



# 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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## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM DEBORAH?

*Bill Boyd*

***It is by God’s design that women are most powerful in their influence among the righteous when they are modest, charitable, and chaste. If you ask a Deborah like that to be your preacher, she will set you straight.***

We are introduced to Deborah in Judges 4:4. She was a prophetess, a wife, and a judge. The order of those roles may be an indication of her priorities, for as a prophetess she had a responsibility to God, as a wife she had a responsibility to her husband, and as a judge she had a responsibility to her community. Deborah was not a preacher, and she did not exercise authority she did not have. In all things, she was becomingly modest, shamefaced, sober, having an inward quietness, and an appropriate subjection. Like the godly women of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, she was powerful because she was a woman of faith, charity, and holiness.

Deborah did not make laws; as a judge she helped people apply God’s law to their situations. She did not go from village to village preaching like Jesus; people came to her for judgment where she sat under her own palm tree (Judges 4:5). The *New International Version* says that Deborah “held court,” but they made that up. God wants men to preach and lead in prayer (1 Tim. 2:8). Some women think that when men will not do this, then they can step out and do it themselves. Deborah was not like that. When Barak failed to lead the men of Israel against Sisera, Deborah did not try to lead the men herself. As a prophetess, Deborah knew God’s will. She sent and called for Barak to admonish him.

Barak is rightly faulted for not having already done what God told him to do, but to Barak’s credit, he asked Deborah to go with him (Judges 4:6-9). He knew Deborah was a woman of God. Barak’s dependence on Deborah was his dependence on God. This is why Barak is counted as a man of faith in Hebrews 11:32. A wise man knows the value of having a wise godly woman at his side. Deborah did not go with Barak to be his commander; she went to be his helper.

Following God’s own prescribed strategy (Judges 4:6-8), Barak led his men to the top of Mount Tabor. This drew Sisera out, and he brought his chariots into the Kidron valley. The storm God sent brought the brook out of its banks, and the rain and flood-soaked soil rendered Sisera’s chariots useless. When Barak and his men came charging down the mountain, the Canaanites panicked, fled, and were destroyed. We sing a children’s song about Barak at Vacation Bible School. “There was a wise old king who had ten thousand men. He marched them up a hill and then he marched them down again.” We should tell the children that Barak was not really a king, but like a king, he led the men of Israel in battle against the kings of Canaan (Judges 5:19).


Deborah gave Israel a song of victory and praise. God had come to their rescue (Judges 5:2-5). Israel was down-

trodden until Deborah took the initiative (Judges 5:6-11). From the top of Tabor, Deborah spurred Barak into battle (Judges 5:12-19). God sent a flood that swept Sisera’s chariots away (Judges 5:20-23). Jael killed the Canaanite captain. Her story is told in Judges 5:24-26: “*Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen’s hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.*” The way Deborah sang of Sisera in his death throws is chilling: “*At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead*” (Judges 5:27). Then she sang of Sisera’s pathetic mother awaiting her son’s return in vain (Judges 5:28-29). Deborah’s song ends, “*So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might*” (Judges 5:30).

Deborah is often more admired than Barak. This is not because of the role she played, but because of how she played her role. There are such

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**What Can We Learn?...**



Editorial...

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT... #2

Garland M. Robinson

Please read the first part of this article from last month. In this installment we continue with the point: **The church of Christ is NOT...** Read this statement before each point below.

### SEEKING TO PLEASE MEN.

Men please themselves — what they want, what they like, how they feel. The church of Christ seeks to please God in heaven above, not men. Paul wrote, *“...do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10).

When the apostles had been falsely accused and put into prison, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors that night and set them free. The angel said, *“Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.”* That same morning the high priest and the council summoned for them to be brought before them. When the officers came back and reported the prison was empty, the men of the court were greatly troubled and were afraid what would happen when word of this got out. *“Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.”* They were arrested again; *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:17-29).

Faithful Christians will always be about the Lord’s business; not caring at all what men think or whatever the political climate may be. The truth is the truth and it can’t be screened or modified to suit the times. We’re

not trying to win a popularity contest. Our faith and work is about God. What does God think? What will he say about us? What is his judgment regarding us? When Jesus spoke the truth without compromise, *“...many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him”* (John 6:66). He simply asked the apostles, will you also go away? Will you walk away from the Lord? Shall we not imitate the Lord Jesus? Yes, of course!

