



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 37, No. 6

June 2026

THE GREAT INVITATION

Randy Kea

The Lord’s invitation to obey His saving Gospel will never grow old as long as this world stands

The Lord’s Great Invitation: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matt. 11:28-30).

In a very real sense, the whole Bible is an invitation from God. There are scattered through the whole Bible specific records of invitations and exhortations to come to the Lord and do His will (Josh. 24:14; Deut. 30:19; John 5:40; 7:37; Matt. 16:24; Rev. 3:20; 22:17). 1) There are invitations to come to Him, 2) Invitations to keep faithful to Him, and 3) invitations to come back to Him if you have fallen away.

1) God has always revealed His will to man (Deut. 29:29; Amos 3:7; 1 Cor 2:9-15; Eph 3:3-5).

2) His revelation to man with reference to what He requires has always been clear and understandable (Psalm 19:7; 119:105; Matt. 4:4; Eph. 5:17).

3) God has always held man accountable to His revealed will (John 12:48; Jude 14; Eccl. 12:13-14).

4) God has always condemned and brought judgment upon those who tamper with or seek to modify His revelation to

man (Gal. 1:7; Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Peter 3:15-16).

An increasing and disturbing neglect to the scriptural practice of always telling lost people how to become Christians and prodigal members of the Lord’s church how to be restored either during or at the close of Gospel preaching seems to be growing among us.

I would like you to consider some biblical reasons why a Gospel preacher should always (at least briefly) set out conditions of how to become a Christian.

First of all, there may be non-Christians in the assembly of the saints that, as the preacher, you might not even know they are there. I’ve worked with larger congregations and small congregations and particularly in the larger congregations it would be impossible for the preacher to know whether there were people there who were not Christians. However, even in smaller congregations someone could be there that you had overlooked. I have always tried to find out if we had non-members in the assembly before I preached but it would be impossible to do that every time. Would you want to stand before God on the day of judgment and explain to the Lord why you did not set out the Gospel plan of salvation to someone who might never have another opportunity to hear it with clarity? Would

you be able to say that you were “free from the blood of all men?” Can you imagine Peter, Paul, Philip, or any other Gospel preacher failing to tell lost people how to be saved?

Second, almost in every congregation there are young people who year after year are becoming accountable to the Lord who would need to hear the plan of salvation repeated and emphasized. I’ve had teenagers respond and no one, not even their parents, knew they had made the decision to obey the Gospel. We do not know “the exact age of accountability.” So these young people that hear us preach on a regular basis need to be exhorted and encouraged to make that most important decision.

Third, even Christians need to be reminded of the one true Gospel plan of salvation that saved them. Here is what Peter says about that: *“For if these things (Christians’ graces listed) be in you, and abound, they make you that you should neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was once purged (baptism) from his old sins”* (2 Peter 1:8-9). It would always be appropriate therefore to remind Christians of that great and happy day they were baptized and the

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The Great Invitation...



Editorial...

KING SOLOMON #2

Garland M. Robinson

A GREAT BUILDER

Solomon, among all the kings of Israel, was the greatest builder of the kingdom. Most of his life was composed of details regarding buildings, organizations and commerce. Under him, nearly the whole city was renovated with new streets, walls and buildings.

He inherited a kingdom that was fully prepared for him to carry on his marvelous work. The prospects were never brighter. He developed the kingdom in such glory and splendor that his fame went out into all the world.

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions ... And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard” (1 Kings 10:1, 4-7).

THE TEMPLE

Four hundred eighty years after the children of Israel left Egypt, work on the temple was begun. It was a vast undertaking. Solomon made a contract with Hiram, king of Tyre, to trade food for timber and craftsmen. Hundreds of thousands of workers were employed in its construction. Much of the work was compulsory (slave labor). They brought *“great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house”* (1 Kings 5:17). *“And the house, when it*

was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building” (6:17). *“So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar”* (6:9). Everything in it was overlaid with pure gold. *“So Solomon overlaid the*

house within with pure gold” (6:21).

