



# 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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## DO METHODISTS NOT HAVE A BIBLE?

Tommy J. Hicks

A “Special Session” of The General Conference of **The United Methodist Church** was held February 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri. This “Special Session” met to decide if The United Methodist Church would strengthen or end its prohibitions regarding same-sex marriage and the ordaining of gays and lesbians into its clergy? The “Special Session’s” final vote was 53% to 47% in favor of strengthening the prohibitions “against” same-sex marriage and ordaining gays and lesbians into its clergy. This may lead to a wide-open break in the United Methodist Church.

Matt Miofsky, a “Special Session” attendee, said about the Methodist Church where he preaches, “We fully embrace LGBTQ+ people into the whole life of the church.” Further, Miofsky added, “Jesus loves queer people for who they are” and that the “scriptures welcome queer people into the Kingdom of God through faith in Christ (and not through a renunciation of their gender or sexual identity).”

Kevin Young, the “Senior Minister at St. John’s United Methodist Church,” in Lubbock, TX may or may not have attended the St. Louis meeting, but he, like many other Methodists did not like the “Special Session’s” outcome. Young made it known that as far as he is concerned, the general conference of the United Methodist Church has decided to stay on the side of discrimination. He said he thought that it is tragic, “to send a signal to our culture and our world that somehow that discriminatory posture against LGBTQ people is approved by God.”

God does love those involved in LGBTQ+ immorality (John 3:16). He wants them to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Still, if the Bible is true, and it is, God cannot accept them as long as they engage in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer lifestyles. Perhaps, it should be asked, “Do Methodists (and others) who claim the ‘scriptures welcome queer people into the Kingdom of God through faith in Christ (and not through a renunciation of their gender or sexual identity)’ actually have a Bible”? If so, have they not read Paul saying: “*Know ye not that the **unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God***” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Other translations use the words, “sexually immoral...men who practice homosexuality.”

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul identifies such conduct as “works of the flesh” and sounds the warning, “that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” God turned “*the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*” (2 Peter 2:4-6).

The LGBTQ+ folks and their allies may try to deny it, but the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah we read about in Genesis

18:20, Isaiah 3:9, and Lamentations 4:6, is a reference to the sin of homosexuality (cf. Gen. 19:4-9; Jude 7). Condemning homosexuality in the Mosaic Dispensation, God said, “*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination*” (Lev. 18:22). God, according to the Law of Moses, commanded, “*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them*” (Lev. 20:13). The Law of Moses is no longer of force (i.e. men do not live under its laws today, Gal. 3:24-25).

Now, under the Law of Christ in the New Testament Dispensation, God still condemns homosexuality and lesbianism, but He does not have them harmed physically as a punishment. He will dispense to them their due on Judgment Day. However, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 warns that “*the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” These include the sexually immoral... adulterers... and those who practice homosexuality (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10).

Supporters of the “LGBTQ+ Community” need to read Romans 1:26-29, 32. God has rendered His decision about all forms of sexual immorality (including homosexuality) and made it known in His Word. He has not changed that decision (Malachi 3:6). So, if the Methodists and others have a Bible and believe what God says in it, what is the point of having a “Special Session?” They cannot change what God says about the matter.

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Editorial...

## THE UNITY CHRIST DEMANDS #4

Garland M. Robinson

### BARRIERS TO UNITY

**T**here are many barriers to unity. We must avoid them at all cost.

**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 has no equal. It is without flaw or error. It is consistent with itself. No other book or document can lead mankind to eternal life. *“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). We are told to *“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 knowing the Scriptures brings God’s wrath upon us. *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children”* (Hosea 4:6).

**Not respecting the Scriptures is a barrier to unity.** God demands respect to his word. We are forbidden to alter it in any way, either by adding

to it or deleting from it. *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book”* (Rev. 22:18-19). 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.** God 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)? *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32).

**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. Jesus said, *“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I com-*

*mand you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”* (John 15:14-15).

