



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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"THEY ARE BETTER OFF"

Marvin L. Weir

We live in a world filled with pain, anguish, heartache, and disease. Many people are in terrible pain and suffering on a daily basis. Pain medication is prescribed and medical treatment is performed, but many times such efforts do little for one's misery and pain. The burden of suffering can reach the point where one loses the desire to live. When one, whose body has been ravaged by disease and pain, finally slips from this life, it is not uncommon to hear some person seeking to offer words of comfort say, "They are better off."

Are people really "better off" when they exit this life? It depends! Just because some well-meaning person says, "They are now better off because they are not in pain and suffering anymore," does not make the statement true. Brethren who have been faithful members of the Lord's church and who "die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13) are indeed "better off" when the struggles of this life have ended. But what is the condition of people who have chosen to "know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8)? The non-comforting answer according to God is, they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9).

Even sadder is the fact that many brethren who should know better often times seek to extend false comfort to families who have lost loved ones. Do some members of the Lord's church no longer believe in

hell or everlasting torment and punishment for the disobedient and wicked? Do some members believe that if one is basically a **good person** that God will overlook his lack of obedience and the sins in this life? Do some members actually believe that pain and suffering in this world is worse than the torments of an eternal hell? A member of the Lord's church needs to exercise great caution to not teach error or offer false hope and comfort to those who have lost loved ones outside of Christ.

We must understand what the Bible teaches about being saved. Salvation is **IN** Christ, not **OUT** of Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). One is not "in" Christ who has not obeyed the Gospel. A person must **hear God's Word** (Rom. 10:14,17); **repent of sins** (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), **confess Christ as God's only begotten Son** (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and **be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins** (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism puts one into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). One who has not obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation is not in Christ, as he has not put on Christ. The Bible clearly teaches, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). One who has chosen to not "put on Christ" is obviously **outside** of Christ and lost in their sins! The Scriptures clearly teach one must obey the Gospel to have forgiveness of sins. Luke records this information regarding Saul of Tarsus who had become a **believer** in the Lord: "And now why tarriest thou?"

arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). It is impossible for one to be saved **in his sins** as "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The Gospel thus must be obeyed for a person to have hope of that which is "far better" (Phil. 1:23).

We must also understand what the Bible teaches about hell. Jesus warned, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). He also taught: "if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark. 9:43). There is no peace or rest in hell. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Rev. 14:11). There is **never** a moment of relief from the suffering and pain of hell. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24). There is not one shred of hope in hell. "When a wicked man dieth, [his] expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust [men] perisheth" (Prov. 11:7). Our Lord clearly states that on the Day of Judgment many will go away into everlasting punishment (Matt. 7:13-14; 25:46).

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They Are Better Off"...



Editorial...

MAN NEEDS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE #1

Garland M. Robinson

We understand “hope.” If you are anxiously awaiting news concerning a loved one who has been seriously injured in an accident and the doctor appears with a sad expression and says, “I’m sorry, there’s no hope.” The feeling of that moment cannot be described. We desire so much, that as long as there is breath, there is hope. But there comes a time in life with some, that such is not the case.

Why cannot men long for the hope of eternal reward in heaven with the same intensity they do for physical existence? Why do many spend their fortunes on the self gratification of their own lusts and never consider what lies ahead? Many times people become so entangled in the “lusts of the flesh” and the depths to which it takes them, they feel lost in despair and see no escape. It seems as though they believe there is no hope for them, they have reached the end of their rope! Many, in such moments of desperation, consider taking their life — some attempt it and some succeed.

Man needs to know there IS HOPE for the future! If there is no hope, then the reason for our existence is an unsolved mystery. As long as sin takes us when we yield to it, there remains hope if we turn from sin and obey God.

Consider the plea of this lesson. Are you prepared to stand before God? Do you have the hope of salvation?

THE MEANING OF HOPE

Webster defines hope as: “Trust, reliance; desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.” W. E. Vine says, “In the New Testament, favorable and confident expectation.... It has to do with the unseen and the future, Rom. 8:24,25. Hope describes (a) the happy antici-

pation of good (the most frequent significance), e.g., Tit. 1:2; I Pet. 1:21; (b) the ground upon which hope is based, Acts 16:19; Col. 1:27, ‘Christ in you the hope of glory;’ (c) the object upon which the hope is fixed, e.g., I Tim. 1:1.” (p.232). Thayer: “...always in the N.T., in a good sense: *expectation of good, hope*; and in the Christian sense, *joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation*: Acts xxiii.6; xxvi.7; Ro. v.4 sq.; xii.12; xv.13; I Co. xiii.13; I Pet. i.3; iii.15.”

