

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 NOBLE EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE PREACHING

Walter W. Pigg

Since "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21), every effort should be made to preach in such a way that it will be effective in accomplishing God's intended purpose. Obviously, much of today's preaching is not as effective as has been some preaching in years gone by. Why is such the case? A number of factors may be involved, but a major reason could well be the quality of preaching being done today. The apostle Paul's Noble Example of Effective Preaching at Thessalonica, as recorded in the second chapter of I Thessalonians, has much to offer by way of example in this respect. Therefore, trusting it may help improve the quality of today's preaching, let us note a few things from that example. First, a few words about the results of Paul's preaching.

As to the *effectiveness* of Paul's preaching, there is no question. The Thessalonians themselves were proof that his preaching was "not in vain." To the contrary, they had been "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1:9). A more complete change could not have been made, and this shows the great power of the Gospel when people are willing to accept it. They had "received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God..." (2:13). Paul points out several things about his preaching which no doubt contributed to its effectiveness. Now, we want to note those qualities which made Paul's preaching so effective and should be found useful in our time.

1) IT WAS DONE IN BOLDNESS (v.2)

That Paul and Silas had been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, being thrown into prison and made fast in stocks (Acts 16:19-24), did not deter them from preaching the Gospel *boldly* at Thessalonica. They spoke openly and freely in declaring the Gospel, though it was done with "much contention" (in much conflict, ASV). That is, they were in a struggle as they battled the foes of Christianity.

God's word is certainly worthy to be preached in like manner today or it should not be preached at all! But it does not always work out that way. It may be due to intimidation that some fail to declare "all the counsel of God." The "whole truth" does sometimes prick the conscience of those who love unrighteousness and who do not abide in truth, thereby incurring their wrath. Some who are more concerned about courting the favor of men than the approval of God will not speak boldly. In Paul's example of preaching, it can never be said that he was timid in the presentation of the Gospel of Christ. He was never "ashamed" of it (Rom. 1:16). When he touched upon those things which show the distinctiveness of the church and New Testament Christianity, he did so with boldness and conviction, never apologetically.

2) IT WAS NOT IN DECEIT, UNCLEANNESS, NOR GUILE (v.3)

Paul had been entrusted with

the Gospel and would not betray that trust by preaching *deceit* (error, ASV). Preaching may contain error due to *ignorance* (hence the need to study) or it may contain error *knowingly*. But, the end result with the hearers would be the same in either case. Paul would preach no error, thus condemning himself and leading his hearers astray. Paul's preaching did not stem from the motive of *uncleanness* — that which would serve some selfish purpose in that which was wrong. The same could be said of *guile* — that which carries the idea of trickery to deceive, "to catch with bait." Those who employ such means in their preaching often have some selfish motive. To the observing person who loves God's truth, it is clear that some of today's preaching is not without fault in these areas.

3) IT WAS TO PLEASE GOD, NOT MAN (v.4)

Paul said, with regard to the one true Gospel which he preached, that if he sought to please men, "*I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1:10). The appeal to preach to please men rather than God is undoubtedly great with some. It is God who must be pleased and to whom an account must be given, not those to whom an effort is made to "please" by the preacher. Much of the preaching done in the denominational world is strictly designed to please the hear-

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A Noble Example...



Editorial...

INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP

(GENERIC AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY AND THE ARGUMENT OF AIDS IN WORSHIP)

Those who use mechanical instruments of music in worship love them. They want them and one way or the other they are going to have them. If they could turn in the New Testament to a *command*, *example* or *implication* of their use, then they would certainly point that out. Since they can't do that, they look elsewhere. So, in desperation, they use every means they can think of in an effort to find something to support them.

It is argued that instruments are simply an AID to singing and they are in the same category as electric lights, microphones, pews, song books, air conditioning, etc. They say that since we use these things and they are not mentioned in the New Testament, then there is nothing wrong with using instruments even though they are not mentioned in the New Testament.

