



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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UNDERSTANDING GRACE #1 (A WORD STUDY)

Bill Boyd

At the graveside service of a godly woman, I heard a man say that his departed grandmother had “grown up in the churches of Christ before we discovered grace.” The way he said it you would think “the churches of Christ” were a denomination. He could not have been talking about the churches of Christ we read about in the New Testament. The apostles taught the truth about grace from the beginning. They also refuted false ideas about grace that were in circulation in their day. Perhaps this man in the graveyard was talking about the time before change-agents in the church discovered Baptist doctrines.

I have heard a lot of strange things about grace. Here are some things old and new I have either heard or read (not in any particular order): “You must keep the old law to enjoy grace,” “grace is for the circumcised,” “grace must be earned,” “there is insufficient grace for me,” “grace means you do not have to obey the gospel,” “salvation is by grace only,” “grace is unconditional,” “grace is only for the elect,” “grace is irresistible,” “you cannot fall from grace,” “grace means you are not under ANY law,” “there is no grace in the Old Testament,” “let us sin that grace may abound,” “because of grace, it does not matter what we do in worship (instrumental music and women preachers),” “because of grace, it does not matter what we believe about salva-

tion (salvation without baptism),” “because of grace, it does not matter what church we are a member of (denominations),” “because of grace, it does not matter who we marry (fornication),” “grace excuses lasciviousness,” “I can only reach so high and grace reaches the rest of the way,” “you never talk about grace.” You have likely heard some of these things yourself; and, you could probably add statements to the list. But, this is enough to demonstrate the confusion believed and taught about grace.

It is not true to say that we “never talk about grace.” However, if you hear Gospel preachers talk about obedience more than they talk about grace, then remember that is what Jesus did. When the apostles preached grace they did so in the context of obedience. Grace is God’s part, and what God does by grace is not changed by what we preach. Obedience is man’s part, and “*we persuade men*” (1 Cor. 5:11). Preaching the truth about grace can motivate men to obey the Gospel, but I do not think confusion about grace is because “the churches of Christ have been slow to discover grace.” I think it is more likely that some have not been listening, or they have dismissed what they heard because it did not suit them.

Thomas Warren used to teach that if we wanted to understand the whole truth about what the Bible teaches about a topic, then we need to find everything the Bible says about

that topic and put it together. That is a big task when it comes to a subject like grace. Nevertheless, that is what I tried to do in preparing for this series of articles. The King James Version remains the translation of my choice, and the numbers that follow are in reference to that grand old book, but for most other translations these numbers will not be far off.

In the King James Version of the New Testament, the word “grace” is found 130 times (129 of these times the word “grace” is a translation of the Greek word *charis*). The one time the English word “grace” is used where the word *charis* does not appear in the Greek text is in James 1:11, where in reference to the flower it is said, “*the grace of the fashion of it.*” Here the word “grace” is used for the word *eu-prepeia*. It is referring to its beauty.

In the Greek text the word *charis* is found 150 times. This means that twenty-one times the word *charis* is not translated “grace.” Here is a breakdown of how *charis* is translated in the New Testament: grace (129); thank, thanks, or thankworthy (8); favor (6); pleasure (2); gracious (1); benefit (1); liberality (1); joy (1); acceptable (1).

The common Sunday School definition of the word “grace” is “unmerited favor” — but it’s never translated that way. The basic meaning of the

(Continued on page 4)

Understanding Grace...



Editorial...

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SILAS #1

Garland M. Robinson

Silas is mentioned by name 17 times in the New Testament. His name appears 13 times as “Silas” (Acts 15:22,27,32,34,40; 16:19,25,29; 17:4,10,14,15; 18:5) and 4 times as “Silvanus” (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12).

It is not known whether he was married or had children. Nothing is known of his parents or background. It is supposed he was a Hellenistic Jew because his name is derived from the Latin *silva*, “wood.” It is also implied that he was a Roman citizen. When the magistrates at Philippi sought to release Paul and Silas privately from prison, Paul said, “*They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out*” (Acts 16:37).