**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. Jesus said *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:8-9).

**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. Jesus revealed to the apostles that God alone had the right to “bind” and “loose.” *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matt. 16:19). The point of this verse is the fact that the apostles would only bind and loose what God had bound and loosed in heaven. They did not have power to make laws for God. That would be 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 ignores or refuses to obey the Scriptures, he is not respecting what God 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. *“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). Man has no right to ignore God’s word.

Conclusion: Unity does not come about by accident. It is a deliberate action upon the part of every member of the Lord’s church. It requires a lot

of work. The words of Ephesians 4:1-6 tell us what to do and gives us the standard upon which to stand. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul wrote: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all **lowliness** and **meekness**, with **longsuffering**, **forbearing one**

**another** in love; **Endeavouring** to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.”

## WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS PROMISED TO ABRAHAM?

Bill Boyd

*It was not the property of the world that was promised to Abraham. His seed received all the earthly property they were promised. Abraham desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly” country.*

Some renewed earth advocates suggest there is support for their doctrines where Paul wrote, “For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13). To them, “heir of the world,” means, “heir of a renewed earth.” This is one of the dots they connect to draw their idea from the Scriptures. To get this dot, they lift a phrase from its context and read their supposition into the text. They have three big problems.

First problem: **they cannot find the promise.** God made promises to Abraham, but God never promised Abraham a renewed earth. God did promise land for Abraham’s seed (Gen. 12:7): “northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen. 13:14); “the length of it and the breadth of it” (Gen. 13:17); “from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18); “all the land of Canaan” (Gen. 17:8). God delivered on these promises. “The LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein” (Josh. 21:43). “There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Josh. 21:45). “Not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning

you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Josh. 23:14).

The seed of Abraham received all the land they were promised, but they did not receive all the property on the earth, therefore they were not promised all the property on the earth. A renewed earth advocate recently recognized this problem. He said that Paul was “expanding” the promise, but Paul did not say he was expanding the promise. Paul was explaining, not expanding. If Paul was expanding the land promise to include a renewed earth then a renewed earth was not promised to Abraham. If it had been given to Abraham, then Paul would not have had to expand it. That is enough to show that the promise made to Abraham and his seed (that they should be “heir of the world”) was not the promise of a renewed eternal earth.

Second problem: **a renewed earth is not in the context.** The promise made to Abraham that applied to the world was not a promise for the property of the world, but for the people of the world. “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Gen. 13:16). “Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Gen. 15:5). It was in this

context that Abraham asked, “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it” (Gen. 15:8)? The use of the word “inherit” in Genesis 15:8 related directly to the use of the word “heir” in Romans 4:13. In this context, Abraham was not asking about being heir to the land, or to the property, but the people. Further, God said, “Thou shalt be a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4), and “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18). This is the promise Paul referenced in Romans 4 when he said, “(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations)... who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be” (Rom. 4:17-18). Paul was referencing both Genesis 17:4 (“father of many nations”) and Genesis 15:5 (“so shall thy seed be”). Paul’s point is that the promised blessing comes, not upon the circumcision only, but upon the uncircumcision also (Rom. 4:9). “That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised... and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:12). Abraham would be heir of the people of the world, not of the property of the world, and the people would become his because of their faith, not because of their flesh.

Paul taught the same thing in

and about Galatia. When Paul first preached in Antioch of Pisidia he said, “We declare unto you the glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised him from the dead... And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). When the Gentiles understood that this salvation was for them, “they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:48). They rejoiced over the salvation of their souls, not the salvation of their property. Paul followed with a letter to the Galatians, saying, “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:7-9). “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Paul did not say anything to the Galatians about saving, redeeming, or renewing their property.

