

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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FELLOWSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Steve Miller

Fellowship is a wonderful blessing that is found in Jesus Christ. Joseph Henry Thayer has written concerning *koinonia*, "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse" (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p.352).

New Testament Christians are a group of people who have a mutual interest, salvation in Jesus Christ. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins, salvation, membership in the true church, and every blessing that is promised to Christians in the Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that when one obeys the Gospel plan of salvation, he is added to the church by the Lord. *"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved"* (Acts 2:47, ASV). The saved are in the body of Christ. In order for someone to be saved, he has to be in Christ — in the church. Those in the church are in a unique position. They have fellowship with each other in a way that people outside the body of Christ cannot enjoy.

After Pentecost, the Christians *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). The early Christians had joint participation in the apostles' teaching, which was Jesus' teaching. This teaching involves how we are to worship, to work, and to live as New

Testament Christians. Brother Goebel Music has well said that fellowship "relates to and involves partnership, joint-participation, co-sharing, and mutual helpfulness and this can easily be seen from the fact that Christians are described as: 1. Fellow Helpers (2 Cor. 8:23), 2. Fellow Citizens (Eph. 2:19), 3. Fellow Soldiers (Phil. 2:25), 4. Fellow Servants (Col. 1:7), 5. Fellow Laborers (Phil. 4:3)" (*A Critical Study Of A Critical Subject — Fellowship*. p.11).

We are a body of Christians who work together to follow the Lord's will in spreading the Gospel, worshipping in spirit and in truth, living our lives for Christ, and following the commandments of a loving Lord and Savior. As true brothers and sisters in Christ, we can enjoy the blessings of having *"the right hands of fellowship"* (Gal. 2:9). Even though this is a unique, glorious, brotherly, and warm fellowship in Jesus Christ, it still can be broken.

Some in the Lord's church have adopted the Calvinistic view of "once in grace always in grace" and have applied it to fellowship. They have the false notion that no matter what your brother or sister teaches, you can never cease to have fellowship with them. But, the Bible says fellowship can be dissolved, broken, cut off, and withdrawn when the Scriptures are violated, whether by one or a group; in teaching false doctrine, immoral actions, or a failure to

remain faithful in the fellowship of God (2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-18).

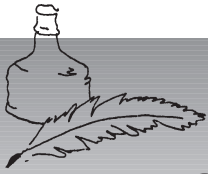
Fellowship is limited to those who walk in the light. *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). Also, to those who abide in truth, *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son"* (2 John 9).

Fellowship is prohibited to those who are in Biblical error. Error in the Bible is designated as "darkness." *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Eph. 5:11).

With the Word of God so plain in its teaching of the doctrine of fellowship, why do people in the church overlook and ignore this teaching? Is it because they do not want to "rock the boat?" Or, is it because they are afraid they might lose friendships or associations? When someone is in error, should they be allowed to inject their false teaching into the body of Christ without opposition? Does ignoring such teachings really make it go away? Surely not! Having no fellowship with an individual or congregation is for the benefit of their soul. It is an attempt to get them to see

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Fellowship...



Editorial...

MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH #1

The God whom we serve is eternal, all wise, benevolent, loving. He knows what is best for his creation. He designed it and sustains it (Col. 1:16-17). Even before the foundation of the world, God prepared a glorious kingdom/church for his people (Matt. 25:34).

The kingdom of God and the church of Christ are used synonymously in Matthew 16:18-19. God chose to make known His glorious Gospel and eternal purpose through and by the church (Eph. 3:10-11,21). However, there is so much misconception today regarding the Lord's kingdom/church. *Misconception* means: "the act or result of misconceiving," "a wrong or inaccurate conception," "a wrong notion," "misunderstanding." All kinds of things are believed about the church: from the belief that it has not yet been established to the idea that the Lord has already come the second time!

Why would people have such wrong notions concerning the church? Is the Bible not plain enough so people can properly understand the nature and characteristics of the church? The Bible was written to be understood (Eph. 3:4). Men misunderstand it because they do not rightly divide the word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Some misunderstand it because they do not intend to do what it says. We must remember, "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33).