The first mention of him is found in Acts 15:22 where he and Judas (surnamed Barsabas) are described as “*chief men among the brethren.*” Thayer describes the word “chief” as: “to lead, to go before, to be a leader, to rule, command, to have authority over, leading as respects influence” (p.276). The idea of “chief men” is “leading men” — “chosen men” (Acts 15:25).

Silas was one who was a leader. He was one upon whom much could be intrusted. There are many great lessons to be learned by this simple yet powerful commendation of Silas. This lesson draws from the statement that he was one of the “*chief men*” in the first century church. He is an example worthy of imitation.

Silas was a team player — a cooperative individual. He saw the value in coordinated efforts. He wasn’t too good to take the back seat while others took the lead. He could work with others such as *Judas* surnamed Barsabas (Acts 15:22), *Paul* (Acts 15:40), and *Timothy* (Acts 15:22; 17:14). He was part of the team. Every player worked together.

He was a supporter of good men and good works. Are you a team player? How sad it is when brethren can’t get along and work with one another.

Silas was a man interested in UNITY (the right kind of UNITY) founded on the Scriptures. We know this is so based on the fact that he carried the inspired letter from Jerusalem to Antioch. This was an effort toward unifying churches in dealing with the Gentile problem of circumcision. By carrying the letter (along with Barsabas) the Scripture was confirmed, “...*that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established*” (Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). He also endorsed Paul by traveling with him.

Much has been said and done in recent years regarding unity among certain religious groups. The various “summits” held in different places testify to this fact. There is a movement among some in the Lord’s church today to join with denominations. But it is not unity — not the kind of unity supported by Silas.

Silas was a supporter of unity based upon Scripture. The letter he carried was an inspired document from the Holy Spirit. “*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things*” (Acts 15:28). Not only did he carry this inspired letter, but he himself was an inspired prophet. “*And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them*” (Acts 15:32).

There can be no unity that is not based upon Scripture. Whatever joint participation (union) there may be among some religious groups is not Biblical unity. Let those who have strayed from the truth and care nothing for the truth, leave their innovations and additions — REPENT and come back to the truth. The word of God demands it! “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*”

(Eph. 5:11). Jesus said, “*And 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 reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God*” (John 3:19-21). Paul wrote, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Silas was a man who was a supporter of inspiration. He was chosen by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas and give witness to the letter which they carried. He would not be the kind of man that would not support it. “*It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth*” (Acts 15:25-27).

He was a supporter of the apostle Paul regarding those who questioned his apostleship. It was the Lord that appointed Paul an apostle and inspiration that revealed it. Silas was witness to his apostleship by the simple fact of traveling with him. Had Paul been an imposter, Silas would not have gone along.

In regards to the present day ecumenical movements and unity meetings, how would Silas act? Place him in today’s environment of the so-called unity meetings and there’s one thing he would keep coming back to: “What about inspiration? What about

the sacred Scriptures? What about this letter I'm carrying? What about the inspired apostle Paul? What about the other apostles? Does it not matter what they say?"

There's no way Silas would say and do what many are saying and doing today. There's no way Silas would say: "Now I realize what the Scriptures say about the Gentiles and this is what they are to do...but let's see if we can't find some way for you Jews to force your idea of circumcision (something that is unscriptural) on the Gentiles and we'll try to get along with you and have fellowship with you...there's got to be some way we can get together." Silas can't be placed into that kind of setting! He was not that kind of man!

Silas was a man willing to obey the great commission. He was mission minded and traveled extensively in his support of the Gospel. He traveled with Paul on his return to Antioch carrying the letter from the elders and apostles (Acts 15:30-32). He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36). In Berea, Silas remained behind with Timothy while Paul was sent away by the brethren for fear of his life (Acts 17:14). Arriving in Athens, Paul sends for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed (Acts 17:15-16) but apparently they did not rejoin Paul until after he had left Athens and gone to Corinth (Acts 18:1,5). There is no further mention of him by name in Paul's second missionary journey.

The great commission commands every child of God to be evangelistic — sow the seed of the kingdom. Before Jesus ascended into heaven he said, "...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20). "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38).