Third problem: **Abraham wanted to go to heaven.** God had told Abraham that he was a stranger in the promised land, “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land

wherein thou art a stranger” (Gen. 17:8). In the New Testament we read that Abraham “...sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country... for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9-10). When the body of a loved one is lowered into the grave, our hearts ache, and our affections turn from the passing vanities of earthly things to eternal blessedness — heavenly things. We walk away from their buried dust feeling like strangers in the land. The pleasures of earth lose their charm and our desire to follow those we have loved to a better place grows fonder. David comforted himself upon the death of his infant son, saying, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). My father-in-law spoke these words of David to comfort in David’s words after the death of his little girl in St. Jude Hospital. So also, after Sarah died, Abraham remembered the words of the Lord from Genesis 17:8 and confessed to the sons of Heth, “I am a stranger, and a sojourner with you” (Gen. 23:4). The Holy Spirit who searches the deep things of the heart revealed to us more fully the mind of Abraham on this occasion, saying, “They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of the country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity

to return. But now **they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly:** wherein God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:13-16). Note the words, “an heavenly.” Look it up in the Greek text. It is not the common word for “heavenly,” but “*epi-heavenly*.” After Abraham left his Sarah in the tomb, he was looking for a country “above the heavens,” a place that is better than the earth.

In context, it was promised to Abraham that he would be “*heir of the world*” (Rom. 4:13) when it was promised, “Thou shalt be a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4; Rom. 4:17), and “So shall thy seed be” (Gen. 15:5; Rom. 4:18). It was in this context that Abraham asked, “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it” (Gen. 15:8)? It was not the property of the world that was promised to him, but the people of the world, “...that he might be the father of all that believe... who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:11-12). His seed received all the earthly property they were promised (Joshua 24:14), but Abraham desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16). We do too.

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## CALVINISM

Jon Gary Williams

The roots of Calvinism extend back to the 16th century during the early days of the *Reformation Movement* in Switzerland. **John Calvin**, a theologian, became a part of the growing wave of *Protestantism*. He, like **Martin Luther** in Germany, was troubled over the corruption he found in Catholic doctrine and practice.

One thing Calvin found especially disturbing was the emphasis on works in order to reach heaven. In contrast, he began emphasizing the grace of God. To him it was the **grace of God versus the works of man**. In his zealous opposition to Catholicism, it never occurred to him that the scriptures taught a happy medium — a **combination of grace and works**. So, in the formation

of his position against the extreme works of Catholicism, he created another extreme teaching — **extreme grace**.

Calvin’s views focused on the nature of man’s redemption. He taught that all men are born inheritors of Adam’s sin (a carryover from Catholic belief) and that man plays no part in his redemption and that the atonement for sin is limited to the elect. He felt there was nothing for man to do to be saved, that man’s salvation was solely in the hands of God.

In the mid to late 1500s Calvin’s views became the standard among reformation efforts throughout Europe. Hence, the term “Calvinism” came to be the identifying label of reformation theology and continues to this day;

practically the entire denominational world adheres in some way to Calvinism. Calvin’s efforts eventually led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church.

Actually, there are five parts to the Calvinistic doctrine, hence, it is often addressed as, “The Five Points of Calvinism.” Unraveling this five-point system can become complicated but it can best be understood by remembering the acrostic “**TULIP**,” which designates the titles of the five parts. They are:

**T**otal Inherited Depravity,  
**U**nconditional Special Election,  
**L**imited Atonement,  
**I**rresistible Grace, and  
**P**erseverance of the saints.

But what, exactly, are these five points and what do they mean?

**CALVINISM EXPLAINED**

**1. Total Inherited Depravity**

This is the teaching that all men are born guilty of Adam’s sin and is sometimes referred to as the doctrine of “Original sin” or “Adamic sin.” It is the belief that man enters the world totally depraved with an inherited sinful nature which is passed on from one generation to the next. It teaches that man is incapable of doing any good and his condition is so sinful he can do nothing to correct it. However, if man is born in such a sinful state and if he can do nothing to aid himself, how then is he to be saved? This leads to the second point.