What are some misconceptions people have about the church?

It is a misconception that the church is a building. The church is the people, not a building. A building is simply a place where the church meets. Hebrews 10:25 demands that children of God assemble on the Lord's day to worship. This necessitates a place to assemble. This place may be rented or furnished by the church. Howev-

er, at no time does the place of assembling become the church. It is improper and incorrect to refer to a building as the church. The building may burn down but the church will still be intact. One may attend a beautiful church, but it is beautiful only because Christ is its head and the members of it live godly lives, not because the building in which the church meets has eye appealing architecture and decorations. The word church means "called out" (Col. 1:13). The church is composed of those who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

It is a misconception that the church is a temporary substitute for the kingdom. Some people say Jesus came to establish his kingdom in the first century but was rejected in doing so by the Jews. In its place He established the church as a temporary substitute until such time He would be able to return and establish His kingdom. Those who believe this doctrine say Jesus is coming soon to establish the kingdom and are actually bewildered as to why He has not already done so. This suggestion comes from not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God (cf. Mark 12:24). The truth is, many of the Jews were ready and willing for Jesus to be their king and tried to make Him so. In John 6:14-15 we read, "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

The kingdom/church of Christ is not an earthly, political, military kingdom/church. Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world:

if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). It is a spiritual kingdom/church. It is in the hearts of men and women and is not "of" this world (Luke 17:20-21).

The context of Ephesians 3:10-11 clearly points out the church was not an accident, nor was it only a temporary substitute for the kingdom. It is exactly what Jesus had planned! "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The prophets prophesied of the days of the church (1 Peter 1:10-12; Acts 3:19-25; Luke 24:27)! Peter made this clear on the day of Pentecost when he said, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). The kingdom Christ came to establish was instituted just as was prophesied. It is the church (Mark 9:1). If it is not, then Jesus is a liar and a fraud.

It is a misconception that the church is not essential to salvation. Jesus believed the church was important enough to die for. In Acts 20:28 we read, "...the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." If the church is not essential, then Jesus died in vain. He shed His blood for nothing. We know that is not true.

When a person's sins are washed away at baptism (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16), the Lord adds them (the saved) to the church. He does not add them to a building. Concerning some on Pentecost we read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41,47). First Corinthians 12:13 says the same, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Those people who think they can live a good life and go to heaven without being a member of the church of Christ are sadly and tragically mistaken.

When the Lord comes again it will be to save his body, the church, not a building. Ephesians 5:23 says, "he is the savior of the body." Matthew 22:11-12 shows that those without a wedding garment will be cast out. The church IS the saved. There are no saved individuals that

are not in the church of Christ.

Jesus taught the church would stand until the end of the world. *“I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. 16:18). *“Then cometh the end,*

when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24). A building built by man, no matter how strong, is subject to

decay and will eventually fall (2 Peter 3:10-12). However, the Lord’s spiritual body, His church, is not subject to decay. It will be delivered up to God in the end.

“THAT’S NOT FAIR”

Charles Blair

It is so unfair to see some occupy pulpits which they would not have to stand in, had it not been for the efforts of those in the past who called the world to Jesus and His church.

Most parents encounter the above statement when trying to raise children. They possess a sense of fairness when it comes to what is happening to them. The unfairness arises because children often fail to see the whole picture of what is taking place. Even though this is part of their growing pains, there are things in life which are not fair. At times, we must call a thing for what it is, it is just not fair. Let us take a moment and mention a few.

A few years back, faithful preachers were waging war against the dangers of Pentecostalism. It was debated on the polemic platform, in pulpits, bulletin articles and in Bible classes. The lines were drawn very clearly and the Pentecostals could not handle the Truth. We challenged them, if you think you have the power to heal, then prove it. You think you can raise the dead, then prove it. On and on, the battle went. It was indeed a trying of the spirits to see if they were of God or not (1 John 4:1). When truth was held up, the doctrines of these people were destroyed.