In the process of answering this argument, let's begin by discussing the matter of Bible authority. Colossians 3:17 says, "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*"

The basic point is simple. Colossians 3:17 demands that all we "say" and "do" be done in "the name of the Lord." That means "by his authority" — in accordance to his instructions, his will. It is commonly understood that the phrase "in the name of" means by a person's authority. With "power of attorney" we act in someone's name, on their behalf, with their authority. Law enforcement has the right to tell us to open our door or stop "in the name of the law" — by the authority of the law.

So, if we are going to be approved in God's sight, we must act according to his authority — by his instructions

— in his name. We must be able to point to a scripture for "everything we say" and "everything we do." The scripture is our authority, it is the word of God.

There are two areas or realms of authority: "*specific authority*" and "*generic authority*." For example, God told Noah to build an ark (Gen. 6). In doing so, God gave him some specifics such as its size: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits high and 30 cubits wide. It was to be made out of gopher wood, have one door, one window and three decks. Noah was limited in building the ark in accordance with God's commands (by God's specifications). However, there were some things in regards to building the ark that God did not specify. Noah, therefore, would be free to utilize things that were necessary in carrying out the command to build the ark. These would be generic things such as hammers, saws, nails (pegs), whatever was necessary for Noah to do in obeying God's command to build the ark. These generic things would be authorized under the heading of doing what God commanded.

This same principle is seen time and time again throughout the Bible. For example, Nadab and Abihu were both killed by God because they did not use fire from the altar while burning incense (Lev. 10:1-2). They used a "strange" (unacceptable) fire for which they had no authority. Uzzah was killed by touching the ark of the covenant because he did not have authority to touch it (II Sam. 6). God rejected King Saul as being king over Israel because he offered a sacrifice before going into battle. He had no authority to offer sacrifices, that was reserved for the priests (I Sam. 13:1-14).

In the worship authorized in the New Testament, God commands

(authorizes) Christians to SING (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). He tells us exactly what to do — SING. This is SPECIFIC authority. On the other hand, there is no command (authorization) for us to PLAY instruments. There is no verse(s) one can turn to which authorizes the use of mechanical instruments of music. The Bible is silent on the subject (no authority is given). The principle of "silence" is used by God in Hebrews 7:12-14. Silence means "no authority."

Now, what about the use of electric lights, microphones, pews, song books, air conditioning, etc. All of these things are authorized under the heading of GENERIC authority. These things are expedients — they expedite or help us carry out the SPECIFIC command to worship. None of these things affect worship. They do not take a part in worship. They do not alter worship. They do not ADD TO worship, nor do they TAKE FROM worship. They are equivalent to Noah using a hammer and saw. Hammers and saws did not affect the ark. They were not a part of the ark. Air conditioning, electric lights and even song books do not affect worship. They do not ADD TO nor TAKE FROM worship. In our use of modern conveniences, our worship is still the same with them as it is without them. BUT, this is not true when mechanical instruments of music are used. They ADD to singing. They are another type of music altogether. The sound emitted from instruments is a "music of its own."

When we sit in a *pew*, are we using the *pew* in worship? Does it add to or take from worship? The answer is No. What does it constitute? What action does it take? It does not add anything to worship. We're not offering it to God in worship. But when we PLAY instruments, we offer them to God in worship. PLAYING is an act of its own.

We don't offer *electric lights* to God in worship. We don't offer *air conditioning* to God in worship. We don't offer *song books* to God in worship. All these things are AIDS. They are authorized (in a generic way) by aiding us in carrying out the command of God to worship him just as a hammer was an aid to Noah in building the ark. When we utilize these things, we still are only worshipping,

singing, as God has commanded us to do. We simply SING, nothing more, nothing less. BUT, when we use instruments of music, then we've added another kind of music. It is something more than singing. This is not true with lights or microphones or pews. When they are used, we still are only singing, praying, hearing the word, eating the Lord's supper and giving. Noting is added or taken from worship.

