



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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BLURRING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG

Marvin L. Weir

The majority of people... always seek to justify the evil they engage in by attempting to blur the difference between right and wrong.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines “blur” as “to make indistinct and hazy in outline or appearance; obscure.” The devil is never happier than when people believe and argue that one cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. Wrong is **never** right, and to become convinced that it is, will jeopardize one’s soul.

There are two things that will guarantee a recipe for disaster. First, to believe that one cannot discern the difference between right and wrong will lead to eternal ruin. Second, to believe that right is whatever one believes it to be will damn one’s soul.

The only one capable of defining what is right for all people is God. The Holy Scriptures affirm that God’s people have always been told to “...*hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God*” (Deut. 13:18). One will observe that people are to do that which is right **in the eyes of God**. Man may believe an act or action to be right when the act or action is actually wrong. Solomon warned, “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Prov. 14:12). Man’s thoughts and ways cannot be compared to God’s thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:8-9). The Holy Scriptures remind us: “*He is the*

Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deut. 32:4).

Faithful spokesmen of God have always instructed people to do the **right** thing. Samuel told the people of his day, “*Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way*” (1 Sam. 12:23). Today, the faithful of God must continue to pray for those who refuse to obey the Gospel and for those who have erred from the truth while continuing to instruct each group “*in the good and the right way.*”

First, let us observe that the world seeks to blur the difference between right and wrong. Never in the history of this country has this been more true than today. A lesson that most young people sorely need to learn is that the **majority** have never been right! In Genesis 6:5 God observed that “*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5). Only eight souls were saved **in** the ark (Gen. 7:13) when the universal flood destroyed all other flesh that moved upon the earth (Gen. 7:21). Lot only escaped the wicked city of Sodom with his two daughters (Gen. 19:15). His wife chose to do the **wrong** thing and

look back and she became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). All other people were killed in Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities of the “Plain” (Gen. 19:24-25). The majority of people have never been loyal to the Creator, and they always seek to justify the evil they engage in by attempting to blur the difference between right and wrong.

Those who want to go to Heaven will come out from among people in the world (2 Cor. 6:17). The words of the Lord have never been more true than when He said, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:18-19). One will either be a follower of the world or a follower of Christ. A person cannot “*serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matt. 6:24). It is impossible to follow God and the world at the same time. Thus, this warning is given: “*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*” (1 John 2:15).

(Continued on page 92)

Blurring The Difference...



Editorial...

THE GOSPEL

Garland M. Robinson

***The responsibility of being saved
is upon the HEARER of the Gospel.***

They must take heed to it.

***Do you have on honest heart,
a good heart?***

Won't you respond to the Gospel call today?

What would you consider to be the world's most pressing need — more than anything else? Ask this question around the world and you'll get thousands of different answers. Ask it of a Christian, a faithful Christian, and you'll get only ONE ANSWER. The world needs CHRIST!

There's only one way the world can know about Christ. It is by and through THE GOSPEL! The Gospel is Good News: **Facts** to be believed, **Commands** to be obeyed, **Promises** to be fulfilled. The Gospel is God's power to save sinful man. Paul said, "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). "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but **unto us which are saved it is the power of God**" (1 Cor. 1:18). Take away the Gospel and man can't be saved. That's why Jesus gave his disciples the command to preach it: "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" (Mark 16:15-16).

What do we know about the Gospel? We know...

It is **GOD'S GOSPEL**. Paul spoke of himself as "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the **gospel of God**" (Rom. 15:16). To the Thessalonians we read, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and tra-

vail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you **the gospel of God**" (1 Thess. 2:9).

The Gospel has been certified, i.e. verified, declared, made known, give to understand, to gain knowledge of or thorough knowledge of. We know about certified birth certificates, technicians, mechanics, etc. God has given the world a certified Gospel. It's origin is God. Paul wrote: "...I **certify** you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is **not after man**. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it [by man], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). The Gospel is GOOD NEWS!

We are to **LOVE THE GOSPEL**. The Psalmist wrote: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). God's word, testimonies, commandments, statutes, laws, and precepts are to be loved more than gold, yea fine gold (Psa. 119:24, 47-48, 113, 127, 159). Those who delight in the Lord's word have great peace and nothing will cause them to depart from it (Psa. 119:165). No wonder we read, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But **his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night**" (Psa. 1:1-2).