The building of Solomon’s Temple (the house of God) was the highlight of his career and is outlined in 1 Kings chapters 6-10. The temple was seven years in construction while his own house was built in thirteen (1 Kings 6:38; 7:1). The temple was a “type” of the “church.” Notice the similarities in the chart.

SOLOMON’S FALL

Probably no king in history began his reign in more splendor and promise and yet ended it in such fatal apostasy as did Solomon. The writing of Ecclesiastes portrays this to be so. Solomon had it all, the most riches, wisdom, and women, but even then, he declared

Solomon’s Temple A Type of Christ’s Church	
TEMPLE	CHURCH
Israel’s adversaries were conquered before Solomon’s Temple was built (1 Kings 5:3-4)	Christ’s adversary was conquered before the church was built (Matt. 12:29; 28:18-20; Rev. 1:18).
The material for Solomon’s Temple came from the Kingdom of Tyre (1 Kings 5:3-4).	The material for Christ’s church came from the Kingdom of Israel (Matt. 3:1-2).
Solomon’s servants had the measurements for the Temple (1 Chron. 28:11-19; 1 Kings 5:18).	Christ’s servants had the measurements of the church (Matt. 28:19-20; John 1:11-13).
Solomon’s servants worked with the servants of another kingdom (1 Kings 5:6, 18).	Christ’s disciples worked with the disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:29-37; 4:1-4).
The material for Solomon’s Temple was cut and sized under King Hiram while it was in another kingdom (1 Kings 5:6-10).	The material for Christ’s church was cut and sized (prepared) by John the Baptist while it was in another kingdom (John 1:11-13; Mark 1:4).
Solomon paid Hiram, King of Tyre, for the material for Solomon’s Temple while it was still in Tyre (1 Kings 5:10-12).	Christ paid for the material for the church while it, the subjects, was in another kingdom (Acts 20:38; John 19:3-37).
The material for Solomon’s Temple was transferred by the water of the Mediterranean Sea to be fitted into the Temple (1 Kings 5:8-10).	The subjects of Christ’s kingdom were transferred by the water of baptism to be fitted into the church (Mark 1:4; John 1:11-13; Acts 2:38).
The material prepared by Hiram fitted into Solomon’s Temple without the sound of a hammer (1 Kings 6:7).	The material prepared by John the Baptist fitted into the church without the sound of a hammer (Acts 1:15; 2:41).
The glory of God filled Solomon’s Temple when it was completed (1 Kings 8:10-11).	The glory of God filled the church that began on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
(Chart from Annual Lesson Commentary, 1976 Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, TN, p.14)	

it all to be in vain (Eccl. 12:8).

Though eminently endowed with wisdom, he was not always wise. He forsook the wisdom of his own council and worked a diabolical scheme of treachery in his illustrious career. Such is the plight of all who compromise with evil. They turn away from God in such a life. *“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father ... And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD”* (1 Kings 11:4,6).

The Lord was angry with Solomon and appeared to him twice concerning his evil and commanded him that he should not go after other gods, *“but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. ... Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father’s sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son”* (1 Kings 11:9-12).

Sad, sad; Solomon was directly responsible for the division that resulted in two kingdoms of God’s people: ten tribes in the North and two in the South. Solomon was not the considerate, kind, wise king as so many envision him to have been throughout his lifetime.

H. V. Morton, in his book on Bible Characters, says that if he were “writing a book about Solomon, I would paint him not as we commonly imagine him, a kind, wise and pious ruler, but as a greedy and relentless autocrat who by his insatiable love for splendor sucked his people dry, overtaxed them, carried them at one bound from the simple, tribal civilization of his father, David, to the misery of a highly organized commercial state, with its ghastly extremes of wealth and poverty.”

Others have written of him saying, “Religious apostasy and indulgence in polygamy brought upon Solomon’s ruin. His idolatrous mistresses and consorts brought into the royal household the worship of their native deities, for whom shrines were built in Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:1,7)). Divine

chastisement fell upon Solomon for his adultery and idolatry. Although he commenced to walk in David’s godly ways, he sacrificed in high temples. He tried to mix the worship of God with heathen rites. The high places Solomon built for Ashtaroth and other heathen deities appear to have remained for more than 350 years.”

