

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 19, No. 10

October 2008

DAVID LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY AND THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

Wayne Jackson

The Christian Scholars Conference (CSC) convened in June, 2008, on the campus of David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. With support from several sister schools, e.g., **Pepperdine University, Abilene Christian University, Oklahoma Christian University, and Harding University**, it was the twenty-eighth annual gathering of some of the most radically liberal, self-designated "scholars" on the planet. There were dozens of presentations (all of which were characterized as "high quality" productions), delivered by both men and women, representing sixty-eight colleges and universities, along with twenty-four additional institutions.

The conference was a heterogeneous blend of sectarian personalities (all of whom were identified as "Christian"), combined with a conglomerate of digressives who have surrendered virtually every vestige of interest in the restoration of New Testament religion. "Restorationism" is not merely ignored, it is **repudiated** emphatically.

The CSC platform affirms that it *"is dedicated to the virtue of diversity which expands world-views, fosters collegiality, demonstrates the highest quality of scholarship, and provides opportunity for all Christian scholars."*

The sacred Scriptures enjoin unity; the emerging anti-restorationists applaud diversity. The lineup

demonstrated how very far from New Testament teaching this aggregation of "elitists" has strayed.

One of the most startling participants was former Abilene Christian University student, **Jared Cramer**. Cramer is currently affiliated with the Anglican (Episcopal) movement (working toward priesthood). On his blog the "Reverend Cramer" (as he likes to designate himself) emphatically declares he has abandoned the ideal of "restorationism."

I don't believe in Restorationism or Primitivism. I just don't. It's not Biblical, there's no call to it. I don't care two bits if today's church looks like the first century church, and I don't think God does (*Becoming Quicksand*). (www.jaredcramer.com/?p=3D297)

The most stunning thing, however, was the topic for which Mr. Cramer contended, with the obvious tolerance of the CSC screening committee and/or those affiliated with this program. According to an abstract that appeared on the Lipscomb University website, the author's presentation was titled *"One New Humanity: Reconsidering Homosexuality in Light of the Ecclesiology of Ephesians."* The abstract states:

Paul's letter to the Eph-

esians presents an ecclesiology founded on unity in Christ rooted in the fullness of God. Ephesians builds on the fundamental truth that in Christ, God has broken down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles and is creating one new humanity in place of the two. After examining the ecclesiology of Ephesians, this paper engages in a case study on the place of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) Christians in the Episcopal Church. Perhaps a deeper understanding of Paul's message in Ephesians can lead to a renewed perspective on the issues facing Christians today.

This may represent an all-time historical low as an approach to Paul's Ephesian letter.

The material submitted to the CSC (with only a slight alteration to accommodate a transition to the newer CSC format) is a regurgitation of Cramer's previously published views. His position was set forth in an article titled *Homosexuality: But Why?* (www.jaredcramer.com/?p=3D583)

It was submitted in a more

(Continued on page 75)

David Lipscomb University...



Editorial...

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ON SALVATION #2

Several passages have been set forth by “faith only” advocates in an effort to refute what the Bible teaches concerning faith and obedience. They suppose these passages support their man-made doctrine of “faith only” or “faith alone.” We take in hand a brief examination of these passages as was set forth in a letter we received some months ago. The following was written in answer to this letter.

John 6:35, “*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*”

The word “faith” or “believeth” is used for everything that is necessary in obeying Jesus. It sums up one’s total involvement in being saved. To tie the word “only” or “alone” to it, is adding to God’s word. Faith in Jesus is essential to salvation, but nothing is said in this verse about “faith alone.” Where do you read that in the verse? Multiple verses are offered to support and defend the man-made doctrine of “faith alone,” but not a one of them says anything about “faith alone.” These verses make clear that “faith” is essential in being saved, but they say nothing about “faith only.”

