

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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PREDICTED DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH

Roger D. Campbell

***To depart from the faith is the same as departing from the truth.
To depart from the faith is the same as departing
from the way of the Lord. When a person leaves the Almighty,
such a one is committing spiritual suicide.***

The Bible record of I Timothy 4:1-3 states, "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 [demons, NKJV]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

1) **Who revealed this departure would take place?** "The Spirit" (v.1), meaning the Holy Spirit. What Paul writes in this passage is not his personal hunch. It is not his own forecast that is based on the conditions of his day. Rather, he spoke this message by God's Spirit. God was the source of this prediction. The fact that the Spirit has the capacity to speak makes it plain that He is not simply a force, but rather a Person with power and expression.

2) **When would the departure come about?** "In the latter times" (v.1). This refers to some point in the future after the time Paul penned I Timothy (probably mid-60s of the 1st century). Such a departure would not

take place overnight, but would come about over the course of time. Paul had earlier written to the church in Thessalonica that there would come "a falling away" (II Thess. 2:3). Prior to the time that Paul wrote I Timothy, he had told some shepherds from Ephesus, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30). By the Spirit, Peter also wrote that there would arise false teachers among the saints, and many would follow their damnable heresies (II Peter 2:1,2). The departure from the faith that eventually came about should have caught no one by surprise for numerous inspired statements about it were given to the church.

3) **What does the expression "depart from the faith" mean?** "Depart" is from the Greek word *aphistemi* which means to go away, depart, to desert, withdraw from one, to fall away, become faithless, to shun, flee from" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p.89, word no. 868). The same Greek word is used in Luke 8:13,

where we read Jesus' explanation of the stony soil in His Parable of the Sower — "...these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." While Paul requested that his thorn in the flesh might "depart" from him (II Cor. 12:8), the apostasy about which he writes in our text (I Tim. 4:1), points to actions by which people would remove themselves from the faith. What is "the faith" from which some would depart? It is the system of faith that is called the "one faith" (Eph. 4:5). It refers to the teaching of the Christ or His Gospel. To depart from the faith is the same as departing from the truth. To depart from the faith is the same as departing from the way of the Lord. When a person leaves the Almighty, such a one is committing spiritual suicide.

4) **What could possibly entice people to depart from the faith?** The Bible says that such apostates would give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils or demons (v.1). The following description fits them well: "And they shall turn away

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Predicted Departure...



Editorial...

TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are so many different words or terms in the Bible that describe those who are servants of God. Many of them are well known, such as saints (Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7) and brethren (Acts 11:29). However, many of them are not well known. One such designation is found in Isaiah 61:3. In this passage we read, *“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called **trees of righteousness**, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”*

As a Christian, have you ever thought about being called a “tree of righteousness?” That is exactly what this verse says. A strong healthy tree has its roots deep in the earth. It is one that can weather the storms. It is one that will be stronger as a result of adversity. As the Lord’s people, can’t we learn from the trees of creation?

Children of God are spoken of in Psalm 1 in the figure of a tree. *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a **tree planted by the rivers of water**, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”*

The man blessed of God is as a tree growing near an ample water supply. It does not fail to be nourished. It will grow and flourish to accomplish that for which it was cre-

ated. A Christian will do the same. He/she will grow in the Lord and seek to do that which will bring glory to God. The apostle Peter wrote by inspiration saying, *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever”* (II Peter 3:18). A Christian will grow strong in the Lord and the power of His might (cf. Eph. 6:10).

A principle of creation affirms that a tree bears fruit after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12). A peach tree bears peaches. A plum tree bears plums. An apple tree bears apples. The Lord made this principle clear when he talked about false prophets in his sermon on the mount. He said, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matt. 7:15-20).

Christians will seek to be fruitful just as a tree is fruitful. That’s the very nature of our existence. What fruits do Christians bear? Our fruits are good, holy, righteous, godly. They are as God is and desires that we be. *“Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy”* (Lev. 19:2). As *“he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”* (I Peter 1:15). *“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves...”* (Lev. 11:44).