“Solomon’s disregard of God’s honor was the cause of his calamities and the raising up of adversaries against him, the division of the kingdom, and the ultimate captivity of the Ten Tribes and of Judah (1 Kings 11:9-14; 2 Kings 17:14-20; Luke 19:42). [Lockyer, *All the Kings and Queens of the Bible*, p.114]

“All rivers ran into Solomon’s sea: wisdom and knowledge, wine and women, wealth and fame, music and songs; he tried them all, but all was vanity and vexation of spirit simply because God had been left out.” [Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, p.320]

Solomon violated, to the letter, every prohibition given by Moses (Deut. 17:14-20). His sensuality and pride brought about his demise. All in all, he was a disappointing figure in Hebrew history.

HIS DEATH

“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead” (1 Kings 11:43; 2 Chron. 9:31). The book of Ecclesiastes sadly details the various methods whereby he sought happiness. All failed! He learned the lesson that all one gains in this life is worthless without the fellowship of God. Therefore, he wrote these words: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”* (Eccl. 12:13). For *“the dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”* (Eccl. 12:7). Paul wrote: *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Rom. 14:12).

It is not known for certain whether Solomon repented and turned to God in the end. He may have, e.g., if he turned to live according to his own words in the book of Ecclesiastes. On the other hand, (1) nothing is recorded about him showing signs of genuine repentance and (2) the shrines he

erected were allowed to stand (2 Kings 23:13), which, if he had repented would have been torn down. He may have likely died in spiritual darkness.

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The Great Invitation...

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essentiality and meaning of obeying that command.

Furthermore, a great deal of the information in the New Testament on water baptism is written to people who had already been baptized for the remission of sins. Paul wrote to the Roman brethren reminding them of their baptism (Rom 6:1-4). He did the same for the Colossians and Galatians (Col. 2:12; 3:1-4; Gal. 3:26-27). Peter wrote and told the Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia that baptism saved them (1 Peter 3:18-22). In addition, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Hebrews about baptism (1 Cor. 6:-9-11; 12:13; Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:22-25). It is therefore always appropriate and scriptural to present the Gospel plan of salvation, even to Christians, to remind them of what they did to obey the Lord and why they did it. One cannot be a Gospel preacher without setting out the Gospel plan of salvation to the lost.

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)” (2 Cor 6:1-2).

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As children of God, we should be:

- ALWAYS rejoicing in the Lord, Phil. 4:4
- APPRECIATIVE of God’s blessings, Eph. 1:3
- ASPIRING for Biblical Unity, Eph. 4:1-6
- ASSEMBLING for every church service, Heb. 10:24-25

— Jerry Joseph

LESSONS FROM PAUL'S REBUKE OF PETER

Roger D. Campbell

Paul “called Peter out,” so to speak, in front of others, the intention being to bring about repentance and limit the damage done.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews” (Gal. 2:11-14)?

Simon Peter was an apostle of the Lord Jesus, as was Paul. Both of them preached the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, though Paul did more of his work among the Gentiles, while Peter carried out more of his labors among the Jews (Gal. 2:8).

Here is what Paul penned about one situation that involved himself and Peter: “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11).

Let us consider some lessons we can learn from the course of action taken in this matter by these two apostles.

Let’s look first at **Peter**. As noted above, he had done something for which “he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11). Wait a minute. If Peter was a genuine apostle of the Christ, how could he mess up? Was he not guided by the Holy Spirit? Take note of the following point. The Holy Spirit guided Jesus’ apostles to communicate the Gospel without mistakes, both orally and in writing. But, the Spirit did not take over their minds and make their choices for them in their personal lives. When preaching, Peter’s message was perfect. In his own life, he had the freedom to make his own choices, and when humans do that, even when they show forth a pattern of being faithful servants of God, they still

make mistakes.

