



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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PURPOSES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE CHURCH

James. W. Boyd

Someone once abbreviated the purpose for the existence of the church as being good and doing good. In this way we glorify God, which is the overall purpose for the church’s existence.

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

Anything that exists ought have some good reason for existence. When God designed the church, He had certain purposes in mind for the church and has revealed those purposes in his word. As we speak of the church, let us always remember we are talking about the church of the Bible — the one of which we read in the New Testament. We have no interest in churches of men that were originated by men and have come from the minds of men, regardless of how honest, sincere or well-intentioned those men may have been. The one church is that of Christ, of which He is the head and Savior, the only body, that which has no connection or fellowship with the confused denominational world. We emphasize this because much of the misunderstanding as to the purpose of the church stems from the denominational concept many have regarding the church.

NOT THE PURPOSE

Sometimes we learn what we need to know by seeing some things that are not true in order to contrast the truth with error. Let us first consider some areas that are not included in

the purpose for the existence of the church.

The church is not to direct the affairs of the state. The church is not a political pressure group or a political party. To be sure, there are matters of a moral nature that are sometimes decided for society by political means. Even when the church does become involved in the moral issues, it does so because of the moral and religious nature, not the political aspect of it. Romanism (Catholicism) has had the doctrine of the combination of church and state, but the New Testament keeps the two God-ordained functions separate. This does not mean that civil affairs should have the right to do anything whatsoever regardless of the religious and moral implications, but it means that the state does not govern the church and the church does not govern the state. Christians must abide by the laws of the land (Rom. 13:1-7) so long as these laws require nothing that would make one violate the law of God — the highest authority. In such a case, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But, civil government is not the role of the church.

It is not the purpose of the church to engage in and promote

recreational activities, secular education, entertainment, business operations, manufacturing, merchandising, or displacing the operations of the home. God ordained the home and government just like He did the church. While a Christian lives his life under the umbrella of Christianity, not everything of which an individual Christian can and must be involved in is a proper area of operation for the church. We must have God’s authority for what the church does (Col. 3:17). Without it, we can bring upon ourselves God’s wrath as did Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10) when they did that which the Lord commanded not.

The church must not ever just soothe people into a slumber, pretending that obstacles of life really do not exist, hiding one’s eyes from realities and the need for solutions to problems. Voltaire once said, “Religion is the opium of people.” Unfortunately, some people “get religion” and act as if the affairs of life have no significance whatever. God does not want us to become hermits and monks and withdraw from the

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Purposes For The Existence...



Editorial...

WOKE TO EVIL #2

Garland M. Robinson

Last month's issue of STOP had two articles discussing the concern of what is presently being called "woke." It's all over the news — individuals considering themselves "woke" as well as businesses and huge corporations joining in to reverse every right and decent way — all the while thinking they are "woke."

On the other hand, the New Testament speaks of being awake unto righteousness (1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:11-16). The whole idea is of being alert, attentive, mindful, observant. We are to be awake (alert) to God's way which involves being knowledgeable of both evil (wickedness) and good (right) — upholding truth and reproving error. The "woke" crowd today have reversed the concept of being alert to holiness and goodness and use it to promote every evil and wicked deed. However, they don't see it that way, but that is the truth of the matter. The Lord does not give them a pass when they misuse an otherwise good word, nor can the Lord's people just look the other way. More is said of this in the Mailbag on the back page.

Let's look at some examples in the Bible where some thought they were awake (woke) when in fact, they were the very opposite.

The **chief priests and elders** among the Jews sought desperately to destroy Jesus and took him to Pilate to be condemned to die (Matt. 27). After examining Jesus and finding no fault in him, Pilate sought to let him go. But the "woke" mob of priests and elders demanded he be crucified (v.22). Pilate asked, "why, what evil hath he done?" But they cried out the more, saying, "Let him be crucified" (v.23). Pilate saw through the rabble rousers ploy knowing "that for envy they had delivered him" (v.18). Even Pilate's wife knew Jesus was a "just man" (v.19). But the evil workers would not accept it. They were going to "destroy" Jesus no matter what. They did not care for anything about him. They would not stop until they got their