Christians are described as a kingdom of priests. God told the children of Israel in their Exodus from Egypt, *“And ye shall be unto me a*

kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Christians today are likewise called priests. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (I Peter 2:9-10). Being priests, necessitates that we be righteous and holy. The path we follow is the way of holiness. It is spoken of as being a highway of holiness in Isaiah 35:8. We have been called unto holiness. We’ve been called out of the world and its sin and wickedness. In becoming a Christian, repentance of sins is mandatory. God *“...commandeth all men every where to repent”* (Acts 17:30). Repentance means we live a godly life. That means we have to turn away from our sins. We no longer live the way “we” want to live. We live the way God commands us to live. Jesus *“...died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”* (II Cor. 5:15).

We have many great and precious promises (cf. II Peter 1:4). Therefore, we’re told *“...to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (II Cor. 7:1). We are to cast down our imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5). This means we will *“...be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:15).

As “trees of righteousness,” we will *“...walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”* (I Thess. 2:12). *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that*

the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (I Thess. 4:3-7).

Paul told Timothy to be an example before brethren (I Tim. 4:12). This would be done *"in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."* The Gospel shows us plainly *"...that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"* (Titus 2:12).

When we realize this world will not stand forever and that we must give account of ourselves, it causes us to reflect upon the kind of people we should be *"...in all holy conversation and godliness"* (II Peter 3:11). We so live to *"...be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless"* (II Peter 3:14). Therefore, since the Lord is righteous, we strive to be like him (I John 3:7).

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their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:4). Why would fables attract them? The previous verse states, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears"* (II Tim. 4:3). Rather than give their heart to following the word of God, they would be pulled aside by false teaching. Why? It would be more pleasant to them.

5) What does the Bible say about the honesty of those that would have part in the departure? They will be *"...speaking lies in hypocrisy"* (v.2). Some people may spread lies, not knowing they are untrue statements. In this case, though, the lies would be told by hypocrites. Hypocrites are mask-wearers or actors. They put on a front. Jesus openly condemned the hypocrisy that prevailed in His time (Matt. 6:1-18; 23:2-33). Can you think of anything more disgusting than the thought of hypocritical liars using a religious message to pull others away from the faith?!

6) What would be true of the

conscience of those involved in the departure? It would be as if it were seared by a hot iron (v.2). Just as a brand on the flesh of a steer causes the steer to lose its feeling in the branded area, so a person's conscience can become totally without feeling. The term "hard-hearted" fits them well.

7) What were some of the specific false teachings that would characterize the departure from the faith? "Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats" (foods, v.3). It is a matter of historical record that in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox denominations, traditionally only single men may serve as "priests" and only single women are allowed to serve as "sisters/nuns." There might be exceptions to that policy, but that has been the standard practice of those denominations. What about the matter of forbidding people not to eat meat? Many of us remember a time when Friday meals in the cafeteria at school never included pork, beef, or chicken. Why? Because of the Catholic influence in our society and the traditional teaching of the Catholics that it is wrong to eat meat on Friday. Does that not sound a lot like what I Timothy 4:3 says about commanding to abstain from foods? Many have sincerely wondered why the meat of fish does not count as meat on Friday!

Other groups, such as Seventh Day Adventists, also teach that it is wrong to eat certain types of meat. Yes, the Bible does contain the message that the eating of pork is forbidden. That instruction, however, was given to the children of Israel (Lev. 11:1,2,7). The old law, including its dietary restrictions, was abolished when Jesus died on the cross (Eph. 2:14-16).

Paul's inspired prediction was not that "all" would depart from the faith, but rather that "some" would. It is still possible for individual saints to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4), just as it is possible today for congregations to depart from the truth (Eph. 2:4,5). How can God's people be on guard against such apostasy? By doing exactly what our text speaks of doing: "believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:3). God has the truth. It can be *known*, it can be *believed*, and it can be *obeyed*. That is the only safe

course of action for any of us to follow.

The predicted departure from the faith about which we read in I Timothy 4:1-3 should serve as a warning to all of us. May we take its message seriously, learn its valuable lessons, and determine to stick with the Book and its Giver, so that we will not be drawn away by the fables of men.

