



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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THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

John Chowning

The encroachment of the “social gospel” into our brotherhood is undeniable. It does not follow the pattern of the New Testament.

If the purpose of Jesus' incarnation had ever been political or social utopian in nature and purpose, the perfect storm for a political coup and the proclamation of the social gospel occurred at the conclusion of His feeding of the great multitude near Bethsaida.

Anti-government feelings among the Jews and especially the Zealots were raw and fervent because of the news of Herod's recent beheading of John the Immerser and his publicly expressed interest in seeing Jesus (Mark 6:17-29; Luke 9:9). Passover was approaching (John 6:4). Jews from around the world were trekking to Jerusalem, swelling its population to three or more times its usual size. The Roman soldiers quartered near the temple would be greatly outnumbered.

Because of His power to cure the physical ailments of those who had need of healing (Luke 9:11) and to transform five barley loaves and two fish into a banquet feast where everyone ate as much as they wanted with more leftovers than “begin withs,” the crowd desired to take Jesus by force and make Him king (John 6:15). What a Great Society Jesus could rule over — free healthcare and free food for all.

But Jesus refused. It was the wrong time (John 7:6), the wrong Passover (Luke 22:15), the wrong king-

dom (John 18:36). He was not going to receive all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them by yielding to Satan's temptation amid great peer pressure. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

His Gospel is not identical to the social gospel's proclamation of simply love your neighbor as yourself. His message of spiritual victory states that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matt. 22:37-38). Because of one's love for God, he ought to do good unto all men, especially to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

“At least 47 Churches of Christ across the nation received loans of \$150,000 or more through the federal government's coronavirus relief bill, a *Christian Chronicle* analysis found.”

“In all, those Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act loans amounted to at least \$9,450,000 — and as much as \$23 million — for Churches of Christ, according to a list released by the U.S. Small Business Administration.” So reads the first two paragraphs on page 23 of *The Christian Chronicle's* August issue.

In addition, the article also states, “Roughly 1,900 jobs, from ministry staff to daycare workers, were retained by the Churches of Christ listed...Recipients can apply for loan forgiveness

if they spend at least 75 percent on payroll costs and the rest on mortgage interest, rent and utilities...Of the nation's 30 largest Churches of Christ (as reported in a directory published by 21st Century Christian), 19 congregations were among those receiving loans of \$150,000 or more.”

The only congregation with a loan amount of between \$1 million and \$2 million was The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas. Its loan was used to retain 254 jobs. Its website (<https://thehills.org/>) lists the following 90+ staff positions (which are assumed to be part of the 254 indicated on the loan paperwork: Student Ministers (6), VIP Director, Special Needs Directors (2), Student Facilities Coordinator, Missions Financial Coordinator, Production Coordinator, Women's Minister, Lead Worship Minister, Ministry Administrator, Revenue Specialist, Film Director, Technical and Special Events Coordinator, Porch Manager, Early Childhood Director, Financial Coordinator, Kids Recreation Director, Family Care Minister, Guest Services Minister, Campus Ministers (2), Kingdom Expansion Minister, Healthcare Specialist, Administrative Assistants (10), Production Technician, Executive Assistants (2), Human Resources Director, Kids Outreach Di-

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The Social Gospel...



Editorial...

TEACH MY PEOPLE THE DIFFERENCE

Garland M. Robinson

Obeying the Gospel is the difference between heaven and hell.

Knowing the difference between right and wrong is firmly fixed within those who love the truth. Loving the truth solves our problems because we always turn to the truth to know right from wrong. When we know the truth, we act (work, operate, function) according to the truth. *“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). To continue in (live according to) the Gospel/Truth makes us free (forgiven) from the penalty of our sins.

When we speak of “obeying the Gospel,” there are many who have no idea what that means or what we’re talking about. They act as though they’ve never heard that expression. And, they probably haven’t heard it because of two, perhaps three, reasons: 1) they don’t read the Bible for themselves, 2) denominational preachers don’t preach it, 3) they have read it or heard of it, but because they don’t consider it important, it never registers in their mind; i.e. obeying the Gospel is not significant. Part of this thinking may stem from being told all their lives that man has no part in his own salvation and therefore cannot do anything to secure it.