What about a *pitch pipe* or *tuning fork*? Are they authorized? Yes, under the generic command to sing. They aid us in carrying out the command to sing. They do not ADD to singing because they are not used during or in conjunction with our singing. They help us find the tone or pitch to start the song so everyone can sing in the same key.

Now, how do we determine whether something falls into the SPECIFIC or GENERIC category? Consider this...

If God commanded it, then it is specific. God has specified what he wanted. When God tells us WHAT to do, that is specific. If and when God tells us HOW to do it, then that is specific also. The HOW, in this case, becomes just as specific as the WHAT. But, when God gives us a command (the WHAT) and does not tell us HOW to carry out that command, then we are left with our good judgment, using the principles of the Bible, to use whatever is necessary in carrying out the command. However, we obviously could not USE something or DO something that would violate any other scripture in the process of carrying out God's command. Everything in the Bible must be in harmony with no conflicts. That is, we must never do anything that violates any principle of scripture.

For example, God gives us the command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). That is specific — GO preach. He did not tell us HOW to go. He leaves it up to our good judgment and common sense to use any method of GOING. We can walk, ride a horse, go in a car, train, bus, or we can fly or sail. These are all ways of "going." All these ways are authorized for us to go, in a "generic" way, because of the "specific" command to go. They are allowed because of generic authority. They aid us in car-

rying out God's command to go into all the world. None of these ways violate any principle of Scripture; therefore, they are authorized under the heading of generic authority. However, could we rob a bank and use the money to pay our air fare to fly to India? Flying is an acceptable way of going. Yes. But, stealing, even though the money was used for a good cause violates the command to not steal. We are not permitted to do anything or use anything that would violate any passage or principle of Scripture.

Using mechanical instruments of music in worship materially affects the worship. They are not aids to worship, even though some argue they help carry out the command to sing. Some may feel they help us; BUT, they also ADD another kind of music. With their use there is both VOCAL music and MECHANICAL music. No one can say we are only SINGING. That is no longer true when instruments are introduced. There is SINGING, but there is also PLAYING — two different acts altogether.

Notice these examples of true aids:

Eye glasses are an AID to seeing. They do not ADD another kind of seeing. We are not seeing "and" doing something else. When we use them, we are still just seeing, nothing more, nothing less.

A *walking stick* is an AID to walking. It does not ADD another way or kind of walking. We are not walking "and" doing something else. When it is used, we are still just walking, nothing more, nothing less.

Using a *PA system* is an AID to speaking (preaching). It does not ADD another kind of speaking. We are not speaking "and" doing something else. When it is used, we are still just speaking, nothing more, nothing less.

Using *pews* is an AID to sitting. They do not ADD another kind of sitting. We are not sitting "and" doing something else. When they are used, we are still just sitting, nothing more, nothing less.

Using a *song book* is an AID to singing. It does not ADD another way or kind of singing. When it is used, we are still just singing, nothing more, nothing less.

Using *instruments of music* is far more than an aid to singing. They are

an ADDITION to singing. They ADD another kind of music. When they are used, we are singing AND playing. They are clearly something more than (in addition to) just singing.

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Please read Roger Scully's article on page 97 and consider helping the church there financially. He is a good man and the work is worthy.

A Noble Example...

(Continued from page 94)

ers rather than God and may be done even at the expense of perverting the truth of God. It would not be without evidence that the same could be said of some within the body of Christ. One's loyalty to the Master is rightfully called into question when there is more concern for the "feelings" of the hearers than for the approval of God. On some occasions the Truth may be withheld or compromised under the guise of "love." The true love which is commanded of the Christian, for God, for one another, and for all men, does not mean compromise of truth or encouragement of wrong. When the truth is spoken in this love, nothing will be withheld which the hearer needs, be it pleasing or displeasing!

4) FLATTERING WORDS WERE ABSENT (v.5)

People like to hear good things said about themselves; and, compliments and commendations are certainly in order when deserved. To use *flattery* to gain the favor of people is to resort to hypocrisy. The preacher who uses flattery as a tool may win some friends and gain some favors but many will see through his dishonesty. Even if some people do not, the Lord always does!