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Brad Green

Paul, writing to the Philippian brethren, sets forth a list of qualities by which the Christian's life should be patterned — *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,”* as well as any other attributes of virtue and anything worthy to be praised (Phil. 4:8). Paul concludes this statement with an exhortation — *“Think on these things.”* Paul exhorts the brethren to permeate their lives with all things that are characterized by these moral attributes. He compels them to make these virtues the object of careful attention and study, “so as to put them in practice; to think what they are; think on the obligation to observe them and to think on the influence which they would have on the world” (Barnes' Notes).

The word “think” is translated from the Greek word *legizomai* which means to make a conclusion by logical deduction; to take an inventory of; or to reckon or reason (Strong's). Paul is making an intense proclamation that Christians should and must reason through the things which he taught. He expected them to take inventory of the meanings of the words he used. He expected them to examine the evidence and make a logical conclusion based on facts.

God has always required man to use his mind, assimilate information, and make proper conclusions based on his findings. God made man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). Just as God is Spirit (John 4:24), man has a spiritual nature and the soul of man will live eternally. But also, God made man so that man could communicate and understand. God made man a being with which He, Himself, could communicate. In time past, God used holy prophets, like Isaiah, to convey His message and will to the people. *“Come now, and let us reason together; saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If*

ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa. 1:18-20).

God expected man to be able to “reason.” Israel had turned from God. God used this time to chasten His people as well as to reprove them. This process of reasoning together would have been useless and meaningless without man's mental capacity to ingest information and ability to make a rational conclusion from the information given. The people could use their past experiences to know that they had nothing without God. All blessings came from Him. They were also able to apprehend the fact that their idol worship was doing them no good; it was only angering the God who would save them. These evidences in hand, they could properly discern to either obey God and “eat of the good of the land” or rebel against God and “be devoured with the sword.” The people had to make a choice. They could not serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). The people had the mind and ability to make that choice and God required it of them.

It was customary for the apostle Paul to preach in the synagogues of the Jews. On one occasion, he *“went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ”* (Acts 17:2-3). Paul used the Old Testament scripture to set about a rational discussion concerning Jesus Christ. Paul knew his audience and their needs. He also knew they were well acquainted with the Old Testament scriptures. Paul not only offered scripture to prove his premise, he expounded upon its meaning and set forth a logical argument from those passages which proved that Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled prophecy. This discourse demanded rational and logical thinking on behalf of the audience. The audience was expected to exam-

ine the truth of God's word in correlation with the evidence, presented by Paul, about Jesus. The result, *“some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few”* (Acts 17:4). Many people made the logical conclusion that this Jesus whom Paul preached was the Christ. Their conclusion led them to believe and follow the teaching set forth by Paul and Silas.

Many, today, have totally ignored and disregarded rational thought in matters of religion. Some have mis-defined faith as merely a “leap in the dark” when God clearly defined faith as obedience based upon, and resulting from, solid facts and evidence (Heb. 11; James 2:17,24). Others have claimed that religious matters are only governed by emotion (i.e. Love). Jesus says, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). Faithful Gospel preachers preach love when they preach obedience to God's will. Though the world and liberals among us would like to make love and law mutually exclusive; they simply are not. *“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). God loved man so much that He sent His Son to die for man's sins. In return, God only requires that we submit to His will. Man can know God's will (John 8:31-32). In order for man to know God's will, which is truth (John 17:17), man must use his God-given abilities to make logical conclusions based upon deductive reasoning. Once man realizes that he is in sin and separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2), he will desire to be reconciled back to God. Reconciliation is only found in the blood of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18-22) and man can only contact the blood in Jesus' death. *“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” (Rom. 6:3-4).

The logical conclusion, then, is that in order to contact the blood of Jesus, which can reconcile man back to God, man must be baptized. The apostle Peter proclaims “*baptism doth also now save us*” (I Peter 3:21). It is not the water, alone, that saves. It is also not a meritorious act or work that will save. It is, however, acts or works of obedience to God’s

word that will save.

God has never required man to act without facts — evidence. God has never left man to his own devices (Jer. 10:23) nor in need to make a “leap in the dark.” God has always communicated His will to man in a clear fashion that can be easily understood IF one will honestly weigh the evidence and draw only such conclusion as is warranted by that evidence.

