



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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WHEN GOD REJECTS OUR WORSHIP

Matthew Carver

We must faithfully live the life enjoined upon us by Jesus the Christ and His noble ambassadors. The Spirit of Christ must permeate the life of His professed followers.

Amongst the people of God, worship has always been of high and solemn importance. Great emphasis has been placed on ensuring that our worship is in accordance with the divine mandates as delivered within the pages of the New Testament. We are thoroughly familiar with the fact that, under the New Covenant, praise and worship is described as *“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”* (Heb. 13:15). Further, we find admonitions given by the Holy Spirit through Paul: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Eph. 5:18-19).

In the past, contentions arose over the meaning of the Greek term *psallo* that is translated “making melody” in Ephesians 5:19. It was contended that the word implied the use of an instrument other than the human voice, thereby permitting worshippers (laboring under the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus) to employ the melodious tones of the piano and the organ, which find such ready and frequent acceptance in most all denominations today. However, all reputable Greek lexicographers, with one voice, report that by the time of Christ and His apostles,

the term *psallo* had come to mean simply “to pluck, pull out, to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang; in the NT, to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song” (Thayer, p.675, 1967). Hence, upon considering the text with this understanding, we find that that which is to be plucked or twanged is the human heart and that it is to be done during the singing of praise. We find a similar reference in Colossians 3:16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

Moreover, during our worship we know that it is right and proper to pray to our Holy Father and to commemorate the sacrifice and death of His only Begotten Son through the elements of the unleavened loaf and fruit of the vine (Acts 20:7). These we teach and practice; and, we take great comfort in knowing that we worship God in accordance to His divine standards. However, there have been occasions throughout the history of God’s people when, in fact, God has rejected the worship he prescribed. Let us examine such an occasion in the book of Isaiah so that we might find the root cause of such rejection; and, in order to guard ourselves against a similar fate.

Through the prophet Isaiah

(1:11-14), our Creator spoke these words: *“To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them].”*

An analysis of this passage reveals these findings:

1) We note that the people of God during this time were bringing a “multitude” of sacrifices. Hence, we understand from this that they were not slack in the Law’s requirement of offering sacrifice unto God on a regular and consistent basis. In this respect, the Israelites were in total compliance with the Law.

2) We find within these offerings the image of the “fat of fed beasts.” This description is indicative of the fact that the worshippers were indeed bringing the best of the flocks

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When God Rejects Worship...



Editorial...

CHRISTIANS CAN FALL AND BE LOST

Garland M. Robinson

The subject of apostasy is so prevalent in the Scriptures that you can take your Bible and randomly open it at any place, Old or New Testament, and on either of those two pages you will likely read something about falling away. Some have noted there are as many as 2,500 verses that speak on this topic. For example, in Hebrews 4:11, we read about the **danger** of falling away. “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, **lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief**.” In 2 Peter 3:17 we are **warned** about falling away. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know [these things] before, **beware** lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, **fall from your own steadfastness**.” In 1 Timothy 4:1-3 it is **predicted** that some would fall away. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times **some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth**.” In 2 Timothy 2:17-18 we have an **example** of some who fell away. “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is **Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some**.”

If one cannot fall away and be eternally lost, why are we exhorted so frequently to be faithful so as not to lose our reward? “...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). What if you’re not faithful unto death? Will there still be a crown of life? The obvious answer is No. “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my

Father, and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5). What if you don’t overcome the temptations and cares of life? This text says your name will be blotted out of God’s book of life.

Unless we add faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity to our lives, we will be barren, unfruitful, and blind; and consequently, will have fallen from the Lord (2 Peter 1:5-10). “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). An evil heart of unbelief causes us to depart from God (Heb. 3:12-14). We must follow peace and holiness or we will never see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Unless we seek after the Lord’s goodness, we will be “cut off” (Rom. 11:22). The devil knows Christians can fall and is working diligently to that end (1 Peter 5:8). If we can’t fall, he is wasting his time.