5) NO CLOKE OF COVETOUSNESS WAS USED (v.5)

It is right for a preacher to be supported financially while preaching the Gospel. Paul said, "*Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*" (I Cor. 9:14). To preach just for the sake of money is a different matter. It is possible for a preacher to hide his real motive from men when that motive is money or personal gain. One could not imagine Paul watering down the Gospel in order to keep a good salary coming in, nor keeping his mouth shut with reference to some false doctrine because he did not want to jeopardize a "good setup" somewhere. No, he had no motive of covetousness to hide, but quite to the contrary, he worked with his own hands to sup-

port himself so there would be no basis for his opponents to accuse him.

6) SOUGHT NO GLORY FROM MAN (v.6)

Though Paul was an apostle, he was no "glory seeker." Those who are seeking glory, honor and the praise of men in this life may well fail to have the Lord's approval in the hereafter. Like those of whom Jesus spoke in Matthew 6:2, who did things to "have glory of men," they may well "have their reward." Some go to great lengths to seek the glory of men and may indulge in self-praise to help accomplish their objective. I well remember a young man at F-HC more than 40 years ago who seemed to have an ambition along this line. He said that when he finished school he was really going to make a name for himself — he would get his name in all the papers, etc. I would like to think that his aspiration changed, but I do not know. At any rate, I do not think I have heard of that brother since that time. It has been noticeable over the years that some who have gotten quite a bit of glory, praise and recognition from men, no longer stand for God's truth. This should serve as a warning that seeking the glory of men is an evil motive.

7) AN EXAMPLE IN BEHAVIOR (v.10)

Paul's conduct in life was such that it deserved no criticism and the brethren could testify to that. He was not a poor example in that his manner of life was inconsistent with his preaching. When preaching brethren have a bad reputation due to their conduct, the cause of Christ is hurt. When preachers will not pay their debts, practice dishonesty, dress immodestly, engage in sexual immorality or marital unfaithfulness, or other common sins of the world, they destroy their influence as a preacher and bring shame and reproach upon the church for which Christ died. The instances of such behavior among preachers are far too many!

8) HEARERS WERE TAUGHT TO WALK WORTHY OF GOD (vs.11,12)

The Christian's manner of life is

to be such as is in accord with God's will. The preacher who fails to so teach (for whatever cause) is short-changing those to whom he preaches, and could be responsible for the loss of their souls as well as his own. The manner of life approved of God involves both positive and negative aspects. To overemphasize either to the neglect of the other is to present God's will only in part. Preaching which emphasizes godly living is not ringing out from our pulpits as it once did. Why? Could it be that some no longer want to hear it and brethren are often too willing to accommodate their wishes? I can remember the time when the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21) were not nearly so common within the church as they are today. This must be due, at least in part, to the failure of preachers to emphasize that walking "worthy of God" is necessary in order to go to heaven.

CONCLUSION

If Paul's example of effective preaching was followed more closely today, our preaching would be more effective. More souls would be saved, Christians would grow up in the faith, and churches would grow both in influence and in number as never before in our time! The preaching of the Gospel is still "foolishness" to many people of the world but it is serious business with the Lord and those who sincerely love Him and His truth. Therefore, every preacher has a great responsibility (and opportunity) to be the kind of preacher God wants him to be. Until our preachers quit depending so much upon the philosophies of men and modern day "theologians," our preaching will not be as effective as it could and should be. When we go back to the Bible to learn how to preach and what to preach, then and only then, can we turn things around!

The Gospel has not lost its power, but unless men are willing to boldly proclaim it after the example of Paul, the most favorable results will not be forthcoming.

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well worth reading

GOOD WORKS ARE LACKING SUPPORT

Roger Scully

If saving the souls of the lost is the most important thing there is, why are so many doing so little to help this matter? Is it because we are too busy building cathedrals and updating carpet?