If you are going to teach “faith only”, then why don’t you give the verse that says it? You and I both know such a verse is not in the Bible. The only time you find the words “faith only” in the Bible is in James 2:24 and it has the word NOT in front of it. What would God have to say to get you to believe that salvation is NOT BY FAITH ONLY? God plainly says it, but you don’t believe it. You insist the Bible teaches “faith alone,” but won’t give the verse that says so.

John 6:40, “*And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last*

day.”

This verse demands belief and connects it to everlasting life, but it does not say “believe only.” That is man-made doctrine — the devil’s doctrine. The Bible certainly teaches salvation by faith, but not by faith only. All Bible believers accept that faith is essential to being saved, but where does the Bible say one is saved by “faith only?” Please list the verse.

John 6:47, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*”

One must believe on Jesus to have everlasting life, but nothing is said about believe only. The word “only” or “alone” is added by man and; therefore, stands condemned by God. The word “believeth” is used to include ALL that is involved in man’s response.

John 7:38-39, “*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*”

This verse says nothing about “believe only.” That is man-made. It’s not in the verse. Those who keep on believing on Jesus, AS THE SCRIPTURE HATH SAID, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. I’ve never seen rivers of living water come out of one’s belly, nor has anyone else. The phrase “rivers of living water” is a figure of speech, where one thing is said but something else is intended. In this case, the phrase indicates salvation. All should understand that.

But notice that Jesus said that one will only experience salvation if he DOES what the Scripture says. The Scripture nowhere says anything about “faith only” except in James 2:17,24 and there it makes it

clear that salvation is NOT BY FAITH ONLY.

John 11:25-26, “*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*”

This is all true, but where does it say “believeth only.” Notice that it says “liveth.” That is, one keeps on living, obeying, the Lord. This is a living, active, obedient, faith. “Faith only” is a dead, lifeless, inert faith. Of course, this verse says nothing about “faith only,” making it so that a person will never die.

John 20:31, “*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*”

This is true. I don’t know anyone who denies any of these verses. But, this verse makes it clear that life through his name comes only to those who keep on believing through his name. When one keeps on believing, he keeps on obeying, only then is there life in his name. “Faith only” is not found in this verse. “Faith only” won’t bring life through his name. “Faith only” keeps people from ever enjoying life through his name. “Faith only” is a tragedy to mankind. It nullifies the Lord’s suffering and death on the old rugged cross. It prevents one from ever being raised with the Lord (in baptism) to walk a newness of life (Rom. 6:3-6). “Faith only” keeps people in their sins (James 2:24).

Acts 10:43, “*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*”

This verse is so true. What a comfort it is to know that Jesus cares and that we can have forgiveness by believing in him. But, this verse doesn’t say anything about “believing only.” This verse says “believeth.” That is, one who keeps on believing. It is a faith that performs, acts, obeys. It is a living faith. “Faith only” is a dead faith. It does not perform, act, obey. One will never receive remission of sins by “faith only.”

Acts 11:17, “*Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as [he did] unto us, who **believed** on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*”

Those at the household of Cornelius believed on the Lord. As a result, they did not claim “faith only.” They gladly submitted to being baptized and therefore received remission of sins (Acts 10:48; 2:38). Had

they believed only, they would not have been saved. Where does it say they “believed only?” It’s not there. Over and over again throughout the New Testament, belief, faith, is used to indicate one’s obedience to the Lord’s commands. Faith sums up all that one must do to become a Christian and live a Christian life to be able to go to heaven someday. To “rightly divide the word of truth” (II

Tim. 2:15), makes it necessary that we take ALL the Bible says on a subject and reason to a logical conclusion. “Faith only” is a dead, devilish doctrine. No one has ever been saved by it nor will anyone ever be saved by it. This verse certainly does not teach otherwise.

—*More to follow next month*

David Lipscomb University...

(Continued from page 73)

extensive format as a thesis written while at **Abilene Christian University** and presented to Dr. James W. Thompson, November 28, 2006 (see the thesis at www.jaredcramer.com/wp-content/paulineecclesiology.pdf). The CSC submission (June 27, 2008) is virtually a carbon copy of his ACU thesis. It can hardly be claimed, therefore, that his position caught CSC officials by surprise.

