



# 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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## BEWARE, BEWARE, BEWARE

*John Chowning*

***Identifying grievous wolves who seek to enter the flock of God, speak perverse things, and thereby shipwreck the faith of beloved brethren, ought never be a duty that God’s watchmen find tiresome, irksome, or tedious.***

In the early A.D. 60s when the apostle Paul (a prisoner of Jesus Christ in Rome) and Timothy wrote to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, the church of Christ there truly was noteworthy. It was an autonomous and organizationally mature congregation. It had bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1) and was a generous, mission-minded body of Christians. It had financially supported Paul’s preaching from the first day until the time of the writing (Phil. 1:5). From the content of the letter, there does not appear to be a present threat of false teachers and their heresies from inside their midst (like in Galatians, Colossians, Jude, 2 Peter, and 1 John).

Philippians 3:1-3 identifies three timeless reasons why the ever lurking wolves in sheep’s clothing had not made any successful in-roads among the Good Shepherd’s sheepfold during its first decade of existence in Philippi. Here, it is written: *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed **is not grievous**, but for you **it is safe**. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”*

Verse one indicates there had been repeated warnings of false teachers by Paul and others in the past. These

warnings had not fallen on deaf ears in Philippi, nor had those making the warnings grown weary in well-doing. Identifying grievous wolves who seek to enter the flock of God, speak perverse things, and thereby shipwreck the faith of beloved brethren, ought never be a duty that God’s watchmen find tiresome, irksome, or tedious. Failing to warn the righteous of real and present spiritual dangers of false teachers is an egregious dereliction of duty (Ezekiel 3:18). The church in Philippi is noteworthy because it had received and heeded frequent warnings of false teachers.

Verse two indicates the flock of God ever needs a clear understanding of the grave threat false teachers are to it. Ravening wolves do not spare the flock; therefore, “Beware, beware, beware” is the only appropriate present imperative possible.

False teachers are spiritually unclean and dangerous (*“beware of dogs”* 3:2). They are spiritual black holes (Jude 13) who walk after their own lusts (Jude 16). They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by their good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple; thus causing divisions and offenses contrary to the apostles’ doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18). Their attacks are primarily on God’s grace and His authority; they seek to pervert God’s grace into a license to sin and to deny

the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ of any significant authority over anyone’s life (Jude 4).

False teachers are active forces for evil (*“beware of evil workers”* 3:2). Like the Judaizers, they may be trying to subvert the Gospel of Jesus Christ by seeking to build again things from the Old Testament which Christ has destroyed (Gal. 2:18). Like the heretics which threatened the church in Colosse, they may be blaspheming the preeminent Christ by seeking to wed human philosophy to His Gospel (Col. 2:8). These are two of the most common “work orders” carried out by Satan’s demolition crew.

False teachers are idolaters and counterfeiters (*“beware of the concision”* 3:2). In Paul’s day, the Judaizers had elevated the act of circumcision above Christ Himself. Like the idolaters of the Old Testament who mutilated their bodies in devotion to their god (Lev. 21:5; 1 Kings 18:28), these false brethren idolized circumcision to the point of mutilating their flesh and the flesh of all their male converts. Great Biblical doctrines like God’s grace, His love, and assurance in Christ can become so distorted by false teachers that a perversion of sound doctrine occurs and an idol is created.

Verse three (3:3) demonstrates

*(Continued on page 64)*

**Beware...**



Editorial...

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS... #2

Garland M. Robinson

See part one of “the church of Christ is...” in the July issue: [seektheoldpaths.com/stop2022.html](http://seektheoldpaths.com/stop2022.html)

**A royal priesthood, an holy nation, a chosen generation, a peculiar people.** *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”* (1 Peter 2:9). Moses spake God’s word to tell the Israelites: *“if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”* (Exodus 19:5-6). God had chosen for himself a people, a holy people, a chosen people — God’s own possession. God’s eternal purpose was fulfilled when the church of Christ was established in Acts 2. The church is made up of his very own chosen people — those who trust him and obey him. There are no other people in the world that are God’s very own. They are his people and the sheep of his pasture. *“So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations”* (Psa. 79:13). *“Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture”* (Psa. 100:3).