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JUDAS STOOD WITH THEM

Marlin Kilpatrick

*Even though Judas was chosen to be an apostle,
he was not immune to temptation.*

After our Lord had observed the Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord’s supper, he, along with his disciples left the upper room and went to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus took Peter, James and John and goes a little farther and began to pray (Matt. 26:36-39). Judas knew Jesus often went there with his disciples (John 18:2). While in Gethsemane, one of the most tragic scenes in the Bible takes place. Jesus’ enemies came to take him and Judas betrayed him. The apostle John records, “*And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them*” (John 18:5). Oh, how telling is this statement! Our Lord knew what Judas would do, but, on this occasion, how disappointed the rest of the disciples must have been. Contrary to what some religious folk may claim, Judas was not a devil from the beginning. Our Lord had selected him as one of his apostles. Judas had every opportunity to do the right thing, but he allowed Satan to enter his heart (Luke 22:3) and, in doing so, he “stood with them.” Brethren, where one stands speaks volumes about one’s self.

Judas stood in opposition to Jesus. Jesus said, “*He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*” (Matt. 12:30). In standing

with our Lord’s enemies, Judas fell into a lost state (cf. Acts 1:25). When brethren take their stand with denominational doctrines and practices, they depart from the way that is right and fall from God’s grace (cf. Gal. 5:4). Brethren who have brought into the worship the use of *instrumental music* are as guilty as Judas. Likewise, the partaking of *the Lord’s supper at weddings, funerals*, and other special occasions, for which there is not the least Scriptural authority, amounts to nothing more than standing with Judas. When we do so, we are in opposition to Jesus and his Word.

Why did Judas stand “with them?” Evidently he failed to recognize the importance and high honor the Lord had bestowed upon him. The apostleship, from which he fell, was a great honor and worthy of his faithfulness. While no one today is an apostle, we are, however, disciples (learners) and followers of Christ. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian brethren to follow him as he also followed Christ (I Cor. 11:1). Has it never occurred to our unfaithful brethren that their unfaithfulness shows a failure to recognize and appreciate the high honor and privilege of their having been called out of sin by the Gospel of Christ (II Thess. 2:14)?

As a result of Judas standing with our Lord’s enemies, he encouraged and strengthened the hands of the wicked (cf. Ezekiel 13:22). He betrayed the confidence of the other disciples and his true character was revealed. Sadly, he lost his soul.

Brethren, it is crucial we take our stand with Christ and his Word. Since God chose us in Christ before the world was begun (Eph. 1:4), he has the right to expect our loyalty. Even though Judas was chosen to be an apostle, he was not immune to temptation. The fact is, he succumbed to it. Judas fell for thirty pieces of silver. Such a small amount of money may not tempt many today, but the desire to be like the denominational world is very seductive and, like Israel of old, we often desire to be like our religious neighbors.

Too, lest we forget, our deeds will determine our eternal destiny (Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:12). If we take our stand with the Lord and remain faithful to him, he will stand with us in the Judgment (Rev. 2:10). May we always stand with Him, and not with “them.” Think about it.

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GOD'S RULE BOOK

Marvin L. Weir

Is it not amazing that most people will accept some rule book written by men over **the** rule book written by God? Countless millions profess to believe in God and the Bible and then they put their faith and trust into man-made creeds. It is again amazing that these people either can not or do not desire to see the error in their reasoning. The Scriptures plainly declare, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Tim. 3:16-17). It was Hosea who said, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children"* (Hosea 4:6).

People who enjoy engaging in or watching certain sporting events have absolutely no problem in comprehending the fact that there are **rules** that govern these events. After three strikes in baseball, one is declared to be "out." Do fans become upset and complain that this rule should be ignored in some cases? Surely there are circumstances where a batter can benefit from "four strikes" before returning to the dugout! In football, the team with the ball has four attempts to travel ten yards in the proper direction for a "first down." What if after four attempts the running back is within "one inch" of a first down? Does the referee say, "Because this is such an important game and you have come so close to picking up the first down, I'm going to give it to you." No, such a statement is not made because **everyone** understands that the teams must abide by the **rules** of the game.