In this case, of what sin was Peter guilty? Paul labeled it as **hypocrisy** (Gal. 2:13). A hypocrite is one who is an actor, a stage player, a pretender. The person whom we see performing as a character in a theatrical performance is a different person in real life. In the same way, a hypocrite is one who is very different in his heart than the impression he wants others to have of him. He is a pretender.

Notice this about Peter’s hypocritical mistake: **it had an influence on others**. When others saw Peter, who definitely would have been counted as a leader, acting like a hypocrite, some of them joined him in his misdeed: “And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy” (Gal. 2:13). Yes, our choices, whether helpful or harmful, can have an influence on others. That is especially true for those who are in the role of leaders.

What led to Peter’s sin in this instance? **Others may have affected his thinking**, but the bottom line is, **it was fear that led him to behave like he did**. The Bible says Peter stopped associating with Gentiles, “fearing those who were of the circumcision” — the Jews (Gal. 2:12). When we allow fear to take over our heart, we do not make healthy choices. As Peter was walking on water, fear entered his heart and he began to sink (Matt. 14:30-31). Do you remember that? And, when he denied the Lord three times, what was going on inside of him? He was fearful. God does not want us to live in fear of what might happen. Instead, He wants us to put our trust in Him, cast our cares on Him, and make choices which glorify Him.

Now, what about Paul’s action in dealing with Peter? First of all, **what Peter had done could not be justified, nor could it be swept under the carpet as if it had never happened**. It happened. It influenced others. It had the potential to bring great harm to the Lord’s work. You

see, there was a point when Peter was spending time with Gentile Christians and treating them like they were on equal footing with Jewish saints and were “part of us.” Then, because he was afraid of what some Jewish Christians might think about him, Peter started treating those same Gentiles as if they were *not* “part of us” (Gal. 2:12).

Kudos to Paul for having the courage to stand up to Peter “to his face” (Gal. 2:11). In fact, Paul rebuked his fellow-apostle “before them all,” that is, in the presence of others who were involved (Gal. 2:14). If a brother or sister in the Christ has sinned against me in a personal matter, that is between me and him/her and I should attempt to resolve it in a private manner. That is what Jesus taught (Matt. 18:15-16). What Paul describes in Galatians 2, though, was not a matter of Peter sinning against Paul. His was a sin against the Lord that had been committed in such a way that it was a corrupting leaven, having a widespread, evil effect on the thinking of others (Gal. 2:13).

Paul “called Peter out,” so to speak, in front of others, the intention being to bring about repentance and limit the damage done. It is a biblical approach to follow the instruction of 1 Timothy 5:20: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Paul’s rebuke of Peter was not done in an effort to try to make Peter look bad (Peter already had done that all by himself), nor was it done to make Paul look superior. Paul did it to help Peter, help Barnabas, and help the church.

The Bible says, “He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue” (Prov. 28:23). There are indications that after Paul rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy, they still thought highly of one another, and neither labeled the other as unfaithful or unreliable. That says a lot about both of those men. Are we listening?

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CATHOLIC CORRUPTIONS

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide men of the first century A.D. into “all truth” (John 16:13). In that century, the faith “was once for all delivered to the saints” — not progressively developed over centuries (Jude 3). God said the Scriptures give us everything we need for life and godliness, i.e. to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). We do not need additional spiritual instruction beyond God’s Word in the New Testament. We must not ADD to His Word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). In fact, binding unauthorized religious requirements on others is what caused the churches of Galatia and others to be lost in the first century A.D. (Gal. 1:6-9; 5:1-6).

Catholicism has gone far beyond God’s authority, and created its own system of religion — like the Pharisees of Jesus’ time on earth (Mark 7:7-9; Rom. 10:1-3). Not only do they add commands, but they also completely contradict the Scriptures in many ways.

The following are some of the supernatural inventions of Catholicism:

- **Papal supremacy and infallibility.** This included the claim that Peter was the first pope and that the church is built upon him. No mere human is presented in the Scriptures as an infallible head over the universal church. Christ alone is the faultless foundation and Chief Shepherd. Peter was a married apostle and fellow-elder who was publicly rebuked. The church is built upon the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, not upon Peter (Matt. 8:14; 16:16-18; Acts 8:37; 10:25-26; 1 Cor. 3:11; 9:5; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Gal. 2:11-14; Col. 1:18).