At the close of the 20th century, there are those standing in pulpits which defended the Truth against Pentecostalism who are now trying to hold hands with it. It is not fair for these “Johnny come latelys” to speak about what the Holy Spirit does and offer no proof for it. Young men, barely out of college, are able to tell us things that we have not known until they came on the scene. They are not old enough to know of the battles which have been fought to provide them with the ground on which they now stand. They lack the

courage to confront the errors of Pentecostalism, thinking instead they have found new Truth, which no other generation has had since the first century.

There was a time when the message went out from our pulpits about the danger of changing worship as authorized by God (Col. 3:17). Those who wanted the instrument of music (mechanical) in public worship were met by faithful brethren who declared we must have a *“thus saith the Lord.”* Time and again, these false doctrines were met head on, and the truth did not suffer from such confrontations. It is so unfair to see pulpits now being occupied by those who claim we need a different approach to worship. They occupy pulpits and labors which they would not have were it not for faithful preachers in the past who took long and hard stands against altering worship to suit man and not God.

In days gone by, the religious world was confronted by loving brethren who called upon all men to obey the Lord. The message was clear. There is salvation in no one but Jesus (Acts 4:12). At the end of the way, Jesus will save His church (Eph. 5:23). All souls who would desire to be saved must be in the church built by Jesus and paid for by Jesus (Acts 20:28). The religious world trembled because truth was exalted and souls were being brought to God. It is so unfair to see some occupy pulpits which they would not have to stand in, had it not been for the efforts of those in the past who called the world to Jesus and His church. The “church-bashers” of today would have sought the shadows had they been in the

company of great preachers of bygone days.

There was a time when the message of salvation was rooted in the idea that the grace of God had appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). Faithful preachers stirred their audiences and closed out each session of a Gospel meeting with an invitation calling the sinner from Satan to accept the grace of God as revealed in the Gospel. How unfair for some today to spread the lies that we never preached grace. Preaching Jesus without grace would make as much sense as preaching Jesus without faith or claiming the church is not a part of the teaching. Those who espouse “grace only” insult the dignity and the work of faithful brethren over the years who fought so hard for the church to be here today.

In a sense of fairness, let me say “thank you” to all the faithful preachers, elders and Christians everywhere who paid the price to get us to where we are now.

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**15TH ANNUAL
“SEEK THE OLD
PATHS”
LECTURESHIP
THEME:
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH
JULY 23-27, 2000**

SOME CORNERS INTO WHICH WE HAVE NOT PAINTED OURSELVES ON THE VERSIONS

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

A member of the church in another town recently said, in essence, to a dear and close friend of mine, “You fellows pushing the King James Version have painted yourselves into a corner.” I want to respond to this statement which is critical of both the KJV and those of us who will revere it and use it for our study Bible. There are definitely some corners into which we have NOT painted ourselves. I shall number, name and elaborate on some of these.

1) **We have not painted ourselves into the corner of the indiscriminate usage of anything and everything that calls itself a Bible.** We have not made the colossal mistake of casting out a good, safe, reliable and reverent Bible for a bad, unsafe, unreliable and irreverent Bible such as proliferate the Bible reading populace today.

2) **We have not painted ourselves into the corner of modernistic Bibles.** The New Testament Revised Standard Version was this when it came out in 1946. The RSV Bible was this when it came out in 1952. The Preface of the 1946 product said they could not be content with the older versions and their word-for-word approach. They axed Mark 16:9-20 — more than 160 Greek words wholly left out of the text. The 1952 RSV tampered with the *Abrahamic promise* in Genesis 12:3. They removed the *Deity of Christ* from Psalms 45:6. They removed the *virgin birth* from Isaiah 7:14 and injected young woman in its place. They tampered with an *eldership qualification* in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

The **New English Bible** left *virgin* out of Isaiah 7:14. **Good News For Modern Man** had Mary a virgin in its first edition but changed *virgin* to a *girl* in the second edition. This product by Robert Bratcher showed great irreverence toward the *blood* passages of the New Testament. Modernism has never had an ounce of respect for the

precious blood of Christ in such passages as Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7 and 1 Peter 1:18,19.

