

Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 11, No. 12

December 2000

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH BRETHREN WHO HAVE ERRED FROM THE TRUTH?

Roger D. Campbell

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19,20). This passage shows it is possible for a brother in Christ who was living in or by the truth to err from it. The Holy Spirit calls the one who has left the truth “a sinner,” and describes his condition as “death.” In other words, a child of God who is no longer abiding in the truth is spiritually dead or separated from God (Eph. 2:1). When this happens, what should you and I do?

We must recognize that because the church is made up of people, there are sometimes going to be problems and even sin in it. Christians are people, and people sometimes make wrong decisions, some of which are transgressions of God’s will. The Bible truth about Christians is: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1:8). Some saints to whom the book of James was originally written were sinning by respecting persons (James 2:1-9). Some in Rome were causing divisions and offences in the church (Rom. 16:17,18). The church in Corinth had members who were carnal, and one brother there was a fornicator (1 Cor. 3:1-4; 5:1-13).

The churches of Galatia were troubled by those who perverted the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-8). In Thessalonica some members of the church were walking disorderly and not working (2 Thess. 3:10-12). Jesus clearly pointed out the sin that existed in the churches of Asia, and called upon the transgressors to repent (Rev. 2,3).

What do the above-mentioned examples show? Do they prove God approves of sin? No! Do they show the church must tolerate sin? No! What they show is that due to weakness of the flesh, God’s children sometimes sin. Is there anything the church can do to help prevent members from falling away from Christ? Yes, it can diligently teach the Bible to all members in order to strengthen them. It can give its greatest effort to exhort and encourage every member to be faithful to Christ, and it can provide an atmosphere of love in which all members feel like we are really one family. These are some basic, but essential steps, that the church (that means you and me) can take to try to provide for a healthy spiritual environment in the local congregation. But the reality is that despite such actions, from time to time, members of the church are going to sin. When a child of God sins, how can the problem be resolved? The one who has sinned must confess

his sin (1 John 1:9), repent and pray to God for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). If others know of the sin which he has committed, then he must confess it to them as well as to God (James 5:16). God promises to forgive us of all our unrighteousness if we truly turn away from our sin.

What about the case when a member of the church sins, does not want to repent, and continues to live in sin? How should we treat such brothers and sisters? First of all, **we must identify them.** We first need to find out for certain they are living in sin before we put them on a “list of the unfaithful.” Sometimes we hear rumors about other people, but when we begin to search into the matter, we find the rumors are not true at all. Surely we do not want to accuse anyone of leaving the truth without proof.

King Saul desired to kill David, partly because he believed what some were telling about David, although those things were not true (1 Samuel 24:9,10). This example plainly shows that rumors are not proof! Before we begin to speak about a member of the church as living “unfaithfully,” we need to hear the whole matter, in other words, gather

(Continued on page 97)

What Should We Do?...



Editorial...

THE UNITY CHRIST DEMANDS #2

Garland M. Robinson

JUST CHRISTIANS

The unity which Christ demands requires that we be neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jew. It is hard for many to comprehend this because they believe everyone has to be one or the other. Yet New Testament Christians are neither. We are just Christians. We are not any “kind” of Christians, we’re just Christians. The Bible knows nothing of Methodist Christians, Baptist Christians, Lutheran Christians. All denominational churches in the world were begun by men, not Christ; in many parts of the world, not Jerusalem; centuries after the apostles, not 33 A.D. They all began at the wrong place, at the wrong time, by the wrong men. Since they are plants which the heavenly Father did not plant, they will all be rooted up and cast into an eternal lake of fire (Matt. 15:13; Rev. 19:20; 20:15).

UNITY AT ANY PRICE?

God does not approve of all unity nor does He condemn all division. There are times we must not be united. Many passages tell us so. When one (or more) is in error and will not repent, fellowship can not and must not, be maintained. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). The teaching of church discipline shows that fellowship (unity) cannot be continued with those who will not repent (1 Cor. 5). The faithful must withdraw themselves from those who do not love and practice the truth (1 Tim. 6:5). Those who teach contrary to sound doctrine are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 1:9). We are to “...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

Compromise among children of God today is rampant. So little con-

cern is shown for the Lord’s Way. Lectureships and seminars are many which promote everything from instrumental music to holy roller pep-rallies. Like Elymas the sorcerer, they stand against the faithful proclamation of God’s Word and do not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord (Acts 13:8-10). They are full of all subtilty and all mischief. They are children of the devil and enemies of all righteousness. Their eyes are full of adultery and cannot cease from sin. They beguile unstable souls and their heart they have exercised with covetous practices. They are as cursed children and have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:14-15). Jude said, “*But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*” (Jude 10-13).