- **Exalting Mary beyond what the Bible teaches.** They claim she was “preserved from all sin,” was bodily taken into Heaven, and should receive special religious devotion. However, no passage teaches such things. The Bible presents her as a faithful and blessed servant who needed a Savior (Luke 1:46-47; Rom. 3:23; Acts 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5).

- **Praying to Mary or departed “saints.”** Christians are taught to pray to the Father through Christ,

not to deceased believers (Matt. 6:9; John 16:23; Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). ALL faithful Christians are saints (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 2:19).

- **The rosary and repetitious prayers.** Jesus warned against vain repetitions (Matt. 6:7; cf. Eccl. 5:2).

- **The use of images in worship.** This includes statues, icons, and bowing before them. All such things are condemned in God’s Word (Exodus 20:4-5; Acts 17:29; 1 John 5:21).

- **Transubstantiation.** This false doctrine says the bread and cup becomes the literal body and blood of Christ. This contradicts the figurative language and memorial nature of the Lord’s Supper. It conflicts with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (Matt. 26:26-29; John 10:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; John 6:63; Heb. 10:10-14, 19-20).

- **A separate “clergy priesthood”** that is distinct from ordinary Christians. The New Testament teaches a priesthood of all Christians, not a separate class of men (1 Peter 2:5-9; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:23-28; Rev. 1:6).

- **Confession of sins to a Catholic priest for forgiveness.** Christians are taught to confess sins to God and to one another. God forgives through Christ, our only Mediator and High Priest (1 John 1:9; James 5:16; Eph. 4:32; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25).

- **Celibacy required for church leaders.** God requires the opposite. It requires marriage for bishops/elders. He warned of those who would “forbid to marry,” calling it a “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim. 3:2; 4:1-3; Titus 1:6; 1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4).

- **Infant “baptism.”** Baptism in the Bible is always immersion, preceded by faith, repentance, confession, and for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).

- **Purgatory.** No passage teaches a post-death purification before judgment. God’s Word presents death as followed by judgment, with eternal destinies fixed (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 9:27).

- **Observance of Ash Wednesday, Lent, and other “holy days.”** None of these things are authorized in the New Testament. Christians are not bound to man-made religious days.

Binding what God has not authorized is sinful. Jesus warned against outward displays of fasting. Neither He nor His apostles established an annual season of fasting or repentance (Luke 9:23; Gal. 1:6-9; 5:1-4; Col. 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11; Rev. 22:18-19; Matt. 6:16-18; 4:1-2).

- **The “Mass” as a continuing sacrificial offering of Christ in worship.** The Bible teaches that Christ was offered “once for all” and does not continue to be offered (Heb. 9:25-28; 10:10-14; John 19:30).

- **Exalting church tradition as equal to the Holy Scriptures.** God’s Word alone is the standard of authority (Mark 7:7-9; John 16:13; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Robert & Beverly Pitts (in memory of Jimmy Higgins).....	\$25
Mead C/C, Durant, OK	\$150
Cubb Creek C/C, Whitleville, TN	\$300
Anonymous	\$10
Royce & Linda Goza	\$240
Eastside C/C, Trenton, TN.....	\$20
Allen & Irene Tate	\$100
Garry & Susan Truitt	\$155
Broadway C/C, Rockford, IL.....	\$50
Chuck & Nancy Verkist.....	\$50
Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN.....	\$100
West Fayetteville C/C, Fayetteville, TN.....	\$3,000
Mexico C/C, Mexico, MO.....	\$150
Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN	\$50
Central Arkansas C/C, Alexander, AR.....	\$250
Anonymous	\$25
Beginning Balance.....	\$22,139.24
Contributions	\$4,675.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$2,432.10
Paper.....	\$536.32
Supplies	\$191.48
Ending Balance.....	\$23,654.34

BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE SIFTED

Rick Owens

The Savior warned Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Satan sifts through one’s character, searching for the vulnerable areas he can use to cause his victims to stumble (Heb. 12:1). He used “lust” to cause the downfall of king David. With others he may use alcohol, anger, bitterness, hatred, or a myriad of other weaknesses present in life. The weak spot might even be a lack of commitment and a love for God.