**A CULT.** Since the church of Christ is different from all the denominations of men, they are often accused of being a cult. A cult is defined as “a system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object.” It is a “misplaced or excessive admiration for a particular person or thing.” It is a “group or movement held together by a shared commitment to a charismatic leader or ideology. It has a belief system that offers a special solution to be gained only by following the leader’s rules.” As you can see from this definition, a cult is contrary to God’s will and therefore sinful. The church of Christ (the Lord’s church) is focused on following the Lord Jesus and his teaching. That does not make his church and his way a cult.

Cults are founded by men, not the Lord Jesus Christ. Cults have their own rules, not the rules of Christ. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, the creator of the universe, the redeemer, the savior. He has all authority given unto him by God the Father in heaven (Matt. 28:18). He alone is the master. No man has that power. Jesus said, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32). He therefore summons the weary and heavy hearted to come unto him for spiritual rest. *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matt. 11:28-30). *“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great”* (Luke 6:47-49).

**POPULAR.** The Lord’s way has never been popular. If you want to be approved by the masses, then you don’t want the church of Christ. Jesus put it this way, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matt. 7:13-14). Jesus also said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:18-19).

Deniers of the truth, the faith (the church of Christ) in the first century were spreading false rumors that the Lord’s church was a sect. As a result, it was everywhere *“spoken against”* (Acts 28:22). Many were speaking *“evil of that way”* (Acts 19:9). Some were accused of being *“a mover of sedition”* and a *“ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”* (Acts 24:5). The Lord’s way was being labeled as *“heresy”* (Acts 24:14). Some were accused of turning *“the world upside down”* (Acts 17:6). Peter noted that even though Christians were living an honest and upright life, there were those speaking against them *“as evildoers”* (1 Peter 2:12; 3:16). The same thing is true today. False accusations are levied against the church of Christ in order to poison the minds of people and persuade them not to read the Bible and think for themselves. Are you afraid of the truth? Are you afraid to read and study for yourself?

To the faithful, encouraging words

are recorded by the apostle Peter to let saints know that though the Lord's way is not popular among the masses, it is still God's will. *"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf"* (1 Peter 4:14-16).

The only way to heaven is through Jesus (John 14:6) and the church he established — the church of Christ. There's no other name given among men whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus only promised to save his church (Eph. 5:23). No other will be saved.

**OPTIONAL.** There's a lot of things in life that are optional, but the church of Christ is not one of them. Read heaven's words about the church: *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"* (Heb. 10:24-26). There is no such thing as being a Christian "at large," that is, not being a member of a local congregation. That's not the way to heaven. One can't just "come and go" to this congregation and that congregation and never settle down and get to work. That may suit man, but it does not satisfy God. His people are workers in the kingdom — the vineyard of the Lord.

The church of Christ is God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10). It's not an option to be a member of it or not. It has always been in the mind of God. As much as Christ was slain from the foundation of the world, even so was his kingdom/church in God's mind since before the world was formed. *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily*

*was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"* (1 Peter 1:18-20). Those who are redeemed are added to the church of Christ. We read of about 3,000 on the day of Pentecost obeying the Gospel by repenting and being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ... Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:41,47).

*"Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body"* (Eph. 5:23). Those in the body/church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) are the saved. Those not in the church/body are not saved. There are no saved people outside the Lord's church — church of Christ. There is no passage that says there is. When one obeys the Gospel by **believing** in Jesus, **repenting** of sins, **confessing** faith in Christ as God's Son and then being **baptized** (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), being "born again" (John 3:3-5), those individuals are automatically added by the Lord to his church — the body of the saved. Acts 2:47 makes this clear: *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

The Bible says nothing about "joining the church" or being "voted on by a denomination" in order to be a member of the church. Those concepts are foreign to the Bible. That's man's idea. Those who are saved from their sins are added by the Lord to his spiritual body. That's not an option!

The church of Christ is described as a *"bride adorned for her husband"* (Rev. 21:2) and is further identified as the *"bride, the Lamb's wife"* (Rev. 21:9; John 1:29). The church (his bride, his wife) is NOT optional. We can not, must not, make it appear like it is a "take it or leave it" optional matter!