Silas was a man willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. He was aware that Paul and Barnabas had "...hazarded their lives for the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ" on the first journey (Acts 15:26), yet he was still willing to go and do the same. He learned exactly what suffering meant when he found himself thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and his feet made fast in the stocks (Acts 16:24). In spite of it all, he still went on preaching and teaching the blessed Gospel of freedom in Christ Jesus the Lord. They continued their journey passing through Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:1,10,16; 18:5). He was still involved in the work. He was willing to pay the price. Moses also chose "*rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Heb. 11:25).

Inspiration says, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Tim. 3:12). We are told it will come. Jesus told his disciples, "*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. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me*" (John 15:19-21). This is the way it has always been. Jesus says to rejoice in it. "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*" (Matt. 5:10-12).

The Bible's hall of faith is filled with men and women who suffered for the cause of righteousness. "*...Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder; were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of*

whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:35-38).

Jesus teaches to count the cost of discipleship. "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:26-33).

"*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). "...*Your reward [is] great in heaven*" (Luke 6:22-23). "*Jesus said...There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life*" (Mark 10:29-31).

Many other passages speak of suffering and the great reward to be obtained: Matt. 10:22-25; 23:34; John 16:1-3; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 1 Thess. 3:4 5; 1 Peter 2:20-21; 3:14; 4:12-16; 5:10; Rev. 1:9; 7:14).

**SEND US
YOUR CHANGE
OF ADDRESS**

Understanding Grace...

(Continued from page 1)

word *charis* is simply “favor.” The idea of “favor” is in the word *charis* itself. When the “unmerited” idea is coupled with it, it comes from the context. If we would focus our attention on the inherent “favor” idea in the word “grace,” rather than the often-implied “unmerited” nature of it, we would get a better appreciation of the word itself. “Grace” is not so much about our own unworthiness as it is about the nature of God, His love, His good will toward men, and the pleasure He has in favoring us.

“If I have found grace in thy sight” is a common expression in the Old Testament. Substitute the word “favor” for “grace” in your mind when you read these passages. In Genesis 19:18-19 Lot said, “Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight...” when he plead with the angels to let him escape to Zoar rather than fleeing to the mountains. In Genesis 32:5 Jacob said, “I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight” when he was sending word to his brother Esau. He was wanting his brother to look favorably upon him. In Genesis 39:4 it is said of Potiphar that “Joseph found grace in his sight,” when he looked upon him favorably. In Exodus 33:13 Moses prayed saying, “If I have found grace in thy sight,” when asking God to go with him. In Ruth 2:10, Ruth ask Boaz, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes?” And Boaz answered by telling her of the good report he had heard of her.

The first time the Greek word usually translated “grace” is used in the New Testament is Luke 1:30 where the angel said to Mary, “thou hast found favour with God.” It is the word “favour.” It is used again in Luke 2:52 where the text says, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” There were reasons that people liked Jesus, and God was pleased with him. In Acts 2:46-47 it says of those in the early church that they had “favour with all the people” — they were making a good impression. In Acts 7:9-10 it is said of Joseph that God was with him and “gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” He was an impressive young

man, and so also it says of David in Acts 7:46 that David, “found favour before God.” In these passages the word repeatedly translated “favour” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*). Thinking of the word “favour” when we read the word “grace” helps us better understand and appreciate Paul’s salutation at the beginning of all his epistles when he says “Grace be unto you,” and his benedictions at the end of every one of them when he says, “The grace of the Lord be with you.” He wanted the Lord to continue to look favorably upon them, to be pleased with them, and to continue to bless them.

This kind of good will is often demonstrated by a gift. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 Paul wrote, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.” The word translated

“liberality” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*). In 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 he wrote, “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; ²How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. ³For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; ⁴Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” Here the word usually translated “grace” is translated “gift” in verse 4.

In all these examples, the word “grace” is more of a compliment to the character of the giver, than a commentary on the worthiness of the receiver. This should help us better understand and appreciate passages like Ephesians 2:4-8: “By grace are ye saved through faith...it is the gift of God.” It is out of God’s good will toward man that he extends salvation to man.

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COURAGE

The courageous person has been admired throughout history because he is willing to stand up for something. Joshua was told, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Josh. 1:6-7). In the New Testament, the word “bold” is used as a word for courage. Paul asked for prayers to God on his behalf that he might be bold (Eph. 6:19-20). Boldness will help overcome fear (Heb. 13:6).