In the ancient past, the Israelites (Jews) were God’s chosen people, but they rejected Jesus. Therefore, the Lord *“saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”* (Matt. 21:42-43). The Jews are no longer God’s people. That ended when Jesus died on the cross. On that day,

Jesus purchased his new nation with his own blood (Acts 20:28). It is called the church of Christ. Christians are members of his kingdom, his church. It is comprised of people from every nation (Acts 10:34-35). God’s people in the past were the Israelites. Today, his people is the church of Christ. *“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 2:10).

### Where the saved are found.

The apostle Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles on the day of Pentecost and declared that Jesus, whom the Jews rejected, had been made *“both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36). He shed his blood and purchased a new people for his very own. His new people is not connected with one’s earthly ancestry or lineage. His people were no longer a “fleshly” kingdom. They were a “spiritual” kingdom, made up of people from every nation and lineage. Jesus was slain and *“...redeemed us to God by thy [his] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”* (Rev. 5:9). The everlasting Gospel would be preached *“...unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”* (Rev. 14:6). Those who heard the Gospel on Pentecost *“...were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward gener-*

*ation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:37-41). What were they added to? According to verse 47, they were added to the church, the Lord’s body, his church, the church of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23 clearly informs us that Christ is not only the head of the church, but he is the savior of the body. Ephesians 1:22-23 declares that the church is his body and Colossians 1:18 makes certain we understand that his body is the church. The “church” and the “body” are identical. To speak of one is to speak of the other. The word “church” speaks of its “called out” nature (sinners called out of a life of sin and separated unto the Lord). The word “body” identifies its unity, wholeness, oneness. It’s also extremely vital to know there is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4); therefore, there is only “one church.” Why then do men say there are many churches? Only the Lord’s church, the one over which he is head, to which the saved are added and the body he will save, is not “many”, but only “one.” That is why the church of Christ is his people, his possession, his special treasure.

### The oldest church in the world.

Jesus Christ is the foundation of his church. While on the earth he said, *“...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. 16:18). It began on the day of Pentecost at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Acts 2). Those who repented of their sins and were baptized became members of it. *“Peter said...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls. ... Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:41,47). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; In whom all the building fitly framed together*

*groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).*

The church established on Pentecost was the church of Christ. It was not the church of John the Baptist. He died three years before the church began (Matt. 14:1-12; Acts 2). Jesus said of John, “Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28). The “kingdom of God” is the church of Christ. Jesus himself said the church and the kingdom were one and the same institution. “I will build my church and...I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). The word “church” identifies it as the “called out” ones (its members). The word “kingdom” identifies its “kingly, royal, regal, majestic” characteristic, aspect, or nature.

The apostle Peter did not establish the church, nor was it built upon him as so many believe. The Lord’s church was not built upon any of the apostles. It was built (established) by Jesus Christ. The church of Christ is the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 2:1-5, Micah 4:1-4, and Daniel 2:44-45.

None of the denominations are the church of the New Testament that Jesus died for and that belongs to him. The oldest denomination in the world is the Catholic Church. It certainly did not exist in the first century. It did not come into existence until over 500 years after the days of the New Testament. It continues to evolve to this day and has practically no resemblance to the church of the first century. It honors and exalts man through its pope; whereas Jesus taught that He “...is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Every protestant denomination (with no exceptions) came into existence well over 1,300 years after the church of Christ was established on Pentecost (Acts 2).

The church of Christ honors Jesus the Christ. It not only teaches the Lord’s doctrine, it practices it as well. Denominations follow the doctrines and commandments of men and do not honor Christ. They teach, promote, exalt, and practice division, the very opposite of what Jesus prayed for in John 17:20-21 — “Neither pray I for

*these alone [the apostles], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all [Christians] may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”*

The apostles preached and practiced those things pertaining to the kingdom, the church (Acts 3:18,21,24). When the Lord comes again, he will hand over the kingdom/church to God the Father. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

**The household of faith.** “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the **household of faith**” (Gal. 6:10). This is obviously a reference to the church, to brethren, a family. We are sons and daughters of God which make up his “house” (Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:2; 1 Peter 3:6). We are God’s children (Gal. 3:26). We as “lively [living] stones, are built up a **spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

We are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16). We are the body of Christ, bought with a price (1 Cor. 12:27; 6:20; 7:23). We are no longer our own, we belong to the Christ (1 Cor. 6:19). Christians are God’s husbandry, God’s building (1 Cor. 3:9). Satan has a household (Matt. 10:25) and God has a household, a family. We are called into one body, the Lord’s house (Col. 3:15).