3) **We have not painted ourselves into a sectarian corner.** This is the basic thing wrong with the **New International Version**. It is favorable to *faith only* in Romans 1:17. It is *Calvinistic* to the core with David *conceived and born in sin* in Psalm 51:5 and the *sinful nature* passages in Romans 7, 8 and Galatians 2. It is favorable to the usage of *mechanical music* in worship in Ephesians 5:19. It favors *Jehovah's Witness doctrine* in Acts 2:27,31. It favors *Judaism* in denying the removal of Mosaic Law in Matthew 5:17. It really messes up the *Gospel plan of salvation* in Ephesians 1:13; Romans 10:9,10 and Galatians 3:27. Were I a *premillennialist*, I would be happy with its rendering in John 5:28,29 and Matthew 19:28.

4) **We have not painted ourselves into a neo-Pentecostal corner.** One cannot study Bratcher's **Good News For Modern Man** and tell who received *Holy Spirit baptism* on Pentecost. The **New English Bible** abets the *tongue talkers* and their language of ecstasy in 1 Corinthians 14. Were I a Pentecostal, I would really like how **Phillips** rewrote 1 Corinthians 14:22. I would also like how the NIV rendered 1 Corinthians 13:10. I would like several of the renderings by Kenneth Taylor in **Living Bible Paraphrased** were I in the *Neo-Pentecostal camp*.

5) **We have not painted ourselves into a premillennial corner.** Taylor really majors in such. It would be virtually impossible to refute *militant premillennialism* if all we had was Taylor's paraphrased product of the **Living Bible Paraphrased**.

6) **We have not painted ourselves into a feminist or women's movement corner.** The **New Revised Standard Version** of 1989 has done this. This product will go a long way in moving women into every religious position of lead-

ership from preacher, to elder, to teacher of mixed classes, to song director, to prayer leader and to officiating at the Lord's Table.

7) **We have not painted ourselves into the corner of contradictions.** THE RSV frequently gets Old Testament prophecies clear out of harmonious gear with New Testament fulfillments and thus have contradictions galore. Most of the new Bibles have *flat contradictions* between Matthew 5:17 and Ephesians 2:15. They have Christ to deny doing what Paul affirmed he did do. The *Calvinistic Bibles* such as NIV and **Living Bible Paraphrased** have David born *totally depraved at birth* in Psalm 51:5 and yet wonderfully and fearfully made in Psalm 139:14. Several will stress *salvation by faith only* and yet contradict themselves with renderings that demand more than faith to be saved.

8) **We have not painted ourselves into the mutilated corner.** *Addition and subtraction* is the name of the game played by the new Bibles. *Denominationalism* has been added to the text. *Faith only* has been added. *Calvinism* has been added. So have *Pentecostalism* and *Premillennialism*. The new Bibles get shorter and shorter. They do not like *only begotten Son* relative to Jesus and so “begotten” is axed. Some have not liked *Mark 16:9-20*, and out it comes. **The Readers Digest** axed about 300,000 words plus — 50% of the Old Testament and 25% of the New Testament. Earlier ones paved the way for they had already employed their Jehoiakim penknives in cutting away words, verses and even sections.

The KJV and ASV have brought the church to us. They are safe and reliable. This is why our elders ask that all Bible reading, teaching and preaching done in our services be from one of these. I defend 100% their right to make and execute such a wise and safe policy.

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SO MANY HAVE ITCHING EARS

Timothy L. Dooley

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the young evangelist Timothy, instructs him to “*Preach the word...*” (2 Tim. 4:2). The young man was told to do this when it was popular to do so and when it was not so fashionable, even when it would prove to be dangerous. The reason behind this direction from Paul is then given in verses three and four when he says, “*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.*”

Shortly after this writing we are told, in both God’s word and history alike, that many apostasies took place. But this was not new or novel. For people from the beginning of time have sought to please themselves by their own personal wants and desires. They wish to hold to their own traditions and practices, even when these are not in harmony with God’s direction.

We see this in the beginning of time with Adam and Eve and their sin in the garden. We also see it in the story of Cain and Abel. God even destroyed the world with the great flood, only sparing Noah and his family because of man’s desire to serve self. And, what of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?