Does one really believe in the game of baseball or football who will not abide by the rules of the game? No, not at all! They may believe in another version of the game, but they do not believe in the game as out-

lined in the rule book that governs it. Why can't people see this same truth in the spiritual realm? One does not really believe in God who refuses to accept His Word as truth on any matter.

The players on a sports team must conform to the rules that govern that sport. The rule book for a particular sport does not conform to the player's whims and wishes. The same thing is true in regard to the Bible, God's Holy Word. The Bible does not conform to the thoughts and wishes of men, but men must conform to the Word of God (cf. Rom. 12:2). One will not save his soul or incur God's blessings by refusing to live by the Holy Scriptures. Man must accept the truth that his thoughts are not God's thoughts and his ways are not God's way (Isa. 55:8).

Let us note some areas where many who profess to be followers of Christ do not abide by God's rules.

The majority of those who profess to be Christians think they were saved at the point of belief. They do not believe that baptism (immersion) is necessary for salvation. They conclude that "he that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved." The Word of God says, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16a).

The majority of people who profess Christianity believe that there are **many** different roads (ways) leading to heaven. The Word of God says, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matt. 7:13-14).

Man believes that one can **join** the church of his choice and be saved. The Word of God says, *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47).

Most churches today wear man-made names and thus honor the founder of such church. The Word of God shows that Christ's church is to

wear His name (Rom. 16:16) and honor is to be given to the Lord who purchased the church (Acts 20:28) and is its founder (Matt. 16:18).

Most people today who profess to be Christians believe and practice salvation by "faith only." The Word of God says, *"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only**"* (James 2:24, emph. MLW).

God's rule book (the Bible) states that Christ is the *"head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Eph. 1:22-23). The Bible says there is only *"one body"* (Eph. 4:4), and Christ promises to save only *"the body"* of which He is head (Eph. 5:23). One is not a Christian and cannot go to Heaven who refuses to follow God's rule book!

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THE TRUTH ON WATER BAPTISM

1) It is a BURIAL in water (Acts 8:38; Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 2:12).

2) It is for SALVATION (Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21).

3) It is for the REMISSION (FORGIVENESS) OF SINS (Acts 2:38).

4) It is for the WASHING AWAY OF SINS (Acts 22:16).

5) It is TO GET INTO CHRIST where salvation and all spiritual blessings are found (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; II Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:3).

6) It is TO GET INTO CHRIST'S DEATH where He shed His blood that washes away our sins (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Rev. 1:5).

7) It is TO GET INTO CHRIST'S ONE BODY, THE CHURCH, the place of the saved (I Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:18; Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23).

No “RIGHT” WAY

John Cotham

There always seems to be an effort on the part of some to try some new innovation not supported by the scriptures. Then, when confronted by sound brethren, they will try every way to give some “right” reason for doing a wrong thing. I recently saw this cliché on a church sign: “There is no right way to do a wrong thing.” How true! No matter how man might try to justify his innovations, there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Those who try to justify choruses or solo singers twist and distort the scriptures by trying to say there is NO scriptural support for congregational singing. Those who try to justify fellowship with the denominations argue a non-scriptural view of fellowship. Those who teach there is no law under the New Testament totally distort the context of New Testament letters like Galatians. In the end, there is no RIGHT way to justify these WRONG things. How do we know that all of these are WRONG? — Because the scriptures point out the error of each one.

Some few years ago a great effort was made to bus kids to church study periods and worship services. There is certainly nothing wrong with trying to teach children the necessity to love and serve God. However, many bussing programs began to inject other innovations that were contrary to scripture. Many began to bribe the children to attend by offering candy, gifts, and other kinds of incentives. Then, when many found themselves with so many young children disturbing the worship service, they invented something they called “children’s church.” This took the children out of the worship assembly so the adults could “enjoy” their worship. Sound brethren soon showed how erroneous it was to divide the worship assembly of God’s people. Many of the churches gave up “children’s church” because it was proven they were in error. Finally, most of the bussing programs failed for several reasons: prohibitive costs, most children had to be bribed to attend, but most of all because it involved

tremendous work on the part of brethren, and they just were not willing to continue the hard work. With the fall of the bussing programs came the end of “children’s church” — for a while.