way — just like little children falling on the floor and throwing a temper tantrum kicking and squalling! They would cause enough mayhem, ruckus and disturbance until everything around them was destroyed. Their mission was not about dignity, decency and justice. It was about power and control. Jesus' righteous life and principled teaching would destroy their unjust popularity, prominence and rule. There was only one course they would pursue — get rid of him! Jesus was everything opposite they were. He was calm, peaceful, sensible. They were not. He did not march in the streets yelling, screaming, burning and destroying. They did. Matthew was inspired to write of the Lord regarding these matters: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench..." (Matt. 12:19-20). Jesus' life fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 42:2-3. His life and teaching would bring about peace with God by speaking the truth that can save men's souls. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Many jump on the bandwagon of the woke crowd not realizing the evil they are endorsing and promoting. This is condemned in Exodus 23:2, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment."

Pharaoh refused to do God's will. He was the master of Egypt and would not allow the god of Moses to challenge him. Moses appeared before him time and again delivering God's word to let the Israelites go but Pharaoh refused. Ten plagues were brought upon Egypt, but each time Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 5-14). His heart was awakened unto evil! After the tenth plague Pharaoh let them go but

then changed his mind and pursued after them. His army was drowned in the Sea and troubled the Israelites no more. If we will trust God today he will bless us. Don't put your trust in man or what man can do — trust the Lord.

Ten spies gave a discouraging and evil report after assessing the land of Canaan (Num. 13-14). God's charge to Israel was to inhabit the land but they had to first conquer the evil people in it. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, gave a favorable report of their mission, but the other ten were fearful. There are always those who refuse to obey God's word. We must not be among that number.

The New Testament is filled with individuals who would certainly fit in with the 'woke' crowd of this generation. "Of whom is **Hymenaeus** and **Alexander**; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:19-20). It is said they put away "the faith" and made shipwreck of it. This is what happens when people don't love the truth. They hate it, resist it, and do all within their power to "cancel" it. The masses love the works of darkness (1 John 5:19). The truth, however, shines its light on their evil works and exposes them for what they truly are. The Lord's people are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). We must not stand with them. We must stand against them and expose their evil practices so others won't be deceived by them.

The apostle Paul writes to Timothy: "**Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words**" (2 Tim. 4:14). He also told Timothy to "...shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is **Hymenaeus** and **Philetus**; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:16-19).

On the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas we read of "**ELY-**

mas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

Every opposition to God’s word fits in with what’s going on in the world today — it always has. Our generation is no different than any others. Even in the first century we read these words: “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

Jesus said, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matt. 12:34-35). “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:18-19).

The Psalmist wrote: “Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord” (Psa. 35:23). The Holy Spirit said, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God...” (1 Cor. 15:34). “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14). “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ... putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:6,8).

Let us not be woke unto evil, but instead, let us be woke unto righteousness.

**SEND US YOUR
CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

IT IS WHAT IT IS

I heard a rather trite expression that has come to typify a number of situations that we may observe in today’s society. For example, someone may develop cancer and say “It is what it is” and fail to seek any medical attention whatsoever. This is a situation best described as *resignation*. In effect, the person is simply saying, “there is nothing I can do about it. I’ll just live with it.” And yet another person may come down with some severe malady and say “It is what it is” but at once seek the very best medical attention available. This individual accepts, but sets about to do what he/she can to overcome their sickness.

Sadly, I see the effects of “It is what it is” at play throughout the brotherhood today. When it is suggested that the need exists to *seek the lost* (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16), someone is apt to say “They won’t listen” and so nothing happens. Isn’t that person saying “It is what it is” and there is nothing I can do about it? Might that be resignation with no thought for doing otherwise? Too many are not willing to “keep on keeping on” when they do not see immediate results. One such person answered me, “We don’t know if it’s doing any good” when I approached him on a particular work for which he had been previously responsible.

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 we read, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” This scripture surely suggests that it is man’s responsibility to sow the seed (preach the Word) and leave it in God’s hands. Much of what is being taught today does not reach those who need it most as there is little fertile soil in most pews.

It is little wonder that the Lord’s church of today has become smaller, weaker and offering little or no influence on society since so few seem inclined to accept “It is what it is” and set about to make a difference. A lesson could be taken from the Apostle Paul when he said “...I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed” (1 Cor. 15:9-11).