**The church and kingdom of God.** The book of First Corinthians was written “Unto **the church of God** which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). When Paul was held as a prisoner in Rome, he summoned chief Jews to come unto him. “And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom **he expounded and testified the kingdom of God**, persuading

*them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).* The church and the kingdom are the same institution. Each word simply depicts a different aspect of it. We understand how this works, for example, I am a man, a son, a husband, a father, a preacher — all these words apply to me, they simply portray different roles I perform. (See also the point made above about the church of Christ being the oldest church in the world.)

**That which brings glory to God.** “Unto him be **glory in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21). There are a lot of works among men, instituted by men, operated by men, social programs of many kinds, etc. But God receives glory, adoration, homage, praise, veneration, worship, “in” and “by” and “through” the church of Christ, not the institutions of men. Men can’t improve upon what the Holy Spirit said about it. Glorifying God is accomplished through the work of his church.

**The church of the firstborn.** “To the general assembly and **church of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23). “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18).

# THE ELDERSHIP

Jon Gary Williams

**W**earing the name “elder” is not an honorary title bestowed upon men. The eldership is not a place designed for personal pride or ambition. Rather, it is a position of service. It embraces a task to be performed. It involves a sacred trust over a congregation of God’s people and consists of one of man’s greatest responsibilities. There is no higher place man can hold in the service of God, for it carries with it the charge of souls. (1 Peter 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17).

## WHAT IS THE ELDERSHIP?

The eldership of the Lord’s church is set forth in three different Greek words.

- *presbuteros* — translated “elder” signifies one who is not a novice (new to, inexperienced) but is older in the faith having the experience of years. (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1)
- *episkopos* — translated “overseer” or “bishop” signifies one who oversees, watching over his charge. (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7)
- *poimen* — translated “pastor” signifies one who leads the flock of God (Eph. 4:11). The associated word “shepherd” is derived from 1 Peter 5:2,4.

The eldership, therefore, is to be made up of men who are older in the faith, capable of overseeing the affairs of a congregation and able to adequately lead.

## WHO CAN HOLD THE POSITION OF ELDER?

The New Testament places certain restrictions on who can hold this position. Qualifications for this position are listed in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Both lists were penned by Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and both were addressed to preachers. In all, nineteen specific qualifications are listed. These qualifications can be broken down into five categories — Character, Experience, Reputation, Domestic relations and Intellect.

## THE QUALIFICATIONS

**CHARACTER** (five negative and eight positive statements)

1. “*not given to wine*” (ASV, “*no brawler*”) — not subject to the influence of strong drink (Note: “*brawler*” [1 Tim. 3:3 in the KJV] is a repetition and reinforcement of the restriction on wine.)

2. “*no striker*” — not contentious or quarrelsome

3. “*not greedy of filthy lucre*” (ASV, “*no lover of money*”) — not longing for wealth. (Note: “*not covetous*” [1 Tim. 3:3 in the KJV] is a repetition and reinforcement of the warning about greed over money.)

4. “*not self-willed*” — not overbearing, headstrong or arrogant.

5. “*not soon angry*” — not easily provoked or prone to hatred or hostility.

6. “*vigilant*” or “*temperate*” — self-control, prudent, discerning.

7. “*sober*” (ASV, “*sober-minded*”) — of sound mind, sound judgment and reasoning.

8. “*patient*” (ASV, “*gentle*”) — mild, kind, not contentious

9. “*of good behavior*” (ASV, “*orderly*” - literally “*modest*”) — mannerly, dignified, modest.

10. “*given to hospitality*” — (a love for strangers), a host, helpful.

11. “*lover of good men [good things]*” (ASV, “*a lover of good*”) — literally “*loving good*”) — a love for all that is good: deeds, words, people.

12. “*just*” — upright in dealings, treating all alike, fair.

13. “*holy*” — devout, pious, moral, faithful in spiritual duties.

