

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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WHY I LEFT THE INSTRUMENTAL CHURCH OF CHRIST

Larry Harrington

The Instrumental Church is so bent on getting larger numbers that they have run contests, held entertainment and anything else to that end.

First, let me say that I appreciate the fact that the instrumental Church of Christ taught me to study the Bible and to do just what God tells me to do in His Word. Because of their teaching, I left the Baptist church (of which I was a member for ten years) and was baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins. When I left the Baptist church, I left because they were teaching false doctrines made by man and claiming they were in the word of God. I just wanted to be a Christian and do the will of God as commanded by Christ my Savior. Even if I did not believe what the Baptist Church taught, I was condoning what they taught just by being a member. It was the same with the instrumental Church of Christ. I do not accept the man-made doctrines they are teaching, therefore I could no longer be a member of their congregations.

The first reason for leaving the instrumental church of Christ is that their members, preachers and Bible College professors have a lack of reverence and respect for the authority of God's word. There are those who teach the Bible (God's holy word) has doctrinal errors. It is also taught and believed that you can be a member of the Lord's body regardless of why you were immersed, that preachers rule the congregation and not the elders and that it is all right to have women preachers, elders and deacons. To

refute this, see I Timothy 3:1-13 and I Peter 5:1-4. The concept of premillennialism is taught even though the Bible teaches that the Lord's church is his kingdom (see Dan. 2:44; Luke 1:32-33, 10:9, 24:49; Mark 9:1).

There are some teaching that the Gospel (recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) is not binding on us as Christians because Jesus taught during the Mosaic dispensation. They say this nullified what Jesus taught concerning marriage in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. However, the Gospel is binding on us today. How would we (the church) settle personal grievances if the Gospel is not binding (Matt. 18:15-18)? Isn't the "golden rule" found in Matthew 7:12 binding? Don't we baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19-20?

When major decisions were to be made, they were made by majority vote (the Baptists do it that way). Yet, according to the Bible, the elders make these decisions.

It seems like in every Christian Church (Church of Christ Instrumental) congregation that I ever preached, the organist, choir director, choir, etc. caused trouble, division and craved the praise and glory instead of giving it to God. Ephesians 5:19 tells us that all Christians are to sing and give God praise and glory. There is no record of the church at Jerusalem or Ephesus having choirs

or an organist.

Christmas and Easter as well as other national holidays were and are celebrated as religious festivals. Galatians 4:10 forbids such as a religious practice.

We were taught that we were to be separated from religious error and yet we were encouraged to participate in ministerial alliances, etc.

As far as mechanical musical instrumentation in worship is concerned, there is no authority for it. There is no record of it ever being in a worship service in the first century church. It was brought into the church in the last half of the 1800s and caused division in the Lord's church because it was not authorized in God's Word. The Bible teaches that we are to have nothing to do with anything or anyone that causes division in the Lord's church. Christians are only commanded to sing in the worship service.

But I say once again, the main reason for leaving the Christian Church (Instrumental Church of Christ) is their disrespect and loose attitude toward the authority of God's Word. The Instrumental Church is so bent on getting larger numbers that they have run contests, held entertainment and anything else to that end. They have gone so far that preachers are afraid

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Why I Left...



Editorial...

DENYING BAPTISM IN THE LORD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Denominationalism denies water baptism with a vengeance. In their minds, one thing is certain, water baptism has absolutely NO connection with forgiveness of sins and consequently, salvation. Therefore, they reject it and make bold claims that it is one of the most damnable doctrines the Devil ever conceived.

The Lord's people on the other hand, simply accept what the Bible says on the subject (and all other subjects) whether we like the results or not. We strive hard to not glorify one subject more than another. We believe in "rightly dividing the word" (II Tim. 2:15); i.e., accepting all that the Bible says and recognizing the harmony between all subjects. There is NO WAY to deny what the Bible teaches about water baptism and still be right with God.

Notice these plain, simple and understandable verses.

Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Acts 22:16, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Romans 6:3-6, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve

sin."

Romans 6:17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." The doctrine they obeyed was baptism (vs.3-6).

I Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

Colossians 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

I Peter 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Jesus said that those who do not obey Him do not go to heaven (Matt. 7:21). He also said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46). John 15:14 makes clear that a friend of Jesus will keep His commandments.

Water baptism is "FOR the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). The word "for" means "in order to," "in order to receive." However, many in denominationalism say the word "for" means "because of." They say one is baptized "because of" the remission of sins. A parallel to the phrase, "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 is found in Matthew 26:28 where it is said that Jesus shed his blood "for the remission of sins." That is, Jesus died in order for men to receive remission of sins. He did not die because men have already received remission of sins. The clear and obvious conclusion is this, if baptism is "because of" remission of sins in Acts 2:38, then Jesus shed his blood "because of" remission of sins in Matthew 26:28! The two phrases are identical in both English and Greek. A person needs help to misun-

derstand these verses! And, sadly, there are many to provide such help because they hate what the Bible says about baptism with a vengeance. Their minds are made up and nothing on earth or in heaven will convince them otherwise.

Without the remission (forgiveness) of sins, there is no salvation because it is one's sins that causes a person to be lost (cf. Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:1-2). Whatever the Bible says is FOR the remission of sins, is essential to salvation. Jesus shed his blood for the remission of sins; therefore, the blood of Jesus is essential for salvation. Water baptism is for the remission of sins; therefore, water baptism is essential for salvation. Without it, there is no salvation.

John the Immerser preached baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Jesus, likewise, preached the same and actually baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1). Jesus commanded the apostles to go into all the world and baptize those who believed (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19-20). This is exactly what they did, beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38,41,47) and continuing throughout their life. They taught all other disciples to do the same (Matt. 28:20). Therefore, the same practice, for the same purpose, continues to this day.

Salvation is IN Christ (II Tim. 2:10). Since salvation is IN Christ, an obvious question is this, HOW does one get into Christ? Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 give the answer. Baptism is both HOW and WHEN one gets into Christ. No other verses give us this information. Faith alone does not put one INTO Christ.

EVERY TIME you find baptism and anything said about salvation, salvation ALWAYS follows baptism. Salvation never comes before water baptism!

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized IN ORDER TO flee from the wrath to come (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7).

John's baptism was FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

Jesus said "he that believeth AND is baptized SHALL BE SAVED" (Mark 16:16).

In Acts 2:38, we read of baptism, and when it is done, one receives the remission (forgiveness) of sins.

In Acts 2:41, we read of baptism, and then by that act, one is added to the church. The church is the saved (Eph. 5:23).

In Acts 8:36-39, we read of baptism, and then afterwards, one rejoices at being saved.

In Acts 22:16, we read of baptism, and at that moment, one's sins are washed away.

In Romans 6:3, we read of baptism and through that act, one is put INTO Christ (where salvation is).

In Romans 6:4, we read of baptism and through that act, one is put INTO the death of Christ.

In Romans 6:4, we read of baptism and at that moment, one begins to walk (live) a new life.

In Romans 6:6, we read of baptism and at that moment, one's sins are destroyed.

In Romans 6:6, we read of baptism and afterwards, one no longer serves sin.

In Romans 6:7,11, we read of

baptism and through that act, one becomes dead to sins.

In Romans 6:8,11, we read of baptism, and through that act, one becomes a servant of Jesus.

In Romans 6:13, we read of baptism, and at that moment, one is made alive from spiritual death. Those once dead in sins are now alive unto the Lord.

In Romans 6:14, we read of baptism, and afterwards, one no longer allows sin to have dominion over them.

In Romans 6:17-18, we read of baptism, and at that moment, one is made free from their sins.

In Galatians 3:27, we read of baptism, and through that act, one puts on Christ (where salvation is).

In Colossians 2:12, we read of baptism, and at that moment, God performs an operation to remove one's sins.

In Colossians 2:12-13, we read of baptism, and at that moment, one

receives the forgiveness of all their trespasses (sins).

In I Peter 3:21, we read of baptism, and through that act, one is saved.

To deny baptism is to reject its teaching, purpose and design. To deny baptism is to reject the counsel of God (Luke 7:30). Will you be like those in John 12:42-43 who reject the command of God?