The lesson to be learned is that Peter didn’t realize, neither may anyone else be aware of the ways the devil sifts through people to find the weak spots that may exist. That is why Christians must always be guarding themselves, wearing the whole armor of God to defend themselves against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

Pride, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the selfish and self-centered will of humanity are all favored sifting techniques of Satan. However, since it is common knowledge to know the enemy will be sifting, one must continually monitor the vulnerable areas of life and strengthen them with the power of Scripture. The Lord continually answered Satan with, “*It is written*” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), and so should all the faithful.

Satan sifts God’s people when they suffer in this life; meaning, he sifts out the hurt and uses it to his advantage! We may wish we had never experienced hurt and trouble, and wouldn’t life have been so much more pleasant without the distress, the affliction, and the sorrow? The truth is life doesn’t unfold that way. People make poor decisions, unknown events are thrust upon us, and people find themselves in situations they wish were not reality. However, the difficult time in life may be of great value if they are allowed to be beneficial to the one who endures them, that doesn’t mean they are enjoyable, but they are valuable none the less.

Consider the apostle Paul, he told the beloved Philipians, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is*

far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (Phil. 1:23-24). Who was Paul to leave his assignment early? The only person to benefit from his exit would have been Paul! Could anyone blame him for wanting to leave this life, a full of misery and punishment? Of course not! It is doubtful many suffered in the physical world more than he (2 Cor. 11:23-28), but he understood the assignment and it wasn’t because he was an apostle. He was a faithful Christian who agreed to endure until the end, however his end may come (Rev. 2:10).

We are no different than Paul, we have agreed to endure until the end however the end comes, and along the way there will be difficulties. As we travel the road of life, we must do it with great courage. The Lord Jesus called out to His disciples on a stormy sea, and he told them, “*Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid*” (Matt. 14:27). Was it all about crashing waves and dangerous elements? Absolutely not! He was encouraging them to have courage in the face of frightening life events; after all, they would be tasked with carrying the Gospel into a stormy world, where the threats would be more than wind and waves. They would have their lives threatened by Roman rulers, Jewish leaders, and anyone who disagreed with heaven’s message. They needed the courage Jesus urged them to have.

That is true for us, we may not travel the world and face dangerous governments, but Satan will sift us down to our bare essence, discovering what we fear most, and then use it against us. The lesson is to face those times with the courage of the apostles as they looked into the eye of the storm, because the Lord is with us too (Heb. 13:5). Don’t be looking for the nearest exit, Paul didn’t. That doesn’t mean the exit doesn’t seem appealing, because it does, but it isn’t time; it wasn’t time for Paul, and it wasn’t time for the Lord when He prayed to the Father (Matt. 26:39). They continued, even when the road ahead was difficult, and so should we.

All the faithful who came before

“endured,” even as they were sifted because it benefitted them, and it benefitted everyone who came after. That is what Paul told the good brethren in Philippi, “*It was more needful for them*” (Phil. 1:24). When Jesus continued to the cross, it benefitted the entire world for all who had ever lived because His blood washed the sins of the obedient, and all who would ever take advantage of His gift of life. Let’s never believe we have it worse than others, we never know what terrible hurt someone is carrying around, and he or she is enduring!

There will come a time, as another sits across from “you,” and he/she is encouraged by what is learned from your life by the troubles, by the difficulties, by the sadness, and by the hurt you have survived because you endured to the end; however, that end may come. Who are any of us to desire to leave our assignments early? Life is a mixture of happiness and heartache. Paul lived through the heartache, and he spread the happiness to others. Keep enduring!

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How Do We Hear?

We are warned in Scripture to take heed “what” we hear (Mark 4:24) and “how” we hear (Luke 8:18). We may not always be able to control everything that might fall on our ears, but much of it we can. And, we can guard ourselves from the effect the things we hear might have on us. We can use self-control and self-discipline regarding our reactions to such things.