## What Can We Learn?...

*(Continued from page 73)*

Deborah's in our churches today. They encourage the preachers to preach sound and distinctive doctrine. They call things needing attention to the attention of the elders. I have been in Bible classes where it was evident that the women knew their Bibles better than the men. These are the wives and mothers who, by their *"chaste conversation coupled with fear"* (1 Peter 3:2), have kept their families together, and have kept them faithful and strong. Their quietness, meekness, and submission are not born of weaknesses; these are their strengths. I knew a Deborah who was held in high esteem among her elders. She held no office of authority, but the shepherds of that congregation would often consult her concerning matters they were overseeing. She was a wise woman, and they were wise men.

Those who put women in public positions of leadership in the churches, thinking to elevate them, degrade them. They do not understand women, men, or God. Jesus said that the greatest in his kingdom are servants (Matt. 23:11), and often the greatest of these servants are women. God chose men to lead his churches (1 Tim. 2:8; 3:1), and God chose women to be their helpers.

It is by God's design that women are most powerful in their influence among the righteous when they are modest, charitable, and chaste. It is no accident that men grow in courage and faith when they have the company of godly women. If you ask a Deborah like that to be your preacher, she will set you straight. We should thank God for spiritual Deborah's in the churches, and we should pray for men of faith who recognize their worth and honor them.

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*Jesus said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. ... It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me"* (John 12:32; 6:45).

Are you ready to hear, learn and go to Jesus in obedience?

# WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?

Jon Gary Williams

## THE CHURCH DEFINED

The word “church” found in the New Testament is from the Greek term *ekklesia* which means to “call out.” People who made up the church were those who had been “called out” of the world of sin and into Christ. This calling came through the “gospel” — the word of God (2 Thess. 2:14). The church was made up of those who had given their lives to Christ — they wore his name and were called “Christians” (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). The church was spiritual in nature and was different than anything the world had ever known.

## THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED

The church was established by Christ in the city of Jerusalem in about 30 AD. Long before this, however, prophets of the Old Testament foretold of its coming. Isaiah prophesied the church would come in the “last days” (the close of the Old Testament era) and that it would begin at “Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-4).

When Jesus came he announced, “upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Christ himself was the rock or foundation upon which the church was to be established (1 Cor. 3:11). It was Jesus who “gave himself” for the church and it was “his own blood” which became the “purchase” price (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28). This is why the church is so very important to God — it took the life of his own Son to make it possible!

On Pentecost, just fifty days after Christ’s crucifixion, the church came into existence. As Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit was sent to his apostles to enable them to powerfully proclaim the Gospel (Acts 2:1-4). On that day about 3,000 people accepted it by being baptized for the “remission of sins” and as a result they were “added” to the church by the Lord. In the following days more people were continually being “added” to the church (Acts 2:41,47).

Jesus had earlier told his apostles that the church would spread beyond Jerusalem and into the far reaches of the world! “And ye shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea,

and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The book of Acts was given to reveal, in part, the story of this tremendous spread of the church.

## THE CHURCH IDENTIFIED

In the New Testament the church is described in different ways. Each of these descriptions helps us to better identify the nature of the church.

The church, for example, is pictured as a BODY — the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23). Christ is “head” over his body (Col. 1:18). As a body is under control of its head, so the church is under the control of Christ.

The church is also pictured as a KINGDOM — the kingdom of Christ (Matt. 16:18,19). Christ is “king” over his kingdom (Rev. 19:16). As a kingdom is subject to the authority of its king, so the church is subject to the authority of Christ.

The church, likewise, is pictured as a BRIDE — the bride of Christ (Rom. 7:4). Christ is the “head” over his bride (Eph. 5:23). As a bride is to be in subjection to her husband, so the church is to be in subjection to Christ.

These descriptions clearly show the relation between Christ and the church. It is Christ’s church and exists under his authority. This is why congregations of the church were identified as “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16).

How many churches does Christ have? Only one! He has only one body, only one kingdom, and only one bride. There is only one church which is the “one faith” (Eph. 4:5).

## ITS ORGANIZATION

In some instances, Christ’s church is spoken of in its universal sense. This is the church collectively wherever it exists in the world. Sometimes, however, the word “church” is used in a local sense. This is the church in a local area — a local congregation. Wherever the word of God was preached, local congregations of the church were established. These local churches were organized according to a simple pattern set forth in the New Testament.