Many of the parables teach that Christians can fall away and be lost: the *ten virgins* (Matt. 25:1-13), the *net* (Matt. 13:47-50), the *talents* (Matt. 25:14-30), the *sower* (Luke 8:13), the *unfaithful servant* (Luke 12:41-48), the *vine and the branches* (John 15:1-8).

If Christians can’t fall, why did Jesus teach his disciples to pray, “lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13)? Why did Peter say that when we turn from the truth we are in a worse condition than if we had never known (obeyed) the “way of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:20-22)?

It’s amazing how some people have a wild and vivid imagination in attempting to make the Bible fit their manmade doctrines! Jesus said, “But in VAIN they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the **COMMANDMENTS OF MEN**” (Matt. 15:9). If the Bible teaches anything at all, it teaches a child of God can fall away from God’s saving grace and be eternally lost. Unless we strive to enter the strait gate (Luke 13:24) and give diligence to make our call-

ing and election sure (2 Peter 1:10), we will fall.

To those who go back to keep any part of the Old Testament, Galatians 5:4 says, “Christ is become of no effect unto you,...**ye are fallen from grace**.” Could any passage be clearer? If this verse is not sufficient, what would God have to say to make people believe Christians can fall away and be lost? You can’t fall from a place you’ve never been. One needs help to misunderstand this passage. Sadly, the world is full of false teachers who are leading men astray in helping them to misunderstand the Bible!

Second Peter 3:9 says the Lord does not wish for any to perish (be lost) but for all to come to repentance. The key is REPENTANCE; without it, no one will be saved (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30). God has provided a means of forgiveness for those who have gone back to the “old life.” An example of this is shown by considering the account of a converted sorcerer whose name was Simon (Acts 8:12-24). After becoming a Christian, he desired to obtain the gift of “laying on of hands” by offering Peter and John money to buy it. Because of his deed, he was said to be “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” His heart was not right in the sight of God and was shown to be wickedness. Could any doubt he had not fallen away? He was told to repent and pray in order to be restored to the fellowship of God. This is the same way it is done today for God’s children who have gone astray.

The way back to God is for the “fallen” to repent, confess fault and pray. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another. ... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). “Brethren, if any of you do **err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins**” (James 5:19-20). First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The point is, if we do not confess our sins, he will not forgive us. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritu-

al, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Jude 21 says, *“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”*

If you are an unfaithful member of the Lord’s church, why not come back to faithfulness by repenting of your sins and making things right with your home congregation? The eternal consequences of the wayward Christian is worse than if you had never known the way of truth and obeyed it (cf. 2 Peter 2:20-21).

Can we expect to see you at church the next time the doors are open?

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When God Rejects Worship...

(Continued from page 9)

to Jehovah for offering. Once more, this placed them in harmony with the divinely enjoined precepts of the Law.

3) We note that the priests were still faithful in their offering of incense, and yet it was an abomination unto God. Only the priests were permitted to offer incense upon the sacrifices, which emphasizes the fact that even the priesthood of holy and righteous men devoted to the pursuit of serving Jehovah in His Temple were corrupted by the rampant wickedness that prevailed amongst the people of God.

4) The observance of the various appointed feasts and religious days were wearisome to God to the extent that He hated them and considered these occasions troublesome. However, from this description we realize once more that the Israelites were faithful in their external observances of the requirements of the Law.

In view of these facts, we are left with the image of an indignant God who despised and therefore rejected the worship offered unto Him by His people. However, when viewing the actions of the Israelites, we must concede that the sacrifices offered and the religious days observed were all in accordance with the very laws that had been divinely prescribed by God Himself. Therefore, knowing that the external forms of worship were not to be faulted, we must seek the reason behind God’s rejection elsewhere.

Note the context of this passage (Isa. 1:11-14):

1) First, we find Jehovah lamenting the rebellion of the Israelite people whom He had nourished and brought up as children: *“...I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me”* (Isa. 1:2). This people had become a *“...sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters...”* (Isa. 1:4). It was even said of them that they had *“forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.”* Be mindful that these charges were laid against them in spite of the fact that they had remained faithful in their observance of the worship of God as

the Mosaic Law had directed.