God chose for man to communicate with man for the salvation of man (Mark 16:15). For this cause the inspired apostle wrote, “*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*” (I Cor. 1:17). This passage in no way minimizes the importance of baptism (cf. I Peter 3:21), but rather states a Christian’s responsibility to preach the Gospel. Verse 21 further states: “*...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*” If people are saved by the message (cf. James 1:18), then it is necessary for those who know that message to teach it. Now, baptism comes into play when the person hearing the message believes it and acts on his belief — “*...He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). The Christian preaches and the hearer must decide to respond to the message preached. In order for this to be done properly, at least three things must be available: 1) A man with the ability and knowledge to teach God’s word (II Tim. 2:2), 2) A man with such an ability in a location where he is needed (cf. Acts 18:6,7), and 3) proper financial support (Gal. 6:6).

For a man to work as effectively as possible in this realm, he is in need of financial support by means other than through secular work. Paul wrote, “*even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*” (I Cor. 9:14). We also read in Philippians 4 how that the church at Philippi, as well as they of Macedonia (II Cor. 8), helped support Paul while laboring in the word. This type of support is necessary because of the time demanded by biblical studies and the need to have a flexible schedule in order to establish and conduct Bible studies, as well as become acquainted with, and known by, those in the community in which he labors.

So often preachers, young and old, filled with zeal, move to commu-

nities where they are certainly needed to work with small congregations to help them become spiritually strong[er] and to help them grow by seeking the lost. But, in order to do so, outside financial support is needed. Yet, the support needed is rarely able to be raised, hence many areas, in our own country, are facing a dearth of the word of God. But why is the money not raised? Is it because it is not available? That cannot be concluded, for many financial statements have been observed showing just how much money is available. In addition, many speak of how much money certain congregations have upon which they “sit.” Proof of the available money was seen after hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. The money donated from brethren (not speaking of the unscriptural disaster relief effort) is estimated in the hundreds of thousands. In fact, the congregation where I labor in Morgan City, LA, had more than \$20,000 pass through our hands, which was distributed to those in need. So, then, the money is obviously available.

I recently heard of a congregation leaving its well-equipped building to build another costing more than \$1.5 million, which will be paid in full over the next 5 years. Another congregation just spent \$5,000 having parking lines painted in their parking lot. Yet another is said to have sent \$10,000 to help some needy families. One of the most disheartening of all was hearing of a congregation who spent \$50,000 on a PowerPoint set up, including large dual screens, a remote laptop computer and large display mounts. Yet, when elders were approached to support a mission field for as little as \$100 a month, they said, “It does not fit into our budget.” Brethren, \$100 a month totals \$1,200 a year. They spent \$50,000 on a PowerPoint system, which could have supported this mission field for a total of about 40 years at \$100 a month! Now, I am not

saying that sometimes new buildings are not needed, or that helping those in need is not a good work; but I am suggesting that there is a far greater need than hurricane relief — **saving the souls of the lost** — “*For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*” (Matt. 16:26)?

If saving the souls of the lost is the most important thing there is, why are so many doing so little to help this matter? Is it because we are too busy building cathedrals and updating carpet? Alexander Campbell sarcastically wrote, “How much better is this sum laid up in brick and mortar than spent in missionary projects [some] prefer [a] steeple to six hundred, three score and six souls” [1831, p.23].

The congregation where I serve barely stays afloat. At one point we even went into the negative in our bank account. Our members give beyond their means, and make great sacrifices to continue working for the cause of the Christ. This is the only sound congregation in a 150-mile radius, and we are continually knocking doors and do all we can to bring the good news to those in need. Recently a cry for support sounded forth from our humble lips, and only a small, very small, number responded. After Katrina we didn’t even ask and received many checks for large sums. We were even being contacted by brethren from Canada, Arkansas, Texas and even places as far away as Rhode Island. Now, with a greater need, we ask and receive little to assist the greatest work that could be done. Could it be that brethren think large foyers and high ceiling auditoriums is more affective in saving souls and more needed than the support of mission fields?