On the personal side, I love peace. I hate controversy. I deplore wrangling and contention. I would love to get along with everyone. However, I love the Way of the Lord more. I love it more than my own personal feelings. The Bible warns of those who depart from the faith and exhorts us to hold steadfast. “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*” (1 Tim. 4:1). “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye*

stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

As much as we might love peace and hate controversy, we must understand there can be no peace until there is purity first – purity of doctrine – soundness in the faith. “*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17). Bible unity, which is the only God-approved unity, will not be achieved until those who truly desire it submit themselves to a “*thus saith the Lord.*” They must love book, chapter and verse teaching and preaching. They must do all in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17).

BARRIERS TO UNITY

There are many barriers to unity. We would do well to learn some of them so we might avoid them.

Not accepting the Scriptures as the divine Word of God is a barrier to unity. The Bible is the all-inspired word of God. It is without flaw or error. It is consistent with itself. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “*...His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:3).

Not knowing the Scriptures is a barrier to unity. Since the Bible is the only acceptable standard on which unity is based, we cannot have unity without knowing what the Scriptures require. Even as a young boy of twelve, Jesus knew the Scriptures. “*And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers*” (Luke 2:46-47). “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Not respecting the Scriptures is a barrier to unity. To respect the Scriptures is to recognize their

authority. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”* (Col. 3:17). To do something in “the name of the Lord” means to do as the Lord has authorized. We must have Bible authority for all we say and do. To act without authority is to act apart from the Scriptures which ignores the Lord’s commands.

Not obeying the Scriptures is a barrier to unity. The Lord will only save those who obey Him. *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). Jesus is *“...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Heb. 5:8-9). He said, *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say”* (Luke 6:46)?

Not demanding that others follow the Scriptures is a barrier to unity. It’s not enough for some to obey the Scriptures while others do not. Everyone must obey the Lord’s Word. The Bible *“...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom. 1:16). Those who “believe” are those who obey. *“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”* (John 15:14).

Accepting standards God did not authorize is a barrier to unity. Many accept what men say and count it equal or even above what God says. Laws and doctrines are accepted by councils, synods, conferences, catechisms, creeds and manuals. The book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants and Science and Key to the Scriptures are but a few standards accepted by many. All will perish with the using for they are not the Word of God. There is but one holy divine Word – the Bible.

Making laws God did not make and binding them upon others is a barrier to unity. This is taking upon one’s self the liberty to speak in place of God. This is binding where God has loosed. It is going beyond the inspired Word and brings condemnation. *“If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book”* (Rev. 22:18). *“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”* (Prov. 30:6).

Ignoring the laws of God is a barrier to unity. When one does so he is not respecting what God has said. He takes liberties with the Scriptures and says God does not mean what He says. This is loosing what God has bound. We must not go beyond that which is written, whether of men or any other. *“And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think [of men] above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another”* (1 Cor. 4:6).

WHAT NOW?

All men living today have been born into a world of deep religious division and confusion. It is a part of our society and culture. How can we avoid it? What shall we do?

The answer is to go back to the Bible. Go back before the faith was departed from. Go back before the Gospel was perverted. Go back before the Truth was distorted. Go back before the doctrine was corrupted. Go back before unity was destroyed.

Go back. We must go back all the way to imitate the church of the first century before we can have the unity the Lord requires.

We must do today what they did to **become a Christian**. They heard the Word of God (John 6:44-45; Rom. 10:17). When they heard, they believed (Acts 18:8; Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Mark 16:16). Their belief (faith) moved them to *repent* of their sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Having repented, they *confessed faith in Jesus* as the only begotten Son of God (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10). Believing, repenting and confessing, they were *baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins* (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6,17-18; 1 Peter 3:21). Obedience to the Gospel made them children of God (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41,47). Men and women today are made children of God by doing the same things.