God gave us examples of courage that we may lean how to live. David went against the odds to defeat Goliath (1 Sam. 17:23,32,57). Joseph was strong enough to overcome sexual temptation (Gen. 39:1-13). Elijah was bold enough to stand alone against the 450 prophets of Baal, Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 18:1-40). Jesus had the courage to speak the things that needed to be said even though it upset his audience (Matt. 23:1-39).

God needs and wants men to preach the whole truth today (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:2). God wants preachers and teachers that are not afraid to speak against sin. The Bible is filled with great lessons, both positive and negative. Positive lessons are needed, but the negative are also needed (2 Tim. 4:2). God wants members of his church to study to see if their preachers and teachers are giving them the pure word of God (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:25). Far too many seek to find preachers that will make them feel good while living in sin (2 Tim. 4:3-4). God wants people with the courage to obey Him even when they learn the church in which they are members is not teaching the whole truth (Acts 19:1-18; Gal. 1:16). When preachers preach the truth some may get upset and go somewhere else to worship, but this should not prevent the truth from being preached (2 Tim. 4:2).

May God give us more courageous truth-loving people (Acts 17:11).

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Elder's COLUMN

WE NEED TO STOP JUDGING OTHER PEOPLE

Roger D. Campbell

As humans, we all have flaws (Rom. 3:23).

Jesus is the Judge through whom the Father will judge the world (Acts 17:30).

Jesus' word will judge those who reject Him and do not receive His words (John 12:48).

It was Jesus Himself Who gave the command, "Judge not" (Matt. 7:1).

How am I doing so far? Do I have the facts straight? In the preceding four paragraphs, I made a total of four statements. Each of them is true from beginning to end. Why are they true? Because they either are direct quotations from the Bible or declare what the Bible teaches.

Some take the truths set forth in those first four paragraphs and arrive at this conclusion: "No person ever should judge another person or group. If Jesus said not to judge, then we never should judge, period."

We certainly never should judge in a **hypocritical** fashion. After Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1), He went on to say, "hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (v.5). Harping on the faults of another person who fails to live up to a standard to which we ourselves are unwilling to submit, is hypocritical judgment. Jesus said not to do it.

We should never hold ourselves up as being equal in knowledge or authority with Jesus. Dealing with others as if we were the Judge who will have the final say on the Day of Judgment about their eternal destiny is presumptuous arrogance. Such an attitude must be an insult to Him Who has pre-eminence (Col. 1:18).

We should not judge **suspiciously**, supposing that we know all of the thoughts of another person's heart. It is not appropriate for us to have minds filled with suspicions, "thinking the worst" of others. Genuine love "thinks no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5).

We should not judge **rashly**. There is a need to think things through and draw conclusions only after the need-

ed information is available. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth [it], it [is] folly and shame unto him" (Prov. 18:13).

One who eats only veggies should not judge a brother who chooses not to be a veggies-only disciple, and vice versa (Rom. 14:2,3). In that context, Paul was writing about not judging in matters that are acceptable to God — matters that He receives (14:3).

So, are you convinced? Are you convinced that Jesus' followers should not judge? I am. The Bible evidence is clear: Christians should not judge. But, wait, there is more. Is there any indication that at least some form of judging is appropriate in God's sight?

After our Lord said, "Judge not," in that same context we read that He went on to tell His followers, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). If we are to beware of false prophets, does not that instruction include the thought that we must be able to tell if someone is teaching a false message? Surely it does.

The Holy Spirit charges Christians, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). If I am going to abhor and cling to the correct stuff, does that not mean that I need to be able to distinguish between what God counts as evil and good? Is that not a form of judgment on my part?

When giving instructions from the Lord about how to deal with a fornicating brother in the church, Paul asked the saints in Corinth, "Do not ye judge them that are within" (1 Cor. 5:12)? Yes, they *did* judge internal matters of the church, and doing so was not simply permissible: it was much needed and commanded.