“Obeying the Gospel” (the Truth) is the difference between heaven and hell. *“...The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”* (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The Holy Spirit in this passage plainly says that those who do not obey not the

Gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord — that’s eternal hell where the devil is cast (cf. Matt. 25:41,46). The lost, those who have never heard the Gospel; and, those who have heard it but never obeyed it *“...are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”* (Jude 7). Men aren’t lost because they have never heard the Gospel. They’re not lost because they haven’t obeyed the Gospel. Men are lost because they have sinned. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). Sin, just one sin, separates from God. Sin is a transgression (violation) of God’s law (the Scriptures, the Gospel, 1 John 3:4).

We must LOVE THE TRUTH! It’s tragic indeed when people don’t love the truth because they don’t care about the truth. The truth is the ONLY thing that can save one from their sins. Jesus said, IF we obey the Truth and keep on obeying the Truth (John 8:31-32) — the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:8), the Word of Christ (John 12:48), the Law of Christ (James 1:25; Gal. 6:2), THEN the Truth will make us free (forgiven) from our sins.

Do you love the truth? People remain in their sin when they do not love the truth and obey it. *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (2 Thess. 2:10).

Under the law of Moses, the priests were given the charge of teaching the people the law of God. To know God’s law made them able to know the difference between right and wrong. Regarding the priests, we read, *“And they shall teach my people the difference between the*

holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23). This was under the Old Testament and was “taken away” when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14). However, the principle taught in this passage has not changed. It is true in every generation. The Holy Spirit wrote in Romans 15:4, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

The priests were to teach the people the difference between the holy and the profane. “Holy” is that which is sacred, hallowed, dedicated, consecrated, separate from evil. It has to do with God’s holiness, divinity, sanctity, uprightness. “Profane” is that which is common, ordinary, plain, not special, not dedicated, of no value or use in God’s service. God is worthy. He is Holy. He is Divine. Nothing about him is common, ordinary, plain. How dare anyone relegate him, assign to him, that which is common and plain. God almighty is the very antithesis (opposite) of that which is common.

In Isaiah 55:8-9 God said, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Also, *“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations”* (Psa. 33:11). *“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them”* (Psa. 139:17)!

God’s word and way is this world’s everlasting guide. The vast majority of humanity do not see it and refuse to acknowledge it, but it does not change the fact and truthfulness of it. *“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations”* (Psa. 100:5). *“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations”* (Psa. 145:13). Jesus said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48). John wrote, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were*

judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20:12).

God’s thoughts, his word the Bible, shall endure to all generations. *“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither; but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”* (Isa. 55:10-11).

The Lord God in heaven above is the Father of all that exists. It is all his, including humanity. It is he that made us and not we ourselves (Psa. 100:3). God’s will is that all the world know, and are able to make the distinction between *the holy and the profane* (the unholy). People must see the difference between *the good and the evil*. It’s the difference between *righteousness and wickedness*. So sad and tragic indeed is the fact that *“the whole world lieth in wickedness”* (1 John 5:19). That was true in the Lord’s day and it is still true today.

God has much to say in his holy Scriptures about mankind making the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil.

Isaiah 5:20, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

Romans 12:9, *“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”*

Romans 12:21, *“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Romans 16:19, *“I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple, concerning evil.”* “Simple” means to be harmless, innocent. Those who are “good” do not work, espouse or endorse that which is evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:15, *“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good...”*

1 Peter 3:11, *“Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”* “Eschew” means to avoid, refrain.

3 John 11, *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”*

Hebrews 5:14, *“But strong meat*

belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

We all must know the difference between right and wrong. We then must be diligent in teaching others to know the same and then to live accordingly. It is disturbing that people around the globe work evil with all their heart and soul instead of goodness and uprightness. They need to know NOW that their behavior is leading them down the path to eternal damnation. The Lord some day will say to them, *“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41).

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The Social Gospel...

(Continued from page 81)

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What a contrast when compared to Jesus with the Gospel and His twelve apostles!

Congregations in eight different states received \$150,000 or more in aid. These include: one in Indiana and Alabama; two in Arkansas, California, and Oklahoma; three in Georgia; thirteen in Tennessee; and twenty-four in Texas.

The work of the church is to be solely supported by the freewill offerings of its members. Its primary work is to seek and save the lost by preaching the Gospel to every creature in every nation and keeping the saved saved by spiritual edification. Any “gospel” which deviates from this pattern is accursed of God (Gal. 1:8-9).