We must do today what was done in the first century to **worship God** faithfully. The New Testament reveals five acts of worship. These acts are included in worship on the Lord’s day, every first day of the week. 1) *Singing* (Eph. 5:19). Singing is congregational and a cappella, i.e., without the accompaniment of mechanical instru-

ments of music. There are no choirs, solos or “special music” in New Testament worship. 2) *Teaching* (Acts 20:7). A message from God’s Word is delivered. Nothing but the pure and unadulterated Word of God is proclaimed. The whole counsel of God is preached without fear or favor of any man (Acts 20:26-27). 3) *Giving* (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). A free-will offering is collected from each member on the Lord’s day. You will not find sales and fund raisers in New Testament giving. 4) *Lord’s supper* (Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-29; Matt. 26:26-29). Each member partakes of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine every first day of the week to remember Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. 5) *Praying* (Acts 12:5; cf. Acts 2:42). Members reverently pray unto God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ the Son.

Jesus said true worship is *“in spirit”* (from the heart, sincere) and *“in truth”* (according to and directed by God’s Word) (John 4:24). Does this characterize your worship? Let’s return to the Lord’s authorized acts of worship.

We must do today what they did to **live a daily Christian life**. That requires living faithful unto the Lord every single day. *“...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). *“...He that endureth to the end shall be saved”* (Matt. 10:22). *“...Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58).

Our day by day Christian living must be governed by the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:17). All that we do must be in accordance with the authority of the Scriptures. If we cannot point to a passage which authorizes our action, then we must not do it. Unauthorized acts causes division.

CONCLUSION

Only one way exists to have the unity God desires we have – put away our own will and submit ourselves to God’s will. We must submit to and embrace wholeheartedly the doctrine of the Lord – the New Testament. It is God’s standard for unity. *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you*

all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

Let us endeavor to “...to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Not by compromise with error, but by following heaven’s way of righteousness – God’s plan for unity, the Holy Bible.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dorothy Pace	\$20
Granville & Frances Parris.....	\$30
Danville Church of Christ, Rienzi, MS	\$150
Anonymous	\$20
Jimmy L. Clark	\$10
Charles Henley.....	\$20
Jewell Howard.....	\$20
Anonymous	\$20
Virgil Poe	\$25
John H. Brown	\$25
Anonymous	\$90
John Akers	\$3
Chuck & Nancy Verkist.....	\$50
Anonymous	\$60
Sammy Cooper	\$25
Jackie Weathers	\$100
James L. Shaver	\$15
Anonymous	\$200
Anthony Crowell.....	\$120
Leon Jones	\$10
Richard Messer	\$40
M/M Tommy Exum	\$25
Anonymous	\$50
Lenard Hogan	\$100
A. H. Kennamer	\$25
Oak Ridge Church of Christ, Obion, TN	\$100

PRINTER

Anonymous.....	\$40
Anonymous.....	\$500
Anonymous.....	\$225
Anonymous.....	\$160
Anonymous.....	\$60
Anonymous.....	\$50
Anonymous.....	\$160
Anonymous.....	\$60
Anonymous.....	\$200
Thresa Weir.....	\$25
C. Dennis Sensing, Sr.....	\$50

Beginning Balance.....	\$3,870.28
Credits	
Contributions.....	\$1,353.00
Printer	\$1,530.00
Debits	
Postage	\$1,075.68
Paper.....	\$1,026.40
Printer payment	\$ 945.00
Ending Balance.....	\$3,706.20

If you would like to contribute to our new printer, please earmark that on your check. If we have failed to properly post your contribution, we will be glad to make a correction.

Cost of Printer.....	\$11,871.65
Contributed	\$ 7,262.75
Remaining on Printer.....	\$ 4,608.90

SOMETIMES TO BUILD UP YOU MUST TEAR DOWN

Marvin L. Weir

The mentality that allowed each person to do “that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25) during the time of the Judges is the same warped mentality that afflicts many of God’s people today. In fact, this anti-pattern, anti-God type of thinking continued to afflict the Jews long after the period of the Judges. King Josiah was convinced that in order to receive God’s blessing Judah would have to live and worship according to God’s true pattern. There are numerous lessons we can learn from King Josiah’s edicts that are recorded in 2 Kings 23.

First, all the people were required to hear the word of God! “And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of Jehovah” (2 Kings 23:2). It is the word of God that enables people to make decisions that are **right**. Without hearing the word of God, one will not know what he needs to do in order to please the Almighty (cf. Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12).

Second, Josiah ordered the priests to “bring forth out of the temple of Jehovah all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah...” (2 Kings 23:4). The objects made by the hands of men that did not glorify God and were contrary to His word had to be purged from the temple.