Are we over emphasizing baptism? No. Do we put our trust in baptism? No. Our trust is in the Lord AND what he teaches us. We discuss the subject so much because men deny its purpose in God's plan of salvation. It is not more important than the rest of the plan of salvation, nor is it any less important. It is not more important than faith, nor is it any less important than faith. It just happens to be the exact moment one is transformed from being lost to being saved.

THE DEMANDS GO WITH THE BIBLE

Marvin L. Weir

Many homes have yet to give up the Bible. It has its place on a certain table or shelf, and it is in no danger of being carted off to the half-price bookstore. The Bible will survive in a multitude of homes and perhaps even be passed down from generation to generation.

Now, the **demands** the Bible makes are a different matter! Many folks buried the demands of the Bible long ago, and they have no intention of resurrecting them. When one gives serious thought to the matter it doesn't make much sense. What does one have left when all the **demands** have been stripped from the Bible?

The demands go with the Bible. Removing the demands from the Bible is reminiscent of those who sought to separate Christ from His church. One does not have the option of Christ without the church or the Bible without its demands.

One demand the Bible makes that is so frequently ignored is that it be believed. A geometry book or a grammar book is designed to be believed. These books are

worthless to the unbeliever. One reads these books in vain unless he chooses to put into practice the examples and instructions that lie therein.

Paul reminds the Roman brethren, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Bible is of no value to one who does not believe it is God's divine pattern for man. Will a person trust his feelings or will he believe the Bible? A person may say, "I just feel that I am saved and that I will go to Heaven when I die." This person has not been "baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 12:12), but he "feels" that he is saved. He reads his Bible but he does not believe it. If he did, he would yield to the Bible's **demand** to be immersed for the remission of his sins.

The Bible reveals the attitude one should possess toward the Scriptures: "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). The writer of Hebrews says, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

Another demand the Bible makes is that it be obeyed! If a student does not believe the geometry book he probably will fail the course. A failure to obey the geometry book's instructions will not help his GPA, but it will not cost him his soul. A failure to obey the Bible will doom one to eternal torment. However, the Bible is of no value to one who chooses to disobey its teaching.

Multitudes claim to love the Lord while adamantly refusing to obey the teaching of the Bible. Such actions caused Jesus to say, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Peter makes it clear that we purify our souls in "obeying the truth" (I Peter 1:22). The admonition from

James is to “*be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (James 1:22).

So many today **feel** they do not have to **obey** the teaching of the Bible if it **contradicts** their man-made creeds. Millions become members of and attend the “**church of their choice**” while refusing to obey the Bible command to “*worship in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). The truth of the matter is that the Bible teaches that the Lord promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), and thus there is but **one body** (Eph. 4:4). The Bible does not teach that one **joins** a church of his own choosing, but the Bible does declare that the Lord **adds** those who obey the Gospel to **His church** (Acts 2:47).

Faith without obedient action is dead (James 2:1-26). To sing “Give Me The Bible” while refusing the demands of the Bible is hypocrisy.

Friends and brethren, the **demands** come with the Bible. Please consider this truth as you read from the Holy Book. If you truly love the Lord and respect the Bible, you will gladly submit to the demands contained in the inspired Scriptures.

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Why I Left...

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to preach the truth boldly like the apostle Paul condemning sin, and the congregations are afraid to hear the truth because it may step on their toes.

My prayer is that my erring friends will see their mistakes before it is everlastingly too late.

This article was written from my own personal experience as well as information from an article written by Clarence Lavender and a tape of a message presented at the Fourth Annual Virginia Bible lectures by Timothy Nichols. I'm very thankful for these two men and many more like them who have left the Christian Church (Church of Christ Instrumental) to become ministers of the truth that is contained in God's Word.

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ZEAL AND KNOWLEDGE

Douglas Hoff

Paul's words about his countrymen contain a sobering warning about having a proper zeal based on the knowledge of God's will. “*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*” (Rom. 10:1-4).

