involved in the work of the church and let your life revolve around the church (Matt. 6:33). Make the decision that when the church assembles, your family will be present. Your children's evaluation of the church will largely depend upon your love and faithfulness to the Lord's church. Live your faith daily at home and elsewhere. Proverbs 22:6 still teaches, "*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart*

from it." We train with both words and by personal example.

We can all learn from the things written aforetime (Rom. 15:4). Harken to the words of Joshua! "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom we will serve; whether the gods which your father's served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Joshua 24:15).

We must choose whether we will follow the false gods of this present world, which includes all man-originated religious faiths and practices; or, if we will serve the Lord. Jesus said "*no man can serve two masters*" (Matt. 6:24). If we seek material and social success, then we have chosen our god. One has a lot of company on the broad road. But the road that leads to heaven is the less traveled road (Matt. 7:13-14). Remember this.

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THE DANGER OF NOT KNOWING THE BIBLE

Randy Kea

God through His prophet in the Old Testament said, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6). The inspired apostle teaches us, "*Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17).

ELDERS: It is absolutely essential that elders be men of the Book. Paul says they must be "*apt to teach*" (I Tim. 3:2) and "*be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*" (Titus 1:9). Without a working knowledge of the Bible, this would be impossible.

DEACONS: An often-overlooked qualification of deacons is the fact that they must be familiar with Bible teaching. Of deacons Paul says, "*holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*" (I Tim. 3:9). "The faith" here is the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3). You can't hold to something you don't know.

TEACHERS: The Hebrew writer says, "*When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God and*

are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14). James states the principle of the higher degree of responsibility that teachers have when he says, "*Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment*" (James 3:1, ASV).

PREACHERS: It seems several times recently that I have had comments made to me by older Christians that they do not hear today from the pulpit the Bible-centered lessons that they used to in years gone by. This is a sad commentary on preachers today in the Lord's church. Of course the only way a preacher is going to qualify himself to preach the Bible is to take the time necessary to study the Bible. To preachers, Paul would say, "*But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine...*

Sound speech that cannot be condemned... These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority... hold fast the form of sound words... give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine... preach the word" (Titus 2:1,8,15; II Tim. 1:13; I Tim. 4:13,16; II Tim. 4:2).

ALL CHRISTIANS: Paul wrote to the brethren generally and said, "*Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17). On another occasion he wrote, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*" (Col. 3:16). The apostle Peter also exhorts, "*But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18).

If the church is going to be what it needs to be and do what it needs to do, all of us, regardless of our station, are going to have to take the time and make the sacrifice to inform ourselves concerning God's will.

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PREACHER, "WHAT WILL YOU PREACH"

Bob Spurlin

Gospel preachers have many tasks to perform during the course of a year. Among their greatest priorities is choosing suitable sermon material for the congregations where they serve. Sermons come in different categories including: expository, topical, character studies, doctrinal, and devotional. Preachers would be wise to regularly conduct a thorough self-examination of their work. A New Year offers the local preacher an opportunity to assess his preaching, while taking into account his pulpit work for the coming year.

The primary duty of the Gospel preacher is to preach. But, "What will he preach?" Paul writes, "*Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (II Tim. 4:2). This is a charge of great importance as the minister virtually holds life and death in his tongue. The apostle Paul declared, "*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*" (I Cor. 9:16).

Preachers are to feed their hearers the pure Gospel. The apostle Peter declares, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (I Peter 2:2). The local preacher, like the cook, must provide a balanced diet. Our families deserve a healthy diet, and likewise a preacher must feed his hearers spiritual food which will enhance their spiritual health. The following are some suggestions for those who preach.

A healthy portion of first principles. Faithful preachers will include a healthy dose of the first principles of the Gospel during the year. The writer to the Hebrews said, "*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*" (Heb. 2:1). The American Standard Version renders the last part of the verse, "Lest haply we drift away from them." We see those in the church "drifting" from a life of faithfulness and we wonder

why this is happening. The ABCs or fundamentals of the Gospel, should be stressed regularly. Preachers must never assume their listeners are fully cognizant of God's plan for redemption. The fundamentals of the Gospel must be regularly preached and reviewed. I fondly recall as a child that Gospel preachers would take their place in the pulpit with "book, chapter, and verse" preaching. Also, due emphasis was given in each lesson to the five steps to salvation. Since the eternal destiny of souls is always in the balance, Gospel preachers will not neglect this needed practice.

A hearty discussion of the Old Testament. It is possible to lose sight of the valuable lessons rooted in the Old Testament. Recently a Gospel preacher was going through his "annual review." He was informed that preaching from the Old Testament was no longer effective. Let us not exclude an important part of God's revelation, as the Old Covenant needs to be studied with keen interest.