**2. Unconditional Special Election**

Calvin taught that since man is totally depraved it is impossible for him to choose to serve God. Therefore, it is God alone who determines who will be saved. He believed that God, through his grace, elects those who will be saved even before their birth. This means that man’s salvation is entirely unconditional, hence, “unconditional special election” or sometimes merely “unconditional election.” This doctrine is also known as “predestination.” Since Calvin taught that God’s grace predetermined those who would be saved, this meant also that the atonement for sin would only apply to them. This leads to the third point of Calvinism.

**3. Limited Atonement.**

Since the only atonement for man’s salvation is the blood of Christ, and since Calvin taught that only whom God has selected can be saved, this means the atoning blood of Jesus is limited to those who have been selected. Hence, all outside that group are excluded from redemption. But if salvation through the atoning blood on the elect has been predetermined, is it possible for them to refuse redemption? This leads to point four of Calvinism.

**4. Irresistible Grace.**

Calvin taught that redemption through God’s grace is so certain, it is impossible for the elect to resist it. He believed that God accomplishes his redemptive work of grace through a direct, supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Hence, the elect have no choice in the matter. If, however, the elect cannot resist God’s redemptive grace, does this mean they can never be lost? This is answered in the last point of Calvinism.

**5. Perseverance of the Saints.**

Since Calvin believed salvation is entirely in the hands of God and that the elect could not resist his grace, he was forced to further teach that the elect cannot lose their redemption. This was the logical conclusion to his overall salvation theology. Hence, the elect will persevere to the end. This view is sometimes called the “impossibility of apostasy” or “once saved, always saved” doctrine.

**CALVINISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURES**

**1. Total Inherited Depravity.**

Sin is not inherited. Man is guilty only of his own sins (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 3:23; 14:12). Man will be judged for his own evil works (Matt. 16:27; Eccl. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:17). Little children are not sinners (Matt. 18:3-4; Luke 18:16). They have no knowledge of good and evil (Deut. 1:39). Death, not sin, is passed to all mankind (Rom. 5:12).

**2. Unconditional Special Election.**

God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9). There is something for man to do (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:7-8).

**3. Limited Atonement.**

The atoning blood of Christ is for all (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Salvation is for all men (Acts 2:21; 10:35; 17:30; Rom. 10:13; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; John 3:16; Rev. 22:17).

**4. Irresistible Grace.**

This takes away man’s free will (freedom of choice). He becomes nothing more than a robot. Man is free to choose or not choose God (Josh. 24:15; Matt. 11:28,29). Man can choose to resist the holy Spirit (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19). The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to bring God’s message. The Jews rejected this message and Stephen said that in doing so they were resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).

**5. Perseverance of the Saints.**

Christians can depart from God (Heb. 3:12).

Christians can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Peter 1:10; 3:17; Jude 24).

Christians can deny the faith and become worse than the lost (1 Tim. 5:8).

Christians can turn away from the faith (1 Tim. 1:19).

Christians can perish (1 Cor. 8:11).

Christians can be spewed out by

Christ (Rev. 3:16).

Christians can err from God and be in danger of spiritual death (James 5:19-20).

Christians can be servants of sin which leads to spiritual death (Rom. 6:16).

Christians can sow to the flesh and lose eternal life (Gal. 6:7-8).

Christians can wither away or be choked (Matt. 13:5-7).

Christians will stand in judgment along with the world (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 4:17).

Even the apostle Paul said that he could be a castaway (rejected) (1 Cor. 9:27).

**Summary**

Calvinism is a drastically false set of teachings. From beginning to end it abounds with beliefs contrary to the Scriptures. Once the first step is accepted, all the other steps, of necessity, fall into place.

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**CONTRIBUTIONS**

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Sue Neal .....	\$25
Baker C/C, Baker, FL .....	\$25
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Beginning Balance .....	\$2,913.89
Contributions .....	\$2,705.00
Debits	
Postage .....	\$1,774.06
Supplies .....	\$543.06
Repairs .....	\$460.90
Ending Balance .....	\$2,840.87

[NOTE: The ending balance above does not include the postage for December. After this mailing there’s only about \$1,050 left in the account. If you can help, it would be greatly appreciated. We have begun our 31st year of publication. What a blessing! Thank you so much for your interest in the Lord’s work.]