The encroachment of the social gospel into our brotherhood is undeniable; it can be clearly demonstrated in terms of dollars and cents.

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LOVE THE TRUTH, NOT THE WORLD!

*Send us your change of address
when you move.*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CALLING BIBLE THINGS BY BIBLE NAMES AND DOING BIBLE THINGS IN BIBLE WAYS?

Alan Gauger

One of the more prevalent movements in the Lord's church that has greatly increased in momentum over the past several years, involves that of many congregations implementing a myriad of "feel-good programs" that have absolutely nothing to do with the work of the church. Not only that, it is becoming more and more popular for elderships to introduce a variety of titles and positions within the church and then labeling them as 'ministers' over whatever the activity or program they have decided to implement. Having looked at many of the websites of churches of Christ in the Middle TN and the greater Nashville area, it is truly amazing as to the quantity of titles and positions that some congregations have come up with. The term 'minister' in its most simplistic form carries with it the meaning of servant. In that sense, we are all ministers in the Lord's church. It can also be said that we are all evangelists — heralds of truth. However, the first century church of which we read about in the New Testament never handed out 'minister' titles to serve specific groups based on their social needs nor specific age groups within the body of Christ.

One of the more prominent examples of this is that many congregations of the Lord's church today feel a pressing need to come up with "programs" that primarily focus on either the social needs or entertainment aspects (or both) of their members. For instance, many congregations feel their young people must have something 'extra' in order to keep them interested, involved, and even faithful. Many elderships have whole-heartedly bought into what the denominational world has been trying to do for years in an all-out effort of catering to, entertaining, and oftentimes to the point of even babysitting the young people. Whatever happened to the power of God's word (cf. Rom. 1:16)?

As a teenager, the congregation I attended numbered over 300 members. It was a sound and faithful congregation. They had absolutely none of these 'special' programs like we find so often in congregations today that attempt to occupy the youth or cater to any select group of people for that matter. Yes, the youth of the congregation did some good, clean, fun activities together (as they should), but it had absolutely nothing to do with a select "program," or a focus on needing to be entertained all the time. There was no need for a so-called 'youth minister' nor was it ever mentioned as a position of need.

It is now becoming more common (especially in larger congregations) to implement programs that appeal not only to the youth, but also to the 'social needs' of all the members. This oftentimes results in how some view the gathering of the saints for worship as little more than a social gathering; and as a result, they oftentimes receive nothing more than a social gospel.

Here is a partial list of titles and/or positions found on various websites of congregations that identify themselves as churches of Christ. Many of these titles go well beyond the 'youth minister' title mentioned previously; and, several of the titles below (and the programs they oversee) are unscriptural to begin with. This is just a sampling and likely there are many more not named here that exists in congregations locally and abroad: Youth minister, Education minister, Community outreach minister, Children's minister, Young Adults minister, Stewardship minister, Children's program minister, Marriage minister, Encouragement minister, Children's worship minister, Life Groups minister, High School minister, Middle School minister, Worship minister, Family Life minister, Seniors minister, College minister, Church Life minister, Finance minister, Pre-school minister, Facilities minister,

Women's minister, Executive minister, Discipleship minister, Singles minister, Singles again minister, Parking Lot minister.

Let me ask you, where did all these titles come from? Can any of these be found in God's word? Whatever happened to calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways? Many proclaim to do such, but they are oftentimes only deceiving themselves.

One congregation I came across has over 30 people on their staff and payroll consisting of ministers, directors, counselors, and even therapists. And by the way, many of these so-called ministers are women that have taken on a leadership role. I recently viewed one congregation's website which states that their counseling ministers (plural) offer a wide range of services i.e. individual psychotherapy, premarital and marital counseling, family therapy, and even psychological testing.

What is happening in the church today? This is plainly the subtlety and work of Satan. These deceptive devices have been at work in many congregations for some time now. Sadly, there are some in the church today who seemingly choose to remain ignorant of God's word. There are those who do not care about scriptural authority any longer. And there are still others who simply have fallen into Satan's trap of outright apathy. Many of these congregations have completely gone over the edge of the cliff and left the faith. Others are well on their way and the edge of the cliff is in sight and drawing ever nearer. Tragically, many members including elders, deacons, and preachers are convinced of the idea that many of these programs and activities equate to doing the work of the church. From what we can gather from Scripture, the primary work of the Lord's church simply involves that of teaching the Gospel to the lost, strengthening those who are of the saved, recovering those

who were once faithful but who have fallen away and helping the needy and destitute.