The English word “hope” is found 129 times in 121 verses throughout the Bible. It is described a number of ways in scripture.

1) It is a **lively hope**. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3).

2) It is a **blessed hope**. “*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13).

3) It is an **earnest expectation**. “*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death*” (Phil. 1:20).

4) It is a **helmet**. “*But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*” (1 Thess. 5:8).

5) It is an **anchor of the soul**. “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...*” (Heb. 6:19).

6) It is a **rest**. “*Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope*” (Psalm 16:9).

7) It **remains** forever. “*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these*

three...” (1 Cor. 13:13).

HOPE IS REAL

Hope is real, genuine, actual, certain, veritable! Among the seven “ones” of Ephesians 4:4-6 we read in verse four “*there is one hope.*” There are not many hopes, there is ONE hope. If all the denominations of men are true, there are many hopes, for all are trying to get to heaven in different ways. But Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*” (John 10:1). Thieves and robbers do not go to heaven! Denominations of men do not go to heaven. They are false hopes!

God is the one behind our hope, making it genuine. “*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*” (Titus 1:2). “*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...*” (Heb. 6:18-19). In these two Scriptures we read that God cannot lie and in both, the reference is in regard to hope!

IN WHAT DO WE HOPE?

The **WORD** of God. “*Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*” “*My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.*” “*Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*” “*I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope*” (Psalm 119:49, 81, 114; 130:5).

God’s **MERCY**. “*Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*” “*Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*” “*The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*” (Psalm 33:18,22; 147:11).

DEATH. “*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death*” (Prov. 14:32). The dead will rise first in the resurrection to meet the Lord in the air and will remain with him forever

(1 Thess. 4:16-17). Death is the portal through which we reach heaven. “...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord...” (Rev. 14:13).

TRUTH. “For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (Isa. 38:18). “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5).

SALVATION. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lam. 3:26). “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for” (Rom. 8:24)?

The **RESURRECTION** of the dead. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). “...Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Acts 23:6).

ETERNAL LIFE. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2; 3:7). “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19).

EXPECTATION OF THE UNSEEN. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:24-25). “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14).

PRAYER. “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you” (Philemon 1:22).

IN WHOM DO WE HOPE?

God the Father. “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10). “Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1 Peter 1:21). “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is” (Jer. 17:7). “For in thee, O LORD, do I hope...” (Psalm 38:15). “That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Psalm 78:7). cf. Psalm 31:24; 33:22; 42:5,11; 43:5; 71:5; 130:7; 131:3; 146:5; Jer. 17:7,13; Lam. 3:24.

Christ the Lord. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thess. 1:3).

Part 1 of 2

“They Are Better Off”...

(Continued from page 49)

The most excruciating suffering in this life cannot come close to the pain and anguish of eternal hell. Hell is described as a place of darkness (Matt. 25:30), constant and everlasting torment (Rev. 14:10-11), and a lake burning with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

Let us teach people (as opportunity permits) about the salvation of their souls and warn them of eternal hell. God in His goodness has always set before people “the way of life and the way of death” (Jer. 21:8).

May we never be guilty of leaving the false hope with families that a loved one who has died outside of Christ is now “better off.” Such a comment (no matter how good the intention) could not be farther from the truth!

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is in its 25th year of
publication. Back issues can
be found at
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WHY I LEFT THE MORMON CHURCH #7 (PART 2)

Nathan Franson

The **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints** is driven largely by a creed of thirteen “Articles of Faith.” To see our ongoing examination of these “Articles,” go to seektheoldpaths.com/stop2014.htm.

This installment began in the June issue and continues to examine Mormonism’s sixth article of faith which says *“We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”*

AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

There are two priesthoods in the Mormon Church, the Melchizedek and Aaronic which includes the Levitical (D&C 107:1). The lesser of the two in terms of authority is the Aaronic, which functions under the direction of the Melchizedek. A male member at the age of twelve may receive the Aaronic Priesthood, which consists of the offices of Bishop, Priest, Teacher, and Deacon.