Zechariah exhorted those who returned to the land of Canaan from captivity in Babylon to "love the truth and peace" (Zech. 8:19). Those who do

not love the truth will never have forgiveness nor go to heaven. They will be consigned to everlasting fire "because **they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved**. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12). "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (accursed, doomed, 1 Cor. 16:22).

Those who love the Gospel will be as those in Berea who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **hold the truth in unrighteousness**" (Rom. 1:18). Such people see the truth as a matter of folly and hold it in contempt. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and **do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile**" (Rom. 2:7-9).

We are to **PREACH THE GOSPEL** to every human being. Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to **preach the gospel** to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

We are forbidden to teach or preach any other Gospel or any modification or alteration of the Gospel. A very stern warning is given in Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach **any other gospel** unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." These words followed the amazement expressed by Paul regarding the brethren scattered throughout the region of Galatia. When he preached the Gospel in that area, many believed and obeyed it.

Congregations of the church of Christ had been established all over the country. But, instead of continuing in the one true Gospel of Christ by which they were saved, many had turned away from it and received “another gospel” which Paul said, “is not another” (vs.6-7). The gospel they embraced after he left them was not the same Gospel they had obeyed. It was a gospel of a completely different kind! It was a false gospel, one that pretended to enlighten them to a deeper faith in God, but instead, carried them far away and led them to being accursed by God. They had been duped by false brethren who had perverted the Gospel! That’s what false teachers do. They teach a counterfeit, fake gospel that leads to hell, not heaven.

Don’t fall prey to smooth talking teachers. They will lead you astray from the pure and unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ. Love the Truth!

We are **SAVED BY THE GOSPEL**. All humanity are given the assurance that they need saving (rescuing) from the wrath to come. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ... As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:23,10). “...We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6). Therefore, we need saving. God does not desire that a single person be lost. Because of his great love, God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). However, God can’t save sinful man without man’s faithful obedience to his word.

As a result of God’s willingness to save, we read: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain**” (1 Cor. 15:1-2). “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity (overflowing) of naughtiness, and receive with meekness **the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding**

his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:21-25).

To those who believed on Jesus, he said... “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32).

We are to **LIVE THE GOSPEL**. “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). “*Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them*” (Psa. 119:129). Hebrews 10:38 says, “*the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*” Jesus pointed out, “*Ye are the salt of the earth ... ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:13-16).

We are to live continually in accordance to God’s holy Word. As we do “...we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). The Scriptures are written, exhorting us to keep it, not yielding to temptation. The apostle John wrote, “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 John 2:1). As we “walk in the light” we “*hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*” (Heb. 10:23). “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10). “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, 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).

In order to do all the above, we must first, **OBEY THE GOSPEL**. Notice these words from heaven if we do not obey the Gospel. “*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*

*with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and **that obey not the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*” (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Therefore, “*what shall the end be of them that **obey not the gospel of God***” (1 Peter 4:17)?

Obedying the Gospel of God is a process involving several things — steps if you please. As you park your car, you take steps to enter your house. Each step taken gets you closer, but there’s one last step to enter your home. The first step does not put you into your house. The last step does.

The steps one takes to be saved are clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

1) **HEAR** the saving Gospel of Christ. One can’t respond to something he knows nothing about. Jesus said, “*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*” (John 6:45). “**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). “**So then faith cometh by **hearing**, and hearing by the word of God**” (Rom. 10:17).

2) **BELIEVE** the saving Gospel and what it says about the Christ and his church. “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him **all that believe** are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (Acts 13:38-39). “*When they **believed** Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8:12). The man from Ethiopia said, “**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**” (Acts 8:37). Jesus said, “*He that **believeth** and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16).

3) **REPENT** of your sins. Repent means to change your mind, your thinking. The result of repenting is that your life, your actions, will change. God requires all men every where to repent (Acts 17:30). Jesus said, “*except ye repent, ye shall...perish*” (Luke 13:3,5). Therefore, those in Acts 2 who

cried out wanting to know what to do to have forgiveness of their sins were told, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:37-38). *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...”* (Acts 3:19). Men must repent and turn to God (Acts 26:20).