Now, a few years later, we are beginning to see a program similar to “children’s church” in some congregations. Some now dismiss the younger children from the worship assembly so that they might attend a class (or classes) while the adults and older children remain for the worship service. When confronted about the innovation, the argument is that these classes are altogether different from “children’s church.” In other words, this is the “right” way to dismiss young children from the worship assembly. It is no matter that the approach is different, it is still wrong. Just as sound brethren argued against “children’s church,” the same scriptures forbid any kind of divided worship assembly.

Notice what the Bible says about the worship assembly. The scripture speaks of ALL the people being together, “And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; ... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of ALL the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, ALL the people stood up: ... And ALL the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground”(Neh. 8:4-6). Paul also shows how ALL the people were together for worship, “When ye come together therefore into ONE place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper” (I Cor. 11:20); and “If therefore the WHOLE church be come together into ONE place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” (I Cor. 14:23). Paul speaks of the “WHOLE” church coming together “in ONE place.” Paul was NOT speaking of all just being in the same building, but all assembled together at the same time. The Hebrew writer said we are

not to “forsake the assembling” of God’s people together (Heb. 10:25). Neither should some adults be forced to forsake the worship assembly just to be glorified “baby sitters.” And, that is what is happening!

Any dividing of the assembly is a man made innovation. It is wrong! It is wrong whether sending children to a “children’s church” or to some similar kind of class. No matter what the program, dividing the assembly is wrong, and cannot be made right. Not only are the children divided from the assembly; but the adult teachers who are caring for them are divided from and absent from the assembly while others worship.

The sad thing is that usually the very purpose for such is to “give mom a break.” Since when can mom take a break from teaching her child(ren) some of the greatest lessons they need to learn. These small children need to learn just how important worshipping God should be in their lives. They need to learn how to show the proper awe and respect for God (and fellow worshippers) while in the worship assembly. Young children need to be learning just what the worship assembly is about. They need to be taught to be quiet. Nothing is more disturbing than a child that is let cry or talk continually in the worship assembly. These are the problems some have tried to overcome with “divided assemblies.” All these things can be taught to children from the time they begin to crawl. If they can be taught to behave in a class, then they can be taught to behave in the worship assembly. If they have to be removed from the assembly, let it be to dust off their bottoms until they learn the proper behavior during worship.

All in all, the truth is: there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

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(“Brother Cotham is looking for a sound congregation with which to work. If you know of one that is available, please let him know. His contact information is in the Mailbag on the back.”)