In the previous chapter, Paul expressed great sorrow that his fellow Jews were lost (Rom. 9:1-5). They once had been God's people and considered themselves right in His sight. John wrote of Jesus that “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Because they had rejected the Savior, God had rejected them (Rom. 11:14,15). Thus Paul desired that they might be saved.

Why were they lost? Was it because they did not believe in God? Hardly. The apostle acknowledged their zeal but said it was misdirected. Their problem was a failure to accept God's will. A study of the book of Acts and other New Testament epistles reveals that many first century Jews wanted to hold on to the law of Moses. Many thought that zealous adherence to the law would guarantee a right standing with God.

Paul learned that nothing could be farther from the truth. As he declared in the letter to the Galatians, “for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21). To be saved by observing the law, a person would have to keep it perfectly. That is, he would have to do all that God had commanded and refrain from everything that was prohibited. The only man who did this was Jesus. Paul described the rest of humanity when he wrote, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). Christ's perfect life enabled him to be

the sin offering for everyone else. His sacrificial death satisfied God's justice. As a result, the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:13,14). The only way for a person to be saved and thus be right in God's sight is through faith in Christ's death (Rom. 9:30-33). Salvation cannot be obtained through the old law. This is what the Jews had to accept. Some did (Acts 6:7) while most did not (Acts 13:45-47).

What lessons can we learn from Romans 9 and 10? First, *zeal without knowledge will keep souls lost in sin*. Zeal is good as long as it is used to accomplish the right objective. Scripture teaches us to be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14). Sadly, some folks are zealous for evil (Micah 2:1). False apostles in Paul's day were fervently promoting a false Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; II Cor. 11:13). Christians need to discern the Lord's will (Eph. 5:17) and then submit to it. Paul declared the Gospel to the Jews of old but they refused to accept it. Read the words of warning Paul uttered upon their stubborn refusal (Acts 28:24-27).

Second, *knowledge without zeal will also leave souls lost in sin*. Knowledge is a good thing as long it is put into practice. God's blessing comes to those who *hear AND do* the word (James 1:22-25). Sadly, some Christians know the right doctrine but do little or nothing with it. This is like the one talent man who buried the Lord's money in the ground (Matt. 25:24-27). This man was condemned because he did not use for the Lord what had been given to him. Members of the church are called to serve the Lord by teaching the Gospel to lost souls. If they do not hear and obey it they will remain lost.

Some have no zeal about their religion. Others have very little working of the Bible. These conditions put members of the church in jeopardy of losing their souls. What is needed is knowledge of God's will coupled with zealous obedience.

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IS GOD AN “INDIAN GIVER?”

Roger Scully

Since obedience to God is man’s responsibility (cf. Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12), it logically follows that if he fails to continue to submit to God’s will, then by his own will he has rejected God and forfeited the hope he once had (cf. Titus 1:2). This is so because salvation is only extended to those who obey God (Heb. 5:8,9), hence those who fail to obey God are lost. Despite this fact, however, there is a strong denominational teaching known as *Perseverance of the Saints*, otherwise called *Once Saved Always Saved*. This Calvinistic teaching says that the saved can never be lost because God is immutable (unchanging). One writer has even said that the church of Christ teaches God to be an “Indian Giver.” Since there are millions of adherents to this doctrine, it has become worthy of our time and consideration.

In the first place, God is not an “Indian Giver.” Man is the one who forfeits his contract with God. Should a person purchase a car through the bank, then he is in a contract with the bank to pay a certain amount each month back to the bank in order to possess and in order to continue to possess, the car. Now, the ownership of the car is, in reality, that of the bank, not the person purchasing the car. Thus, the person’s ownership is only his “in hope,” until the final payment is made. Now, should he break his contract by ceasing his payments, the car will be taken by the bank (the rightful owner). Is the bank an “Indian Giver?” Most certainly not, the person purchasing the car has forfeited his right to the car when he breached his contract. So it is with salvation.