When God charges His children to expose the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), warn the unruly (1 Thess. 5:14), have no company with disorderly members (2 Thess. 3:14), and reject a divisive person (Titus 3:10,11), each of those charges requires that you and I observe, analyze, and compare what we see or hear with God's truth, and then

draw a conclusion. We could refer to that as making a "judgment call." Just go ahead and say it: it means to "judge."

Jesus wants us to be humble, kind, and gentle. But He does not want us to cringe in fear and allow those who disregard His will to run roughshod over us. Some of those who are the most vocal in stating that no judging of any kind is ever allowed actually judge those who point out their wrong actions or teachings. In essence, it-is-never-right-to-judge-others people, judge the judgers. Does anyone see a contradiction in that?

Our Lord once told frail, uninspired humans, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). If Jesus said that it is right to judge righteous judgment, then right it is. Think about it.

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PETER WAS NOT THE FIRST POPE!

Ivie Powell

The oldest church in the world is the church of Christ.

If asked to name the oldest church in the world, many would instantly reply, “The Catholic Church.” Three possible reasons for this response are: 1) Lack of diligently searching the Scriptures, 2) Constant bombardment of Catholicism by mass-media and/or 3) They are members of the Catholic Church. Another factor that enters into this equation is a lack of militancy in exposing the errors of Catholicism.

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, very little has been written exposing the fallacies of Catholicism. Unfortunately, the prevailing attitude of many members of the church is to ignore; i.e. not expose, any and all false doctrines. This has resulted in a weak, compromising mind-set throughout the Lord’s church. Brethren need to be reminded we are “to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11) [and to] “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Toleration of error weakens the body of Christ. Weak brethren soon, if not careful, compromise truth, adjust and eventually accept that which they once opposed!

It might be very surprising for many to learn that the oldest church in the world is NOT the Catholic Church or any other denomination! The oldest church in the world is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16)! This is the one and only church Jesus said He would build (Matt. 16:18). It was established on the first Pentecost following His resurrection (Acts 2:4,41,47)!

The heart and core of Catholicism is the supposed primacy of Peter. According to Catholicism, Peter is considered superior to the other apostles and the first Pope. Note the following quote:

“The Catholic Church teaches also, that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole

church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or Bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently, to be true followers of Christ all Christians, both among the clergy and the laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, where Peter rules in the person of his successor.” (*Faith of Our Fathers*, James Cardinal Gibbons, one hundred and tenth edition, p.78).

Catholics insist that Peter was the rock/foundation of the church. Their so-called proof is Matthew 16:18, “*And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” A close examination of this verse destroys the false doctrine that Peter was the “rock” upon which Christ promised to build His church. The word translated “rock” is *petra* which means a huge ledge, massive, rock. Whereas the word “Peter” is *petros* which means a small stone or pebble. Thus, our Lord was telling Peter: Thou art *petros* (a small pebble) and upon this *petra* (massive rock) I will build my church. This *petra* upon which Christ built His church was His authority and divinity. “*Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God*” (Matt. 16:16).

Catholic scholars often state Peter’s supremacy is verified in the first twelve chapters of Acts where his name occurs 53 times. The absurdity of this argument is quickly seen in the last 16 chapters of Acts where Paul’s name is mentioned approximately 130 times and Peter’s name is referred to only twice. Does this mean Peter relinquished his supremacy to Paul?

The fact is, Peter was just one of the apostles. Simply because his name heads various lists and events in the first 12 chapters of Acts does not make Peter superior to the other

apostles any more than it makes Paul superior to the other apostles since he is the leading character in Acts chapters 13-28 and penman of the majority of the New Testament. Furthermore, one can search in vain and never find one instance where Peter was ever called Pope or spoken of above the other apostles! As pointed out by brother Ben Vick, “If Peter were the first Pope, why did he refuse to let Cornelius worship him (Acts 10:25-26)? However, the Pope today does not prohibit individuals from bowing to him. Evidently, Paul did not know Peter was the first Pope because he rebuked Peter before all because he was to be blamed (Gal. 2:11-14).” (*The Informer, Is The Catholic Church The True Church of Christ?* Ben F. Vick, July 15, 2007).

Furthermore, the Pope is not holy, nor is he my father! The Lord said, “*And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven*” (Matt. 23:9). There is no doubt that Paul is referring to the Pope when he wrote, “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*” (2 Thess. 2:4)!