But nowhere is this attitude more prevalent or blatant as it is in Isaiah 30. The children of Israel had chosen to be self-serving and did not wish to hear or heed “God’s Word.” In verses 9-10 we read, “*That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.*” The least that we could admire of these people is the fact that they were honest. But honesty will never save a soul that is wrong (Matt. 7:21-23).

Today, so many have itching ears and do not desire to hear the Truth. Therefore, there is an abundance of false teachers like those described in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. “*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*” Christ gives a vivid description of such individuals in Matthew 23:27-28 when addressing the Scribes and Pharisees. “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*”

We need to preach the Truth in love (Eph. 4:15), both in season and out! We have to be willing to stand up and preach God’s Word just as Micaiah said in 1 Kings 22:13-14, “*And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.*”

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Fellowship...

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their error, repent and come back to the Truth. Matthew 18:15-17 teaches one should confront trouble with a brother for the sake of gaining him. One should also have the same spirit toward disfellowshipped brethren in error — those who are bringing reproach upon the church and cause of Christ.

Even though brethren are marked for their teaching and promotion of error, there are still some brethren, churches, and colleges that will use those who should be avoided.

When a church or college has a lectureship, is it necessary to discriminate against known false teachers? Certainly! We should be interested in using people that will help build up the body of Christ who are sound in the faith. If we invite false teachers to speak at workshops, lectures, homecomings, Gospel meetings, we are putting these precious souls in danger of eternal damnation.

Besides using a disfellowshipped brother, some events sponsored by brethren use denominational speakers. What is the difference in having a member of the church that is a known false teacher and a denominational preacher when it comes to fellowship? There is NO difference! “Oh but the speaker is not going to speak on the subject he has been marked for.” Big deal! Does not the Bible talk about bidding someone God speed in his error by fellowshiping them? “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds*” (2 John 10-11). Elders, college presidents, board members, preachers, and all who invite and encourage the promotion of false doctrine will be held accountable before God on the Judgment Day.

Let us always be thankful for the wonderful blessing of fellowship with our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. “*Ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:3).

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SAY WHAT YOU MEAN, AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

Chuck Pearson

*...we need to be careful what we say when proclaiming God's word, and how we say it.
We need to be sure our speech is plain, simple, on the level and easily understood.*

Most of us are familiar with the court system in this country. Many have watched courtroom dramas on TV — either real or fiction. What I have found to be most interesting, and oftentimes frustrating, is seeing the lawyers in action. It seems as if law attorneys possess this ability to twist around just about anything that can be said. If the defense is on the stand, the prosecutor will find any way possible to bend, manipulate and discredit the testimony given. The same is true with the defense attorney. In any case, lawyers are experts in using (or mis-using) words to help them in achieving the desired verdict. A lot of times, this means using deceptive language, vague terminology, and articulating in a roundabout way. People in the law profession are skilled in not saying what they mean and not meaning what they say! Unfortunately, brethren can be like this as well.

Sometimes preachers will word things in a sermon in a certain way as to cause the listener to not be sure what was meant. There are several reasons why this might happen.

A preacher might be deliberately trying to be vague. This is common among false teachers, as they do not want their heresies to be easily exposed. Therefore, they will “side-step” and try to make their statements complex and/or indistinct and when they’re called to task on what they said, the usual response is, “well, you just misunderstood!”

A preacher might be trying to sound sophisticated. This can happen among men who possess a high education and advanced degrees or even among men who don’t possess them but wish to sound as if they do. The result is the same. The listeners are confused, not knowing what was meant (and many times not even

understanding the language).

A preacher might not know how to put his message in straight, easy-to-understand terms. Honestly, I believe that anyone with some education knows how to make himself easily understood. But I suppose that if ambiguity is the only way you’re used to, then anything else might prove troublesome.

Whatever the reason, vague language is a problem when proclaiming the Gospel. God did not write his book for only the Ph.Ds. The word of God is written for everyone to read and understand. God inspired it with the intent that all men might learn of His Will and obey the Gospel! Jesus said that whoever believes in him will have everlasting life (John 3:16). How is that possible if we can’t understand what to believe? God commands that all men everywhere repent (Acts 17:30). How can people repent if they don’t understand what they must do? We’re also told that we must be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). But what if we can’t understand what it means to be baptized? Jesus said that all people will be judged according to His Word (John 12:48). Would a just and righteous God judge us based on something we can’t understand because it’s too vague and complex? Ridiculous!