4) **CONFESS** faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus 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). *“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 salvation”* (Rom. 10:9-10). Some refuse to confess and will remain lost. *“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). If you don’t confess the Lord in this world, you will in the judgment to come (Rom. 14:11-12; Phil. 2:10-11).

5) **BE BAPTIZED** in water for the forgiveness of your sins. There is no baptism without immersion — sprinkling or pouring is not baptism. This step puts you into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) where salvation is (2 Tim. 2:10). Your sins are not forgiven at the step of Believing. The demons believe but they won’t be saved (James 2:19; cf. John 12:42-43). Believing by itself does not put you INTO Christ. Your sins are not forgiven at the step of Repenting nor at the step of Confessing (though repenting and repenting are essential). Water baptism is the one step that puts you INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3). Baptism is the step that puts you in contact with the blood of Jesus that washes sins away (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). Jesus shed his blood in his death (cf. John 19:34) and sinners are baptized into his death. *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death”* (Rom. 6:3).

Saul, having spoken with Jesus on the road to Damascus, was miser-

able for three days afterward. That doesn’t sound like a saved man does it? So miserable in fact that he did not eat or drink the whole time (being lost in his sins). It was at Damascus that he was told, *“be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). If his sins were forgiven (washed away) on the road to Damascus, then he did not have any sins to wash away when he was baptized in water three days later. Why do so many refuse to believe the Gospel on this step? They’ve been lied to and tragically, they believe the lie, not the plain words of the Scriptures.

Hearing, Believing, Repenting and Confessing are all steps TOWARD being saved. Each step puts you closer. But there’s only one step that puts you INTO Christ — that step is water baptism. Sinners are *“baptized into Christ”* (Rom. 6:3) — they *“put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). Salvation is IN Christ, not OUT of Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Sinners are OUT of Christ. They must be IN Christ to be saved. What step puts one INTO Christ? Nowhere in the New Testament will you find a passage that says one believes or repents or confesses INTO Christ. These steps are taken UNTO (toward) Christ, but only the step of water baptism puts one INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27).

The responsibility of being saved is upon the HEARER of the Gospel. They must take heed to it. Jesus talked about the sower that sowed seed — the seed being the word of God (Luke 8:5-11). Some *“fell by the way side.”* Some *“fell upon a rock.”* Some *“fell among thorns.”* Some *“fell on good ground.”* The good ground are *“they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience”* (Luke 8:15). Do you have an honest heart, a good heart? Won’t you respond to the Gospel call today?

Jesus said, *“this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light...”* (John 3:19-21).

Are you ready to embrace the truth, the light, God’s word?

Blurring The Difference...

(Continued from page 89)

Second, Satan will try to blur the difference between right and wrong. There are those who loudly declare one cannot know right from wrong. They also advocate that either society, the situation, or the circumstances will determine the right thing to do. Solomon knew there was good and evil and wanted to accurately judge the people as he discerned between good and evil (1 Kings 3:9). Isaiah admonished, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter”* (5:20)! The Bible warns of false teachers in saying, *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Third, Satan will attempt to get one to believe that he is entitled to interpret the Scriptures the way he sees them. People have a choice when they are confronted with the Word of God; they can believe and accept it or deny it and refuse it. The Bible reminds all who will hear, *“that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:20-21). The origin of Scripture is Peter’s point — it came from God, not man! Man must understand the **will** of God and do it (Matt. 7:21). God has made it abundantly clear that He intended for man to comprehend His will in stating, *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Eph. 5:17).

The **right** thing to do is to *“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”* (Col. 3:16) so that it might be *“a lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path”* (Psa. 119:105)! Will you choose to do what is **right** and never try to blur the difference between good and evil and right and wrong?

484 CR 44700
Blossom, TX 75416
countryboy357@hughes.net

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF ME AS A CHRISTIAN?

Larry W. Grouns

God's word is clear in regard to His expectation of Christians. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Often, however, we are quick to adopt the excuse-making attitude exhibited by Moses when he was confronted by the angel of Jehovah at the burning bush (Exodus 3). We say, "I can't do that because..." God, however, has given each of us something which is a constant reminder of His expectations of us, that being a physical body.