There are certainly times in which an eldership, out of expediency, may highlight specific needs. This could certainly involve assigning specific tasks to certain members. One example would be volunteers visiting the shut-ins or those hospitalized. This is certainly a wonderful work and a scriptural one (James 1:27; Matt. 25:35-36). However, implementing such a program or being involved in such an activity would certainly not justify the creation of a so-called ‘visitation minister.’ Another example would be that of benevolence which is commonly assigned to one or more of the deacons under the oversight of the elders. This task could also be fulfilled by other members (Matt. 5:42; 25:35-36). However, just because someone is put in charge of benevolence would not constitute putting in place a so-called ‘benevolence minister’ to carry out this work. And we could go on and on with these types of examples where congregations have come up with one title after another. These two examples just mentioned are indeed worthy works, but there are many others that have absolutely nothing to do with the work of the church. Instead of adhering to Scripture and what may be expedient, there is oftentimes a total disregard for what is authorized in Scripture. In some places, it seems just about anything goes; and, with no limits.

I believe that one primary reason for what is happening in so many congregations of the church today is the fact that many elders have lost sight of what their role as shepherds of the flock entails — Lead, Feed, and Watch! Many elders seem to be more concerned with membership numbers and contribution totals than they are spiritual matters. In many (mostly larger) congregations there is oftentimes a ‘liberal’ element that exists, and some elderships have been heavily influenced by such members. The question really comes down to this, are they seeking to please God or are they seeking to please men (cf. Gal. 1:10)?

Sadly, many in the Lord’s church today do not think things such as Bible authority are all that important anymore. Some are seemingly no longer interested in a “*thus saith the*

Lord.” Many will not heed to the teaching given in Scripture as to the warnings of ‘adding to’ and ‘deleting from’ God’s word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). But those of us who preach and teach God’s word, who love the Lord and love his word, will gladly heed and uphold the truth that makes men free (John 8:31-32).

I hope and pray that an article

such as this will help some become aware of some of the dangerous devices that are creeping into the Lord’s church today. May we all strive to uphold God’s word and understand the importance of calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways.

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FIRST JOHN 4:1

Roger D. Campbell

Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits

That is a message which grabs our attention, does it not? It was written to first-century saints who were facing the challenge of dealing with the influence that false messengers were having on the church.

In its entirety, the wording of 1 John 4:1 is: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” Let us examine the meaning and application of those words.

“**Beloved**” — This comes from a Greek word which means “beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite, worthy of love.” It is an endearing term, found five times in the letter that we know as “First John.” In each of those five instances, it is the beginning word of a sentence (3:2,21; 4:1,7,11). For John to address them as his “beloved” let them know that he cared about them. He has some tough language for those who cast aside the Lord’s instructions, but he loved all of them dearly.

“**Do not believe every spirit**” — First, we need to identify who or what these “spirits” were. In the same statement, John mentioned prophets (4:1). He went on to write about spirits confessing or not confessing Jesus (4:2,3). John said the spirits “speak” (4:5), and he noted there is a difference between “*the spirit of truth*” and “*the spirit of error*” (4:6). It is clear that when John charged the disciples not to believe every spirit, he meant do not believe every religious messenger/message. It is not uncommon for parents, perhaps on several occasions, to warn their children, “Do not believe everything you hear.” That still is sage advice. In the spiritual realm, not every spoken or printed message is good for us. There is sound doctrine — teaching that is healthy for our soul (Titus 2:1). There also are unhealthy spiritual messages. In the context of 1 John 4, John speaks of false prophets (4:1), messengers who are “*not of God*” (4:3). He further describes them as being “*of the world*” (4:5) and “*the spirit of error*” (4:6). Our Lord does not want any of us to be influenced by “*every wind of doctrine, by the sleight [trickery] of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*” (Eph. 4:14).

“**Test the spirits, whether they are of God**” — How can you and I know which spirits are of God? Test them. “To test/try” is from a Greek word defined as “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals; to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.” The charge to prove/test all things employs the same Greek word in First Thessalonians 5:21. It is the word Jesus used when speaking about a man testing his oxen (Luke 14:19). So, there is testing metals...testing animals...testing religious teachers.