Each congregation was au-

tonomous (or self-governing) and was overseen by a plurality of men who were called “elders” (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). These men were also called “bishops” or “pastors.” They had the spiritual oversight of the congregation and were to meet certain qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

Working under the oversight of the elders were men who were called “deacons” (Phil. 1:1). The men served the congregation in various ways and were also to meet certain qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

In local congregations there were men who proclaimed the Gospel. These men were called “preachers” or “ministers” and were to faithfully teach the word of God (2 Tim. 4:2).

Beyond the local congregation there was no further organization for Christ’s church. There was no earthly headquarters controlling the church worldwide. Each local congregation was independent and directly subject to Christ.

## ITS LAW

Every kingdom has law. The law of the kingdom of Christ is the New Testament. The church did not follow the Old Testament law of Moses. That law was designed only for the Jewish nation. It was “abolished” and “nailed to the cross” (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). The church was subject only to the “will of Christ” which was sealed by his own blood (Matt. 26:28). That will is the New Testament.

Writers of the New Testament, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, penned the will of Christ. This is the law by which the church was governed. The Bible teaches, “All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible also teaches that the church was given “...all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

The church, therefore, did not have a human creed nor was there ever to be a need for later revelations. The complete law for the church of Christ is found only in the New Testament. This is the “faith once delivered” (Jude 3).

**ITS ENTRANCE**

How did people enter the church? Christ and the apostles taught a clear plan of salvation by which people could obtain the forgiveness of sins. That plan included the following steps:

- 1) Faith in Christ. Belief that Christ was the Son of God (John 3:16).
- 2) Repentance of sins. Turning away from sin and turning toward God (Acts 17:30).
- 3) Confession of faith. The confession of one's faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10).
- 4) Baptism in water. An immersion in water for the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

When this plan was followed, people received the forgiveness of sins and, at the same time, they were also made members of the Lord's church. At baptism they were saved and; likewise, at baptism they were added by Christ to his church (Acts 2:41,47). Therefore, entrance into the Lord's church came through obedience to the plan of salvation. The same thing that saved them made them a part of the church. The teaching that people are saved without being in the church is a false doctrine.

**ITS WORSHIP**

The worship of Christ's church was designed to be plain and simple. Each first day of the week it consisted of the following:

- 1) Congregational singing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). This was done acapella, that is, singing without the use of instruments of music. [Musical instruments did not come into use until almost 700 years after Christ.]
- 2) Prayer (1 Thess. 5:17). Praying was a vital part of the church's worship. Members of the church were encouraged by praying together. It was in this way that they expressed to God the thoughts of their hearts.
- 3) Teaching (1 Cor. 4:17). It was by teaching God's word that Christians were encouraged to remain faithful to Christ. It was important that they walk in the truth (3 John 3-4).
- 4) Communion (1 Cor. 11:23-26). In the Lord's supper Christians called to remembrance the death of Christ. This was done each Sunday (Acts 20:7).
- 5) Giving (1 Cor. 16:2). Christians

returned to God a portion of the material blessings they had received. They did not "tithe" as did the Jews under the law of Moses. Rather, they gave as they prospered and with cheerful hearts (2 Cor. 9:7).

This was God's simple plan for worship. It is not to be added to or taken from (Rev. 22:18-19).

It should be clear to any serious

student of the Bible that Christ's church was not denominational. The Lord never intended for it to be divided into denominations. Today, churches of Christ throughout the world plead for the unity found in the New Testament. Only by sincerely following the word of God can scriptural unity be found.

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## YOU AND I ARE NOT THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

*Jason Patrick Hilburn*

**A**re we guilty of being too critical of others? Do we judge others based on our own personal standards instead of God's Word? Here are some questions to consider: Do you look down on others...

- If they do not smile and joke around as much as you do?
- If they buy something you personally would not buy? (though it is nothing sinful).
- If they are not as energetic and outgoing as you?
- If they do not exercise as much as you or follow the same type of diet you do?
- If they do not clean or maintain their vehicles, house, or lawn exactly as you would?
- If they do not discipline their children exactly as you would?
- If they do not mourn their loved ones the same way you do?
- If they do not have the same sense of humor as you?
- If they read their Bibles, but not as much as you do?
- If they do not do things exactly the way you do, even though either way is fine?