# "BE YE STEADFAST, UNMOVEABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING..."

Marvin L. Weir

It has always amazed me that so many profess to read and study the Bible and yet believe that salvation is unconditional. Far too many people (including many brethren) have bought into the devil's doctrine of salvation by "faith and grace only."

One must have faith to become a child of God, and it is only by the grace of God that such is possible. Without faith and God's grace, one cannot successfully live the Christian life. God has **always** set forth *conditions* to which one must comply in order to be a recipient of His grace. Even God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is a case in point. The Scriptures reveal, "...though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience ... he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him**" (Heb. 5:8-9, emph. MLW).

The apostle Paul rebuked the Galatian brethren in saying, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). One can **move away** from God's grace after having Scripturally received it. This point is made absolutely clear when Paul tells the Roman brethren, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein" (Rom. 6:1-2)? One should then not be surprised that Paul would plead with the Corinthian brethren, "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). Let us learn several lessons from this passage of Scripture.

**First, Paul is speaking only to members of the Lord's church (New Testament Christians).** The Corinthians that Paul addresses are his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. A non-Christian may be kind and do many good deeds but his labor is in vain as far as spiritual matters

are concerned. Jesus' words still ring true today: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)! One who seeks to worship God but has not obeyed the Gospel worships in vain! If a person reacts by saying this is a harsh statement, he needs to carefully listen to our Lord. Christ says, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:7-9).

No matter what a person does, he can never attain Heaven unless he obeys the Gospel, becomes a Christian, worships according to the Lord's will, and walks according to the rule of Christ. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). One must be a member of the Lord's church in order to lay up treasures in Heaven (cf. Matt. 6:19-20).

**Second, Christians are to be steadfast and unmoveable in sacred matters.** The "hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8) is rooted and grounded in the precious Gospel (Col. 1:5). There is only one legitimate "hope" (Eph. 4:4) and all people are "called" (2 Thess. 2:14) and "saved" (Rom. 1:16) by the Gospel. But one can drift and move away from the Gospel — his only hope! Paul warns the Colossian brethren, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:23).

The God-given Gospel does not change or move. Neither God nor Christ changes (Malachi 3:6; Heb. 13:8). It is men who seek to change the Gospel to please themselves and others! The words that Christ spake are the words that will judge each of

us in the Day of Judgment (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10).

A faithful child of God will absolutely refuse to move away from Lord's commands. It is sad that many brethren who knew "the way of righteousness" have turned back (moved away) from God's Holy Word (2 Peter 2:20-22). As Paul said of some brethren, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). More and more people have deliberately chosen to do just that! One cannot move away from God's truths and expect to go to Heaven!

**Third, a Christian will abound in the work of the kingdom.** This is not one doing only what is necessary to get by, but one who goes beyond and richly abounds (overflows) in his work for the Lord. One will also notice that he must "abound" in the "work of the Lord." To "abound" in the work of men that follow man-made creeds will doom one to failure. Many sincere people sacrifice and labor hard in man-made denominations, but doing so does not make it right or acceptable to God!

**Fourth, it can only be said that labor for the Lord it is not in vain.** The wise man declared, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14). And again, "Then I saw all labor and every skilful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind" (Eccl. 4:4). All we do in this world will one day be left to someone else, and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish (cf. Eccl. 2:18-19). Thus, let us abound in the Lord's work and lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven "for where [our] treasure is, there will be our heart also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

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# A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN WE PERSONALLY KNOW

Roger D. Campbell

*In an enormous amount of places, in various ways, brothers and sisters are seeing to the needs of widows, caring for children with no parents, helping the needy, training other saints, and teaching the lost. Thank God for every faithful Christian!*

In most of the New Testament epistles penned by the apostle Paul, near the end of the letter he will express greetings from those who are with him at the time, and he often requests that special greetings be given to specific people “on the other end” of the letter. We could benefit greatly by slowing down to pay attention to some of the details about the people in Paul’s life. What I want us to note now, though, is not the specifics in those greetings sections of Paul’s letters, but some of what we do not know (that is, what is not stated in the Bible text).