Cramer contends that his defense of homosexuality is a response to an increasing number of questions he has received regarding his position on this subject. Incredibly, the author asserts that any discussion of homosexuality “is shallow until a person actually engages in an actual relationship with a person of a different sexual orientation.”

The main proposition the author attempts to argue is that there is nothing “wrong about a faithful, loving, monogamous same-sex relationship.” He says, “I fail to see what it is about homosexuality that declares it as inherently evil” (*Homosexuality: But Why?* www.jaredcramer.com/?p=3D583). He contends that Paul’s “oneness ecclesiology” in the Ephesian epistle applies to gays and straights just as it did to Jews and Gentiles!

If this is so, the apostle contradicted his earlier instruction in both 1 Corinthians (6:9), Romans (1:26-27), and his later letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:10).

This brief review is not designed as a comprehensive rebuttal of the author’s superficial treatment of the Scripture texts that condemn homosexual conduct. He dismisses the biblical data with a cavalier wave of the hand and his personal assertion that

some of the scriptural condemnations are “conditioned by time and culture;” thus they are not relevant to today’s gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered phenomenon. Other texts, he maintains, address “abuses” rather than loving homosexual liaisons.

The following questions are appropriate:

How does a “scholar” determine it is “wrong” if: (a) a homosexual relationship is breached by “unfaithfulness”; (b) is flawed when lacking “love” and is solely a matter of lust; or, (c) is unwarranted if it is polygamous instead of monogamous? How does one deduce that fidelity, lovingness, and monogamy are to be preferred over their opposites?

Might someone not contend that Bible teaching about faithfulness, love, and monogamy likewise are culturally flexible, and thus promiscuity, lust, and multiple sex-partners are permissible? These sexually inclusive attitudes and actions are common in numerous “cultures” within certain segments of the modern world.

One of Cramer’s arguments in defense of homosexual relationships (as he ideally depicts them) is that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and the transgendered frequently bear “all the fruits of the Spirit” (cf. Gal. 5:22-23), hence such must be evidence of their approval by God. He contends that “the holiness seen in the lives of these Christians has stood in ‘stark contrast with many sinful patterns of sexuality’ (e.g., promiscuity, prostitution, incest, pornography, pedophilia, predatory sexual behavior, etc.)” (“One New Humanity”). The “logic” is unbelievable.

What is to be said regarding the atheist who loves his wife, is joyful in his occupational employment, and is peaceable with his next-door neighbor? Do these qualities demonstrate

that he enjoys the approval of the very God he denies?

What possible justification could David Lipscomb University and its affiliates have for arranging and/or supporting a program that embraces a defense of this debauched level of moral irresponsibility?

What a disservice to the godly memory of the founder of this school! If this does not awaken a somewhat lethargic brotherhood to the gross level of corruption within a number of our universities, could **anything** bring us to a state of reality?

*Article taken from
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| Berea C/C, McMinnville, TN..... | \$100 |
| Jackson Street C/C, Alexandria, LA..... | \$100 |
| Chuck & Nancy Verkist..... | \$25 |
| Phillippi C/C, Tompkinsville, KY..... | \$200 |
| Lonnie Dawson..... | \$25 |
| Charles Maxwell..... | \$5 |
| Saks C/C, Anniston, AL..... | \$50 |
| Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN..... | \$50 |
| Berea C/C, Rives, TN..... | \$100 |
| Anonymous..... | \$200 |
| Anonymous..... | \$250 |
| Ruby York..... | \$180 |
| Baker C/C, Baker, FL..... | \$25 |
| Billy R. Darnell..... | \$25 |
| Beginning Balance..... | \$13,111.55 |
| Contributions..... | \$1,565.00 |
| Debits | |
| Postage..... | \$1,610.80 |
| Paper..... | \$2,481.00 |
| Supplies..... | \$104.17 |
| Ending Balance..... | \$10,480.58 |

THOSE THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD

Roger D. Campbell

In the New Testament, we read of individuals who were in “deep poverty” (II Cor. 8:2). We also read about those people who were “very rich” (Luke 18:23). While the term “middle-class” is not used in the Bible, we would imagine that a number of Bible characters whose financial standing is not specified in the Scriptures, were somewhere in between the status of being “very rich” and living in “deep poverty.”