The Bible teaches that man is saved “by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8), when he complies with God’s terms of salvation (Heb. 5:9). These terms include *believing* Jesus to be the Son of God (John 8:24), *repenting* of past sins (Acts 17:30), *confessing faith* in Christ (Rom. 10:10) and being *baptized* in water (Acts 2:38). Once these things are done, the per-

son who has complied has entered into a covenant relationship with God, a covenant that has conditions (I Cor. 15:58). Thus, the Bible says that man has the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2). Romans 8:24 explains that “*hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?*” In other words: If I actually have something in my hand, then I do not need to hope I have it, for I see it — I have it. Salvation is in hope — not reality. The reality will be the day in which the kingdom is handed to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). Until then, we are saved by hope, thus the ever-present possibility of forfeiture. For this cause Paul wrote, “*If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained...but I follow after, if that I may apprehend? I count not myself to have apprehended...reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:11-14). Paul realized that should he fail to remain faithful to God, then he would forfeit the hope of eternal life.

Indeed, God is immutable (unchanging). Malachi 3:6 says, “*For I am the Lord, I change not,*” and I Corinthians 1:9 says, “*God is faithful.*” So, if a person can be saved by God, then considered as lost by God, is God really immutable? We say yes! This is why: God will absolutely save the righteous (those who obey Him) and will absolutely condemn the wicked (those who refuse to submit to His will). Now, once a person becomes righteous, by rendering obedience to God, God saves him. However, should that person cease to be righteous, then he has returned to a state of wickedness, and will be condemned by God. Who has changed? Has God changed? No, for God will always save the righteous and will always condemn the wicked (cf. Nah. 1:3; II Peter 2:9). Has man changed? Yes. God remains immutable. Read Jonah 2:10.

Let us now note some specific

passages which teach man’s salvation as conditional. The first to which we call attention is Colossians 1:21 and 23, which says, “*yet now hath he reconciled...if ye continue in the faith...and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...*” Notice carefully that those under consideration were once “alienated and enemies” (v.21), yet have been “reconciled.” However, their reconciliation was dependant on them continuing in the faith and being “not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” The force of this admonition is seen in the word “if.” “If” is translated from a word which is a condition of the first class. Thus remaining reconciled to God is **conditional**.

Now look at James 5:16-20. James, we know, was writing to Christians, for he uses the term “brethren” fifteen times in the book. In the text to which we call attention he wrote, “*confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much...brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*” Does this not clearly teach the possibility of apostasy? Indeed, it does. “But wait”, says the denominationalist, “a person who truly falls away was never truly saved to begin with.” Notice these terms: “err from the truth” (James 5:19), “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4), “so soon removed” (Gal. 1:6). In order for one to “err from,” “fall(en) from,” and be “remove(ed)” from, they have to first be there, for it is impossible to remove from a place where a person has never been. I cannot get out of my chair if I was never seated in my chair to start with.

Let us now look to II Peter 2:20-22. Here we read of some “escaping the pollutions of the world.” These are then described as being “again entangled therein and overcome.”

They are again entangled because they left it, but have returned to it. Peter illustrates their condition with this proverb: “the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” The dog was cleansed of that which made him sick by vomiting it out of his system, yet returned again to that which made him sick in the beginning. The sow was cleansed by being removed from the filth and washed, yet has gone back to being filthy. This illustrates Christians who have been cleansed from the sickening filth of the world, but who have returned to it again, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

There is an even an example of such taking place in Scripture. In Acts 8:5 we are told, “Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ unto them.” In verse 12 it is recorded that the people to whom he preached “believed” and “were baptized.” Verse 13 says “Simon himself believed also,” and “he was baptized.” Because the gift of the Spirit could only be given by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, Peter and John went to Samaria to impart spiritual gifts (vs.14-18). “When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” (v.18). This, we learn from Peter’s response, was sin (v.20). Peter then called on Simon to “repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (vs.22,23). Now, no doubt he was saved, for he had complied with God’s terms of salvation. Yet now, because of his iniquity, he is lost. Thus we have an actual biblical example of one falling away. (One should also read Revelation 2:4,5, 14-16, 20-23; 3:3, 15-19).

Sin is a transgression of the law (I John 3:4). Even the Christian can, and often does, sin (I John 1:8-10). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The only conclusion that can be logically drawn is that when a Christian sins he is worthy of death, unless he repents.

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DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR!