The Mormon Church teaches that the Aaronic Priesthood was removed from the earth as part of their “Great Apostasy” doctrine, but was restored at a later date. A plaque titled *Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood* located on the grounds of Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah reads:

On May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery went into the woods to inquire of the Lord concerning baptism. As they prayed, “a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light” (Joseph Smith — History 1:68). This messenger was John the Baptist, who had baptized Jesus Christ in the River Jordan and was now a resurrected being. He laid his hands on Joseph and Oliver and conferred upon each of them the Aaronic Priesthood. This priesthood, which had been absent from

the earth for many centuries, includes the restored authority from God to baptize for the remission of sins.

There are several factors to consider in this claim. The priesthood of Aaron was never connected to baptism for the remission of sins. It had to do with the Mosaic Law. It was not lost to the “Great Apostasy.” It was absent because Christ removed it and there was a reason. Paul writes concerning the Law of Moses, *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”* (Col. 2:14).

The writer of Hebrews contends, *“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need [was there] that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For [it is] evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood”* (Heb. 7:11-14).

If only those who are priests of the tribe of Aaron have the authority to baptize (according to Mormonism), then why is there nothing said in the New Testament about it? The apostle Paul was not an Aaronic priest. He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), yet he was able to baptize (1 Cor. 1:14-16; Acts 19:1-5). In fact, there is no genealogical proof that any of the other apostles held any kind of priesthood or were of the tribe of Levi, yet Christ commanded them to *“teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matt. 28:19). This is because baptism for the remission of sins was never connected to the Levitical duties.

Mormonism’s alleged history involves a discrepancy regard-

ing tasks. The responsibilities of the Levitical priesthood included the teaching of the Law (Lev. 10:11), offering sacrifices (Lev. 9ff), tending to the Tabernacle and Temple (Num. 18:1-3), officiating in the Holy Place (Exodus 30:7-10), inspecting those who were ceremonially unclean (Lev. 13-14), and adjudicated disagreements and arguments (Deut. 17:8-13).

The Book of Mormon attaches Nephi and his offspring to the tribe of Joseph, not Levi:

And thus my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine (1 Nephi 5:14).

Just prior to this they claim that this same tribe (Joseph) “did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel” (1 Nephi 5:9). This was obviously a contradiction of the tribe who was authorized to function as priests.

There are several references to the severe consequences of those who defied God’s strict laws pertaining to the Israelites’ functions. Why wasn’t Nephi or Lehi or any of their children punished? Not only that, but where in the Biblical list of genealogies for the different tribes is Nephi or Lehi listed? They are not found. God was very specific in who would do what. Did He purposefully or conveniently leave them out?

Additionally, the priesthood of Aaron could only be held based on genealogy — those who were of the lineage of Levi, descendants of Aaron. Ezra discusses an account where some were stripped of the priesthood because they could not

prove their lineage. He writes, “*And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood*” (Ezra 2:61-62).

For argument sake, if it is the case that the Levitical priesthood could be held after the death of Christ (which the Bible plainly shows otherwise), then when Mormons claim Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had the Aaronic Priesthood given to them, every person holding the Aaronic Priesthood in the Mormon Church today would have to be the descendants of Smith and/or Cowdery. It is of course absurd to accept that all members of the Mormon faith are somehow related to one of the two families. This is further evidence of the inconsistent and chaotic reasoning to try to reestablish a priesthood that was taken out of the way by Christ.

MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

Those in the LDS Church may also hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. The *Doctrine and Covenants* reveals,

Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest. Before his day it was called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood. All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood. But there are two divisions or grand heads — one is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood. The office of an elder [not a missionary, NF] comes under the

priesthood of Melchizedek. The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things. The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church. High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member (*Doctrine and Covenants* 107:2-10).

Mormonism teaches that the Melchizedek Priesthood, also called the “Holy Priesthood,” was first held by Adam and continues through all generations (*D&C* 89:6-17). However, they also claim it was removed from the earth for a period of time. Joseph Smith proclaimed that he and Oliver Cowdery received the “restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.”