The Catholic doctrine of Peter being the first Pope is without biblical support! Christ and Christ alone is the only head of the church both in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:22-23)! He alone stands between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5)!

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1 Tim. 6:14-16 tells of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. The pope does not fit this description.

GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

Marvin L. Weir

The Spirit reveals to us the Word of God and thus when we obey and follow the Word, we are being led by the Spirit. The Spirit is grieved when one through prejudice or unbelief refuses to accept His revelation.

It is indeed possible to grieve the Holy Spirit as He is not a mere influence, but a gracious and loving personality. The brethren at Ephesus were warned, “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Eph. 4:30). All of the attributes of Deity are attributed to the Holy Spirit.

The works of the Holy Spirit attest to His personality. First, the Spirit **speaks**: “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*” (1 Tim. 4:1; cf. Acts 8:29; 10:19). Second, the Spirit **witnesses** or **testifies**: “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me*” (John 15:26). Third, the Spirit **teaches** and **quickens the mind**: “*But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*” (John 14:26). Fourth, the Spirit **guides**: “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come*” (John 16:13). We do not live in the miraculously age today, but these Scriptures clearly depict the Holy Spirit as a personality.

Not only can the Holy Spirit be grieved, but He can be *lied to* and *resisted* (Acts 5:3; 7:51), *blasphemed* (Mark 12:31-32), and *despised* (Heb. 10:29). Such cannot be affirmed of a mere influence or principle! One can grieve the Holy Spirit today by:

Unholy And Profitless Speech! The apostle Paul admonished, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ... Let all bitterness, and*

wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:29,31). Communication that in no way edifies but rather has a “corrupting” influence upon the hearer must indeed grieve the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Truth can have no fellowship with frivolous and lighthearted talk regarding sacred matters.

A brochure describes one preacher as bringing “a lighthearted perspective to the gospel.” It is true that one definition of “lighthearted” can be “happy and relaxed; not weighed down with worries or troubles.” Another definition, however, and the troublesome one, is “entertaining in an amusing carefree way.” Brethren, the way the word “lighthearted” is generally understood, I take exception that one can have a “lighthearted” perspective regarding the Gospel. It would not be a compliment for one to say that I have a “lighthearted perspective” regarding sacred matters! Lighthearted about what, the church, the blood of Christ, the plan of salvation, Christian living, singing, or the Lord’s Supper? I think not!

Ignoring His Presence! It is not meant by this that the Holy Spirit is exerting some miraculous presence upon folks today. It is meant that the Holy Spirit exists, and is the giver and sustainer of Divine Revelation. One should not grieve the Spirit by ignoring or choosing to forget the revealed Word.

Rejecting His Teaching! It was by rebellion against His leading that Israel “*rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit*” (Isa. 63:10). In this chapter you have God, “the angel of his presence” (Isa. 63:9, seemingly the second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Israel had chosen to rebel against the entire Godhead!

The Spirit reveals to us the Word of God and thus when we obey and follow the Word, we are being led by the Spirit. The Spirit is grieved when

one through prejudice or unbelief refuses to accept His revelation. A question, are we grieving the Holy Spirit if we are not growing in the knowledge of God’s Word (2 Peter 3:18) and following in the Lord’s steps (1 Peter 2:21)?

Conniving at the Things God Hates! The Holy Spirit is opposed to sin in any form or fashion. All worldliness and self-seeking glory is antagonistic to the Spirit’s nature and mission. Can we be more sensitive than the Holy Spirit? If we are ashamed or afraid to rebuke what He rebukes and exalt what He exalts, then we are **not** in fellowship with the Spirit. One must never grieve the Spirit by encouraging or supporting the ungodly in their sins! A faithful child of God will “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather [will] reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11).

Mistreatment of the Children of God! Spiteful, mean-spirited, and hurtful thinking leads to spiteful, mean-spirited, and hurtful speaking! Such action grieves the Holy Spirit who is concerned with love and unity. Christ prayed for “oneness” (John 17:21), and whatever is done to hinder such, grieves the Spirit by marring the precious unity of the body of Christ. One must never allow standing firm for the truth to become an excuse for being mean, sarcastic, and spiteful. May we always be motivated to speak the “*truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15)!