God Has Given Us **EARS** With Which To Listen. God's first expectation of us as Christians is that we listen to His Word. God's Word says that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). As Christians, we must have the attitude of God's people in the day of Nehemiah (Neh. 8) whose purpose was to hear (v.1), who made preparation to hear (v.3), who expended effort to understand what they heard (vs.3,8), and who showed respect for what they heard (vs.5,9).

God Has Given Us **EYES** With Which To See. We are expected to use our eyes to look at the examples we are given. By so doing the Christian gains strength to live the pattern for life he finds disclosed in God's word. The ultimate example for all Christians is Jesus the Christ. We are directed in 1 Peter 2:21-23 to "follow his steps." The Bible assures us in Hebrews 4:15 that Christ has been faced with it all, yet He did not sin. Paul, the apostle, encourages us to imitate his own life even as he imitated the life of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Therefore, we are not only expected to see the example of Christ, but also the example of the apostles and beyond that, the examples of other faithful Christians (Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7).

Further, we are expected to use our eyes to see false teachers for what they are. The warning from 2 John 9-11 is clear: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of

Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Brethren, there are false teachers among us (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Peter 2:1-2; Phil. 3:18-19). Do you defend false teachers? Do you give them words of encouragement? Do you support them financially? If so, you are in sin and are not meeting God's expectation of you.

God Has Given Us A **HEAD** With Which To Think. Christians are expected to think on good things. Philipians 4:8 stands as proof that the Bible teaches mind control, not mind control that is placed upon us by others, but rather control of our own thoughts and will. Clearly, since the word of God is "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), we are expected to maintain control over these thoughts and intents.

God Has Given Us A **HEART** With Which To Feel. The Christian is expected to feel compassion for the wayward brother (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20) and share in God's desire for the alien sinner's repentance (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Do we love the lost? Do we hurt because we understand the eternal consequences for those who will not repent, or worse yet, for those who have never heard the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9)? Christians must feel the weight of responsibility and the urgency for the action placed upon us.

God Has Given Us **FEET** With Which To Go. We as Christians are expected to use our feet to go and teach. The words of the great commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 demonstrate that each Christian has a personal responsibility to go and teach. Do as much as you can, whenever and wherever you can to tell others about Christ. Tell your friends, your family, your co-workers, and if the opportunity is yours, those

in foreign lands about the eternal nature of man, the eternal blessing of Heaven, the eternal punishment of Hell and the Gospel plan of salvation.

God Has Given Us A **MOUTH** With Which To Speak. Christians are expected to use their mouths to speak in confession of their belief in Christ as the only begotten Son of God (Rom. 10:10; Matt. 10:32), and in proclamation of the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Peter 3:15). We are also expected to speak in defense of or to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3) and to do so unashamedly (Rom. 1:16). Never let anyone walk over the truth, be he an intentional false teacher or a brother in error. Remember what James wrote: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable..." (James 3:17).

God Has Given Us **HANDS** With Which To Do. Looking to the example we find in the great book of Nehemiah (4:17), God expects the Christian to use one of his hands to work by providing for the work of the church (1 Cor. 16:1-2), by providing for our families (1 Tim. 5:8), and by providing for the needy (Eph. 4:28). The other hand is to be filled with the greatest weapon of all, "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) and with it God expects us to "Fight the good fight of the faith..." (1 Tim. 6:12).

Goebel Music quoted Leroy Brownlow as saying: "The medical marvel of the ages is how that so many men have lived so long without a backbone." Truly, Christians are expected to use the blessings each has been given, our ears, our eyes, our head, our heart, our feet, our mouth, and our hands with courage and steadfastness.

First Corinthians 15:58 says: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

3624 Raintree Circle
Sapulpa, OK 74066

**SEND US YOUR
CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS

Roger D. Campbell

When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the apostle knew that his earthly sojourn would soon come to an end (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He wanted Timothy, his dear fellow-servant in the Lord, to continue to be faithful in doing the Lord's work, even after Paul's departure.

Paul appealed to Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel which Paul proclaimed, nor his commitment to it and the Lord (2 Tim. 1:8). He exhorted him to hold fast to the pattern of "sound words" that he had heard from Paul (1:13), to be aware of those who turn away from the Lord's Cause (1:15), and to appreciate those who have the heart of a servant (1:16-18).