As preachers then, and even as Christians in general, we need to be careful what we say when proclaiming God’s word, and how we say it. We need to be sure our speech is plain, simple, on the level and easily understood. Jesus warned about the use of fancy talk and vain repetitions when we pray (Matt. 6:7). The same lesson can be applied to preaching. Our Lord also said, “*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be*

judged, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37). We need to avoid such idle and useless speech when we are teaching God’s word.

The apostle Paul told Titus that Christians are to have “*sound speech that cannot be condemned*” (Titus 2:8). We can do this best by following Peter’s command: “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). If we simply speak as the Bible speaks and keep silent on everything else (which causes confusion), then our speech will be sound and easily understood unto the edification of those who hear (1 Cor. 14:26).

“*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). When we realize that it is through preaching and teaching God’s word that one obeys the Gospel and obtains salvation, then we understand how crucial it is to speak in plain language. Vague speech will confuse. It will not help a person understand what he must do in order to be saved and remain faithful. Since people’s souls are at stake, let us be sure to say what we mean, and mean what we say!

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RESPECTABLE PREACHERS

This writer wishes that every young man in the church who is charting the course for his future would seriously consider becoming a “full-time” Gospel preacher. There is no work in the world more important, more challenging, or more rewarding than preaching the Word.

The preacher is God’s “mouth-piece” here upon the earth; therefore, he must be extremely loyal to God. In Paul’s work of preaching he said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). Yet, it was God he tried to please, not men, for he said, “For 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. 5:11).

A mature thinker realizes that the best service he can offer to man is preaching and living in a manner pleasing to God. However, some refuse to accept God’s will. For this cause Paul wrote the young evangelist Timothy and said, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. 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. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Once one has come to understand this (the first and foremost qualification), he is ready to proceed to other qualifications an evangelist must meet.

A preacher must live a life as pure and holy as humanly possible. Paul instructed, “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). A good preacher must be consecrated to his task. First Timothy 4:15 states, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”

Young preachers must work especially hard to achieve a good reputation and therefore gain the respect of the brethren. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Every preacher who is pleasing to God must be sincere. Several instructions had been given to Timothy in regard to his efforts in Ephesus, but the “bottom line” from Paul was, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5).

Study is a must for any respectable preacher. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Prayer is another must. “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men...” (1 Tim. 2:1ff). When a man meets these qualifications, he deserves the respect of the people.

Too many preachers lose their respectability by becoming involved in “church politics.” They preach for profit or popularity and therefore prostitute the pulpit in which they stand. Their sermons are designed to soothe the brethren, to make them “feel good.” Generally speaking, such preachers could preach their sermons without modification in a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or any other denominational church without being detected as a member of another church. Yes, they preach the truth. There is no doubt about that. But, they refuse to preach all of the truth, or the appropriate truth for the appropriate occasion.

Then, there are other reasons preachers lose their respectability. Some do not have the necessary self discipline to make themselves study and work, they are lazy. Others become possessed with a disease called “preacher jealousy” and they, by their feelings and actions toward preaching brethren, become “little men” in the eyes of the church.

Many preachers allow their attitudes to be impaired by unfortunate difficulties with brethren, even to the point of becoming mean and bitter. It is hard to respect such men.

We need respectable preachers in the church today. Young men, we need you! Train and prepare yourself so that you might preach the Gospel in its purity and simplicity. Set sail on an even keel and maintain your course. Have a “thus saith the Lord” for everything you preach and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God.

Preachers, seek out and recruit more preachers.