Trusting In Self! How it must grieve the Spirit to see people trusting in themselves and their wisdom instead of the powerful and wise Word of God that He has revealed! It would serve many people well today to remember these words: “*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding*” (Prov. 3:5).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thank you” ...**Bobbie Wheeler, Baxter, TN.** “We receive your monthly publication *Seek The Old Paths* and really enjoy it. Thank you so much! Please accept our contribution with our admiration and thanks” ...**Jimmy White, Columbia, TN.** “I thoroughly enjoy the articles in your paper” ...**Janet Bullard, St. Elmo, IL.** “I came across your publication in the papers I bring home daily. I enjoyed reading through it. Would it be possible to receive STOP? Thank you so much” ...**June Gannaway, Ooltewah, TN.** “Thank you for sending me *Seek The Old Paths*. I truly look forward to the next issue” ...**Dixie Hart, Paris, IL.** “I get your paper and really enjoy it” ...**Reba Nell Hutchings, Sparta, TN.** “Please take us off of your publication list as well as mailing list. Thank you!” ...**Cushing, OK.** “To each one who has a part in the publishing *Seek The Old Paths* and those brethren who furnishes the truthful lessons that are very uplifting and inspiring to those of us that are trying to live and do God’s will in this age and time. So thankful to you for sending it to my family each month. Everybody needs to receive *Seek The Old Paths* in their homes. It certainly would increase their knowledge of the Scriptures. God bless and keep up the good work” ...**C. S. Hines, Florence, AL.** “I know you hear it all the time, but keep up the great work you do for the Lord. You’re doing a great job. This Christian friend ask to be put on the mailing list. He and I both worship at the Siwell Road Church of Christ in south Jackson, Mississippi” ...**Tommy Muirhead, Flora, MS.** “Please remove me from your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Timothy B. Campbell, Corinth, MS.** “Please send me three copies of *Seek The Old Paths*. One for me, one for our building and one to mail to selected others. I have a USA address to mail to in North Dakota” ...**Daryl Tucker, Estevan, SK, Canada.** “Very good articles” ...**Michael Book, Stout, OH.** “Joanne Bradshaw would like to be taken off your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Atlanta, GA.**

OH LORD WE NEED A FRIEND

Several years ago we sang a song where I was preaching. I do not have a copy of the song book nor the words to the song but here is a portion as I remember it:

This life is filled with sorrow and trouble here below. We oft are made to wonder just why it should be so. In every situation our life would come to view. Oh Lord we need a friend like you. Chorus: Oh Lord we need a friend on this weary road. We need someone to guide and share our heavy load. We need someone to love and tell us what to do. Oh Lord we need a friend like you.

That song has been on my mind for days.

In Colorado a man goes into a school and kills a teenager. In Wisconsin a teenager shoots and kills a school principal. In Pennsylvania a gunman kills five precious little girls and wounds five others. In Washington DC a congressman resigns because of immoral behavior. The words of the song, “This life is filled with sorrow and trouble here below” keep flooding my mind.

Folks, we need the Lord. We have always needed the Lord. There has always been murder (Gen. 4) and sexual immorality (Gen. 34; Rom. 1). However, it seems to me in recent years it has accelerated. Why?

Could it be because our nation has made a concerted effort to remove God from our society? If there is no God, what difference does it make? Remember the days of Noah? The Bible describes those people by saying, “*And God saw 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). When you teach people they come from animals and that there is no superior being as God, then they’ll act like what they came from. Is it any wonder that people will randomly kill — cut a baby from its mother’s womb?

There have always been and will always be wild teenagers. Could it be that their acts are more violent because they have been catered to by parents who thought it was their job to make their kids happy rather than “*bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4)? I spoke with a father recently who was telling me of his daughter’s feats in sports. Every day, every week end, they are traveling to different places. She is only ten years old. How much spiritual instruction does she receive? Have we taught our children selfishness by giving them every conceivable gadget?

“Oh Lord we need a friend like you.” We need the Lord. We must turn our hearts and lives to God (2 Chron. 7:14).

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