We recognize that the expressions “rich people” and “poor people” must be understood in the context of the folks with whom they are being compared. One who is counted as a rich person in the States, just might be considered a poor man if he were to move to Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, a family that has a household income that ranks in the bottom 5% of the households in a more wealthy country, might be seen as rich by those who live in a poverty-stricken, undeveloped nation.

Many of us who do not count ourselves as being in the category of “the rich,” will have to admit that we do have an enormous amount of material blessings. Yes, we have much, much more than we actually need in order to survive. We would, then, be “rich,” would we not? For the purpose of this study, we want to examine a portion of the message that the Holy Spirit instructed Timothy to give to rich people. It is recorded in 1 Timothy 6:17-19; “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*”

When we break down these verses, we see in them some “Do’s” and “Don’ts” for rich people. Let us look at them one by one.

1. Do NOT be highminded (haughty) (v.17). Having a lot of money or an abundance of material possessions does not make one a better quality person. Riches, or a lack of

them, have nothing to do with a person’s character. And, yet, many of the world’s wealthy are in love with themselves and eaten up with arrogance as they look down their snobby noses at others. Satan has convinced multitudes of people that if they can just become rich, then they will be somebody. Friends, the way to “be somebody” has everything to do with being washed by the blood of the Lamb and having our names written in His book of life, while being “somebody” has nothing to do with how much money a person has!

2. Do NOT trust in uncertain riches (v.17). There is such a thing as being spiritually rich (Rev. 2:9), but here in 1 Timothy 6, the obvious reference is to material riches. Notice how the Bible describes such — “uncertain riches.” What makes them “uncertain?” The fact that there is no guarantee that they will still be in our possession even an hour from now! A rich fool of a farmer said to himself, “*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*” (Luke 12:19). What a shocker it must have been to him to hear the Lord tell him, “*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided*” (Luke 12:20)? Since money and material blessings are in the “now-you-have-them, now-you-don’t” category, they are uncertain, indeed.

3. DO trust in the living God (v.17). The Bible’s message is plain: “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding*” (Prov. 3:5). Every person of every economic status needs to learn to say the following words with an honest heart: “*O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust*” (Psalm 7:1). Sadly, riches are the god before which many bow, but there is only one living God Who is worthy of our devotion. God is a refuge, strength, and hope for those that trust in Him (Psalm 46:1). Money, on the other hand, will never serve as a refuge or shelter which can somehow save a person from every problem in life, including sin. “*Nei-*

ther their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’S wrath” (Zeph. 1:18).

4. DO remember the source of your riches (v.17). The text says, “*...God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*” Yes, “all things” are from the Lord. How much money do I have? Regardless of my answer, I must never forget that every single portion of it came from God. He is the Giver of life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:25).

5. DO “do good” (v.18). One motive that a child of God should have in making money is to be able to use it “to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). That same Book of Ephesians reminds us that Christians are created in the Christ “unto good works” (2:10). Yes, the Lord wants His people to be “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). While almost everyone has opportunity to show compassion and render assistance to those that are lacking in material things, those that are rich are especially blessed with the prospect of being able to do more than others simply due to the fact of their abundance.

6. DO “be rich in good works” (v.18). They should not dabble in helping others just to make themselves feel good about themselves or to avoid the feeling of guilt. Rather, those that are blessed with material riches are to abound in good works. What a blessing those people who love to give can be to a community and a congregation of God’s people.