For instance, consider the message of Titus 3:15, where we read, “*All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.*” When Paul referred to “all that are with me,” whom did that include? We do not know. When he said, “Greet them that love us...” who were those people there with Titus on the island of Crete? We do not know. We do know that Paul expressed a desire for grace/favor to be with all of them.

Think about Philippians 4:3 where it is written, “*And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.*” Who was that “true yokefellow?” We are not sure. Who were the women in Philippi who “labored with” Paul in the Gospel? We do not know for certain. Who were all of those other “fellowlabourers” who had their names written in the book of life? We are not told.

Fast forward to the present. Can you and I name all the people living in the world today who have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life? Of course not. How many faithful servants does the Lord have in the state of Tennessee? What about in

Georgia? What about in the Philippines? In Brazil? In Italy? In Africa? We have no clue, right?

The truth is, most of God’s faithful servants are people we will never meet or even hear about in this life. Let that reality sink in. At one point, Elijah was convinced that he was the only faithful servant of God remaining. The Lord reminded him that He still had seven thousand who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:10,18). Do not get hung up on the number 7,000. It simply meant a whole bunch of folks — a great number known only to God.

There are members of the church throughout the world who are doing great things in God’s Cause. There are elders in multitudes of places who are doing a wonderful job of shepherding the flock of God among them (1 Peter 5:1-3). There are an untold number of deacons who are serving diligently (1 Tim. 3:8-13). I am blessed to know a number of sound, zealous Gospel preachers (2 Tim. 4:2). The overwhelming number of faithful evangelists in the world, however, are unknown to me. In an enormous amount of places, in various ways, brothers and sisters are seeing to the needs of widows, caring for children with no parents, helping the needy, training other saints, and teaching the lost. Thank God for every faithful Christian!

When it comes to all the faithful members of the church in the world, the great majority being people whom I do not know from Adam (whom I also do not know!), I need to remember some things.

First, my lack of knowledge of their existence or activities in the Lord’s work does not minimize their value or faithfulness. Not everyone who is faithful to God is in my pee-wee circle of human acquaintances. As a matter of fact, they don’t know

me either.

Second, those who are serving faithfully did not become followers of Jesus by accident. Someone taught them the Gospel. Go back to the first-century city of Colosse. Paul spoke about how the Gospel “came” to the people there (Col. 1:5-6). How did that happen? Someone took it there, meaning somebody taught it to them. Thank God for the Lord’s people today who open their hearts and mouths to teach the Gospel. As you are reading the words of this sentence at this very moment, somewhere in the world our brethren are teaching the Gospel. How wonderful!

Finally, let us not get hung up on numbers. Going back to where we started, when Paul told Titus to greet those who loved him, how many people did he have in mind? Does it really matter? Today, just because I do not see some action taking place before my eyes, that does not mean it’s not happening. On a more local level, just because I do not see or hear about members of our own congregation actively doing the Lord’s work, that does not mean they are not doing things behind the scenes.

Thank God for His faithful servants, whomever they are and wherever they might be serving. Perhaps I know them. Chances are, I’ll not meet them until we are joined together forever in heaven.