Roger D. Campbell

Satan spoke a lie when he told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, rdc; Gen. 3:4). Not everything that even the first human couple heard was on the up and up. They should have learned at an early time in their existence that, no, not everything you hear in this world is true. We all are aware of this fact, yet for whatever reasons, sometimes we gullibly swallow untruths that others present to us. In some areas of life this may not bring about monumental consequences, but being deceived in the spiritual or moral realm is devastating.

Does not the New Testament repeatedly tell Christians, “Be not deceived,” or something very similar? Indeed, it does (I Cor. 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; James 1:16,22,26). Two truths stand out in such a statement of warning from God. First, it is possible to be deceived. Second, each one of us is personally responsible for seeing to it that we are not deceived. What that means is, if we are deceived, though those that deceive us must also give account of their wrongdoing, we are ultimately the ones at fault for allowing ourselves to be deceived. Remember, it is God’s direct command: “Be not deceived.”

Don’t believe everything you hear in the religious realm. In all seriousness, when it comes to religious teaching, we would be foolish if we believed every religious message that we ever heard. For a moment, let us step outside of the arena of religion. Is three plus four equal to six? If one math teacher says, “Yes,” but a second one says, “No,” would you believe both answers are correct? Of course not. If we refuse to accept absurdities in secular matters, why do so many people accept obviously contradictory answers in the realm of spiritual affairs?

You can turn on the TV and listen to three consecutive religious broadcasts that give three totally dif-

ferent answers to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” You can listen to two consecutive programs on the radio that give the exact opposite answer to the question, “Is it scriptural for women to preach to an audience that includes men?” A person could get on the internet and view two web sites that give the exact opposite answer to the question, “Is it scriptural to worship Mary, the mother of Jesus?”

False prophets and false teachers abound. Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets,” did He not (Matt. 7:15)? Indeed, He did. So do not believe everything you hear in the religious realm. Come to think of it, did not God say something about that? Listen to I John 4:1: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Bottom line: don’t believe everything you hear in religion.

Don’t believe everything you hear on the news. Not long after Ronald Reagan became president, he was shot. Some news agencies reported that he had been killed by the shot. The report, as it turns out, was false. Just because a professional reporter tells it to millions of viewers or readers, that does not guarantee that in every instance it will be 100% true.

In many cases news agencies just pass along the information they receive. Some time ago it was reported on the national radio news that a former employee of a TV network had sued someone because she had been forced to sit through some planning sessions in which vulgar language was frequently used. Some court shot down her case, saying that in some situations it is necessary to use foul language! “Necessary” to use vulgarity to express ourselves? That is what the court ruled, and the news reported it. The court’s statement was ludicrous! The Lord God said, “Let no corrupt communication pro-

ceed out of your mouth” (Eph. 4:29). So many people have become so hardened to sin that using the language of the gutter does not cause them any sense of shame (Jer. 6:15). We must not waver in our commitment to speak and uphold only wholesome language! Others may try to portray us as “having a hangup,” but we must keep our speech pure and encourage others to accept God’s revelation about how to use the tongue.

Young people, **don’t believe everything you hear in the classroom at school.** Yes, be respectful to your teachers and to their right to express their views, but do not swallow everything they say just because they earned a college degree. So-called science textbooks are filled with references to evolution being a proven fact. No, no, no, evolution is not a fact, but rather an unproven and unprovable t-h-e-o-r-y. It contradicts the fact that living things come only from living things. It contradicts the fact that living things can only produce living things of the same nature as themselves (and not some different kind of critter). And, it contradicts the fact that the Lord God created this world in six days (Exodus 20:11; Gen. 1:1).

Don’t believe everything you hear in a gathering of friends. Some friends are as honest and trustworthy as your own grandma, while others will sell you down the river without batting an eye, just like Judas betrayed our Lord (Psalm 41:9). Some friends probably do not mean any harm by it, but they just seem to be very skilled at blowing things all out of proportion and spreading false rumors. All of us need to check things out carefully before we begin spreading to others information that has been passed to us. Better to hear the whole matter before we rush to conclusions and participate in telling things that are not true (Prov. 18:13). Reputations, reliability, and trustworthiness are at stake, both for ourselves and for others.