Instead of believing each religious message we come across, we are to test them one by one. How? We must compare what we hear or read with the truth that God has revealed to us. God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Truth cannot contradict itself. Thus, if a message *harmonizes* with the revealed will/truth of God, it is true. If it *clashes* with the Bible, it is false. If the message is an *addition to* God’s word, it is a human-devised hoax. We recall that the apostle

Paul warned the churches of Galatia not to receive any message which was different from the genuine Gospel he had proclaimed to them (Gal. 1:6-9).

In order for a person to be effective in testing the religious messages he encounters, he must have a good knowledge of God's word. This is where many people are in serious trouble! They are in great danger of accepting, following, and promoting falsehoods because they do not have adequate Bible knowledge.

National and world leaders often discuss and identify what they consider to be the greatest problems facing humanity. There is one grave danger

which such worldly officials never contemplate: a lousy knowledge of the Bible leads people and communities into violation of God's will, and that has eternal consequences! If a person is convinced that going to heaven is the most important matter in his existence, he will be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). It is worth the effort! Failing to arm ourselves will not produce a happy outcome.

"Because many false prophets have gone out into the world." As an apostle of Jesus, John could not take away man's free will, which included the liberty to speak. The reality

is, when people open their mouths to speak, many of them do not teach God's truth. Note that John said in his day there were "false" prophets — "many" of them. Our Lord said to beware of such people who outwardly resemble sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt. 7:15).

No, not every religious message is acceptable to God. No, not every religious messenger is a great person. We love the soul of each false messenger, but we detest their false words which deceive the gullible and lead them toward eternal torment (2 Peter 2:1,2).

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THE HOUSE OF THE LORD IS NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH

Marvin Weir

God loved Israel and was concerned about His people. He gave instructions for the tabernacle, which eventually became known as the "house of the Lord" (Exod. 23:19; 34:26; Josh. 6:24; 9:23; Judg. 18:31). It was David who desired to build God a house (2 Sam. 7), but it was Solomon who Jehovah allowed to build the temple (1 Kings 6:1). The temple became a most holy place to the Jews. They were convinced it would endure on earth forever.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord found that man-made traditions, politics, and materialism was squeezing the truth from the religion of the Jews. At the beginning of His ministry, Christ found money-changers in the temple seeking to profit greatly from the items people needed for their sacrifice. The Lord "...made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:15-16). The lesson had not been learned, and the situation had not improved near the close of the Lord's earthly ministry. Commercialism in the temple was still practiced as is evidenced by this scene: "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast

out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12-13).

The sentiment of the chief priests and Pharisees was expressed in this manner: "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). Can it be that the *house of God* in the mind of the people is now considered to be "our place?" It made a difference then, and it makes a difference today whether or not things sacred belong to God or man!

Before His death, Christ wept over Jerusalem, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38).

When the *house of God* becomes *man's place*, it is no longer fit for sacred matters! Judgment for the Jews who rejected the Messiah and clung to the Law of Moses and the temple came in the form of the Roman

army. The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and left desolate. Instead of the Jews disposing of Christ, it was God who disposed the Jewish economy, the temple, and their way of life.

The "our place" or "our house" mentality is alive and well today. It is now quite common to hear those professing to be members of the Lord's church to speak of "their church," "our church," or "your church." More often than not, this truly describes the congregation where they assemble. It is "their church," and they are determined to do things "their way!"

Recreation, entertainment, and all other man-made innovations come from the "my church" concept. The Lord's church is to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) instead of the soft cushion of man's felt needs! This writer recalls the North Richland Hills church of Christ (now known as "the hills Church") led by Rick Atchley boasting how the elders had prayed for many months before deciding to include instrumental music in their services. Their philosophy is that in *their church* much prayer will make instrumental music acceptable to God. It won't! Man feels that in *his church* he can sing and play. God spake nothing about playing on an instrument in worship (cf. Heb. 7:14). He did specify that hymns of praise be sung in worship (Matt. 26:30; 1

Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13).

The Lord's church demands a "thus saith the Lord" for all that is done in sacred matters. The Lord's church also recognizes that the Word of God was long ago "settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89). The "my church," "our church," and "your church" crowd has nothing but disdain for Bible authority. They reject a Bible pattern or blueprint because it makes no mention of *their church*.