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A NOTE OF THANKS. As this issue closes out 2019 we wish to thank you for your interest in the saving Gospel. Many have contributed financially to this work making it possible for multiplied thousands to read and learn. Our goal is to help men obey the Gospel and be grounded in the faith. It is a blessing to be able to work with you in the Lord’s vineyard. — Editor



## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

wonderful. Send me another one. I love it and am giving one to a neighbor. You're doing beautiful things for the inner man"

**...Doris Ingram, Memphis, TN.** "Please remove my name from your send list. I do not believe only church of Christ people are on God's good list of Christians. Let God decide that and let's let God's Word lead and guide each one of us on this wonderful world that He created. Seek Him First, Right? We are not the judge, God is. Thanks" **...Julia Kosters, Memphis, TN.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: God is certainly the judge (Christ, Rom. 2:16; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10). And, Christ expects people to respect his judgment. Jesus clearly said, 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say' (Luke 6:46)? 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you' (John 15:14). We are so thankful that the Lord is the judge and not men (Matt. 25:31-46). Christ's judgment is perfect because he knows everything (Heb. 4:12-13). Also, concerning the matter of judgment, we are expected to examine whether one is in 'the faith' (2 Cor. 13:5). How would we go about determining whether someone is a Christian or not unless we examined their life to see if they have obeyed and are obeying God's Word? For example, parents judge their children and when they do wrong they discipline them accordingly. School teachers judge students test exam to determine if they gave the right or wrong answer. When one fails the test, can the teacher say, 'We're not suppose to judge anyone so I can't give you a score.' As a matter of fact, Jesus actually tells us to judge others. In Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus said, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.**' We are commanded to be 'fruit inspectors,' that is, we inspect other's actions. We are to apply the Lord's standard, the Lord's judgment, and make our decisions (judgments) accordingly. Those whom the Lord accepts, we accept. Those whom the Lord rejects, we reject. This is not based on 'our opinions.' It's based on the Lord's judgments. We know what the Lord's judgment is because he has told us in the Scriptures. We can't judge a person's motives or their heart, but we not only can, we must judge their actions. Otherwise, we would not know who to fellowship and who not to fellowship. We follow the Lord's Word, not our feelings. — **gmr**]. "I am thankful for the soundness of your perodical, S.T.O.P. May God continue to bless all connected with its distribution. Thank you" **...Joe C. Turbeville, Dresden, TN.** "Please accept this check in support for your *Seek The Old Paths* publication. We consider this publication to be one of the most beneficial in the work of His church in this age. Thank you" **...Smyrna C/C, Culleoka, TN.** "Thank you" **...Mildred Harris, Falls of Rough, KY.** "Virginia Kee has passed away" **...McKenzie, TN.** "I would like to receive *Seek the Old Paths* which inspires me to search for the truth" **...Beverly Davis, Henrietta, NY.** "Thank you so much for the wonderful work of *Seek The Old Paths*. Sharon Higginson was a strong supporter of this publication for well over 25 years! I showed a copy to the men of my congregation, Central Church of

"I believe that our English speaking brethren will benefit immensely from your publication as I personally have. To God be the glory and may He bless you" **...Mary Estrada, L. M. Dover has passed away" ...Magnolia, AR.** "The Oct/19 issue was great. Contending for the faith is so

Christ, Naples, Florida. All supported the distribution of STOP. Please send us 20 copies" **...Clark Dyer, Naples, FL.** "I am so very proud of you and thankful for the Leoni congregation for *Seek The Old Paths*. I look forward each month in reading every article" **...Sue Neal, Baxter, TN.**

"In an everchanging world that is destined to be annihilated when Jesus returns, the unchanging Jehovah is the only constant. It is the pinnacle of spiritual folly to reject the truth that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 5:8-9). As depicted in Psalm 14, such foolishness has several alarming characteristics and consequences. Consider the hideous portrait of a fool that David paints on the canvas of Scripture: A spiritual fool is morally corrupt in his character. He is abominable at heart. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*' (Psalm 14:1). A spiritual fool is misguided in his pursuits. He is carnal in his desires. *The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God*' (v.2). A spiritual fool is rotten in his soul. He is an evil doer. *They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one*' (v.3). A spiritual fool is bankrupt in his head. He has no genuine knowledge. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD*' (v.4)? **...John Chowning, Algood C/C, Algood, TN.**

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