It has been said by those who are overly critical, "Well, I have always done X, so he should do X also," or "I have always been able to do X, so he should be able to do X also." If the matter being considered is a matter of personal judgment, not a matter of faith with clear Biblical instructions, then judgment on such matters should cease (Rom. 14). Beware of self-righteous pride, and remember that man has no authority to make laws where God has not (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Matt. 7:1-6; 15:1-9; Luke 18:10-14; Phil. 2:3; Rev. 22:18-19).

The fact that everybody is different is obviously something God intended in His design of men and women. Variety makes this world more beautiful and interesting. We are not robots who all make the same choices and react to every event the same way, and we do not all have the same personality. That said, the Gospel of Christ unifies Christians of all backgrounds so we can all be one, in spite of our external differences: "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:26-28).

Because of the Gospel, we can (and must) all speak the same way when it comes to religious matters (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Phil. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 2:1; 1 Peter 4:11). Christians all live by the same standard, which is God's Word (Psalm 119:105; Matt. 4:4), but God has given man liberty to make his own choices in many matters. Christians must only judge others with "righteous judgment," based on what God has clearly stated in His Word, not opinions or personal scruples (John 7:24; 12:48; Rom. 14; 16:17).

Let us learn to forbear one another (put up with each other's differences that are not sinful), and allow love to overlook any such differences! (Matt. 22:39; Eph. 4:2, 3; 1 Cor. 13:1-8; 16:14).

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# THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP OURSELVES SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD

Roger Campbell

The ancient city of Corinth was filled with debauchery. Enthrallment with human philosophy, devotion to idols, and immoral living were common marks of the Greek culture of that day.

God called on His church at Corinth to be different. Through the apostle Paul, the Spirit appealed to the Christians there not to walk hand in hand with those who walked in darkness. The clear charge to every single saint was, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...” (2 Cor. 6:17). The people from whom they were to remain separated were the slaves of evil works.

That sounds easy enough. They are darkness; we are light. They belong to Belial/Satan, but we belong to the Christ. They go to a temple of idols, while we are the temple of God. Of course, there will remain a constant distinction between us and them, and, of course, we will not share in their evil deeds. Alas, at times we may feel like it is so challenging to maintain our distinction. Yes, from time to time we might find ourselves struggling to have the courage to walk in the path of godliness rather than compromise with the servants of Satan. Why is that? Why do we at times find it difficult to maintain our separation?

One factor is the reality that *sin is pleasurable*. To his credit, Moses chose not to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). While sin’s pleasures are only temporary, the fact that the devil makes sin appealing and pleasurable cannot be denied. If there were no pleasure/rush to it, sin would not be attractive. We must be careful not to let our guard down, never losing sight of the fact that sin is deadly, causing its participants to be separated from God.

Another factor which can make it difficult to remain separate from the world is the *popularity of evil*. The masses endorse it and revel in it. Many are ignorant of God’s standard of morality and proper living, while others understand the Lord’s truth but choose to disregard it. Living in such a wicked environment can weigh heavily on the thinking of God’s children. Sadly, some decide that if so many folks are doing it, surely they are not all crazy, so the way of sin may not be so harmful after all.

Remember what God told His children in ancient times: “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exodus 23:2).

An additional factor is that some of God’s people seem to *feel uncomfortable* standing out as being different from others. It makes them feel uneasy inside. Look, the Lord calls on each disciple of Jesus to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Maintaining our distinction from the ways of darkness is part of being a faithful follower of Jesus. We need to be strong and maintain our separation, regardless of how outsiders view us. May the Lord help us never to feel uncomfortable making the right choices!

“But, don’t you think *weakness of the flesh* plays a role in a person’s struggles to walk in the light?” There is no doubt about that. Jesus told His weary apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane, “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matt. 26:41). Our weakness can make it tough to lay aside certain habits, but we must not give ourselves “a free pass” by telling ourselves that, since we all have weaknesses, God will not hold us accountable. Rather than try to downplay the sin that we allow to raise its ugly head in our lives, let us have a heart that is ready to repent in godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), asking the Lord to be our Help and Strength (Psalm 46:1).