2) The people were characterized by God in saying *“your hands are full of blood”* (Isa. 1:15). The rulers of the people were *“rebellious, and companions of thieves”* (Isa. 1:23). Moreover, *“every one loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.”*

For these transgressions and failures, the worship offered in accordance with the dictates of the Law was decisively rejected. Hence, the lesson is plainly understood. Although our forms of worship may harmonize perfectly with the divine Will, there is still that which must be done to make such acceptable. We must faithfully live the life enjoined upon us by Jesus the Christ and His noble ambassadors. We must not be full of love and light and life on only one day a week. The Spirit of Christ must permeate the life of His professed followers. Recall the inspired admonition: *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Rom. 8:9).

What was the divine remedy for the people of God whose scriptural worship was so castigated? Hear the words of the prophet once more: *“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. ... If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]”* (Isa. 1:16-17, 19-20).

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WHY I LEFT THE MORMON CHURCH #14

Nathan Franson

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is a dishonest and fallacious religion that has deceived many good souls.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is driven largely by a creed of thirteen “Articles of Faith.” To see our examination of these “Articles,” go to seektheoldpaths.com/stop2014.htm.

The thirteenth and final clause in the Mormon Articles of Faith reads,

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul — We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

The ideologies mentioned here certainly generate behavior by which everyone should abide. In our examination of article 13, we want to call attention to the word “honesty.” Honesty is imperative in the pursuit and presentation of truth. It will also lead to exposing error and deception. This is why it is somewhat ironic that a religion with such a controversial history and disregard for Bible authority would tout such an attribute at the conclusion of its faith-based statements.

A considerable amount of the duplicity (cunning, deception) of the teachings and works of Mormonism, as compared to the infallible Bible, has been discussed throughout our series of 14 articles (beginning in Jan/2014). Yet there is one more compelling piece of evidence (and perhaps the most convincing) that challenges the honesty and integrity of the LDS Church (Latter Day Saints). That proof comes by way of their numerous prophecies that have

utterly failed to be fulfilled.

In Deuteronomy 18:21, God anticipates Moses asking a relevant question pertaining to prophecy, “...*How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken.*” In other words, how will we know if what someone prophesies is true or false? God answers, “*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*” (Deut. 18:22) In short, when one gives an accurate prophecy, he may be trusted. If not, then he exposes himself as fraudulent.

In 1969, a scientist named Peter Stoner wrote an article in the magazine *Science Speaks* in which he examined the validity of Bible prophecy. He first took eight prophecies as recorded in the Old Testament and wrote,

We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power... take 10 to the 17th power silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these *eight* prophecies and having them all come true in any one man.

Stoner then considered 48

prophecies and writes, “We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10 to the 157th power.” These are certainly staggering odds. Now, consider that there are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled exactly *when, how, and where* the prophets said they would. Every one of them was fulfilled (33 in one day)! No other book of religious antiquity provides such explicit prophecies with precise results. However, it does not take long to see how Mormon prophets have fallen short.

FAILED PROPHECY IN THE “BOOK OF MORMON”

The **Book of Mormon** states, “And behold, he [Jesus] shall be born of Mary, at **Jerusalem** [emphasis, NF] which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel...” (Alma 7:10) This prophecy can be immediately dismissed as false. John writes, “*Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of **Bethlehem**, where David was*” (John 7:42)? Matthew writes, “*Now when Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** of Judaea in the days of Herod the king...*” (Matt. 2:1). Likewise, Luke describes the time and setting of the Savior’s birth as being in **Bethlehem** (Luke 2). Jerusalem and Bethlehem are five miles apart. In order to try to reconcile the book of Mormon’s false assertions, Mormon apologists claim the New World knew little of Old World geography. However, John’s account clearly refers to geographic details at the time of David. This Mormon prophecy utterly fails.

FAILED PROPHECIES IN THE “DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS”

A prophecy was given regarding a **Mormon temple** that would be built in Missouri. Joseph Smith writes,

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse. (*Doctrine & Covenants* 57:1-3)

This prophecy declares there would be a Mormon temple erected in Independence, Missouri. However, to this day there has never been one built nor is there any authorization from the government to establish one. This Mormon prophecy fails.