We would do well to say “It is what it is,” but listen carefully to the great judge when He said, “He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:44-50).

Are we listening? Or, are we saying “It is what it is” and doing nothing?

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ARE YOU IN THE ONE TRUE CHURCH?

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Just because someone calls himself a Christian, does not mean he is truly following Christ (1 John 1:6; 2:4). And, just because a church claims to be a Biblical church, does not mean it is truly following Christ. In fact, they may have never even done what God commanded to be added to Christ's church in the first place (Acts 2:36-41, 47).

Christ promised to build only one church, and it belongs to Him: "...I will build my church..." (Matt. 16:18). There were already divisions and false religious groups being created by alleged followers of Christ (such as the Nicolaitans) before the Bible was completed. These divisive groups were consistently condemned by God (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Rev. 2:2, 6, 15). Is it possible that you could be in a religious group that is different from the one church Jesus built?

Regarding the church of which you are a member:

- Was it founded by Jesus Christ? (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28)
- Was it founded during the days of the Roman kings? (A.D. 33; Daniel 2:44)
- Was it founded in Jerusalem? (Isa. 2:1-3; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:5)
- Does it use a Scriptural name for the church? (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11)
- Does it use a Scriptural name for the members? (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:11, 16)
- Does it teach people to love God foremost and to love neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all men? (Matt. 22:36-40; Gal. 6:10)
- Is it organized the way the Biblical church was organized?
 - 1) Christ is the Head of the body (Col. 1:18)
 - 2) A plurality of qualified male elders overseeing only one local, autonomous congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-11; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
 - 3) Male deacons/servants serving under the eldership (1 Tim. 3:1-13)
 - 4) Male evangelists preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 2 Tim. 4:2-5)
- Does it teach the same plan of salvation Peter taught on the day

Christ's church was established? (Requiring *repentance* and *immersion* of the penitent *believer* in water to be forgiven/saved) (Acts 2:36-40; cf. 8:35-39; 22:16; Matt. 10:32; 1 Peter 3:20-21)

- Does it worship the same way the Biblical church did?
 - 1) *Praying* to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (John 16:23)
 - 2) *Preaching the Truth* (2 Tim. 4:2)
 - 3) *Singing* without musical instruments added (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
 - 4) *Giving* as prospered on the first day or every week (1 Cor. 16:2)
 - 5) Taking the *Lord's Supper* on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:2)
 - Does it teach the truth that people are no longer under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ? (Rom. 7:4-7; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 5:3-4; 6:2; Col. 2:14-17; 3:17)
 - Does it promote religious divisions or oppose them? (John 17:21-23; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 5:11)
 - Does it adhere to sound doctrine? (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 2 John 9-11)
 - Does it adhere to the "seven ones" of unity, including the fact that there is only *one body*, only *one faith*, and only *one baptism*? ("the washing of water" for sanctification and spiritual cleansing, Eph. 4:3-6; 5:26)
 - Does it "speak as the Bible speaks" in all matters, glorifying God through Christ? (1 Peter 4:11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13)
 - Does it use the Holy Bible as its sole authority for all things? (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16,17)
- If two men on a deserted island, who knew nothing about religion, were given Bibles and they read and obeyed the Bible only, would they claim to be in the same church as you? They would not be in any denomination, but simply in Christ's church He promised to build. Should we not be like them? If we simply follow the Bible without man-made doctrines and names, we will be like them, and we can all be united as

Christians without denominational divisions! This is clearly God's will, and it is very much possible if we love God enough to put His will first (Matt. 7:21-23; John 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Phil. 3:16; 1 John 5:3).

The Bible teaches that Christ's kingdom/church established in the first century A.D. would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44; Matt. 16:18-19, 28). It began on Pentecost after the ascension of Christ, and it still exists today. Christ commands men to seek the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33), and the true Biblical church can be found by comparing churches today with the church of the Bible. To say that the Scriptural requirements above do not matter, is to say that the Scriptures themselves do not matter!