The apostle Paul emphasized, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*" (Rom. 15:4). Consider how character studies from Abel, Abraham, Moses, Noah, Daniel, Elijah, and others give us illustrations of faith, obedience and devotion to Jehovah (Heb. 11:1-40). Imagine the difficulty of understanding Romans, II Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews without a knowledge or familiarity with the Old Testament. Preachers of the past used to say: "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."

We have often heard it said, "The church of Christ does not believe in the Old Testament?" Those hungry souls that listen from week to week need to hear sermons regularly on the Old Testament. This section of the Bible highlights the many shadows and types pointing to the

covenant of Christ (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 9:15-17).

A hefty embrace of Christian living. One of the greatest needs for the child of God is staying informed of the basic tenets of Christian living. The minister should give serious attention to this much-needed subject. Jesus said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). Living the Christian life, or any other aspect of Christianity, is to be guided by the absolute Word of God (Psalm 119:89; II Tim. 3:16-17). We live in an age when moral relativism is the rule of the day. Thus sermons about Christian living should include warnings concerning such subjects as immodest apparel, dancing, tobacco use, fornication, alcohol, and drugs. We must never forget a Christian is a person who wears the name of the Lord. We belong to Jesus, therefore our daily lives should be conducted in accordance with His will (Matt. 7:24-27).

A honest dose of Christian evidences. Positive encouragement and instruction is received when the local preacher devotes time to a study of Christian evidences. These studies benefit all hearers in strengthening their faith in God. Listening to sermons will edify all that hear the message (Eph. 4:15-16). The theme of Christian evidences includes the following topics: the existence of God, the deity of Christ, the age of the earth, and the problem of evil. Several years ago a wise preacher was quizzed about the single most important Scripture in the entire Bible. He replied, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). The preacher predicated his remarks on the fundamental premise that if we do not believe in the integrity of Genesis 1:1, the balance of the Bible has little meaning (John 6:44-45).

CONCLUSION

For preaching to be effective, there must be sincerity of presentation, clarity of speech, suitability of

material, and simplicity of lesson. Following this pattern will accomplish a threefold purpose: 1) It will bring people to Christ so they might be saved (John 6:44- 45); 2) It will cause Christians to grow spiritually (I Peter 2:1-2; II Peter 3:13); and 3) Will keep Christians saved (James 1:21; I Cor. 15:1-2).

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ONE CANNOT WIN A BATTLE AGAINST GOD

Marvin L. Weir

People who refuse to study the Bible may be fooled, large crowds may claim they are assembled to worship, but worship not authorized by God is in vain

False teaching and preaching may be in vogue among men, but it will always incur the wrath of God. Israel had a long habit of turning away from the true and living God. Such should not have been the case as a loving God warned His people about the consequences of not following Him.

Notice these warnings from God: *“Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left”* (Deut. 5:32). *“That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel”* (Deut. 17:20; cf. 28:14). *“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest”* (Joshua 1:7).

Israel was unwilling to follow the divine pattern given by God. It is a spiritual tragedy when those who know God’s will brazenly say, *“...to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us”* (Isa. 30:10-11).

In chapter four of his book, Amos further describes Israel’s determination to not follow God. The people endured famine (v.6), drought (vs.7-8), mildew (v.9), palmer worm or locusts (v.9), pestilence (v.10), war and death (v.10), and earthquake

while stubbornly refusing to return to God. God brought these acts upon His people in an attempt to bring them to repentance, but five times it is recorded that *“yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah”* (Amos 4:6,8,9,10,12). Israel was engaged in a battle she could not win. The cruel Assyrians took the northern capital, or Samaria, into captivity. God let His people know that it was He and not Assyria who was in control in saying, *“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel”* (Amos 4:12).

God’s people today can expect no less if they defy the Creator and turn aside from His Word. *“False religion is the root of all social ills, and here the prophet poured out God’s wrath upon the polluted, innovative, and unauthorized worship that marked the religious culture of Israel”* (Coffman’s Bible Commentary, Amos 4:4).

Innovative and unauthorized worship is no more acceptable to God today than it was under the Law of Moses! An ever-growing number of congregations today calling themselves churches of Christ have decided to be “upbeat” and “contemporary” while shedding the image of being a Bible based and peculiar people (cf. Gal. 6:16; I Peter 2:9). False teaching abounds on *Divorce and Rremarriage* in order to accommodate people who are living in adultery. The *mechanical instrument* is either introduced or else it is made absolutely clear that its use is a matter of preference and not a matter of fellowship. Some congregations are simply softly playing instrumental music through the sound system until the worship begins. Ivan Pavlov would be thrilled

to know that his classical conditioning technique is alive and well. Many congregations now find that “praise teams” are essential to their singing and women must be used in “leadership” roles if every member is going to find and develop their gift. *Children’s church* has been popular for years and is one reason some cannot endure a structured (Bible based) approach to worship. If one is nourished from a small child on *fun,*

games, entertainment (puppets, etc.), and drama, then this is what he will demand as an adult. Congregation after congregation is now “reaffirming” their elders every few years. Some pulpits strongly suggest that the qualifications for elders listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are not that at all, but simply “Christian qualities.”