7. DO be ready to distribute (give) **and willing to communicate** (share) (v.18). Here we see the mentality the rich need to manifest in the matter of doing good works — not unprepared and forced into it, but “ready” and “willing.” Would this principal not hold true for all Christians? And, would it not apply to the mind-set of those in a congregation who make decisions about the help the church supplies for those that stand in need?

8. DO store up for yourselves a good foundation for the time to come (v.19). The Master said it this

way, *“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matt. 6:20,21). The only way to be ready to live where there is no need for material possessions of any type (which is heaven), is to recognize Jesus as the one foundation (I Cor. 3:11), then serve Him as Lord by doing His will (Luke 6:46). Yes, a wise man builds his house/life on the Lord Jesus (Matt. 7:24-27).

9. Do NOT lose sight of what is most important (v.19). You have probably seen it happen. Perhaps it has even happened in your own life. What am I talking about? A person can get so caught up in the possession of riches (and making more!) that he/she loses sight of what really matters in life, which is living in such a way that we can obtain eternal life. The Holy Spirit’s message to rich

people is for them to “get it right” with their riches in order that they can “lay hold on eternal life” (v.19). When our heart is more concentrated on money matters than it is on eternal life, we are in trouble, big trouble! Many saints of God who were once faithful in His service have self-destructed due to *“the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches”* (Mark 4:19).

It is not money itself, nor the possession of it, that is the root of all kinds of evil. Rather, it is “the love of money” that has the distinction of being called the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10). A further point that needs to be made from our text in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is this: God’s charge to the rich is not for them to become poor, but rather for them to maintain a proper attitude toward their money and to be generous in their use of it for good works. There is no message in the Bible that says a person will be condemned for being rich. Instead,

the rich are given warnings, exhortations, and instructions about the proper use of their funds and possessions.

The message we have considered from 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is a sobering one, not just for “the filthy rich,” but for each one of us. May the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” we have studied about material riches be ever clear in our minds. Let us all be grateful for the greatest riches of all — those spiritual blessings that we enjoy in the Son of God (Eph. 1:3). And, would we not do well to imitate the attitude the apostle Paul expressed? Speaking of his outlook, both past and present, he wrote, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”* (Phil. 3:7). Many of our generation would exclaim, *“To me, to live is money.”* Not so for the apostle to the Gentiles. Hear him: *“For to me to live is Christ...”* (Phil. 1:21).

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BAPTISM: THE TRANSITIONAL STEP

Marlin Kilpatrick

The subject of baptism has for many years been one of great controversy. This controversy is not the fault of the Scriptures. The fault is on the part of those people who do not want to accept what the Bible so plainly teaches. It amazes me to see how so many people who claim to believe the Bible, and who will accept what the Bible says on other subjects, will reject what the Scriptures teach about baptism. One reason for such rejection might be a failure to recognize that a transition occurs when one is baptized for the remission of his sins. A transitional step always takes place when the sinner obeys the Gospel of Christ. Since the Old Testament was “...written for our learning...” (Rom. 15:4), the Israelites serve as an example from which we can learn a lesson about making a transition.

When Moses led God’s people out of Egyptian bondage, Pharaoh’s army followed in pursuit until they came to the Red Sea. The Israelites were afraid they were about to be overtaken (Exodus 14:9,10). The Bible says, *“And Moses said unto the people, Fear*

ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord...” (Exodus 14:13). The Israelites’ salvation was their physical deliverance through the Red Sea. The Israelites made a transition from Egyptian bondage when they passed through the waters of the Sea. It was only when they were on the other side were they able to sing the song of deliverance (Exodus 15). This “transitional step” is referred to by the apostle Paul when he wrote, *“And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”* (I Cor. 10:2).