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I commend you for *Seek The Old Paths* and appreciate you publishing some of my articles. I am currently looking for a place to preach. If you could pass this information along I would appreciate it. I am sound in the faith and have a desire to stand in the old paths" **John Cotham, 120 Stegall Rd., Shady Valley, TN 37688, Ph. (423) 739-3982, jdcotham@preferred.com.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: I recommend brother Cotham. A congregation needing a sound preacher would do well to contact him.] "I hope this finds you in good health in body, soul and spirit. I read with interest the article in the January 2006 of *Seek the Old Paths* regarding "Confronting Islam: Examining the Qur'an." I lead evangelism teams to Ghana, West Africa twice a year, and just returned from there. We had a team of four Americans partner with 28 Ghanaian evangelists and God granted us 166 baptisms and the establishment of 5 new Churches of Christ in the Central Region over a two week period. During these campaigns, it is not uncommon for me to set down and teach people of Islam about Christ. Islam in Ghana is moderate, and not like the radical fundamentalists of northern Nigeria. Therefore, open, friendly conversation is possible. It is not uncommon for us to convert people of Islam in Ghana to Christianity. I have not found it helpful to comment on their holy book. However, I have found it very helpful to ask them to question, "Who is Jesus?" From there I take them in the Scripture to Christ's birth narratives. There the Scripture establishes that Jesus is the Son of God. I have them read this and ask them to question, "Who is the father of Jesus?" If they still have difficulty with this, I take them to Christ's baptism and to his transfiguration and ask the same question again. They will reach the understanding that the Bible says Jesus is the Son of God. After we have established that Jesus is the Son of God, I ask them if they believe what the Bible says about Jesus. Inevitably, they say that since the Bible says it, they must believe it. I then take them to John 1:1-5,14. We talk about who Jesus was before he became flesh and made his dwelling among us. They are often very surprised to find out this information. I then take them to Matthew 16:13-17 to show them that Jesus is the Christ. We talk about Christ being the anointed one, and that means that he is our Prophet, High Priest and King, and that he has a Law that we must follow. I continue to ask questions to make sure they understand what Scripture is saying. I then use the birth narrative again to show that the name 'Jesus' means that he came to save us from our sins, and from here teach about the salvation that God offers us in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-4, 20-23; Isa 53:4-6; Eph 1:7). I emphasize the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and if necessary take them to the Gospel accounts to show that Jesus actually did die on the cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead on the first day of the week. I show them what Christ commands we must do to be saved (believe, repent, confess be baptized), and offer them the same invitation given to Saul in Acts 22:16, and emphasize John 14:6 were Jesus says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' I have found this approach to be effective. This allows the person of Islam not to become defensive, but to be continually open to the teaching of Scripture. It certainly doesn't result in the conversion of every person in Islam. However, I have found that just as many people who call themselves 'Christian' are uninformed about Christ's plan of salvation and his church. I have also found that people who call themselves 'Islam' are also uninformed about their own faith and about what the Bible teaches. Certainly there is a place for examining the Koran, especially when dealing with educated and highly indoctrinated followers of Islam. However, I find that this is seldom necessary or particularly effective. Brother, I know I'm not a trained preacher and that I am just a servant trying to do my Master's will (Matt 28:18-20). I certainly am not trying to tell preachers how to do their business, but only what I have found to be effective when working with the people of Islam in Ghana. Thank you again for publishing *Seek the Old Paths*" ...**Victor Vadney, Abilene, TX.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: I appreciate brother Vadney's letter. It helps emphasize what Jesus said about being 'sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' (Matt. 10:16). Different approaches and methods are needed for different people]. "I commend you for the good work you are doing with STOP. I find the articles true to the Word of God, hitting the mark on today's issues, edifying to the brotherhood and

well researched to prove their point. I am honored to have had articles published in this fine paper" ...**Jack Simons, KY.** "Thank all of you for your work with putting out STOP. I appreciate you all" ...**Name Withheld, MS.** "May God continue to bless you as you print the truth in STOP. I appreciate every copy I receive and am sending this contribution to help keep it going. Living out in far west Texas, your publication is a lifeline for those of us who need to keep informed about the liberal teachers in the brotherhood. Your publication is most valuable to me. I use information I receive in it to use in my sermons and Bible lessons. I preach for a small congregation which would today be called 'traditional.' Knowledge is power and we must keep informed of false teachers. Thanks again for the work you're doing" ...**Jerry L. Duke, El Paso, TX.** "Thank you so very much for your stand for TRUTH and your willingness to share it with others!" ...**Tammy Hudson.** "Your publication and your web site have become a major inspiration to this baptized Christian (and lifelong church of Christ member). Thank you so much" ...**MI.** "Thanks so much. STOP is a wonderful publication. We always look forward to receiving it" ...**Bob Patterson, Goldthwaithe, TX.** "It is so refreshing to read STOP and know there are those that have not turned from their first love as so many have. Please don't give up this wonderful work. Thank you so very much" ...**Ronald Shandor, Death Valley, CA.** "I enjoy it so much" ...**Jackie Bullard, St. Elmo, IL.** "Thank you so much for sending me STOP. I always look forward to it as it stays with the Bible, no man-made additions. This should be read the world over. I lost my husband of 61 years in August of 2002. I am sending a check in his memory" ...**Wilma Danielson, Wewoka, OK.** "It is always encouraging to meet those of us who are standing for righteousness and not following liberalism so prevalent in many of the Lord's church today" ...**H. Joyce Foster, Baltimore, MD.** "Your good work couldn't come at a better time. The roaring lion is at our door" ...**Doug Brazzell, Franklin, KY.**

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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