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THE BLIND AND HARDENED HEART

Marvin Weir

An ever-growing number today have absolutely no desire to examine the Scriptures to see if their actions meet God's approval. The worldly desire to please self and satisfy one's own wishes is so entrenched in today's society that more and more folks harden their hearts to the word of God.

One's attitude is of utmost importance when confronted with spiritual matters. The Lord states that folks are not just to "hear" (Matt. 13:9), but also to give heed to "what" (Mark 4:24) and "how" (Luke 8:18) they hear. Following this teaching of Christ will prevent the religious confusion and error that runs rampant today.

Spiritually speaking, the only "seed" the Bible commands to be sown is "the word of God" (Luke 8:11). It is not difficult to understand the principle that seed will always reproduce after its kind (Gen. 1:11; Gal. 6:7-8). In the physical realm, if one sows the wrong seed he will not have the harvest he envisioned. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, the sowing of the wrong seed will not produce the harvest (a heavenly home) that so many are anticipating. The Word of God (proper seed) in its purity must be taught, believed and obeyed if the promised blessing of a home in heaven is to be realized.

Yes, God's promised blessings are conditional, and even a casual reading of the Bible should impress one with this truth.

The heart being discussed is not the physical blood pump, but the mind or intellect of man. It is important what man thinks in his heart (Prov. 23:7) "*for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. 4:23). The apostle Paul writes that "*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Rom. 10:10). Jesus teaches the first and great commandment is to "*love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*" (Matt. 22:37).

The parable of the sower depicts different types of hearts or soils (Matt. 13:38; 18-23). The types of soils commented on in the Bible represents different attitudes toward

the precious Gospel. This article will focus on the attitude of one who possesses a blind and hardened heart.

The devil, "*seeking whom he may devour*" (I Peter 5:8), knows that sin will separate one from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The writer of Hebrews warned Christians, "*but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. 3:13, ASV). When Paul spoke in the synagogue at Ephesus, there were some who were "*hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way...*" (Acts 19:9, ASV). Isaiah prophesied about people with fat hearts, heavy ears and shut eyes, "*lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed*" (Isa. 6:10, ASV). Jesus mentioned this prophecy in noting people who refused to believe the truth He taught even though they had seen the miracles He worked (John 12:37, 39-40).

Today, countless millions refuse to "see" and "hear" the Word of God! In the parable of the sower, some seed that was sown fell by the "way side" (Matt. 13:4). Even though contact is made with the seed (Word of God), certain people will refuse to understand (Matt. 13:19). The Bible message is the same for every human being, and all mankind can understand the Bible alike! Paul admonishes, "*Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17, ASV).

Again, Paul implores of Bible believers, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (I Cor. 1:10, ASV). It is not that folks cannot understand what God would have them to do, but that they have no

desire to understand and be doers of the word (James 1:22).

One may harden his heart to the point that he will not allow God's word to penetrate it. Why would an intelligent person do such a thing? There are many things that can contribute to one possessing a blind and hardened heart.

First, **pride** can keep one from submitting to the commands of God. The Jews of Jesus' day are classic examples of pride causing people to refuse and reject the truth. The Jews were eagerly anticipating the coming of the Messiah, but foolish pride led them to resist Christ when He came. The problem was clearly identified by Christ when He was confronted by the religious leaders of His day. "*...The Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? ... he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites. ... This people honoreth me with their lips, But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition*" (Mark 7:5-9, ASV).

Multitudes today allow tradition to blind them to God's glorious truth. They base their religion upon the religion of their parents or grandparents. While claiming to believe in the Bible, they worship and serve according to the tradition of their ancestors. Pride will not allow many to cast aside man-made tradition and simply follow a "thus saith the Lord." This is the plight of those in denominationalism today who refuse to give it up when confronted with the word of God. They cannot find "their church" in the Bible. It is hundreds of

years too late to be the church promised and established by the Lord (Matt. 16:18; Mark 9:1; Acts 2). There is only one body (Eph. 4:4), and Christ is the head of that body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23). The name church of Christ simply shows ownership, and denotes those congregations who are abiding by His will (Rom. 16:16). Man-made churches, by the very names they wear, give the glory to man instead of Christ. It is not that folks cannot see and understand this truth, it is rather that most will not swallow their pride and cast aside the traditions of their families.