Today, when one is baptized for the remission of his sins, he makes a transition from his sinful past into Jesus Christ, where he is cleansed by the blood of Christ and *“raised to walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:3,4; Rev. 1:5). When the sinner is baptized his is *“...delivered from the power of darkness, and hath been translated into the kingdom of his dear Son...”* (Col. 1:13). The key word is “into,” a preposition indicative of a forward movement. When the sinner is baptized for the remission of his sins, he makes a transition by putting off the

“old man” (his sinful past, MK) and putting on the “new man” (Christ, MK). (See Col. 3:9,10; Gal.3:27).

Have YOU taken that “transitional step” into Jesus Christ? When one is baptized for the remission of his sins, he enters into the body of Christ which is the church of our Lord (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23). Since salvation is in Christ (II Tim. 2:10) and the only way into Christ is in the transition (baptism) into him, it is imperative that we obey Him today. Tomorrow may not come!

Friend, churches of Christ stand ready to assist you in your obedience to the Gospel. If you **believe** Jesus Christ is God’s Son (John 8:24), and have **repented** of your sins (Acts 17:30), won’t you **confess** your faith in Christ (Acts 8:36,37) and then take that transitional step into Christ by being **baptized** for the forgiveness of your sins? Do so today! You may not have another tomorrow.

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TRUE BRANCHES OF CHRIST

Marvin L. Weir

The fifteenth chapter of John portrays Christ as the true vine and individual Christians as the branches. One who obeys the Gospel is a branch in Christ. Man-made denominations are not the branches spoken of by John as is made clear in verse five. The disciples who are followers of Christ are the branches under discussion. Each child of God has the responsibility to produce fruit as a branch in the kingdom.

Denominations teach that these “branches” are different “churches” in a futile attempt to justify denominationalism. The context, however, will not allow such an erroneous interpretation. It is individual people under consideration and not different religious groups. Man-made religious bodies are desperate to find New Testament Scripture to back up their existence but they will search in vain. There is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4), and one does not mean many!

Only those who obey the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) are branches “in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17). One puts on Christ in the act of baptism (Gal. 3:27). A penitent believer who obeys the Gospel plan of salvation is “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3) and “raised” to walk “in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

One who does not bear fruit is not maturing in Christ. The apostle Paul identifies the fruit that every child of God is to produce as being “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, [and] self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). The Christian who is bearing fruit for the Master will continue to mature as Peter demonstrates in saying, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (II Peter 1:5-7). A Christian will also strive to teach others the Gospel in planting and watering as the opportunity arises (I Cor. 3:6).

When the Word of God is proclaimed, the seed of the kingdom is

sown (Luke 8:11). The Gospel is still to this very day God’s power to save souls from sin (Rom. 1:16). No one has ever been saved by the wisdom of man (cf. I Cor. 1:20-25), and this truth strikes a deathblow to all the gimmicks that are employed today by religious shysters to draw a crowd. A true follower of Christ who is bearing fruit for the Lord will preach the Word and be content to let God give the increase.

The Word of God has the ability to clean and make pure. The apostle Peter says to brethren, “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (I Peter 1:22-23).

It has already been noted that a person puts on Christ at the point of immersion into Christ (Gal. 3:27). One who is **in** Christ must choose to continue to **abide in** Christ (John 15:4). If one fails to “walk in the light as he is in the light” (I John 1:7) or “goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” (II John 9), he does not “abide in the vine” (John 15:4) and **cannot** bear fruit. Many today pretend to be “branches” while refusing to do the Lord’s will. Jesus notes this truth in saying, “*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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:21-23).

May we submit to the Master’s commands so that we will not hear Him say at the judgment, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)? John 15:6 says, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is*

withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” This makes it clear that Jesus is speaking of individuals and not “churches.” One is obligated to remain in the vine. Whatever is required to do he must do or be purged from the vine. This shows that man can apostatize and lose his soul.

Different fruit does not come from the same vine. Religious division is contrary to Jesus’ prayer (John 17:20-21). All “branches” in Christ are to produce the same fruit. In other words, each Christian is to “speak the same thing...that there be no divisions...be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Cor. 1:10).