Don’t believe everything you hear via e-mail or on the internet. Many kids growing up today never lived in the B.E. days — Before E-mail days. The use of computers to search out information and send letters is still mind boggling to those of

us from the old school. The internet and e-mail are simply tools. In and of themselves, they are neither righteous nor evil. It all depends on how we use them. Deceptive advertisements about various products abound on the internet. As far as e-mail goes, there always seems to be a huge amount of scams that make the rounds. Before hitting the “Forward” button to send messages on to others, we would be advised to first check them out. I can think of a couple of cases where great harm was done by sincere people failing to investigate a matter before broadcasting it far and wide as if it were a fact. Consider “the Golden Rule” (Matt. 7:12) before sending out false and/or potentially harmful information.

Don’t believe everything you hear about sister congregations. Tragically, some of the most ridiculous things that are spoken are told by members of the church about other local churches. “I don’t know if it’s true or not, but I heard that over at congregation X they have kind of gotten out in left field and are having women lead prayers now.” Upon further investigation [“investigation,” that is a key word here!], you might find out that, yes, in their ladies Bible classes a sister leads prayer every time. That certainly does not violate the instruction for males to lead prayers (I Tim. 2:8). At one time a rumor was going around that at the congregation where I have been a member for nearly the past seven years, the elders stand at the door to prevent any females from entering the building if they are wearing pants. It simply is not true. When rumors swirl about sister churches in the Lord, do not believe everything you hear. Accept only that which can be put to the test and proven.

Each of us needs to use common sense when we consider what others have to say. We need to seriously analyze what is said before we accept it as being truthful. In the spiritual realm, let us all strive to be like the Bereans of old who “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Don’t believe everything you hear.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

[NOTE: We've had some inquires concerning STOP and *Seek The Old Paths*. They are one and the same. S.T.O.P. is simply an abbreviation. Also, we would like to ask our readers to send us 'news clips' and other information to help inform us of what is going on in the brotherhood, especially regarding false doctrine being taught and/or unscriptural