Second, **prejudice** and **bias** allows many to continue to cultivate a blind and hardened heart. So very many are guided by their feelings and emotions instead of logic and reasoning. But the way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23), and just because a thing feels right does not make it so (Prov. 14:12)! People are influenced by their environment and by what they are taught. The way they “feel” becomes the standard by which they live. It is difficult, at best, to lay aside all prejudice and bias and be determined to be influenced only by the word of God.

Those within and without the Lord’s church must strive to have the attitude of the noble Bereans. *“Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11, ASV). One’s mind (heart) must be ready to receive the word of God. The Gospel was proclaimed to thousands in Acts chapter two, but only those who “gladly received” (Acts 2:41) the word were baptized into Christ.

Those who have accepted man’s invitation to salvation (“Just accept Jesus into your heart as your personal Savior”) while rejecting the Gospel’s invitation to salvation (*Hearing*, Rom. 10:17; *Believing*, Heb. 11:6, John 8:24; *Repentance*, Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38; *Confession*, Rom. 10:9-10; *Immersion for remission of sins*, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27) need to cast aside bias and prejudice and determine to follow Christ. Those within the Lord’s body who are rejecting a standard of authority and

a God-given pattern need to repent and determine to be guided by the word that will judge all mankind at the last day (John 12:48).

Third, a **heart without strong convictions** will become blinded to God’s truth. One’s allegiance will either be to God or to man — to things spiritual or to things material. Jesus said, *“No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matt. 6:24). The Master also said, *“He that is not with me is against me...”* (Matt. 12:30). There is no middle ground that is safe and secure.

Strong conviction for God’s Word is woefully lacking among people today. Oh, people have strong convictions but not for the Word of God. The “situation ethics” philosophy and the “end justifies the means” concept is alive and well in the hearts (minds) of many. The response by most people as to whether something is right or wrong is based upon emotion and feeling rather than reason and conviction. Such will always lead to division, confusion and every man doing what is “right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

A blind and hardened heart to God’s truth will argue that one church is as good as another and encourage people to attend the church of their choice. Please lay aside your “feelings” for just a moment and let us reason from the Scriptures. Christ promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased His church with His blood (Acts 20:28). He is the head of the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). How many “heads” does a body have? How many “bodies” does a head have? It is no wonder that the Bible affirms that there is **“one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all”** (Eph. 4:4-6, ASV). This is why the Scriptures affirm, *“For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free...”* (I Cor. 12:13). Folks, at least have the integrity to admit that all man-made religious groups wear different names, believe different doctrines, worship and serve in dif-

ferent ways, and have different interpretations of the Holy Scripture. How can people convince themselves that so many diverse beliefs compose the “one body?”

A blind and hardened heart will argue that the Bible does not say “thou shalt not use instrumental music in worship.” Again, please lay aside emotion, feeling and personal likes and let us reason from the Scriptures. Instead of appealing to what the Scriptures do not say, one must appeal to what they do say. Christ, as head of the church, has the right to command. The Bible teaches, *“And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (Col. 3:17, ASV). To do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to do it by His authority! Christ has authorized “singing,” not “playing” on an instrument (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). One will search in vain for Bible authority of instrumental music! Neither must one forget that he cannot, with divine approval, “add to” or “take from” God’s Holy Word (Deut. 4:2; II John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19).

An ever-growing number today have absolutely no desire to examine the Scriptures to see if their actions meet God’s approval. The worldly desire to please self and satisfy one’s own wishes is so entrenched in today’s society that more and more folks harden their hearts to the word of God. The appeal is made to all to have the conviction to be guided by the Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119:105). The noble Bereans were commended because *“they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11, ASV). Our prayer is that their tribe might increase!