One who is devoted to the "my church" philosophy not only makes room for the mechanical instrument but also for the fornicator, the adulterer, and the homosexual (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21). The "my church" believer demands that women be allowed to use their God-given talents to preach, lead singing, or participate in any other leadership role in the church. The Word of God restricts women from serving in a leadership role in the Lord's church (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12-14).

Today, in far too many instances, denominational thinking takes priority over Biblical thinking. Self-indulgence seems to be the only thing that most folks refuse to cast aside! The modernist forgets or does not wish to remember that Jesus Christ "came to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He did not come to supply man's every wish, want, and social need.

Since the Lord's church is "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15), it is not *my house, your house, or their house!* The Lord purchased His church with His blood (Acts 20:28) and is therefore the head of His body — His church (Eph. 1:22-23). Salvation is found in the house of God and not in someone else's house. The precious Gospel is the only power to save (Rom. 1:16), and it is not to be twisted, perverted, or watered down (Gal. 1:6-9). The Lord's church realizes it *must* worship according to truth (John 4:24; James 17:17) while man's church is convinced God will accept most anything that is offered. Such an attitude did not work out well for Israel, did it (1 Kings 12:28-30)?

In view of our soul's salvation, may we learn not to trifle with God's house!

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Elder's COLUMN

DEALING WITH CHURCH CONFLICTS

While there are similarities, interactions with brethren are not like those of corporate America! When it comes to actually dealing with church conflicts, many do not know where to start and where to end! The desired result of conflicts is summed up by Paul, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3)! In order for that noble goal to be reached, all participants should spend much time in prayer (James 5:16) and the study of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15)!

Needless to say, all conflicts are not the same. When dealing with personalities, different levels of conflicts can quickly escalate to various complexities and intensities! Church conflicts more than likely involve numerous brethren. A BIG NO NO is attempting to deal with a large group! Mass pandemonium, more than likely, erupts, and the desired result is shattered (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3)!

All conflicts cannot be lumped into one category and dealt with alike. However, there are some basic rules of conflict resolution: 1) Define the problem(s), 2) Consider the various solutions, 3) Choose the one that is best, 4) Maintain an atmosphere of Christ-like behavior, 5) Reinforce a positive attitude until the conflict is resolved, 6) Keep before all present that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3)! If a conflict begins to reach an intractable (uncontrollable) situation, immediately STOP and pray! It might well be that a "cooling off period" needs to take place. Depending on the situation, this could be anywhere from 15 minutes to the next day or week.

The inspired word of God is replete with passages that help bind and heal — if all parties involved in a conflict are willing to "receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21b)!

- "A soft answer" (Prov. 15:1)
- The "golden rule" (Matt. 7:12)
- The command of love (John 13:34-35)
- To "follow peace" (Heb. 12:14)
- Willingness to "forgive men" (Matt. 6:15)
- A paramount imperative — "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19b)
- "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1)

May we ever keep in mind the inspired warning from the apostle Paul, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger; and clamour; and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:30-32). [And] "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then. Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:15-16).

Beloved, division in the body of Christ...

- Hampers our efforts to evangelize the world!
- Promotes the "lust of the flesh!"
- Is the exaltation of pride!
- Sets aside love!
- Unleashes the deadly tongue!

Friends, there can be no more serious matter than that of dividing the body of Christ! It is an abomination — detestable, disgusting and loathing — in the sight of God! Whenever a split occurs, the consequences continue to live well beyond the life span of the disputants!

Remember, the day of judgment is coming (Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10)! It will be too late to correct any wrongs on that day! Think about that!