Bible authority is necessary for what one does in the name of religion

(Col. 3:17). I know why so many pulpits today have an aversion to quoting the Scriptures. The contemporary, uncertain sound coming from them cannot be found in God’s Word. People who refuse to study the Bible may be fooled, large crowds may claim they are assembled to worship, but worship not authorized by God is in vain (Matt. 15:7-9). One cannot win a battle against God!

THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING

We need a return to first century preaching — the kind of preaching that is filled with that which causes the hearer to realize his condition and urges him to do something about it.

Jesus has given the command to go and preach the Gospel. Mark 16:15-16 states, “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” When Jesus used the word “preach” in this passage, he used a word that conveys a unique concept. Preaching is a proclamation of a message. It is a declaring of one’s position. Therefore, to some it is a very common form of presentation that is heard day after day by someone somewhere peddling their positions, whereas genuine Bible preaching is a very unique thing. Nothing can take the place of real Bible preaching, nor can its power really be measured.

BIBLE PREACHING REFUTES FALSE IDEAS

Over and over again, Christ and the apostles challenged the false positions of their day through preaching. Jesus refuted the false teachings of the Jewish teachers of His day. Notice His rebuke of them in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 is but one example of many incidents of the

Lord’s hatred for false doctrine. Though he had supreme love and compassion for the sinner, He hated every false way, for He knew that such would cause souls to be lost. Peter in his sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2) as well as Paul’s sermon on Mars’ Hill (Acts 17) are two illustrations of how Christ and the apostles used the medium of preaching to expose error. We must do the same.

BIBLE PREACHING EXPLAINS THE SCRIPTURES

Bible preaching comes from the Bible. It is a presentation and an explanation of the greatest book in the world, the Bible. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, filled his sermon with quotations from the Old Testament. But, notice that it was not just a Bible quoting session; rather he went on to explain the scriptures which he used. There was no doubt in the minds of his hearers as to how those scriptures should be applied (Acts 2:16,25). Gospel preaching must be Bible based and centered (Acts 2:17-21), but it must also let the people know what the scripture means and how it applies today. A person can read the Bible at home for himself. He can memorize every verse in the Bible, but if he misses the Bible’s proper explana-

tion and application, then he has gained nothing toward growing in faith (II Peter 3:18). Bible preaching is based on God’s Word and is a correct explanation and application of that Word.

BIBLE PREACHING CONVICTS MEN OF SIN

In Acts 2, Peter let his audience know they were sinners (Acts 2:36). There was no misunderstanding him about the matter. He exhorted them to do something about their spiritual condition (Acts 2:40). Peter stirred their consciences (Acts 2:37). Paul’s sermon to Felix caused Felix to tremble (Acts 24:25). Bible preaching is to convict men of their sins and exhort them to turn to the living God.

We need a revival today of the preaching that we hear. We need a return to first century preaching — the kind of preaching that is filled with that which causes the hearer to realize his condition and urges him to do something about it. Then we will see, as the Word of God instructs, that it is indeed “*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*” (Heb. 4:12).

(author unknown)