A plaque at Temple Square reads:

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the authority of God to lead His Church, give the gift of the Holy Ghost, and perform other saving ordinances. This authority has been on the earth whenever the Lord has revealed His gospel. It was lost from the earth after the death of Jesus’s Apostles, but it was restored in May 1829, when the Apostles Peter, James, and John conferred it upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. In the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, “the power of godliness is manifest” (*D&C* 84:20).

These assertions made by Smith illustrate either a confusion or ignorance in his knowledge of the Melchizedek Priesthood. David writes concerning Christ, “*The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou*

art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:4).

Hebrews 6:20-7:4 clarifies, “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec* [emph., NF]. *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*”

Notice that Christ is Priest after the order of Melchizedek. “After the order” in the original language means *concerning the same style or nature* as Melchizedek. In other words, like Melchizedek, He is a Priest appointed without lineage. Christ is simply being compared to him. However, it was never intended to be for all time as the *Doctrine & Covenants* purports. The Melchizedek priesthood belonged to Christ and no other.

Again, the Hebrews writer makes clear, “*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood*” (Heb. 7:11-14).

There is no authority today for the Melchizedek Priesthood to exist in the church. Why would God withhold something so vital for so long if it was lost? Notice the authority was for Christ. The book of Hebrews emphasizes the superiority of Christ

and His priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.

If the Mormon Church wants to bring back the Levitical Priesthood which operated under the Law of Moses, they must bring back all the Mosaic Law according to Galatians 3:10 and 5:3. Further, where in the Bible was there ever the authority to live under multiple priesthoods? The Israelites certainly had no authority to do so; nor do we.

The Bible teaches that all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6) and operate under the priesthood of Christ. We offer up spiritual sacrifices through Jesus, our high priest, who is the mediator between God and man (Rom. 12:1; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6). Peter writes concerning all Christians, “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus*

Christ. ... 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” (1 Peter 2:5,9-10).

CONCLUSION

The Mormon system of offices and priesthoods is a tangled mess of inconsistent rules and guidelines. Their books contain many commandments on which a Mormon’s hope to reach the Celestial Kingdom (the highest level of their depiction of Heaven) is contingent, but a close examination makes it a futile hope. God on the other hand has always been organized and precise in His

plan. There is no room or liberty given to muddle its simple structure.

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Elder's COLUMN

CHRISTIANS AND HAVING FUN

Roger D. Campbell

“That’s no fun.” “Let’s do something fun.” “That was the most fun I have had in a long time.” These are common statements that both Christians and non-Christians make. At one point in our life, we may think constantly about doing things that we consider to be fun. Later in life, however, many people, while they still have playful thoughts, begin to think much less about fun stuff, their definition of “fun” changes, and the activities in which they participate “just for fun” may be different.

Some folks seem to have the idea that Christians should never be happy, never smile, never have fun. In their minds, being a Christian is a life of drudgery, burdens, and void of any fun. God wants us to work (2 Thess. 3:10-12), but there is also the reality that having days off from work, going on vacation/holidays, or simply having a change of routine can be helpful to a person’s mind and health — a time for rest, relaxation, and revitalization. Jesus once told His apostles, “*Come ye yourselves*

apart into a desert place, and rest a while” (Mark 6:31).

When we consider the Bible’s teaching, we see in it no command or principle which would forbid God’s children from having fun. Loving life is something the Bible portrays in a positive way. “*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile*” (1 Peter 3:10). In addition, it is written: “*A merry heart doeth good [like] a medicine*” (Prov. 17:22). There are, indeed, benefits in being able to enjoy life, laughing, and, yes, even doing “fun” stuff. While that is true, it is essential that we keep matters in proper perspective. With that in mind, here are a few reminders for each of us to keep in mind.

1. It is okay to have fun, but it is not okay to become obsessed (going to excess) with having fun. Being “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2 Tim. 3:4) does not please our Master. We must learn to practice self-control in our approach to fun things. Even for fun

activities which are lawful, let us each share Paul’s mentality: “*I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Cor. 6:12). It certainly is not a laughing matter when a person becomes addicted to video games, sports competition, or texting with friends. Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), and so is being obsessed with fun affairs.

2. It is okay to have fun, but it is not okay to have fun in a way that is a violation of God’s will. Sinful fun is off limits for the saints of God. Make no mistake about it: sin is pleasurable (Heb. 11:25), but the Lord charges us to “*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (1 Peter 2:11). So, as we consider our options of fun things to do, we need to choose those which do not endanger our souls or the souls of others.