An instrument of music is such an object today and instead of condemning such we have many congregations now clamoring for such instruments to compliment their worship assemblies. Dedications and testimonials are now common occurrences in many worship assemblies; and, those who prefer to please themselves love to have it so. If elders would read the book today and vow to abide by it, a tremendous purging would occur in most congregations.

Third, King Josiah “put down the idolatrous priests...” (2 Kings 23:5). The king knew the priests were a great influence on the people. He did not begin at the bottom and work his

way up. Josiah started at the top with those who had responsibility to see that God’s word was respected. The idolatrous priests had to go if the people were ever to please God.

The same is true with “turncoat” preachers today. Godly elders will never allow those who do not respect and fully proclaim God’s word to occupy the pulpit. Why? Because what comes forth from the pulpit is going to have an affect upon who is sitting in the pew! Many brethren sit wringing their hands and complaining that they do not understand what is happening to the Lord’s church. What has happened again and again is that liberal preachers and youth ministers have been paid to lead both the old and the young astray!

Fourth, Josiah ordered that “no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech” (2 Kings 23:10). In many instances today the elders act as if the youth and young families are running the church. Wrong doing and a rebellious spirit are not to be tolerated in the kingdom. There is a time to say “no” and “mark” (Rom. 16:17) or “withdraw fellowship” (2 Thess. 3:6) from those who refuse to repent and insist upon corrupting true worship (John 4:24).

Fifth, Josiah broke down the altar and high places created by men (2 Kings 23:15). People cannot, with God’s approval, continue to cherish and cling to that which is wrong. Folks today don’t won’t to “let go” because they are concerned about hurting someone’s feelings and “backlash” from family members and friends. If we desire to go to heaven we must be more concerned with hurting God than hurting man!

The truth of the matter is that sometimes before brethren can “build up” they must “tear down.” A proper foundation is never erected upon the sinking sand (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). King Josiah knew that rotten rubble had to be cleared away before the people could build properly. Brethren today need desperately to grasp this biblical principle.

5810 Liberty Grove Road
Rowlett, TX 75030

What Should We Do?...

(Continued from page 93)

all the information before making a conclusion. Let us remember this truth: *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him”* (Prov. 18:13). Again, let us find out for certain that one is truly not walking in the light (1 John 1:7) before we begin to talk about how to “bring him back.” We have known of some cases in which congregations heard and accepted false information, and as a result accused brethren of living in sin, when in reality the brethren who were so accused were completely innocent. Brethren, let us be very careful in this affair and be certain that we try “to restore” only those who are truly living in sin.

After we are certain that a brother or sister is truly not living in harmony with God’s word, it is necessary that we **maintain a proper attitude toward such a person.** First, consider what would be the improper attitude to manifest in such a case. If we see that a member of Christ’s body is living in sin, then it would certainly be out of place for us to rejoice because he has fallen away! There should be no joy in seeing one separated from his Creator and Savior. Also, it would be wrong for us to be indifferent to the spiritual danger of our brother or sister. If we just do not care about another’s departure from his Lord, then our own heart is not right before God. In addition, when we see a member of the church living in sin, it would be inappropriate for us to approve of their action, support them in it, and defend their lawlessness. Yet, this is the very thing that some do today. Such action is wrong!

What would be the proper attitude toward brethren who are living in sin? Each of us should be *filled with sorrow* when we think about a member of God’s family going astray as a sheep leaving his shepherd. Such should cause us to be *moved with compassion* to try to help them. When a member of our physical family dies, it is a natural thing for us to mourn over their death and our loss. The church is God’s family (1 Tim. 3:15), so would it not be proper to be saddened and weep over one of His

children who have died spiritually? Of course it would. We must *continue to love those brethren who are living in sin.* Three parables of Jesus about God’s love for sinners are recorded in Luke 15: parable of the lost sheep, parable of the lost coin and parable of the lost son (“prodigal son”). If we are going to imitate the attitude that our Heavenly Father has towards those who are lost, then we will continue to love our brethren who have departed from the truth.

Finally, a proper attitude toward the erring would include *understanding and admitting they need help,* God’s help and ours. They need faithful Christians to help them bear their burdens. *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:1,2).