Do we pay attention to what we hear more than those who reject God’s Word altogether? We often criticize those in religious error for not paying attention to the truth, but when I hear the commands to assemble faithfully, and see brethren act as if such a command was not given, it does make one wonder “how” we hear.

How about you?

— James W. Boyd

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

Joshua Alexander

Is the church of Christ a cult, a denomination, or something else entirely?

You may be wondering, what exactly is the church of Christ? If you live in the south, chances are you have neighbors, family members, or friends who regularly gather in a building bearing this name. While driving through town, you may have noticed the name “church of Christ” on signs in front of “church buildings,” or perhaps you saw it while scrolling through social media. Although the church of Christ is especially common in the southern United States, it is not confined to one region. Congregations exist throughout the United States and around the world.

Because of this visibility, many opinions circulate concerning the exact nature of the church of Christ. Some say the church of Christ is a cult founded by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone during the American Restoration Movement. Others describe it as simply another conservative denomination within Christianity. With so many competing explanations, confusion is understandable. This raises an important question: Is the church of Christ a cult, a denomination, or something else entirely?

To answer that question, we must go back to the beginning. The story of the church of Christ does not begin in nineteenth-century America, but at the very beginning of time. In the Garden of Eden, after the sin of Adam and Eve, God pronounced judgment upon the man, the woman, and the serpent. Within that judgment, God revealed His plan for mankind’s redemption: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his*

heel” (Gen. 3:15). This prophecy pointed forward to Jesus Christ. The Lord’s suffering on the cross was the bruise to His heel, and His resurrection from the grave was the crushing blow to the serpent’s head (Satan).

For fifteen hundred years, the children of Israel were God’s chosen people. God revealed His presence through the tabernacle, the temple, and the ark of the covenant. Israel was given laws, sacrifices, and feast days that were to be faithfully observed. Yet these things were never intended to be permanent. The Bible teaches the law of Moses served as a “schoolmaster” to bring the Israelites to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The law of Moses could not fully remove sin, for *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Heb. 10:4). Sin entered the world through one man, and therefore redemption required the blood of a perfect Man — Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:22, 45).

The prophets foretold of a change of the law. Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant that would replace the old (Jer. 31:31-34). Daniel prophesied of the kingdom of God being established during the days of the Roman Empire — a spiritual kingdom that would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Jesus later confirmed that His kingdom was *“not of this world”* (John 18:36). Isaiah, Micah, and Joel spoke of a time when “all nations” would be included and when God’s Spirit would be poured out (Isaiah 2:1-2; Micah 4:1-2; Joel 2:28-32).

These prophecies were fulfilled in Acts chapter 2. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that the events taking place that day were the fulfill-

ment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). When the people asked what they must do, Peter instructed them to *“repent and be baptized for the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38). Those who obeyed were added by God to the church/kingdom (Acts 2:47). Jesus had promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18). Scripture affirms that He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). One cannot be added to a church that does not exist, nor can one purchase something that has not been established. Therefore, Jesus successfully accomplished His mission.

What, then, is the church of Christ? It is not a denominational title, but a description. The word church means an assembly (“a calling out”), and the phrase “of Christ” indicates possession. The church belongs to Christ because He built it and paid the price for it. Paul referred to first-century congregations as *“the churches of Christ”* (Rom. 16:16). In the New Testament, there was only one body, the Lord’s church, the church of Christ, not the many denominations that exist today (Eph. 4:4). The Lord’s church is not one of many!

The church of Christ is the body of believers who have obeyed the Gospel and belong to Christ. It is not founded by human leaders, governed by creeds, or directed by an earthly headquarters. Christ is its head and the Bible its sole authority. Our desire is not to start something new, but to be what the first Christians were. If we do what they did, we will be what they were: Christians, members of the church that belongs to Christ.

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A WARNING FROM THE PAST

Fighting for the truth is almost a lost art. Men who are enjoying the benefits of the gospel unmixed with human error, are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the truth. Every inch of ground from that mysterious way of

being saved, which was better felt than told, to the plain conditions of pardon as taught in the New Testament, was fought out for us by our fathers.