## EXPERIENCE

1. “*not a novice*” — one not new at Christianity, not a babe, one spiritually mature. Why this qualification? (1 Tim. 3:6)

## REPUTATION

1. “*blameless*” (ASV, “*without reproach*”) — literally “*cannot lay hold on*”) — above suspicion, free of false doctrine and unethical,

immoral behavior.

2. “*good report of them which are without*” (ASV, “*good testimony*”) — a good witness from non-Christians.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

1. “*one wife*” — must be a scripturally married man (Note: their wives must also have a good reputation (1 Tim. 3:11).

2. “*faithful children*” (ASV, “*children that believe*”) — children that are faithful Christians.

3. An elder must exhibit a faithful family (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).

## INTELLECT

1. “*apt to teach*” or “*holding fast the faithful word*” (ASV, “*holding to the faithful word*”) — capable and skilled at teaching

2. It is essential for an elder to have a good knowledge of God’s word.

## WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS?

“**TAKE HEED**” (Acts 20:28) — *prosecho* — “*to hold to*”) — to turn attention to; to carefully watch; to guard.

1. “*to yourselves*” — Elders must first keep a guard on themselves.

2. “*to all the flock*” — Giving careful attention to the congregation is their job.

3. This attention includes protecting the flock against false teaching - Acts 20:29 Titus 1:9-11 (cf. Acts 15:6,13,19).

4. This attention also includes “*admonition*” (1 Thess. 5:12). *nouthesteo* — “*to put in mind*”) — to call to one’s attention to, to remind, to warn.

5. This attention also includes taking the lead in discipline — which would include false teachers (Rom. 16:17), the disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6-7) and the immoral (1 Cor. 5:1-2).

“**FEED THE FLOCK**” (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28) — *poimaino* — “*to tend, to feed*” — to provide for the flock.

1.This involves general spiritual nourishment for the congregation

2.This is a part of an elder's "oversight" (1 Peter 5:2).

**"SUPPORT THE WEAK"** (Acts 20:35) — *antilambano* — ("to hold to, to take instead of, to help) — to assist those who cannot adequately provide for themselves.

1.Jesus said there would always be those in need (Matt. 26:11; cf. Gal. 6:10).

2.This help is not limited to physical needs — spiritual encouragement is also essential.

**"ENSAMPLES (EXAMPLES) TO THE FLOCK"** (1 Peter 5:3) — *typos* — ("to strike" [to leave an impression], the mark of a blow) — a pattern, a model, an example.

1.In contrast to being "lords" over the church (1 Peter 5:2) — *katakuriuo* — ("to force down, to lord over") — requiring dominion and demanding rule over subjects (cf. Matt. 20:25-28).

2.An elder cannot live by the rule "Do as I say, not as I do."

3.An elder's example reflects on every aspect of his work.

#### WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A CONGREGATION TO ITS ELDERS?

**"ESTEEM THEM"** (1 Thess. 5:12,13) — *hegeomai* — ("to consider, to account, to elevate") — to elevate these men, to esteem and respect them for their work (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17).

**"OBEY THEM"** (Heb. 13:17) — *peitho* ("to be persuaded, to listen to") — to take their advice and follow it

**"SUBMIT YOURSELVES"** (Heb. 13:17) — *hupeiko* ("to withdraw, to yield to") — to be willing to be under them, to submit and consent to their authority.

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# WORSHIP EXPRESSES OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE

Gary Colley

In speaking to a denominational friend recently, it was found that little care to none was given by him or his religion as to obedience to King Jesus (1 Tim. 6:15). I remarked that we were to partake of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week "in remembrance me" (Luke 22; 1 Cor. 11) as the Lord commanded. He responded that they partook in his denomination only once every six weeks, and he wanted to hear no more from the Scriptures. Paul wrote to the brethren at Colosse that they should do all things in the Lord's service, whether in word or deed, "in the name" or by the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:16-17). Without His authority, we can have no assurance or faith that we are pleasing our King (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17).

The Lord's authority was expressed many years ago in the matters of the required actions, place, manner and time in which worship to Him was to be observed and offered. Concerning the partaking of the Lord's Memorial Feast around the Lord's Table, the instructions were given all the way back to Pentecost! On the day the church of Christ was established, newly obedient souls were taught to partake "steadfastly" (Acts 2:42)!