When we see that a child of God has left the faith, then we must *resolve in our hearts to take action.* We must give our greatest efforts to bring them back to Christ. When a member of the church has become unfaithful, then we must have one goal: help them return to their first love so their soul can be saved! Do you remember James 5:20? *“...He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.”* That is what we want to do, help save a soul! Paul charged the church in Corinth to take action against a fornicator in the church in order that *“the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”* (1 Cor. 5:5). We must try to restore those who have fallen (Gal. 6:1,2). True, we will not be successful every time we try to bring people back to their first love, but still we must give our best effort. We must not just sit and do nothing while our brothers and sisters are walking on the road to hell. We must act in order to help them and so that their blood will not be upon our hands (Acts 20:26).

How can we act to help those who have fallen away? Some seem to think we should do nothing and just hope the erring will someday on their own decide to repent, because as you know, we cannot force people to do what is right. True, we cannot force people to repent, but if we truly are concerned about them, we will not

just sit and be quiet, but will take action!

In order to bring the unfaithful back to Christ, it would also be inappropriate to promise them that if they will return, then we will allow them to teach a Bible class. We have heard of cases where this has taken place, but we must note that when one is living in sin we do not have the right to “bargain” with him or “bribe” him. If a brother truly repents, then perhaps after a period of faithful service, the church might ask him to teach a Bible class, but that should never be the motivation that is used to get him back. Sometimes it is suggested that if we will allow an unfaithful brother to lead prayers or singing during services, maybe this will encourage him to repent. Brethren, the order in the above-described actions is just the opposite of what it should be! A brother who is in error must first repent, then, and only then, should we ask him to lead in some part of public worship, for those who lead in prayer (and other aspects of worship) must be those who are holy (1 Tim. 2:8). It would also be totally out of place to say to an erring member, “If you will just come back and attend services regularly, then we will just forget about what happened.” Where is that concept in the Bible? If one does not truly repent of his sins, then it does not matter what you and I might promise him, he is still dead in sin and separated from God. We must not lose sight of this fact. When a Christian leaves the Lord and will not repent, he is lost!

In some congregations, when a member falls away and a considerable period of time has passed, someone simply takes the fallen person’s picture off the wall (or takes it out of the church’s picture directory) and removes his name from the membership list. While such action might be proper sometime in the future, it should not be the first, and absolutely not the only action taken. If we really love those who have left the faith, then their departure is worthy of more of our time and effort than simply removing a picture and a name on a list!

We would love to see 100% of the members of the church be faithful, but that just does not happen.

4865 Bates Pike SE
Cleveland, TN 37323

BUT THE CHURCH ISN'T MEETING MY NEEDS

Randy Dodson

To be sure, the above title could well take on any one of several meanings, depending on the context in which the statement is made. However, only one application is of interest herein. This statement is many times made by those who purport to be dissatisfied with the role the New Testament church plays in their lives, particularly in corporate worship. When used in this particular context, the phrase takes on the following meaning: "The church isn't meeting my needs. Our worship services aren't meaningful. Let's change our corporate worship so that it is more meaningful and meets my needs."

This sentiment, perhaps even genuinely expressed, reflects a deep misunderstanding of both the purpose of worship and the role the worshipper plays in it.

The sentiments expressed above would seem to suggest that the *primary purpose* of worship is to "meet my needs." Certainly the formal corporate assembly of the saints provides opportunity for worshippers to meet certain spiritual needs: fellowship (Acts 2:41-42), edification (Eph. 4:11-13), education (2 Tim. 3:15-17). In fact, that list could go on for a while. However, the Bible does *not* support the viewpoint that the *primary purpose* for corporate worship is to meet the needs of worshippers.

What then is the *primary purpose* of Christian worship? Webster defines "worship" as "paying homage or service to deity; expressions of devotion or adoration to deity." Thus, in the very nature of the case the *primary purpose of Christian worship is to pay homage, or express devotion to God.*

The concept of expressing devotion to God is not a new one, and in fact is as old as time itself. In Genesis 4:1-7, Moses records the worship of Cain and Abel. Abel's worship was acceptable to God (4:4); Cain's worship was unacceptable (4:5). Why were they worshipping God to begin with? Was it to meet their needs or was it because God commanded them to do so? Moreover, how did they know to worship at all?

A thorough consideration of the preceding three chapters of Genesis

does not reveal to us the instructions Cain and Abel were under as they worshipped God in Genesis 4. However, they *were* worshipping God. Therefore, we may be sure they did so at His instruction. In addition, we may also conclude that worship is based on divine revelation from God. In fact, worship may be said to be a response to divine revelation. Cain and Abel worshipped in response to the instructions God gave them.