One cannot claim to **follow** Christ while refusing to obey His commands. A true branch of Christ abides in His Word and enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son and all others who are content to abide in the teaching of Christ. May we strive to be true branches of Christ!

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On The Brink Of Disaster

Which will it be? The **way that leads away from God** or the **way that leads away from God**? Everyone has their own ideas about social issues (which make no difference one way or the other). But Biblical issues do not fit into that category. What the Bible says makes all the difference in the world — the difference between heaven and hell. Unless the citizens of this land and its governing officials turn from their present course, destruction will be the final outcome. God declares, “*righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Prov. 14:34; 11:11). As Christians, our job is to pray and work to promote righteousness; not lend a hand to hasten our own destruction. It’s far past time to get our mind set on things ABOVE, not on things of this world (Col. 3:2). In which direction are YOU pushing this county, toward God or away from God?

"MAY I SPEAK TO THE PASTOR?"

Roger Scully

Almost daily I receive a phone call which goes something like this: "Hello, Morgan City church of Christ." "Hi, my name is ___ and I am wondering if I may speak to the pastor?" Surely I am not the only one who receives such a call. This question is a manifestation of a false denominational teaching which has plagued our world for years. It is the teaching that the man who "preaches" is the "pastor." This concept is not unique to denominations, however, for many of our brethren have the same concept, which is revealed in a two-fold manner: (1) thinking that the preacher is the boss, and (2) actually thinking like those of the denominational world that the preacher really is the pastor. Despite the thinking of many, the Bible teaches something much to the contrary. We now call attention to what the Bible teaches concerning *pastors*.

The Bible does, in fact, describe an office of work in which men *pastor*. This same office is recognized as being the work of *elders*, who are also referred to as *bishops*. Though these three terms describe the same office of work, they are used to show different aspects of the work. The term *elder* is descriptive of one who is older or aged, thus has experience. *Bishop* refers to the actual work of seeing that things get done, and done properly. *Pastor* refers to the tending process involved in the work, which is expressive of seeing to it that Christians are being edified. Let us now look more closely at how these terms are used to describe the same office of work.

The first section of Scripture to which we call attention, wherein all three terms are used, is Acts 20:17-28. It is said that Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church" (v.17). Notice closely who he called — the elders. The term is translated from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which means one of age, one with experience. As one continues through the context he will notice that once these men (the elders) "were come to him" that Paul "said unto them" (v.18). Paul continues to speak to them through verse 35. In

verse 28 Paul says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves," to whom is he speaking? In view of the context he is speaking to the "elders" of "the church." He continues, "and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers..."

The Greek word translated "overseers" is *episkopos*, which means a man who is charged with seeing that things are done and that they are done correctly. This same word is translated "bishop" in 1 Timothy 3:1,2 and Titus 1:7. Paul is speaking to the elders, but now tells them that they are bishops. Paul uses similar language in Titus 1:5,7 when he said, "...and ordain elders in every church...for a bishop must be..." Again, Paul is speaking of elders, but then calls them bishops. Is this double talk? No, for Paul understands, and is explaining, that elders and bishops are, in fact, the same individuals.

Now, back to Acts 20:28. After addressing the elders, calling them bishops, Paul says they are "...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The term feed is a verb in English. It is translated from the Greek verb *poimaino*, which means to rule or govern, to tend, to feed. The noun form of this word is *poimne*, which means one who rules or governs, one who tends (feeds). The word is translated "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11 (the only time the term pastor is used in the New Testament).

The next section of Scripture, 1 Peter 5:1,2, uses all three terms. Verse one says, "The elders which are among you..." The term "elder" is translated from the word *presbuteros*. Peter continues in verse two by saying to the elders, "feed the flock of God which is among you..." "Feed" is translated from the term *poimaino*, meaning to pastor. Finally, he says, "taking the oversight..." From what word is "oversight" translated? It is the verb *episkopeo*, which is the verb form of *episkopos*, meaning the act of seeing that things get done.