Some say every "church-going" believer today is in a denomination (a man-made religious group), and nobody can be in that one true, pre-denominational church, but if nobody could be in that church, nobody could be saved! The Bible says that Christ is the Savior of that one Biblical body, and only that body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). Religious divisions called "denominations" are not authorized by God; rather they are condemned by God, just as the Nicolaitans were (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Rom. 16:17; Rev. 2). Denominations are smaller than the universal church and larger than the local congregation, and there is no such entity authorized in the New Testament.

Friends, we encourage you to investigate the church of which you are a member and see if it meets the Scriptural requirements mentioned above to be the true church "of" Christ, which simply means the church that belongs to Christ. The "church" of Christ is just another way to describe the "body" of Christ, the "house" of Christ, the "flock" of Christ, etc. We also encourage you to visit and investigate the church of Christ in your area, using the Holy Scriptures as your only guide! (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21).

"The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16).

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MY SACRIFICE

James E. Rogers

Jesus took my place on the cross because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). He, “by the grace of God” tasted “of death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). The cross allowed him “once for all” (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) to offer “up himself” (Heb. 7:27; 9:14,28; 10:10,12).

Paul, in Ephesians 5:2, affirms that “*Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell*” (ASV unless noted). It is in this text that we see Jesus presented as our sacrifice. In this picture, we find many wonderful thoughts that thrill our souls. Let us think for a while about Jesus, my sacrifice.

THE MOTIVE THAT MADE JESUS MY SACRIFICE

“Christ also loved you.” The command to the disciples to love one another was based on the fact that Jesus loved them (John 13:34). Jesus’ love for us makes us “*more than conquerors*” (Rom. 8:37). Jesus’ love for us is manifested in the fact he overcame the world (John 16:33) so we could overcome the world (1 John 2:15-17). Jesus showed the greatest love a man can have (John 15:13). Jesus’ love motivated him to do that which “*loosed us from our sins by his blood*” (Rev. 1:5). The love of Jesus is seen in his earthly ministry (Matt. 9:35-38; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 10:17-21; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:3,35,36).

Jesus’ love for mankind is taught to little children through the song, “Jesus Loves Me.” Anna Bartlett Warner and her sister Susan lived in New York City in the 1800s. The depression of 1837 took the family’s finances and forced them to move into a ramshackle Revolutionary War-era home on Constitution Island on the Hudson, right across from the Military Academy at West Point ... Anna and Susan began writing poems and stories for publication ... One of their most successful joint projects was a novel titled *Say and Seal* in which a little boy ... is dying. His Sunday School teacher ... comforts him by taking him in his arms, rocking him, and making up a little song: ‘Jesus love me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so...’ ... The novel became a best-seller ... when hymn-

writer William Bradbury read the words ... (written by Anna), he composed a childlike musical score to go along with them. ‘Jesus Loves Me,’ soon became the best-known children’s hymn on earth (Morgan 1:139).

Jesus loves me is the motive that made Jesus my sacrifice!

THE MEANS BY WHICH JESUS BECAME MY SACRIFICE

“*Christ ... gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.*” This references the cross by which he became my sacrifice. The saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47). Jesus “*loved the church, and gave himself up for it*” (Eph. 5:25). Jesus “*gave himself for our sins*” (Gal. 1:4). He stated this as his mission (Matt. 20:28). He was “*delivered up for our trespasses*” (Rom. 4:25) and “*died for us*” (5:8). It was his love that motivated him to give “*himself up for me*” (Gal. 2:20).

“Gave up” is from *paredoken* from *paradidomi*, ... to surrender, i.e. yield up, intrust, transmit” (Biblesoft’s). In Jesus’ case, it was the idea of delivering himself up to the custody of the Jews and Romans to be judged, condemned, scourged and crucified (John 18,19). He took my place on the cross because “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23). He, “*by the grace of God*” tasted “*of death for every man*” (Heb. 2:9). The cross allowed him “*once for all*” (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) to offer “*up himself*” (Heb. 7:27; 9:14,28; 10:10,12). Christians remember Jesus, their sacrifice, every first day of the week (Acts 20:7) in observing the Lord’s Supper which proclaims “*the Lord’s death till he come*” (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

His sacrifice was “an offering” (*prophoran* means that which is offered to God). It is sometimes used to denote an offering without blood (Rom. 15:16), but here it refers to the sacrifice of the Christ who shed his blood for us. His sacrifice was “a sacrifice” (*thuisian* is usually used to denote a blood

sacrifice). This was the idea of the atoning sacrifice for sin. This references our deserving the death sentence, but Jesus’ taking our place.