Abraham does the same thing in Genesis 22:1-2. "*And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah. And offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*" God gave Abraham instruction for proper worship, and Abraham acted. Again, one who would worship God responds to divine revelation from God.

Hebrews 11 discusses the worship of Abel and Abraham. Both were instructed of God concerning the proper address to him. Both responded to those divinely revealed instructions. Why? What made them respond thusly?

The Hebrew writer says it was *faith*. Hebrews 11:4,17, "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh. ... By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son....*"

Abel and Abraham were instructed of God, they responded to that revelation through faith. Thus, faith always presupposes a previous revelation. Paul confirms this in Romans 10:17. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

Why has God asked us to worship him? Why has God from the beginning of time to the present asked man to approach him in worship and expected him to do it correctly? For this reason alone: he has made us

creatures of worship. He created us to worship him. He is worthy of our devotion as the creator of the universe (Rev. 4:11). He is our sovereign (1 Tim. 6:15). He has redeemed us through his Son (Rev. 5:9-14). Throughout the Psalms (29:2; 42:4; 89:7; 95:2-3), David acknowledges the fear, reverence and thanksgiving owed God through worship. As the creator he knows us, and knows we need an outlet for our devotion. Looking back, we can see why God told the Israelites to "...*have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20:3). God alone is the audience for our worship.

So in times of old, God revealed to his people how he wanted to be approached. They responded to that revelation by approaching him in the manner requested because they believed (had faith) that what God has asked them to do was right, reasonable and proper. Note further that the approach to God was made *without* thought to the personal preferences of the worshipper.

Additionally, notice the blessings bestowed on both worshippers. Is that primarily why Abel and Abraham approached God in worship – to receive blessings from Him? No. Did blessings follow? Yes. Abel's blessing was God's acceptance of his sacrifice. Abraham was blessed when the life of his son was spared. However, in neither case did the worshipper approach God with the express thought in mind of what might be obtained from worship.

Has God revealed to his people today (the church of Christ) how he wants to be approached in corporate worship? Indeed, he has. Our liberal friends can ridicule it all they like – it makes it no less true. It is what God's word plainly teaches.

Singing.....Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16
Praying.....James 5:16, Col. 4:2,
Eph. 6:18
Teaching.....Acts 2:42, Matt. 28:20
Lord's supper.....1 Cor. 11:23-28
Giving.....1 Cor. 16:1-2

There you have it, i.e., God's divine revelation to us. Are we ready to accept it, and respond to it in faith and approach him as he has request-

ed, just as Abel and Abraham and so many others down through the ages have done?

“But I don’t like doing it this way, it doesn’t meet my needs.” Do not such statements sound alarmingly like those of the Israelites as they came out of Egypt?

Consider how quickly the Israelites turned on Moses as the Egyptians pursue. *“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness”* (Exodus 14:11-12).

In other words: “But I don’t like doing it this way, Moses, it isn’t meeting my needs.”

Recall how the Lord’s people wanted for water yet doubted God could provide for their need? *“And the people strove with Moses, and spake, saying, Would that we had died when our brethren died before Jehovah! And why have ye brought the assembly of Jehovah into this wilderness, that we should die there, we and our beasts? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink”* (Num. 20:3-5).

But I don’t like doing it this way, Moses; it isn’t meeting my needs.

How quickly we forget how exasperated God became with his people on occasions such as these (Exodus 32:27-28; Deut. 9:14).

As we look back at Biblical history, surely God’s people in our day have not become so presumptuous that we would engage in worship that he has not authorized. Would his people further assume to have his approval and approbation for such practices? Are we prepared for the consequences of such arrogance (Lev. 10:1-2; Matt. 7:21-23)?

In his book, *Piloting the Strait*, Dave Miller deals with these sentiments in a very powerful way. He reminds his readers (paraphrasing) of their youth when parents would often attempt to teach their children to eat something they might not like. Remember what your parents said?

Two things, right? Eat it anyway, and learn to like it; it’s good for you.

“But I don’t like doing it this way, it doesn’t meet my needs.”

Friends, where correct Christian

worship is concerned – do it God’s way anyway, and learn to like it, its good for you.

P.O. Box 195
Dadeville, MO 65635

RESPECT OF PERSONS

Gil Yoder

One of the great characteristics of God is that He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17). This truth insures God’s fairness to mankind. The doctrine of Calvinism contradicts this truth in that it teaches that God chooses some individuals over others for salvation, not based on any standard of obedience to God’s commands, but merely on His whim.