We have one section of Scripture

describing one office of work and using three terms: elders, bishops and pastors. What conclusions can we draw from this? Elders, bishops and pastors are the same. These are different terms used to describe the same office of work, each term showing a different aspect of the work.

Next we ask: Who can serve as an elder, bishop or pastor? Despite popular belief, the preacher is not necessarily one who is a part of this work, though he can be. A preacher can be an elder, but not all elders are preachers, though they are to be "apt to teach." The Bible sets forth, in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9, the qualifications a man must meet in order to serve in the capacity of an elder/bishop/pastor.

Included among the qualifications is a man who is married, having believing children. Also included in these qualifications is the fact that there must be more than one man serving in this office at a time. There must be two or more, but no less than two. The words elders, bishops and pastors, always appear in the plural, never the singular. Even though the word elder (singular) appears in 1 Peter 5:1, it is obvious that he is one of a group. For example: "sent it to the elders" (Acts 11:30); "and when they had ordained elders in every church" (Acts 14:23); "go up to the apostles and elders" (Acts 15:2); "let the elders that rule well" (I Tim. 5:17); "ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5); "the elders" (I Peter 5:1). The only time the word *pastors* is used in the New Testament it is plural. So, then, a man serving in this role must meet these qualifications, and must be joined by at least one other man, in a local church, who also meets these qualifications. These men are identified as elders, bishops and pastors.

Let us do away with this denominational misrepresentation of biblical terminology. Let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"For many years I have received 10 copies of *Seek The Old Paths* each month. I have given them to neighbors, people in nursing homes and other friends and have enjoyed the many rewards of many discussions and opened doors that the publication has produced. Thank you!!!! I now wish to cancel my subscription.

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"ENTER NOT INTO THE PATH OF THE WICKED" There is not much in this world that is so baffling as random and senseless violence. We recently learned of a gang of youth on the West coast who broke into a high priced home, not to steal, but to vandalize. The house was "trashed" (as per the news report). Walls were kicked in, furniture destroyed, fixtures and appliances ripped from the wall and cabinets. Indeed, these things cause the sensible and sane to marvel at the extent men will go when under the control and power of Satan. The Proverb writer has given us some insight into the "mind set" of such wicked individuals that we would be wise to note. "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall" (Prov. 4:16). Adam Clarke had these interesting comments rela-

tive to this verse: "The night is their time for spoil and depredation. And they must gain some booty, before they go to rest. I grant also that there may be some of so malevolent a disposition, that they cannot be easy unless they can injure others, and are put to excessive pain when they perceive any man in prosperity, or receiving a kindness" (page 712, Commentary on Proverbs). One can scarcely imagine such depths of depravity, but inspiration tells us that men CAN arrive at such a state, and experience teaches us that an ever increasing number ARE DOING SO! There are two or three truths which we must not miss here. First, one can become just as zealous for evil as he can for good. To be sure, it is a progressive thing, but it is possible nonetheless. One does not become wicked and vile overnight, nor is he born that way. Sin is progressive for the simple reason that it does not satisfy the deep needs of the soul. Second, one can become so steeped in sin that wickedness is his very nourishment. Verse 17 tells us that such individuals "eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence." Depravity has reached such a point in their lives that they feed on those things that are wicked. Third, the best way to avoid such a state of depravity is to avoid the path that leads thereto. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (v.14). Avoid the path, and you avoid where the path leads! We are told to "enter not," "avoid it," "pass not by it," "turn from it," and "pass away." Many a hardened criminal has lamented his past life with the ever familiar words, "If someone had just warned me." Well friend, someone IS warning, shouting from heaven itself, "Enter not into the path of the wicked..." Men are just not listening! —Tom Wacaster.

[From the EDITOR: Occasionally, we receive an anonymous letter with the request that it be printed. I'm sorry, but we do not print anonymous letters. We don't want to acknowledge that it was received. As a matter of fact, many times when we see there is no name on it, the letter is never even read. Why would someone be ashamed of what they have written?]

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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