To be pleasing unto God, one *“must worship...in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). This means that a person will have the desire to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reason. God’s Word reveals what is right to everyone and can be understood by all who do not possess a blind and hardened heart.

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God's Word. Thank you so much and may God bless your efforts. In Christian love" ...**Bobbi J. Wheeler, Baxter, TN.** "Thank you" ...**Bill Hughes, Waco, TX.** I have just located your site on the internet and have enjoyed all of the function and will probably "tune in" frequently (www.wsoj.net). I am a member of the church of Christ, in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. A congregation of approximately 50 members, connected and close to the Western Christian College, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, of which my wife and I were employed for ten years. God Bless your every effort to spread the WORD" ...**Calvin Young.** "We look forward to your publications each month. Appreciate so much your standing for the truth and defending the Gospel. There are very few sound congregations here in Michigan. My husband, Hoyle and I both grew up in the Garden City, MI congregation which has always been one of the strongest, soundest congregations in Michigan. We moved farther north and attend a very small, sound congregation surrounded by many that are being carried away with 'strange doctrines' and teachings of men. ...Too much 'association' with the denominations. Unfortunately, we no longer can support in any way Rochester College or the 'church' affiliated with it since they 'hired' Rubel Shelly. The Bible states that we will be destroyed for lack of knowledge. I can only conclude that those who are easily led into 'liberal movements' must not study the Word enough to know the difference or don't want to know! Please send 10 copies per month for us to distribute to our congregation to help keep us sound by being informed. Will send a donation check to you. Please send me 10 more copies of the Oct/07 edition, as well. Keep standing up for the Truth!" ...**Alice Simmons, Imlay City church of Christ, Romeo, MI.** [NOTE: Rochester College, former Michigan Christian College, was far 'off base' long before Rubel Shelly went there. This is simply further evidence of their departure from the truth — editor] "Thank you so much for the Bible questions and answers section on the internet. The articles and references are just right for a half hour lunchtime Bible class. We've ranged from the Rapture (Revelation) to Psalms which somehow hung us up on dancing. Longtime Christians forget that most people aren't grounded in the most basic truths. Examples of dancing in the Old Testament have now led to a discussion of why and when the Old Testament ended. Defending the faith has definitely improved my study habits. Keep up the good fight!" ...**Melinda Ward, Indianapolis, IN.** "We appreciate your dedication to "The Truth" ...**J. R. Butler Family, Windom, TX and Nolan Butler Family, Honey Grove, TX.** "Would you please send your STOP paper to the enclosed people. We need to hear the truth. I'm sending a few dollars to help pay a little on postage. Wish I could send more" ...**Savannah, TN.** "I have been receiving your STOP publication for about a year after being given one by one of the elders who said "Don't you enjoy this old stuff?" I really enjoy the articles every month and am encouraged that a congregation like yours exists that is not afraid to print the truth. I have made sure that everyone in our congregation [Midway Church of Christ, Maben, MS] has a subscription or an opportunity to read your publication. Keep up the good work" ...**Barry Cole, Maben, MS.** "Thank you so much for the good that you are doing and may the Lord our God continue to bless your work" ...**Michael Lane, Killeen, TX.** "I was receiving STOP until I changed my mailing address. For some reason, I am not receiving it. I would like to keep on receiving the paper" ...**Glen Goggins, Monterey, TN.** "I would like to request a monthly delivery of STOP for the church here" ...**Opelousas church of Christ, LA.** "Another sister in Christ loaned us the Sept/07 issue of STOP to read the article *Overcoming Non-Contenders For The Faith* by Leon Cole. Our thanks to all who have a part in doing this. It seems to be getting more and more urgent with each day that passes that we earnestly contend for the faith. So much error is creeping into the church little by little that young, non-suspecting Christians are being caught up in it without knowing what is really happening. Satan is working overtime trying to pull faithful Christians out of the church that Christ purchased with his blood, Acts 20:28. Keep up the good work. If you will, please put us on your mailing list" ...**Marvin Bellah, Monticello, AR.** "Brother Robinson,

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