In effect it says that God might choose to save someone who has never done a single thing to live righteously, and at the same time choose to condemn forever another who has sought to live as God would have him to live his entire life. But the Biblical doctrine of God’s inherent fairness debunks this myth. While no one earns his salvation, if it were true that salvation has nothing at all to do with conditions of obedience, then the only way God could save some and condemn others to eternal condemnation would be for Him to be a respecter of persons, and there would be no inherent fairness in God’s character.

Not only does the Bible tell us of God’s fairness in these terms, it uses the same terms to instruct us toward fairness toward one another. Hear these words of James: *“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. ... But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors”* (James 2:1,9).

James used the illustration of those who show respect of persons toward the wealthy, while mistreating the poor, to drive this principle home, because it is such a common manifestation of the sin. However, there are other ways we can show respect of persons that might not be so obvious.

1) It is possible to reverse the illustration and show respect of persons for the poor, while mistreating the rich. The cultural class warfare promoted by many liberal politicians is a case in point. To show no respect of persons, all men should be treated equally regardless of their social status in society. Neither the rich nor the poor deserve second class treatment.

2) One can show respect of person by treating one man differently from another solely based on the race of the men. We usually use the term “prejudice” to describe this characteristic. That is a good term for it, because to show respect of persons is to pre-judge a man on faulty grounds. Men should be judged on their works, not on their color, just as God judges us (1 Peter 1:17).

3) We also demonstrate respect of persons when we condemn actions we see in our “enemies” but defend those same actions when we see them in our friends. Many brethren are well known for their defense of the truth, and willingness to call a spade a spade when error is perceived among those outside their sphere of association, and especially among those who have been previously marked for their error. We would not fault those actions at all, but sometimes the same brethren fail to show the same zeal of spirit, when the same errors are discovered among their friends. Perhaps all men have this tendency to protect those with whom they are close, but it is an error that is dangerous to all. It hurts the church, because error is not more quickly corrected. It hurts the brother we seek to protect, because it makes it more likely that he will not repent. And, it hurts us because we become a partaker in his evil deeds.

If we would be more like God, this characteristic should be put away from us. Let us treat all men with equanimity, and have not respect unto persons.



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Panel: Bright, Blanton, Johnson. "Gentleness," Ed Johnson. "Goodness," Jeff Blanton. April 1, "Faith," Ted Thrasher. "Meekness," Jim O'Connor. Question/Answer Panel: Fox, O'Connor, Thrasher. "Temperance," Marion Fox. Call 918- 224-2024 or 224-4376 or write: 101 S Walnut, Sapulpa, OK 74066." "Please add us to mailing list of *S.T.O.P.* It is sad to read what people are doing to God's church. But we as Christians need to be warned of the grievous wolves invading us now. Here is a small donation to help in the work of the paper and we pray God will continue to bless the congregation of East Corinth" ...**Gene & Sue Colley, Mayfield, KY.** "Keep up the good work. Enjoy *S.T.O.P.* so much" ...**Rube H. & Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK.** "Please add me to your mailing list for the publication *Seek the Old Paths.* Thank you in advance. Keep up the good work!" ...**Bob Miller, Ludowici, GA.** "I received the audio cassettes from the lectureship a few weeks ago. I have greatly enjoyed them. There are not many sound lectureships here in Colorado and I appreciate being able to listen to the lectureship since I was unable to attend. My drive to work each day is about 35 minutes, so I try to listen to sermons on my drive. I hope that I may be able to come to next year's lectureship. I also wanted to thank you for continuing to send me *STOP.* It is very beneficial to my Bible study. Thank you for your time and stand for the truth. I know that putting on the lectureship, sending out *STOP,* sermon videos and the many other works which you and the elders do takes a lot of work. I appreciate your efforts. May God bless and keep you" ...**Jason O. White, Milliken, CO.** "Thank you so much for the good work you are doing" ...**Gene Dillman, Mitchell, IN.** "I would like to receive *Seek the Old Paths.* I have read it, and it is truthful" ...**E. A. Swain, Camden, AR.** "Please find enclosed my check to help with expenses in putting out *Seek the Old Paths.* It is fine paper! I wish we had a thousand of them in the brotherhood to counter the false teaching that is going on" ...**V. Glenn McCoy, Yorba Linda, CA.** "Your paper is sound, and contains excellent articles with each issue" ...**Carroll Bennett, Camden, AR.** I hope this letter finds you to be in good health, with the blessings of God raining down upon all of your good works. I am a long time subscriber, and I have always admired the quality of the work you have done in this fine publication. I would be honored, if you would accept this contribution of my work to your efforts. May God continue to bless your labor" ...**Russell M. Kline, Madisonville, KY.** "I have a copy of *S.T.O.P.* my mother-in-law has given me to read and I would appreciate so much to receive it. Your work is most important in helping to keep all informed on false teachings, I am very thankful for it. May God bless" ...**Carmella Lane, Martinez, GA.** "Dear brethren, May God richly bless you for standing for truth. How I pray that all of the preachers of the churches of Christ would do the same. Here is my new address. Please put me back on your mailing list. I really miss receiving your great paper" ...**Jeanette Noble, Jackson, MS.** You all are doing a wonderful job! I have enjoyed your web site a great deal. I know you will be blessed for this maintaining a hold to the righteousness God has given us" ...**Debra A. Reitz, Newport, KY.** "Refused, return to sender" ...**Chris Lowe, Rochester Hills, MI.** "May God's blessings be with you" ...**Steffie Stewart, Riverview, MI.** "Thanks for stand and love for the truth" ...**Tom O'Neal, Hardy, AR.** "I am just starting to preach the word of God and find it very helpful and useful. Please keep up the good work and stand always for the truth" ...**Clarence Cannon, Jr. Butler, TN.** "Thank you for putting me back on your mailing list. I will continue to pray for you and for the wonderful work you do for the Lord" ...**Jeanette Noble, Jackson, MS.** "Hi to you all, I have a family that is good friends to me, their name is Randy and Shari Franklin. They receive your mailing of *Seek The Old Paths,* and I just love all the articles in them. I would love to get this and any other mailings that you send. I am a seeker, and a reader of the Bible, anything like your mailings would be of great joy and interest to me. So please feel free to send me *Seek The Old Paths,* and anything else you send out in your mailings. Thank you very much, and God bless you for your wonderful gift of Biblical material" ...**Linda E. Flaughter,**