– Tommy J. Hicks
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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Just a note to let you know that I came across your web site. I am impressed with it. I think that the web is one of the best things the church can use to help get the message out to the world. I like your site. Thanks for the work that has been put into it. Keep up the good work”

...**Bobby Wood**. “Thank you for sending me the most excellent and informative *“Seek The Old Paths”* ...**Ewell Pritchett, Greeneville, TN**. “Thank you for your work and the stand you take for the truth”

...**James Cossey, McMinnville, TN**. “Thank you and the good congregation there. Keep fighting for the “Faith” we are gaining ground against the “Liberal Movement.” I have much love and respect for faithful Brethren who respect God’s Holy and Divine Word. We need to keep upholding it until our Lord returns! May the faithful continue “holding up your arms” until Liberalism is utterly defeated. We do not need this foolishness in the brotherhood or the church which our blessed died for!!!”

...**Ernest Bentley, Stone, KY**. “Thank you very much and may the Lord’s blessings be with you in keeping the brethren well informed”

...**Steffie Stewart, Riverview, MI**. “Please put me on your mailing list for “Seek The Old Paths.” I support your stand for the truth”

...**Paul McCollum, Salinas, CA**. “Thank you and Godspeed in your work!”

...**Tim Wilkins, Grenada, MS**. “Dear Brother in Christ, I really enjoyed your website. Thank you. I am a new Christian. I have been seeking the truth for a long time. I used to be a Nazarene Minister (for 4 years) and am currently serving in the Army as a chaplain assistant. Thought I was saved that whole time period because of false teaching. But through it all I was seeking a fellowship that best represented the New Testament church. I even joined the Catholic Church thinking it was the most historic. Through the study of the Word and different ministries such as yours I have found the truth that is in Christ and His Word. I am having to “unlearn” many things I have picked up over the years but know God will help me through His Word. I am 40 years old and desire to serve Christ and His church as a Gospel Preacher and after my retirement from the Army will do so. (God willing of course). Thanks again for your website and I will be returning again and again for helpful resources”

...**Tim Hilterbrand**. “We hope this letter finds you well, and would like to express our appreciation for your publication of such a fine newsletter. This *S.T.O.P.* newsletter has been part of our regular reading for the past year. The material contained therein has proven to be very enlightening regarding the issues that are (unfortunately) prevalent in the Lord’s church, and need to be addressed. It has challenged us to stay in the Lord’s word, to prove ourselves against the Lord’s word, and to test the spirits. Enclosed is an amount that we hope will help defray the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter. May the Lord bless you as you seek to follow his word”

...**Bryan & Lisa Reeves, Livonia, MI**. “I am a preacher for 38 years. I have read some articles in your Publication of July 1999. You are teaching the truth and defending it. May you kindly put me on your mailing list for the “Seek The Old Paths” Publication. If you want, you may send me back dated papers as well. May God bless you.”

...**Campion Mugweni**. “I think you are doing a lot of good with the paper here. We have just had Joe Beam in town and we need to know about him and others. I will send you a small donation in a couple of days. I like to do this every year and procrastination is my middle name. So I have waited until the 11th hour as it were. Thanks for the good material”

...**Ben Porter, MI**. “Just a note to let you know again how much we enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths*. We thank you very much. Please continue to send it to us. May God bless you in this good work”

...**Billy & Gracie Aaron, West Monroe, LA**. “We thoroughly enjoy the fantastic *S.T.O.P.* and we would like to continue receiving it. May we all seek the old paths and those who have gone away come to the realization of their wrong. And may God continue to bless all of us”

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...**Madge Moore, Odessa, TX**. “I would like to receive your monthly

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...**Jo Alice Bradford, Rayville, LA**. “Thank you for sending me *S.T.O.P.* Enclosed is a check for a small donation to help cover expenses. Please keep sending *S.T.O.P.* to me as it is very informative”

...**Pat Williams, Cookeville, TN**. “Thank you for your continuing efforts to publish the truth and to inform Christians of the false teaching in the brotherhood today. Your issues are informative as well as a great educational tool in the word. Keep up the good work!”

...**Nancy Wyatt, Crossville, TN**. “We got an old issue of your monthly publication *Seek The Old Paths*. We appreciate very much for your effort to defend the Lord’s one and only church from those who are now busy dividing the brotherhood. Since, your publication is given free upon request, we the new congregation in the above address, request a monthly copy. Thank you very much in advance and we pray for you and your work for Him”

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