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thanks for sound, Biblical articles and keeping the brotherhood informed about false teachers creeping into the Lord’s church” ...**Jimmy Kilgore, Oakman, AL**. “I appreciate you sending me the bulletin and very much want to continue to receive it” ...**Bill Noblin, Hazen, AR**. “I am a member of the Page church of Christ in Page, Arizona. I wonder if you could help me find an issue of *Seek The Old Paths* that I am looking for? It deals with the inaccuracy of the NIV translation of the Bible. I know we have it as we save copies of all of the *Seek The Old Paths* articles that you send us. Please let me know what month and year to look for. Thanks for all the hard work that you do and please pray for our work here in Page. In Christian Love” ...**Joe Drella, Page, AZ**. [NOTE: The material you are looking for was printed in the Dec/94 & Jan/95 issues. Neither of these are online. However, it has been published in a tract and can be obtained from Ben Vick, 4915 Shelbyville Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46237 —editor.] “Thank you” ...**Kenneth Lewis, Sapulpa, OK**. “Just a quick note to say Great Job!” ...**Roy Coffman, Omaha, NE**. “God bless your work” ...**Jackie & Evelyn Weathers, Corinth, MS**. “Thank you for sending *Seek The Old Paths* each month. God bless you for proclaiming Truth and exposing Error” ...**Maurice Brown, Rockford, IL**. “Please send 10 copies each month. We will be sending you a check to help in your expenses. We appreciate your good work” ...**Bill Williams, Island church of Christ, Anacortes, WA**. “Would you please send *Seek The Old Paths* to my sister-in-law. I have been sending them to her but I would like to keep them. There is so much information in them that I would like to keep them. She likes the paper very much. Bless you and keep up the good work for the Lord. God bless you” ...**a sister in Christ, Napoleon, OH**. “Please put me on your mailing list. I would like to have two copies of July 2006 about “Just Who or What is an Anti?” I thought it was very good, especially the last paragraph. Thanks” ...**TX**. “I recently ran across a copy of *Seek The Old Paths* and enjoyed it very much and would like to be added to your subscription list please. Thank you” ...**M/M Neal Essie, Mocksville, NC**. “We, the elders of the Quartz Hill Church of Christ, Quartz Hill, CA, would like for you to place us on your mailing list as we find your publication to be sound in doctrine. We would like 30 copies each month. We are enclosing a donation to help your publication with expenses. If you have 30 back copies of the Feb/2007 issue, please send them to our congregation” ...**The Elders, Church of Christ, Quartz Hill, CA**. [NOTE: The Feb, March, April and July issues contain material concerning mechanical instruments of music in worship —editor.] “To the elders of the church of Christ at East End. We would like 25 copies each month of *Seek The Old Paths* to pass out at church. Thanks so much” ...**Church of Christ at Elkins, Woodbury, TN**. “Please take us off your mailing list. We enjoy them, but my mother gets them and we read them there. Thank you very much” ...**M/M Clois Wright, Booneville, MS**. “I agree with what you said in the Guest Editorial of the June 2007 issue of *Seek The Old Paths* concerning the Christian Chronicle. However, I wonder when you wrote it. If you wrote it recently, you need to know that you hurt your credibility by giving data that is not current. It is my understanding that OCU (Oklahoma Christian University) is not the publisher, Bailey B. McBride is not the editor, and Glover Shipp is not the Senior Editor. The correct data is: Publisher: The Christian Chronicle, Inc., Editor: Lynn McMillon, Senior Editor: R. Scott LaMascus. This has been true for more than a year” ...**Owen B. Moseley**. [NOTE: The article was indeed an older article and dealt with the publisher and editor at the time it was written. However, the fact that the paper now lists a different publisher and editor does not change the things that were being discussed at the time. Thank you for the clarification. —editor]. “The last two issues of your *Seek the Old Paths* were especially good. Keep up your good work for the Lord” ...**John Waddey**. “I commend you for your work with the paper. Keep up the Lord’s work” ...**William McCormick, Monroeville, AL**. “I request you mail me your newsletter each time you publish it. You currently send it to our friends, Jim and Judy Marshall, and they tell me is it wonderful” ...**Mattie Ann Owens, Chattanooga, TN**. “I enjoy your news bulletin very much. Keep up the good work” ...**Gaylon Patterson, Richmond, TX**. “I request that you

send *Seek The Old Paths* to me. Thanks a lot. I was shocked at the way **Rochester College** is going and some of the things they believe and teach today” ...**Joe Powell, Clinton Township, MI**. “Thank you very much” ...**Elijah & Margie McCoy, Metropolis, IL**. “Thank you for the April 2007 issue of *Seek The Old Paths*. All the articles are very good. We publish a paper here that goes into 8,000 homes in Lithia Springs. Do I have your permission to reprint some of these articles? God bless you in your work” ...**Larry Acuff, Douglasville, GA**. [NOTE: Yes, you have our permission to reprint any of the articles that appear in *Seek The Old Paths*. We are all seeking to get the pure Gospel out to the world. God bless you in your work, —editor]. “I worship at the Bisbee church of Christ. A friend of mine who also worships there gave me two of your wonderful publications. Would you please include me on your mailing list. Also, would you add my brother. As a new Christian, not only would he learn a lot, he would also keep to the path. Thank you so much and please keep up the wonderful works that you all are doing” ...**Mitch Whittaker, Pearce, AZ**. “It’s so good to know there are those who are not afraid to stand up for the truth. Please continue your good work” ...**Wanda Clements, Sun City, AZ**. “Just a note to say we appreciate you and all your writers for your godly stand for the Truth. We are not surprised of the **Christian Chronicle** action. God help them! Keep the inspiring words and God will prevail” ...**Bruton & Harold Wood, Paducah, KY**. “I want to thank you for putting me on the mailing list. I’ve been reading a lot in other articles of publications from the church of Christ about souls leaving the faith and the battles that are going on in the church. The article ‘Shall The Sword Devour Forever’ (June 2007) is truly great and I hope and pray that all who read it will take heed and do their own part and stop the spreading of division. Where has the love gone for one another and for the Truth? May our God continue to bless you all and keep *Seek The Old Paths* going” ...**Jerry Hawkins, Brent, AL**.

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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