If someone before us had not fought for the truth, most of us might

yet be in the fog of denominational teaching. This is not the time to temporize or make friends with error.

— F. B. Srygley
(*Gospel Advocate*, 1928)



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thank you” ...**Truda Pauly, Roseville, CA.** “Please subscribe us to STOP. Thanks so much” ...**Courtlan Thompson, Grape Creek, TX.** “I want to subscribe to the monthly *Seek The Old Paths*. I have found it one of the best teaching of Scriptures (doctrinal), in the name Jesus the Messiah. Bless you and your family” ...**Paul Lemon, Bardwel, KY.** “We enjoy getting your edifying articles in the STOP publication. We always find it edifying and strengthening. We just wanted to ask you to reduce the number of copies you send us each month. Thanks again for your work!” ...**North Arkansas St. C/C, Springhill, LA.** “Thank you” ...**Eastside C/C, Trenton, TN.** “Thank you brethren for sending *Seek The Old Paths*. All the articles are sound and scriptural and much appreciated” ...**Maurice Brown, Broadway C/C, Rockford, IL.** “I don’t need your paper anymore. I look at my daughter’s. It is a wonderful paper” ...**Betty Simmons, Glenpool, OK.** “Please remove me from your mailing list at this time. Thank you” ...**Michael Fox, Gainesboro, TN.** “Peggy Smith has passed away” ...**Pocahontas, AR.** “Thank you for the opportunity through your publication to learn about the church and Christ our Savior. May God continue to bless your work” ...**Carrie Norton, Mentor, OH.** “Please delete my name from the STOP. Thank you” ...**Robert Albright, Thomasville, NC.** “Thank you for all the work you do in the name of the Lord” ...**Elders & membership of West Fayetteville C/C, Fayetteville, TN.** “Thank you for *Seek The Old Paths*. It helps me grow so much” ...**Barbara Markham, Greenwood Springs, MS.** “Please stop mailing me the physical copy of STOP. please. Thank you” ...**John Burgett, Lewisburg, TN.** “I truly enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths* and would like to share them with the Cassel Hulls C/C. Thank you so much and any of this year’s issues would be great” ...**Earl Oliver, Vandalia, OH.** “Leroy McNeely has passed away” ...**Benton, KY.** “Please remove my name from your mailing list” ...**Ralph Bennett, Searcy, AR.** [NOTE: We’ve been asked how to send a contribution in memory of someone, you can do so by simply sending a contribution to *Seek The Old Paths* and include in the memo ‘in memory of...’ We will include it in the next issue.]

DRINK Vs. USE

First Timothy 5:23, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”

In the Greek language there are distinct differences between the word *methuo* “to drink wine” and *chraomai* “to use” something.

Methuo and two of its derivatives identifies drunkenness as:

- 1) The process of drinking — i.e., “social drinking” (*methusko*);
- 2) The state of drunkenness — i.e. the end result of *methusko* (*methusos*);
- 3) The habit of getting drunk (*methe*).

The verb *chraomai* employed by the inspired apostle in 1 Timothy 5:23 denotes the idea of “doing what is necessary under extraordinary (i.e. not-the-usual) circumstances”. In Acts 27:17, it is employed to describe the unusual action of a ship’s crew in the midst of a dangerous storm at sea. It “used (*chraomai*) helps” to undergird the ship (v.17), in hopes of preventing it breaking apart in the violence of the storm. This is not typical, every day nautical procedure. This was extraordinary, yet necessary because of the extreme weather they were in.

When a Christian desiring to keep himself pure (like Timothy — 1 Tim. 5:23) consumes a small dose of alcohol for medicinal reasons, the Holy Scriptures says he is “using” it and is authorized by God to do so. When a Christian consumes it socially as a beverage, God’s word declares he is “drinking” it; he is not authorized by God to ingest alcohol for this purpose.

There is a clear difference made in God’s word between drinking wine and using it. This is not rocket science.

— John Chowning

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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