The cross is the means by which Jesus became my sacrifice!

THE MEANING OF JESUS AS MY SACRIFICE

Jesus’ sacrifice is “*an odor of a sweet smell.*” The sweet-smelling fragrance is an anthropomorphic way of stating God’s accepting the sacrifices offered to him by men (Gen. 8:20-21; Lev. 1:1-9; Num. 15:1-3). This references the propitiatory (satisfactory) nature of the death of Christ (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10). This also reminds us that “*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*” (John 3:16) and that “*God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:8).

The meaning in the context is that a recognition of Jesus as my sacrifice will regulate my lifestyle. I will be imitating God, as his child, as I live among people on the earth. The love Jesus manifested for me on Calvary will motivate me to manifest love in my lifestyle (Eph. 5:1-2). I will “*put on love, which is the bond of perfectness*” (Col. 3:14). This shows I am God’s elect (3:12).

Let us appreciate the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf and live for him who died for us! Oh! What a Savior!

SOURCES

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DOES THE NAME MATTER?

Ben Bailey

Someone recently told me they thought it didn't matter what a church called itself as long as they worshipped correctly. Is this true according to the Bible? Could a church call itself any name and be acceptable to God as long as they worship correctly? Let's consider for a moment why it does matter what the church called itself. In fact, just like worshipping God correctly is essential, going by what the rest of the Bible says about the church is also essential. Notice why this is true.

The name of the church is important because the Bible tells us not to "add to" or "take away from" God's Word (Rev. 22:18-19). If the name of a church is not found in the Bible, we would be adding to God's Word. If the name is found in the Bible and we choose to call it by something not found in the Bible, we would be taking away from it.

The name of the church is important because the Bible specifically tells us not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). If the name of the church is not found in Scripture we are going "beyond what is written."

The name of the church is important because we are to do everything by the authority of Christ, who is the

Head of the church (Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23). Whatever God, Christ or the Holy Spirit referred to the church as, that is what we should refer to it as.

The name of the church is important because the name we call the church should only bring honor and glory to God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, not men (1 Cor. 10:31). If the church is called the church of Mark or Mark's church, who is that bringing honor to?

The name of the church is important because Jesus died for and shed His blood for His church (Acts 20:28). The act of Jesus dying on the cross purchased the church. Since it was his blood that paid the price for the church, it should wear His name (Matt. 16:18).

The name of the church is important because the name shows ownership and the Lord as the builder and founder of the church is the only one who has the right to be owner of the church (Matt. 16:13-18).

The name of the church is important because the church is the Bride of Christ and as His bride it should wear His name (Eph. 5:22-31).

The name of the church is important because we are only to speak as

the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11). Here are the names the Bible refers to the church as: Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:13-18). Thus, it is the church of Jesus or the church of Christ.

It is referred to as the church of the Lord (Acts 20:28).

It is referred to as the church of God (1 Cor. 1:1-2; Gal. 1:13).

It is referred to as the church of the Living God (1 Tim. 3:15).

It is referred to as the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Gal. 1:22).

It is referred to as the church of the firstborn, which is another name for Jesus (Heb. 12:23; Col. 1:15-19; Rom. 8:29).

The name of the church is important because calling the church by men's names or denominational names is specifically and explicitly condemned in Scripture (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Friend, a careful study of the Scripture helps us to see that what we call the church really does matter. We need to call the church by names that are in Scripture and that bring honor and glory to God, not men. May God help us to glorify the church Jesus died for in everything we say and do!

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Purposes For The Existence...

(Continued from page 25)

world. The church is to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16). Pulling back into a religious sleep while the world around goes from bad to worse is to miss the mark. We need to help people awake to the reality of sin, the prevention of sin, and how one can have life and have it more abundantly, here and hereafter. "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee life" (Eph. 5:14). The church must not lull into withdrawal or complacency, but be active, militant, vigorous, never allowing people to think all is well when it is not well.

It is not the purpose of the church to swell its numbers at

the expense of the truth of God.