One disheartening source of temptation for some of us does not come directly from the world, but rather it comes from *worldly members of the church*. It is disheartening to see such called-out folks think, talk, and walk

just like the world does. And the truth is, sometimes such world-likeness can weigh on our minds and tempt us to lower our guard or even join them. Brethren, let us trust in the Lord and stay bravely committed to carry out His plea to “*shine as lights in the world*” among those whom He calls “*crooked and perverse*” (Phil. 2:15). When betrayers like Judas and forsakers like Demas make their decisions to go the way of the world, we must not allow their foolishness to cause us to waver.

In not a few places, *the church is more worldly* than it was a few decades ago. Why is that? For one thing, some brethren never hear strong sermons from the pulpit which exalt godly living and tell the truth about the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

In some instances, *permissive parents* play a part. They are afraid to put their foot down and take a stand with their children, so the kids live lust-fulfilling lives with few, if any, restrictions. Being separated from darkness is the last thing they seek to do. Dads and moms, we need to admonish our children with God’s word and insist on practicing self-control.

The destructive influences of *humanism, permissiveness*, and the negative aspects of *the entertainment industry* have infiltrated the thinking of many soldiers of the Christ. When one’s thinking is worldly, the mouth and conduct of such a person will go that way, too. Let us maintain our distinctiveness. It is the Lord’s will that we do so!

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## THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD’S ELECT

Marvin L. Weir

There is much misunderstanding among man-made religious groups with regard to God’s “elect” or “chosen” people. The word simply means those specially picked or gathered out of a group. Israel was God’s chosen nation under the Law of Moses, but in the Christian dispensation, Christians are the Israel of God

(Rom. 2:28-29).

Let me be bold to state that God **does not** arbitrarily select certain folks to go to Heaven or Hell. Man is a free moral agent with the ability to **choose** whether to travel the narrow path that leads to eternal life or the wide road that leads to eternal damnation (Matt. 7:13-14). The desire of God could not be

more clear; He “would have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). It has never been the Father’s will “that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

There are many Bible verses that emphasize the “elect” of God. Jesus taught, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). Paul comforted the Roman brethren by asking, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom. 8:33). To the brethren at Colosse Paul wrote, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). The apostle Peter said of Christians, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

We do not deny the truth that there are those who are God’s elect. Let us ever be grateful that God has made it possible that whosoever desires to become one of His elect can do so! We are appalled, however, at the tremendous amount of Calvinistic error believed regarding how one **becomes** the Father’s elect.

The damnable doctrine of Calvinism perverts and twists the word “elect” to mean that God arbitrarily “elects” individuals to either be saved or lost. This negates the obedience of man from having anything to do with his salvation while declaring that the Father decides who will go to Heaven or Hell.

Let us remember that the grand plan of redemption was in place before the world had its beginning. The apostle Paul says to the Ephesians, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5). One must make sure that he understands **who** it is that God has chosen! It is those who are willing to be **obedient** to the will of God. This is the great truth taught in Hebrews 5:8-9: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal

salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). It is obvious to one who is willing to carefully study the Scriptures that God has chosen the obedient to be saved, and the disobedient to be lost!

**Our election is not unconditional!** No man can save himself without God, but man must **do** something to receive the salvation that God’s grace makes available. To those on Pentecost Peter instructed, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). When those on Pentecost specifically asked what to do to be saved Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Christ clearly depicted two conditions of salvation when he said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch God’s Word. “As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36)? The eunuch understood there was something he had to **do before** he could be saved.

Saul of Tarsus understood that sincere prayer and fasting would not save him (Acts 9). Ananias came to Saul and said, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Only those who prefer to remain blind to Biblical truths will argue that one can be saved without having his sins washed away in the act of water baptism (immersion). Why is it that so many prefer to believe man-made lies and reject the simple truth of the Bible?

God would be a respecter of persons if the process of election were unconditional. Think about it! If God selects some to be saved and some to be lost, He condemns Himself by His own Word. The apostle Peter teaches, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). The apostle Paul proclaimed the same truth, saying, “for there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). As many have correctly said, “The Bible does in-deed shine a lot of light on what is right and what is wrong!” All people become God’s elect in the same way — by choosing to obey the gospel plan of salvation.