In view of those matters, Paul's next charge is, "*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*" (2:1). That is a straightforward appeal, which if accepted and applied properly, would affect Timothy every single day for the rest of his life. Yes, it is that important.

In the statement, "*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,*" what do we see?

First, there is **the Lord's call to be strong**. God does not want His children to be weak, ashamed, fearful, reluctant, or intimidated. "Strong" is the word! It ought to be the goal of every single servant of God to be strong for Him. Our Lord does not want to hear "excuses." There are no "exemptions" to His expectation for us to be strong. There are no "free passes" granted to those who do not take the call to "be strong" seriously. Every member of the church in Corinth was charged to "be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Don't let us think that Timothy was the only one called upon to be a strong servant. Granted, we all have different levels of strength, and, yes, God's people should strive to "*support the weak*" (1 Thess. 5:14); but, the goal for ourselves and others is not to remain weak, but to become strong and stay strong.

A second thing we notice in the charge of 2 Timothy 2:1 is **where grace is available**. God's grace, which is His favor (lovingkindness, good will), is found in His Son and no other place. That is correct: the Bible says "*be*

strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." By God's grace, we are justified through the redemption that is in the Christ (Rom. 3:24). All spiritual blessings, including the forgiveness of sins, are available by the good favor of God which is found only in Jesus (Eph. 1:3,7). No one can be strong in serving the Lord if he/she is not in the Lord Jesus, because that is the only location where grace can be obtained.

When we consider the exhortation to "*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,*" we also see **the realm in which Timothy needed to be strong**. It is not uncommon for us to describe a person or some aspect of his life as being "strong." A child might possess a "strong" will. One person has a "strong" body due to the way he exercises. Another person has a "strong" personality. A student may be described as one who is "strong" in the sciences.

What was God's desire for Timothy? It was for him to be strong in the grace-Jesus connection; that is, be strong in the spiritual realm. Do you recall what the Bible says about Christians putting on the whole armor of God? That section of scripture begins with these words: "*...Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Eph. 6:10). If you and I are going to be strong "for" the Lord, then we need to be strong "in" Him: strong in His *grace*, strong in His *word*, and strong in our *faith* (like Abraham was, Rom. 4:20). We must not trust in our material blessings, educational or occupational accomplishments, genetic ancestry, or

even other humans. Let us set our hearts to be strong in our Lord, His grace, and His way.

What else? Consider **the reasons Timothy needed to be strong**. Timothy needed to be strong because his work was so demanding: demanding on his time, demanding on his attitude, demanding on his commitment, and demanding on his voice. There was much work to do, and being successful in it left no room for weakness. After Paul's appeal for Timothy to be strong, what instructions followed? In what activities would Timothy be involved?

In Timothy's efforts to help other Christians become effective teachers, he needed to commit what he had learned from Paul to faithful saints (2 Tim. 2:2). Such training required strength and persistence on Timothy's part. In addition, Timothy would face hardships in his personal life and in his efforts to proclaim the word of God. Paul called on him to endure such hardships (2:3). That would require spiritual stamina.

Reading further, Timothy was to be "*a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3). The spiritual battles in which he would be engaged with the devil's servants would require notable strength.

The appeal to Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus was not just a philosophy. It was real, everyday life. May we learn to trust in the Lord, striving always to walk *with Him and for Him*.

120 Fawn Dr.
Cleveland, TN 37412

DEFEND OR PRETEND?

A duty of the eldership is to protect the flock from wolves who teach and practice a message and manner that is not according to God's revealed truth (Acts 20:28-31). Many are doing a good job. Many are not. Defending the truth by convicting the gainsayer (Titus 1:9) is part of the work of elders. Churches that are led by men who are diligently teaching the truth and warning of error, defending the right and exposing the wrong, are churches that are blessed. But some elderships want "peace at any price." They suppress any exposure of error, resist teaching that condemns error, try to keep those in their "watchcare" from knowing what the devil and his servants are saying and doing – thinking that will keep the wolf out. But all that does is to keep the flock from recognizing the wolf! Preventing error from entering in the midst is more profitable than having to drive it out. We must defend truth against all forms of error, and not pretend that error is not real and keep a lid on its exposure. Ignorance is not bliss; it's only a blind behind which wolves hide to ensnare their victims. – James W. Boyd