**WHEN?** Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week. The command would cover every first day of every week, and early disciples were obedient (Acts 2:41-42, 47).

**WHAT?** The emblems given, as the Lord partook of the Passover feast, were *unleavened bread* and *fruit of the vine* (unfermented grape juice) (Luke 22:16-21). Thus, they partook in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42), but also in Troas, on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). Just as keeping the sabbath day holy demanded that the Jews observed the Sabbath Day every week, just so, when that time came around, it should be easily understood that partaking of the Lord's supper should be every first day of the week, or every Sunday, according to the inspired Command, and very clear examples.

Does it not seem strange that some claim to understand that God's people are to "lay by in store" or give of their means for the support of the Lord's work on every first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), but, when the exact same language is used about the Lord's supper being taken on "the first day of the week", they think that time can be extended to once every six weeks, or could it be once in a lifetime?! Can this humanly decided action on the part of some religions truly be even considered to be obeying the Lord? Or, would this constitute disobedience?

**WHO?** The Lord's disciples are the only ones who partook of this memorial supper in the New Testament. But we ask, who else would want to partake of this memorial? Not unbelievers, not infidels, and certainly not the enemies of the Lord. Children should be taught about the meaning of this supper but they cannot be participants until becoming followers or Christians.

**ALL WORSHIP.** Worship in harmony with the Lord's commands to **pray** (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 12:28); **give** (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8,9); **preach** (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Matt. 28:19-20); **sing** (Heb. 2:12; Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17); and **partake of the Lord's supper**, as studied in the beginning of this article, without a doubt, expresses our obedience or DISOBEDIENCE. Which will be for our best, and therefore our eternal interest (Matt. 7:21-28)? Obedience of course! Let us not be found among the disobedient (2 Thess. 1:7-9)!

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# THE RESULTS OF GOSPEL PREACHING

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***When Gospel preaching loses its distinctiveness and uniqueness, people will no longer desire to hear it, nor will they be “stirred up” by it!***

Since the Gospel is designed to bring peace (Eph. 6:15) and the Word instructs Christians when possible to “*be at peace with all men*” (Rom. 12:18), there are those who wrongly conclude that a child of God should never be a part of rebuking, marking, or standing for truth so firmly that it leads to division. It appears folks of this persuasion have forgotten that wherever the very first preachers of the Gospel went there was controversy and “*no small stirs*” (Acts 12:18; 19:23). Faithful proclaimers of the truth have always been accused of turning “*the world upside down*” (Acts 17:6), but such is needed because the world is wrong side up!

Can a Christian today do less than Paul and Barnabas did in standing firm for the truth and defending the Lord’s church and please God? I think not! Let us learn from the actions of Paul and Barnabas.

## **There Was A Desire To Hear!**

The Gentiles wanted the words spoken to them proclaimed again on “*the next sabbath*” (Acts 13:42). The distinctiveness of the Gospel message had created a desire to hear it again. A worldly message as well as denominational doctrine is echoed throughout the world. Gospel preaching, however, is distinctive and unique. But mark it down well — when Gospel preaching loses its distinctiveness and uniqueness, people will no longer desire to hear it nor will they be “stirred up” by it!

The unadulterated Gospel will always challenge the thinking of people, and it will also create a desire in sincere searchers for truth to hear it again.

**There Was General Interest In What Was Being Taught!** “*The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God*” (Acts 13:44). Many people were interested and curious as to what Paul and Barnabas would continue to teach. What they were now hearing was *different* from what they had been hearing. Much present day preaching (even in the church) stirs no interest whatsoever in the Word of God. The reason is be-

cause anything and everything but the Word of God is proclaimed to the audience. This is the precise reason that multitudes of “sermon (?) hearers” are in total darkness as to what the Bible teaches!

## **There Was Bitter Opposition!**

“*But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming*” (Acts 13:45). One thing is certain regarding Paul — he would never be guilty of the “**woe**” that comes upon those whom all men speak well of (cf. Luke 6:26). Many who profess to be preachers today would not want to be seen with Paul as it would severely tarnish their reputation of being appealing to all men.