Numbers seem to be the goal of so many religionists. Christians ought be concerned for numbers because every number is a soul. But to increase numbers and win the praise and acceptance of men by compromising God's truth is to default on a sacred responsibility.

If we attempt to please men rather than God we are doomed for failure to please either one. Certainly we cannot please God and man at the same time (Gal. 1:10). We cannot even please men for very long. There is the illustrative story of a man, a boy, and a donkey making a journey. They started with the man riding the donkey and boy walking. Someone saw them and criticized the man for making the boy walk. So they switched places. Soon another rebuked the boy for not having

respect for the older man, making the man walk. So they both rode the donkey. But someone complained that such was so hard on the donkey. So they both walked. And someone commented how foolish it was for not using the beast of burden. So how can you please men? At best you can please some of the people some of the time. But what is important is pleasing God whether it pleases men or not.

PREACH THE WORD

The purpose of the church is to "preach the word." Paul told Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Again, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature” (Mark 16:15). These were among the last words Jesus spoke to His apostles. They could not do that work physically by themselves. But they and those they taught had this charge from God. The church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The Gospel is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16). People cannot be saved without hearing it (Rom. 10:13-17). It is the primary purpose for the existence of the church to make known to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

STRENGTHEN THE SAVED

The saved must grow and be strengthened. After establishing congregations on his missionary journeys, Paul would go back and visit the converted in order to establish them firmly in the faith, confirming them in their hope, and teach them that they might continue in The Faith (Acts 14:22; 15:35-36; Rom. 1:11). The church cannot grow without the proper food. It must grow *spiritually* as well as *numerically* (2 Peter 3:18). The food must be fed and that food is the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). It is wrong for brethren not to grow in knowledge (Heb. 5:12-14). How some in the church ever allow themselves to think they have learned all they need to learn is almost beyond comprehension. Yet, it appears from the absenteeism among brethren from the periods of study and worship that large numbers have just become deluded and self-deceived. But the church is to feed on the word and make the food available.

HELP THE NEEDY

The church should work to create and manifest a Christian atmosphere in the world that would bring true blessedness, which is more than just an environmentally produced happiness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Gal. 5:22-23). In spite of problems such as are common to man, even problems because we have chosen to follow Christ, we should busy ourselves in making those around us recognize the glory that belongs to those in Christ. There is so much sorrow in the world. We should avoid creating more of it needlessly. We have such blessings like forgiveness, fel-

lowship with Deity, the avenue of prayer, God’s providence, the hope in this life for an eternal life with God.

Christians are optimistic about the future in spite of what seems to overshadow the good and the right. Part of our purpose is to bring relief to those around us from the miseries that so often beset the human family. We should do good to all men as we have opportunity, but especially to them that are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). The widows, orphans, hungry, ill-clothed, aged, they are all in need of care and attention. It is the Christian’s privilege to serve God by serving other people. It is beyond reason to think that the people of God would not be concerned and active in manifesting a compassion to those in need when our Lord showed such compassion while in this world (Matt. 14:14; 15:32). The work we undertake is not simply to be a social program and social reform, but always within the bounds of the authorized work of the church. Helping the less fortunate is a part of that benevolent attitude.

BE GOOD, DO GOOD

Someone once abbreviated the purpose for the existence of the church as being good and doing good. In this way we glorify God, which is the overall purpose for the church’s existence. “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Eph. 3:21).

The church is the saved. We have been saved to save by taking the Gospel and the character of Christ to the world. We may not take the world to Christ, but our purpose is to take the Christ to the world. We are servants of God, of our brethren, and the world. We have the duty and privilege to be stewards of that which has been committed to our trust. We have a goal, a mission, a purpose for existing. These things make us the most blessed people in earth.