THE PSALM OF THE ASTRONOMER

Bill Boyd

The 8th Psalm has been called “The Psalm of the Astronomer.” The inscription preceding the psalm tells us that it is “A Psalm of David.” It is easy to imagine the shepherd boy keeping watch over his flocks by night and gazing up into the glorious nocturnal pageant above him. We often see the stars only for a few moments, and view them through atmospheric haze and a glare of electric lights. When we get those occasional clear views, they are indeed glorious.

It was my privilege as a young man to work as a night watchman at a summer Bible camp. I was as much a janitor as a watchman. It was my responsibility to clean the mess hall and the main pavilion for the next morning, but that lowly work only took a few hours. Much of the night I was free to gaze up into the heavens with my “Peterson’s Field Guide to the Stars,” map out the constellations, and read their stories as told by the ancient Greeks. I also read my Bible, and thought of the heavens that were seen by Abraham (Genesis 15:5), Job (Job 9:9), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 9:6), Isaiah (Isaiah 40:26), Amos (Amos 5:9), and David. Night after night, from June to August, I became familiar with Arc-turus, Orion, and the Pleiades. My eyes were sharp then, and I like to think that I saw them as they had seen them of old. As I wondered, I thought of the God who made them, and how David said in one place “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1), but here he says that God set his glory “above the heavens” (Psalm 8:1). Note that word “above.” When you see the glory of the heavens, remember that the glory of God exceeds their glory. I think of this when I sing:

*“O Lord my God, when I in awe-some wonder,
Consider all the worlds thy hands hath made.
I see the stars... How Great thou Art!”*

The Psalm turns from the glory of the heavens to the lowliness of man. We come into this world as “babes and sucklings,” and in our strength we clean mess halls. David asked,

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?” The words “visitest him” mean that God cares for us and attends to us. (Compare this with the use of this word in James 1:27). Then David sings of how God made man a little lower than the angels, crowned him with glory and honor, and gave him dominion over the works of his hands.

Man has glory and honor because he is made “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26-28). He is more than living dust; he is also a living spirit. Think of that next time you glory in the stars, and remember, when the largest, the brightest, and the last of the most distant of all these burn out, that you will live on and on..., and in awesome wonder.

Words from this Psalm are found four times in the New Testament, and every time in the context of Christ. In Matthew 21:15-16 the children are gathered around Jesus in the temple and crying “Hosanna to the Son of David,” to the displeasure of the chief priests and scribes. They said to Jesus, “Hearest thou what these say?” And Jesus saith unto them, “Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

The 8th Psalm is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8. Then in the next verse (Heb. 2:9) the writer says, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Both 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 and Ephesians 1:20-23 tell us again that “he hath put all things under his feet.” The Psalm tells us of man and the son of man (lower case), but the Spirit’s own application is to the Son of Man (upper case) who is the Son of God. In Jesus, God became as man, lowly, and triumphed over all to his glory. Paul tells us that we can be “joint-heirs with Christ” and be “glorified together” with him (Rom. 8:17). John follows up and says, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). That makes me want to sing:

*“When I think, that God his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.
Then sings my soul... How Great Thou Art!”*

647 Finger Bluff Rd.
Morrison, TN 37357
wmhbody@aol.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

Carl O. Cooper	\$300
Naomi Snyder	\$50
Joe W. Nichols	\$100
L.F. & N.J. Robinson	\$25
Charles & Nancy Verkist	\$50
Charles & Joann Clauson	\$50
Larry Milam	\$100
Anonymous	\$25
Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN	\$100
Anonymous	\$150
Baker C/C, Baker, FL	\$25
Jean Ware	\$25
Virginia Boles	\$10
Ed Waggoner	\$100
Southern Hills C/C, Custer, SD	\$500
Anonymous	\$75
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$25
Baker C/C, Baker, FL	\$25
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$50
Anonymous	\$25
Zion C/C, Cookeville, TN	\$25
Jean Ware	\$25
C/C Walling, Walling, TN	\$200
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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** – seektheoldpaths.com

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