There was a prophecy regarding the **Civil War**. Smith predicts,

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and *then war shall be poured out upon all nations* [emphasis, NF] (*Doctrine & Covenants* 87:1-3)

The Civil War was fought between the North and South and isolated in the United States. It never extended beyond the border of America, certainly not to all nations.

This Mormon prophecy fails.

OTHER FAILED PROPHECIES

In Smith's *History of the Church*, he gives a prophecy pertaining to **Lyman E. Johnson**, one of their modern day apostles at that time. Smith writes, "...he [Lyman E. Johnson] shall live until the gathering is accomplished, according to the holy prophets; and he shall be like unto Enoch; and his faith shall be like unto his...and he shall see the Saviour come and stand upon the earth with power and great glory" (*Smith*). Smith claims Johnson would be alive to see the Lord return. This was written in February, 1835. However, Johnson was excommunicated in 1837 and drowned in 1856. This Mormon prophecy fails.

Also in *History of the Church*, Smith prophesied about **William E. McLellin**, another modern day apostle. Smith writes, "...his life shall be spared in the midst of pestilence and destruction, and in the midst of his enemies. He shall be a prince and savior to God's people. The tempter shall not overcome him...and his days may be prolonged until the coming of the Son of Man." This was also written in 1835. However, McLellin was excommunicated that same year and died on April 24, 1883. This Mormon prophecy fails.

The LDS Church claims that the reference to two sticks in Ezekiel 37:15-22 was a prediction of the **uniting of the Book of Mormon and the Bible**. However, an examination of the text clearly explains that the two sticks refer to Judah and Israel. The two would become one. It is a prophecy relating to the spiritual restoration of Israel in Christ and His church (vs.23-28; Luke 1:30-33; John 10:11-16; Heb. 13:20). This Mormon prophecy fails.

There is a rather humorous prophecy regarding **inhabitants on the moon**. In the Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, Joseph Smith is quoted as saying that there are inhabitants on the moon. He expands by saying these "moon men" stood nine feet tall and were dressed in Quaker-style clothing. They also lived to be one hundred years old. Remember at that time, space exploration was still science fiction, which is precisely what Smith's prediction was. This

Mormon prophecy fails.

Another prophecy centered around Smith trying to **sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon**. At that time, Canada was known to purchase religious material and Smith wanted a part of it.

In *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, David Whitmer explains,

Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon...Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copyright, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: "Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of men: and some revelations are of the devil." (*Whitmer*)

Consider how absurd this reasoning is. It implies that any false revelation could be explained away by simply saying it was of the devil or from man. No prophecy in the Bible reasoned its authenticity in this manner, yet many in defense of Mormon scripture fall for this nonsensical logic. Remember Deuteronomy 18:22, "*if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that [is] the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, [but] the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.*" This Mormon prophecy fails.

Brigham Young, the second leader of the LDS Church wrote,

I will tell you who the real fanatics are: they are they who adopt false principles and ideas as facts, and try to establish a superstructure upon a false foundation. They are the fanatics; and however ardent and zealous they may be, they may rea-

son or argue on false premises till doomsday, and the result will be false. If our religion is of this character we want to know it; we would like to find a philosopher who can prove it to us. (Young)

Perhaps if Mr. Young was alive long enough to see this bold proclamation backfire, he would have recanted his confident remarks. Many more failed prophecies can be found with timely research, but it only takes one to correctly expose a false prophet. Several are listed for the sake of identifying the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints** as being a dishonest and fallacious religion that has deceived many good souls.

CONCLUSION

One should not merely accept something just because he believes it to be accurate. Christianity is based on evidence. Paul writes of the Bereans, *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so [emph., NF]”* (Acts 17:11).

Most who defend Mormon doctrine are genuinely sincere. However, sincerity does not automatically initiate truth. One who is honest with their research will unveil the facts. That is not to say those who do it will ultimately accept it, but the hope remains that all will come to Christ.