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- The church was prophesied (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4)
- The church was purchased with blood (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:12)
- The church as established (Acts 2)
- The church will be taken to heaven (1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23)

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Path was one of your most disappointing and spiritually dishonest issues. I used to respect and look forward to your sound scriptural insight. Your issues have become too political and promoting right wing ideology. Please go back to delivering sound biblical doctrine issues. No one uses the term ‘woke’ except right wing racist Trump supporters” ...**LA. [EDITOR’S NOTE:** There is absolutely nothing political about **Seek The Old Paths**. There are some who try to make it so. The word ‘woke’ is used by many to support everything that is contrary to the Scriptures. The March issue dealt with the Biblical concept of being “awake;” and, it also dealt with how many have perverted it to denounce everything that is upright and holy. “Woke” has nothing to do with politics. It is all about “right and wrong;” not political “this and that.” What does one’s political persuasion have to do with righteousness and unrighteousness? When one’s concept of rioting in the streets, destroying property and burning cars, stores and buildings is “woke,” then that person has evil intent and a wicked heart and mind. Are we to ask each one their political affiliation before we teach what the Bible says? Once we have that information, are we then to give them a “pass” if they vote one way and condemn them if they vote another? Are you kidding me? God does not have party affiliation. Why would anyone want to bring politics into this discussion, unless it be to silence God’s holy word? “Right” is demanded by God. “Wrong” is condemned by God! It’s that simple. On the other hand, there is nothing in this world that is “off limits” and cannot be spoken about and examined according to the Scriptures. Many “churches” have told preachers they can’t speak on certain topics — subjects such as divorce and remarriage, social drinking, dancing, immodest dress, abortion, rioting and burning, etc. The faithful people of God support and defend godly elders. They are the ordained shepherds of the local flock. That is God’s design (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). However, churches and elderships have no authority to tell preachers they can’t preach on these topics. Any preacher that is silent on these points needs to repent and preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27)! If they are not going to repent they need to get out of the pulpit and are subject to discipline (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6)! They have sold their soul to the devil. Elders and congregations that ask/demand preachers to be silent on any Bible subject is to be rebuked and exposed for the evil they uphold. There are realms in which the church has no authority to undertake — they’re wasting precious time in doing so and have left their God-given responsibility. Politics is such a realm. It makes no difference one way or the other where to build a road or not to build a road, etc. The laws they make about matters outside of Bible teaching is exactly the realm of authority God has put in their care. BUT, when they venture into Biblical matters, they have over-stepped their bounds. They have NO authority to speak in God’s place. They can call abortion a “social issue” all day long but that does not remove it from God’s realm of morality. When law makers circumvent and contradict God’s Word, they are wrong. Acts 5:29 tells us to obey God rather than man. That’s what I intend to do. How about you? --gmr]. “Thank you for supplying a monthly dose of faith building and reasonable articles. It is sad that the truth is rejected by most, and infuriating when brethren are also opposed to it. Keep up the great work” ...**Freddie Clayton, Dunlap, TN.** “Excellent paper STOP” ...**Judy Mines McAfee.** “Your articles relative to

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‘woke’ are excellent” ...**John Smith.** “Glad we still have a godly publication still in print” ...**Bill Ford.** “Got my copy! Thanks for all you do to further the cause of Christ” ...**Mary Ruth Goff.** “I have told by many people about your **Seek The Old Paths**. I would love to have many friends that would love the read it each month. Would you send it out to some who have been Christians for many years? Thank you” ...**Linda Goins, Clayton, NC.** “Thank you” ...**Allen & Irene Tate, Cache, OK.** “I love STOP and the sound doctrine it teaches. I read mine as soon as it comes in. Keep up the good work” ...**Leland Reed, Pleasant Hill, MO.** “William Jenkins has passed away” ...**Nesbit, MS.** “Thank you for STOP. I am always thankful for the topics and the brethren who write about them. Thank you for making the publication free. May the Lord continue to bless you in this work” ...**Carol Shadell, Beebe, AR.** “Can you please not mail me anymore **Seek the old Path**. If I ever change my mind I will let you know. Thank you” ...**Lydia Santos, Kissimmee, FL.** “Thank you for the good work in helping to spread the Gospel. We spend a lifetime searching for answers to problems that the Lord has already solved. He gave us a road map, the Bible. Micah 6:8, *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* Thank you” ...**Wilson Rowlett, Rogers, AR.** “Thank you for the STOP articles” ...**Cindy Marfield, Augusta, KS.** “Artie Collins has passed away” ...**Florence, AL.** “Please stop mailing copies of **Seek the Old Paths** to me. Thank you” ...**Arnold Kohl, Surprise, AZ.** “John Dillard passed away” ...**Pontotoc, MS.**

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