This brings us to the **calling** of

God. The Bible teaches, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). The Bible never hints that God has multiple ways and means by which one is called. One’s obedience to **the gospel** (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Peter 1:22) will save his soul and make him a member of **the** Lord’s church (Acts 2:47). Anyone can become one of God’s elect if he will renounce the world and “put on Christ” in water baptism (Gal. 3:27)!

Let us make sure we have the truth regarding religious matters. Only God’s truth will free a person from the bondage of sin (John 8:31-32)!

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

**Cache, OK.** “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Catherine Hollis, Amory, MS.** “Please send your paper. Thanks” ...**Billie Harper, Chattanooga, TN.** “Thank you for all your good work and may you continue to have good health to publish the truth to a lost and dying world” ...**Faye Meador, Red Boiling Springs, TN.** “Judy Miller has passed away. She enjoyed *Seek The Old Paths* and the church. She was faithful. God bless you” ...**Doniphan, MO.** [So sorry for your loss]. “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths* booklets that have lessons please. I miss getting to read them and would like them for our congregation” ...**Kenneth Campbell, St. Towson, OK.** “I have a new address” ...**Logan Davenport, Sevierville, TN.** “Thank you so much for providing me a copy. I will use it for studying the Bible and spreading God’s Word” ...**Larry Sellers, Smithville, AR.** “Send no more. Remove me from mailing list” ...**Tom Mapps, Denver, CO.** “I look forward to receiving this publication” ...**Kimberly Walker, Gladewater, TX.** “*Seek the Old Paths*, September issue is STRENGTHENING! ‘The Lord’s Choice in a Church’ is a great read! Bro. Garland Robinson, I can’t express how grateful I am for this publication. There are few like it and not many who will still ‘earnestly contend for the faith!’ My oldest brother and I read it monthly and always chat about if each other has read something either convicting or greatly encouraging in it. I pray that these never end, but continue on proclaiming the TRUTH! I walked past a painted wording in a parking lot (an image about the old paths) and immediately thought of the publication” ...**Regina Gaines, Murfreesboro, TN.** “Please remove me from your mailing list. Thanks” ...**Larry Webb, Prospect, KY.** “Enclosed is a small donation to help spread the ‘old vanilla’ Gospel ‘as brother Ken Butterworth’ would say. I do not understand why anyone who wants to go to heaven rejects *Seek The Old Paths*. The truth is plainly taught from it!” ...**Joe C. Turbeville, Dresden, TN.**

## LET US STAND TOGETHER

It seems that, at an alarming rate, we are seeing congregations of the Lord’s church and many of its members cowering down to social and family pressures concerning the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Many are attempting to turn this doctrinal issue into a matter of opinion — casting aside and trampling the very clear teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:1-12, Mark 10:1-12, and Luke 16:18; and, the teaching of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, 39 and Romans 7:2.

This has created a rift in fellowship between congregations, as it should, as Ephesians 5:11 teaches. However, it also has created what I would refer to as a “Don’t ask - don’t tell” policy among our brethren because they feel ignoring it will make it go away. It has also led to much compromise and twisting of scriptures — trying to turn a black and white teaching into a gray area and attempting to create a loophole where none exists. There are even those who are saying the four accounts of the Gospel are not part of the New Testament dispensation. This is an attempt to nullify Christ’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, saying it applies to the

Old Law only and not to the Christian dispensation.

The Scriptures are clear, plain, and easily understandable, providing we apply the principles taught by Christ in Matthew 7:7-8 of seeking, knocking, and finding what is pleasing and acceptable to God by looking to His word. Especially recommended is Matthew’s account of Christ’s teaching in chapter 19 because, not only does Christ explain His teaching in great detail, but we also see the comprehension of the disciples to Jesus’ teaching. They understood entirely what Christ was saying based upon their comments.

Seeing there is a line drawn on this issue within the brotherhood, it is my prayer that we join together in unity in what the Scriptures teach. We must go back to the old paths on which the church traveled before man twisted its teachings to fit themselves or their situations. If not, we must separate ourselves as was done in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the issue of instrumental music in worship divided the church. As radical an idea as this may sound, nature itself shows us what happens when bad apples are mixed with the good. Paul was clear in 1 Corinthians 5:6 when he said a little leaven leavens the whole lump. We can see the same things happening in the church today.

This issue is as much a heaven and hell issue as instrumental music in worship. Let us be firm and strong in treating it as such.

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