practices. Please send documentation of these things.] "I get a copy from a relative once in a while and really enjoy the sound teaching, so would like to receive it" ...**Betty Chafin, Bluefield, WV**. "We hope the work there is going well. We are always glad to get STOP and wish there were more papers like this. We are very concerned about the condition of the world as it affects the church. We appreciate the articles in STOP very much. This thing about seeking to merge with the Christian Church will never work. Jeff Walling seems to be active in this. I warned the elders about him a long time ago because he always spake at Winterfest where our young people attend. It didn't do any good for they continue to go. You find this condition in many churches. Continue in the faith and our prayers are with you" ...**Harold Wood, Puducach, KY**. "Thank you for a great newsletter. God bless you in this work with STOP" ...**Ron Shandor, Death Valley, CA**. "Keep up the great work you're doing. We appreciate you very much" ...**Marlin Kilpatrick, Fruitland, FL**. "We have moved. Please note new address so that we may continue receiving your paper which I enjoy very much. Thank you" ...**Fern Land, Montgomery, LA**. "I would like to request your monthly *Seek The Old Paths* for my sister, mother and myself. We enjoy the sound doctrine (truth) presented in these publications. Thank you and God bless you greatly in your efforts and defending the truth" ...**Dianna Hoda, Gulfport, MS**. "I have never had the opportunity to meet you but I certainly appreciate your STOP efforts. I hope the enclosed contribution will help with this endeavor" ...**Dan Huffines, Gainesboro, TN**. "I have enjoyed reading STOP for a number of years. It is the best paper I have ever read. It goes right by the Bible, the truth that makes men free" ...**Dale Stovall, Imboden, AR**. "Please keep up the good work. God bless you" ...**Hester Riffe, Suffolk, VA**. "I have seen/read an issue of *Seek The Old Paths* and appreciate the sound doctrine in it. Thank you for your good work with this excellent publication" ...**Clark Sims, Northport, AL**. "This contribution is to help publish your very sound paper. I am a graduate of the old Memphis School of Preaching, 1975. I remember brother Jimmy Bates very well and thought highly of him. You have excellent articles. We are acquainted with brother and sister Chuck and Nancy Verkist of Ellensburg, WA. Faithful Christians are very rare in the Northwest, either mostly 'anti' extremes or semi liberal or outright liberal with no apologies. We covet your prayers" ...**Bill & Kay Williams, East Wenatchee, WA**. "Thank you so much for this wonderful publication. Your hard work is appreciated very much" ...**Tara Dale, Attalla, AL**. "Please remove my name and address from your mailing list. Thanks" ...**Lloyd Harris, Richmond, KY**. "I listen to the radio broadcasts daily. There is nothing else like it. Thanks and God bless" ...**Albert Foley**. [NOTE: You can hear the Gospel preached 24/7 at www.pioneerpreaches.com or www.wsoj.net]. "Thank you so much" ...**Sandra Cullen, Grand Haven, MI**. "Thank you" ...**Jimmy Bagwell, Flushing, MI**. "The article 'God's Plan for Religious Unity' by Jimmy Bates in the August 2006 issue is a excellent article. Some follow-up articles making specific applications to the present fracturing of brotherhood unity would be very beneficial at this crucial time. Continue to Seek the Old Paths and Contend For The Faith" ...**Denny Durigan**. "We enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths* so much. Thank you so much" ...**Shirley Hutcherson, MO**. "I would like to have STOP sent to a friend of mine. Thanks" ...**Billy Curry, Russell Springs, KY**. "I enjoy receiving STOP. God bless your efforts for good" ...**Richard Kirkland, Russellville, AR**. "Dear Friends, I have enjoyed receiving *Seek the Old Paths*, but my reading time has become limited. Therefore, would you kindly remove my name from your subscription list. Thank you" ...**William E. Cochran, River Edge, NJ**. "Thank you for your excellent publication" ...**Guy Grove, Leesburg, FL**. "The Old Paths of September 2006 article on *Water Baptism and Works* is such a complete article on Salvation, so plain and simple. I want a number of them to give to ones I know who need this explained to them. Some are seeking but some people don't know how to explain and this says it so plain" ...**Lillian Harrison, Gallipolis, OH**. "When I receive the paper, I start on the front

page and read every word of it through the back" ...**Lupton City, TN**. "Thank you for September 2006, *Water Baptism and Works*. Accurate, brief, clear! Wish I'd said that" ...**Al Sowins, Bishop, TX**. "I received my STOP September 2006 issue today. *Thank you so much*. We travel far as a family to attend a doctrinally sound church of Christ here on the coast. Standing by and up for truth and finding the reverence and honor due to God is slipping fast in the assemblies today. We must always be searching the Scriptures and abiding by God's written word without looking to the right or left. Thank you greatly for your continued efforts through these edifying articles grounded purely in truth. God never fails all who seek His face diligently with all their heart. We pray for your labor through these papers and the hands they reach. May God bless you" ...**Dianna Hobbs, Gulfport, MS**. "I am the minister here at the Louisville church of Christ in Louisville, Mississippi. We receive STOP. I want to say to you it is one of the best publications in the brotherhood. Just keep up the good work. I read where so many changes are going on in the Lord's church. It's a terrible shame what is happening" ...**Joe Arnold, Louisville, MS**. "Enclosed is a check to help defray publication costs of STOP. Please continue to help expose the errors of today so prevalent in the Lord's church. We will be held accountable if we fail to hold up the banner of truth. May God above give us boldness. STOP has been coming to our home for a long period of time and we appreciate it. Thank you kindly" ...**Delma Whisenhunt, Idabel, OK**. "Thank you for sending *Seek The Old Paths* each month" ...**Church of Christ, Rockford, IL**. "I love *Seek The Old Paths* and so look forward to receiving it. May God bless you in the work you do. You're doing a wonderful work. God bless you. Thank you very much" ...**Bettye Zumbrun, Deltona, FL**. "Thank you so much" ...**Park Street Church of Christ, Metropolis, IL**. "I was given one of your publications and enjoyed the good sound teaching very much. I would like to be put on your mailing list. Thanks. May the Lord continue to bless your efforts" ...**Alvin Reeves, Dublin, TX**.

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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