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

each richly profit from the words of our creator. We benefit from being a servant to God in this life and in eternity. I appreciate this publication teaching what is correct, regardless of the political correctness. Jesus was clear and critics would call him narrow-minded as they do us. Keep up the wonderful work" ...**Jack D. Langford, Sparta, TN.** "We would like to receive 10 copies each time" ...**Church of Christ, Pecos, TX.** [NOTE: We mail bundles in multiples of 10 to save postage. We would be glad to put anyone on the mailing list FREE of charge (individuals or congregations). You can request 10, 20, 30, etc. by letter (to the address on this issue) or by email (seektheoldpaths.com/subscribe.html). Back issues are also available if you need extra to pass out. All back issues are also posted on the internet: seektheoldpaths.com/stop.htm]. "Thank you for putting me back on your mailing list. I enjoyed the bundle of back issues you sent" ...**Jonas Ingrum, Warren, MI.** "Several members would like to receive the monthly *Seek The Old Paths*" ...**Bruce James, Wilsonville, AL.** "Dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ: We have noticed a profound shift in our local congregation. Hopefully, your steady message of truth will work through the Holy Spirit on members and elders. Keep fighting the good fight" ...**Staurt Healy, Maumelle, AR.** "Thank you for STOP. We enjoy it" ...**Patsy & Gene Carter, Lake Park, GA.** "Thank you for *Seek The Old Paths*. There is so much wonderful truths in the paper. Please keep writing and helping all of us with the truth. May God bless all of you in printing God's truth" ...**Bobbie Wheeler, Cookeville, TN.** "Please remove me from your mailing list" ...**Brent Jones, Jackson, MS.** "We enjoy receiving STOP and reading and studying it. It's great that we still have men that will stand on the truth of God's word. Keep up the good work" ...**Jimmy & Flora Kilgore, Oakman, AL.** "Please remove my name from your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Phillip Abel, Boise, ID.** "We enjoy the paper. The truth stands out. Thank you" ...**Allen & Irene Tate, Cache, OK.** "I'm truly blessed with this great work of the Lord (Aug/20). I loved so much the article on 'The fall Of Jerusalem.' You see what sin will do to anyone who says 'no' to our Lord Jesus and His Holy Word the Bible. I am a member of the Lord's church here in Powhatan" ...**Harold Langley, Jr., Powhatan, VA.** "I thank God and you for *Seek The Old Paths*. I look forward to getting it every month. If possible, I would like to see a lesson on the Holy Spirit, what He does and does not do. Thank you" ...**Marian Tillman, Fresno, CA.** "Brother Robinson, thank you for sending us the STOP paper. We appreciate the work you do in getting the truth, God's word, out to people. It is so needed! May the Lord bless all of you in your efforts. May the small donation help in some way in your work" ...**Ella Dean Newton, Eufaula, OK.** "Thank you, my brethren, for all the love and truth you teach for our Lord and His kingdom. May it all shortly come to pass" ...**Velma Scott, Hurley C/C, Hurley, MS.** "We have received *Seek The Old Paths* for the past fifteen years. At that time our congregation numbered a little less than 100. Since that time our congregation has dwindled to about nine families. We would like to reduce the number of copies we receive each month. We have enjoyed and have been enlightened by the articles. Keep up the much-needed work" ...**Treasurer, C/C, Allenhurst, GA.** "Dorothy Griffith has passed away" ...**Terre Haute, IN.** "Take me off your list. Thank you" ...**Robert**

"Add this name to your mailing list" ...**Dresden, TN.** "Thank you for speaking the truth and wisdom of the King James Holy Bible. We shall all be judged by God's instructions and operation's manual. Our personal, family, church, community, schools, businesses and governments will

Notgrass. "Great as always. We appreciate you" ...**Jason Gann, McMinnville, TN.** "Keep up your excellent work" ...**Dickson, TN.** "Thank you for the 'old paths' with the often truths of correction over-looked, or skipped over, that point out our sins" ...**Verna Enfinger, Pensacola, FL.** "I was glad when our elders said the congregation is going to meet as usual during the pandemic. I sent up a prayer of thanksgiving. Why? Because it is the Scriptural thing to do. The church is to come together in one place upon the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread (Lord's supper, 1 Cor. 11:17-20; Acts 20:7). Out of convenience, because we are already come together, the collection also is to be taken on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-20). Teaching, singing, praying can be done any day, but is especially required on the Lord's day. Due to the pandemic, man told the churches not to come together. Who are we supposed to obey (Acts 5:29)? Individual Christians have many things beyond their control to cause them to be absent. These matters should be handled with the utmost Spirituality of mind. It is not difficult to understand what God expects of his people as to when and how we are to worship him. May he help us all to worship Scripturally! Summary: 1) God commands us to come together in one place to worship every Lord's day. 2) Our nation's constitution allows this to happen. 3) The pandemic rule, caused by satan, has many Christians eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:3-6)" ...**Joe C. Turbeville, Dresden, TN.** "I enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths*. It is a wonderful paper. I would like to send a contribution to help spread the Gospel of Christ. This paper is very much needed in today's sinful world" ...**Jared Herren, Silver Point, TN.**

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