Albany, OR. "We enjoy the messages that the publication contains and look forward to receiving them" ...**Blackmon Church of Christ, Baker, FL.** "The books you produce are very useful to me in teaching Bible class and preaching. Thank you so much" ...**James Fisher, Franklin, LA.** "Keep up your good works in His name" ...**Ray Lee Overton, Bedford, VA.** "I always appreciate your efforts with *STOP!* Keep up the good work" ...**Wally Kirby, Gainesboro, TN.** "I receive the *STOP* paper and really enjoy it. It is sad that the true church (in some places) is becoming like some of the denominations we see on TV. It is a shame that we are becoming like that and that some are just rolling with the flow. Sad indeed" ...**Erik Burner.** "God bless. You are doing a great work with the lectures and in *Seek The Old Paths*" ...**Charles Maxwell, Cookeville, TN.** "I have enjoyed receiving *STOP* and would like to continue it. I am now the preacher for the Marshfield Church of Christ in Marshfield, WI" ...**Hardie Logan, Marshfield, WI.** "I always want you to know that I pray for you and the work with *S.T.O.P.* Your contributions to the preservation of the purity and integrity of the church are most appreciated by all those who count truth dear! Keep up the good work Garland. My love and prayer for you in Jesus the Christ" ...**David B. Smith, Lenoir City, TN.** "I really enjoy your articles and say thank you for your good work" ...**Wesley Alford, Montgomery, AL.** "My husband and I would like to order 70 copies of the *Seek the Old Paths,* Vol. 11, No. 10, "The Community Church," written by Brother Gary McDade. Please forward a bill for the cost and we will be happy to compensate you. God bless your work and continue in the Lord's service" ...**Brian and Leigh Ann Test, Meredosia, IL.** [NOTE: We never charge for doing the Lord's work.] "Thank you, and may God bless your stand for the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" ...**Jerry Brewer, Elk City, OK.** "I appreciate so much the good work you do with this paper, and the lectureship. You and the eldership there are to be commended. If you would, please send a bundle of 30 each month. Again, thanks" ...**Ben Justice, Cherokee, AL.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** / Associate Editor: **Jimmy Bates**

<http://www.tsixroads.com/~ecorinth>

EAST CORINTH CHURCH OF CHRIST
1801 CRUISE ST.
CORINTH, MS 38834-5108

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Permit No. 253
Corinth, MS