The truth is that all who preach the glorious Gospel must be prepared for the attack and ridicule of self-serving religious sinners who have no respect for the Word of God and no concern for the lost. Men opposing God’s truths should stir faithful children of God to be even bolder in their stand and speech! When the jealous Jews contradicted Paul and blasphemed the Lord Jesus Christ, “*Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46). Bitter opposition to God’s glorious truth must be quickly met with *bold* refutation. How sad it is to see brethren swallow their tongues and allow the Word of God to be trampled underfoot!

**There Was Joy Among The Gentiles!** “*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:48). The “other sheep” (Gentiles) not of this Jewish flock were anxious to graze in the pasture of God’s truth. The hungry Gentiles are now nourished and fed, while the self-satisfied and tradition bound Jews go away empty.

The same situation exists today.

Some people are willing to “[receive His word and be] *baptized*” (Acts 2:41) while others “*will not come to [him], that [they] may have life*” (John 5:40). One is either willing to obey the Lord or he is not willing to obey. There is no middle ground, and partial or selective obedience will not suffice.

## **There Was Apparent Defeat!**

“*But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts*” (Acts 13:50). Can you imagine “*devout and honourable women*” and “*chief men of the city*” using their influence to such an unholy and dishonorable cause? Is this not the way Satan still works today? The Devil knows exactly how to entice influential people to do his dirty work.

What can be learned from this apparent defeat? It must be realized that God’s servants can be and often are “cast out,” but enemies of the cross do not have the ability to “cast out” the seed of God’s Word which has been sown in honest and good hearts! The *purpose* of God in the lives of His faithful servants will never suffer defeat. May God’s faithful keep this truth firmly fixed in their minds during troubling times!

**There Was Joy In The Hearts Of The Faithful!** “*The disciples were filled with joy with the Holy Spirit*” (ASV) — “*were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost*” (KJV, Acts 13:52). The KJV is perhaps more clear in showing there was joy *and* also supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them by the apostle’s hand.

True joy only comes by completely yielding to the Gospel, standing firm for and boldly defending the truth, and faithfully proclaiming the Word. The results of allegiance to God is treasure throughout eternity while opposition to His will requires a reckoning with the dust the faithful shake off their feet (Matt. 10:14; Acts 13:51).

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# HATING EVIL WITHOUT BEING HATEFUL

Roger D. Campbell

After his conversion, Saul of Tarsus, who had been the number one persecutor of the Lord's church, was quite candid about his past. By no means did he boast about his pre-conversion behavior, but he did not shy away from owning it either.

Paul described what kind of person he and others were before they became followers of the Christ: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Note again the last few matters he mentioned: malice, hateful, and hating one another. What an ugly picture that is!

The great news for the apostle and the rest of us comes in the message that immediately follows what we observed in Titus 3:3. Paul went on to write about being saved by the kindness, love, and mercy of God (Titus 3:4-5). Do you mean the Lord is willing to love and forgive malicious, hateful people? He sure is, and are we not thankful?!

God charges His children to lay aside all malice (1 Peter 2:1). The old me/old man may have been a person with a bitter and hateful disposition, but the new me who has been "born again" into God's family must never act in a hateful manner toward others. Doing so is not part of a Christian's DNA. Rather than being malicious (wanting to harm others or desiring to see them suffer), Jesus' disciples want what is best for others. We should stand prepared to feed our adversaries (Rom. 12:20) and do good unto all, including the obnoxious and immoral in society (Gal. 6:10). And, most importantly, like our heavenly Father, we do not want to see anyone perish in a "spiritual sense," but long for all to repent, turn to God, and leave this world ready to live with Him eternally (2 Peter 3:9).

Would it be acceptable, though, for a Christian to hate what is wicked, corrupts the world, and keeps its practitioners separated from the Lord? Absolutely.

Does the Lord hate sinful behavior? We find the answer in Proverbs 6:16-

19: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness, that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." The Bible also declares that God's Son "loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9).

Some say, "But those passages talk about what the Godhead does, not what humans should do." True. However, Christians are to be imitators of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-22) and the Father (Eph. 5:1). In principle, we need to love what the Godhead loves and hate what the Father, Son, and Spirit hate.

The Bible says there is a time to love, but also a time to hate (Eccl. 3:8). In addition, it is true that "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil..." (Prov. 8:13). A proper reverence for God and His Cause causes us to hate that which is evil.