The world’s idea of “a good time” often involves drinking parties (1 Peter 4:3), unrestricted sexual activity (1 Thess. 4:3), cutting down other people by rude and inconsiderate words (Col. 4:6), driving recklessly,

dancing/lewdness, and pornography. The discerning disciple knows that participating in fun-filled activities which involve the works “of the flesh” will prevent a person from inheriting the eternal kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

Surely it goes without saying, but it never hurts to remind ourselves, having “fun” during our worship assemblies is the height of irreverence (Psalm 95:6). Sending text messages, whispering jokes, or engaging in some type of competition with others during worship are such blatant actions that we find it repulsive to even mention them. Yet, some members of God’s church do those very things as they sit in a worship service. The saddest part? They are not at all ashamed and do not know how to blush (cf. Jer. 6:15)!

Another form of forbidden “fun” is the type of activity which brings harm to people. Some find it enjoyable to destroy the personal property of others. Others think it is cool to say things that hurt another person’s feelings, self-esteem, or even their reputation. The followers of Jesus are supposed to be compassionate, tenderhearted, and considerate (1 Peter 3:8), treating others in the fashion we would like them to treat us (cf. Matt. 7:12). Though some consider it fun, there is nothing spiritual about being obnoxious, mean-spirited, and a jerk.

3. It is okay to have fun, but it is not okay to allow fun to interfere with our commitment to God. Our God is more important than doing something fun! Our hearts must be set on spiritual things, not the affairs of this world (Col. 3:1,2). Our priorities must be clear and inflexible: God comes first above everything else (Matt. 6:33). That includes having fun. When our commitment to “fun things” conflicts with the worship time of God’s people, worship takes precedent over fun! When family gatherings are scheduled at the same time as the services of the local congregation, God still comes first! When we make expenditures in fun-related activities, let us not spend money in such a way that we are forced to reduce our contribution to the Lord. Fun is fun, but it is not fun when marriages struggle because a spouse(s) is obsessed with fun hobbies.

4. It is okay to have fun, but

let us not forget that God expects us to be wise stewards of the time and resources He has placed in our hands. *“It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful”* (1 Cor. 4:2).

God is not opposed to us being

happy and having fun. But, let us strive to keep our longings for fun under control. Good, clean fun is great. Soul-damaging fun is not.

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FALSE PROPHETS AMONG THE PEOPLE

Read the words of 2 Peter 2:1-3: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”*

To some folks it would be much more pleasant in this world if there were no such thing as a “false prophet” or “false teacher.” Everyone just believe and do what you choose as it was in the days of the Judges when *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6).

As Peter said, “even as there shall be false teachers among you.” There are false teachers today. Jesus said, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”* (Matt. 7:15). Here are a couple of false doctrines of which you should be aware.

The doctrine of “FAITH ONLY.” This false doctrine completely disregards the necessity of doing anything in regards to salvation except “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” This false doctrine points to the conversion of the jailor in Acts 16, *“And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:30-31). Those who teach that believing is all there is, stop reading at verse 31. They’ve read enough! That’s all they want to believe! But read on, they fail to accept that the jailor was baptized for the remission of sins that very hour, after midnight (Acts 16:25,33; 2:38). Or, they simply say that he was saved before he was baptized — contrary to Mark 16:16, Romans 6:3-6,17,18, and 1 Peter 3:21.

The LORD’S SUPPER does not have to be observed on a weekly basis. According to Acts 20:7, the Bible says, *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”* According to them, you can observe the Lord’s supper once a month or twice a year or whenever. The proponents of this doctrine say that Acts 20 and verse 7 doesn’t say “every first day of the week.” While it doesn’t use the word “every,” it’s certainly implied. For example, when do you get paid? “On Friday” you say. Once a month, once a year? How often? Unless otherwise specified you get paid every time there is a Friday. Also, the same people who do not believe that Acts 20:7 means “every week” will take the same language about “giving” and take up a collection every week (they never miss that!). *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...”* (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Does that make sense? The only sense that makes is that they do not want to follow the Lord’s commands if it doesn’t agree with them.

These are just two false doctrines that people want to follow today. As Jesus said, *“Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing.”*

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