The Psalmist proclaimed to God, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). Yes, it is proper for children of God to "hate every false way."

The book of Jude shows the need for Christians to demonstrate a discerning spirit when dealing with people. Here is instruction for Christians about how to approach folks in contrasting scenarios: "And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22-23). In one situation, it would be good to approach a person living in sin with a more gentle, compassionate manner. In a different case, though, we need to act as if we are snatching someone out of a fire, and to do so "hating" the defiled garment. Yes, it is proper to hate sin and its corrupting consequences.

I hate the philosophy known as humanism. I deplore the theory of organic evolution. I despise denominationalism. I hate any effort to mock the Lord, His word, or His people. I must learn to channel my energy and

emotions, however, and make sure that I uphold the truth and oppose evil with a spirit that shows a heart which genuinely cares for those who are caught up in ungodly messages or wicked practices.

Not only is it possible to speak the truth in love, it is essential to do so (Eph. 4:15). As we show our disdain for evil, let us not be hateful in the process.

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# RED FLAGS

Tony Ward

Recent news concerning gun control has brought about a new dimension to the old adage “red flags”. Red flags denote warning signs, approaching danger, eminent catastrophes, unavoidable hazards, etc. Let’s consider some red flags threatening the church of Christ.

1) **Disdain for the name “church of Christ.”** A casual visit of congregational websites will reveal relegating the name, “church of Christ”, to a subordinate or even obscure position. Does this not speak loud and clear that they are embarrassed or ashamed of what they perceive as the baggage of a narrow minded, exclusive, bigoted heritage, (the false assumption that the Campbells began the churches of Christ), and that we are just another denomination? Often times it can be seen on church marquees, websites, bulletins, etc., where the name of the location, (i.e. Canyon, Reedland, et. al.), is prominent in bold capital letters and under that name in small letters “Church of Christ.” This is just one red flag to those who identify with the watchman for God (Jer. 6:17).

2) **Innovations in the assembly of God’s people.** Where do we find the authority for Children’s Worship hour, praise teams, the casual approach of worship, cell groups replacing our corporate gathering in one place (1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23), women front and center (in any format)? Why is it so often the younger population that seeks change and does this not speak of their educational background in our sermons, Bible classes, church sponsored universities, home devotionals, etc.? Are our youth ministers

## Beware...

(Continued from page 57)

there are distinctive differences between the counterfeit and the genuine. Neither Paul nor the saints in Philippi believed Satan’s lie that it is impossible to discern between God’s sheep and the devil’s goats. Unlike the spiritual counterfeits, there are those who genuinely belong to God, worship Him acceptably, rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though Satan is the master of disguise, it is possible to discern between New Testament Christianity and its counterfeits.

The final verses of the third chapter of Philippians insightfully trace the somber importance of sound doctrine and the sad outcome of false doctrine. False teaching begets carnal values (“whose god is their belly”) which beget worldly mindedness (“whose glory is in their shame”) which results in eternal destruction (“enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction”). Sound (healthy) doctrine begets godly values (“have no confidence in the flesh”), which begets spiritual mindedness (“conversation is in heaven”), which results in eternal glory (“fashioned like unto His glorious body”).

Sound doctrine is not a contest to be competed in by brethren; it is an essential to eternal glory. Therefore, beloved, “beware, beware, beware” of false teachers.

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doing their job or is there too much fun and frolic going on? Do we see red flags?

3) **What about the use of modern translations of the Bible?** Some years ago at the Sunny Slope church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, during the West Kentucky Lectureship “question and answer” hour, this question was asked, “Does the use of the NIV (New International Version) as a pew Bible indicate a liberal leaning of that congregation? The venerable and scholarly brother Robert R. Taylor Jr. took to the podium and stated “yes” in no uncertain terms. I remember this clearly because I was there and asked the question. It seems sacrilege to some members of the Lord’s church to even think of using only one or two reliable Bibles, (i.e. KJV or ASV). Yet, the scholarly Robert R. Taylor Jr., Foy E. Wallace Jr., Guy N. Woods, and many others held that position. This should be a huge red flag for the watchman of our day, if not, why not? On down the proverbial rabbit hole we could go.

Will the Lord’s church eventually enter into another period of “dark ages” before the Lord returns? I pray not. Rise up, o man of God.

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