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This completes the series

(The entire series of lessons on Mormonism have been put into one document: www.seektheoldpaths.com/pdf/articles.html)

GLORIFYING GOD

Jerry Joseph

**When we follow our “own way”
rather than “God’s way” in worship,
God cannot be glorified.**

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). To “glorify” means to adore, to honor, to esteem or to magnify. God is certainly worthy *“to receive glory and honor and power”* (Rev. 4:14). In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul wrote that we are to *“do all to the glory of God.”* How should we glorify God?

In Our Works. To please and to glorify God demands we be involved in good works, that is, works authorized by God (Col. 3:17; Eph. 2:10; Matt. 5:16; Heb. 10:24). We must be *“zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14) and *“be careful to maintain good works”* (Titus 3:8).

In Our Worship. *“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest”* (Rev. 15:4). If we are to glorify God in worship, then our worship must be as He has authorized in His word. The guidelines for acceptable worship are stated in John 4:24, where Jesus said, *“God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* For worship to glorify God it must be directed to God — *“must worship him”* with the right disposition of heart — *“in spirit,”* being guided by divine truth — *“in truth.”* Therefore, when we change any one of these three essential elements in worship, our worship will be in vain. Some in the church today are pushing for change in how we worship. We must not allow mechanical instruments of music, solos, choruses and choirs, hand-clapping, women preaching or leading in other areas in our worship services. Such matters are not authorized by Jehovah God. When we follow our “own way” rather than “God’s way” in worship, God cannot be glorified.

In Our Way of Life. When we bring our lives in harmony with God’s word, God is glorified (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Rom. 12:1,2). How can we do this? We must *“walk in the light”* (1 John 1:7), *“walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:4), *“walk in the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:16), *“walk not after the flesh”* (Rom. 8:1) and *“walk in love”* (Eph. 5:2). We must put away the *“works of the flesh”* and produce the *“fruit of the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:19-23). Even when we suffer for doing right, God must be glorified (1 Peter 4:16).

By Our Words. It is true that when we teach and preach, we must only teach and preach *“the truth”* (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9-11). Therefore, if we teach false doctrine, no matter how sincere we may be, God is not glorified. Do we gossip, take God’s name in vain, or curse? God is not glorified by such. *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Eph. 4:29). What we say does make a difference because we will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:36,37).

Let us make sure that we are careful in what we do and say so that we can glorify God in our works, worship, way of life, and by our words.

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A LITTLE ORDER IN WORSHIP, PLEASE

Rusty Stark

As spiritual people, we need to outgrow our childish urges for excitement and heed God's call for order.

In previous articles we have called for: 1) **A Little Common Sense** (Nov/14, *Is There A Pattern For New Testament Worship?*) — recognizing and following the pattern God has set out for worship. 2) **A Little Reverence** (Dec/14, *Reverence Please*) — recognizing the meaning of worship, and trying to humbly give to the Lord the glory due his name. In this article, we want to call for **A Little Order, Please.**

Some groups seem to promote disorder and chaos in worship. They allow people to talk and shout while others are talking, to interrupt, and to engage in various attention-getting behaviors. I have visited assemblies of denominational groups and observed some very disturbing things.

In some assemblies, any person moved by the song lyrics is likely to stand up. This happens also when the preacher is making an important point. No big deal, right? The problem is that this behavior focuses those in the assembly on the person who jumps up rather than on God or on the truth being set forth in song or sermon. In other assemblies, I've seen people shouting, supposedly jabbering in "tongues" while songs are being sung or even while the preacher is preaching. I even heard one woman barking like a dog.

The claim is that this chaos is the result of the Holy Spirit overcoming people, 'slaying them in the Spirit,' and other similar nonsense. One older preacher from the past noted that when someone 'gets the Spirit' it takes five brethren to hold him. He then went on to ask, "Why would God have a wild Spirit?" The fact is, it's not the Holy Spirit that prompts men to be disorderly in worship.

We admit that the New Testament pattern does not give us a specific order of worship. It does not tell us what comes first, second, last, etc. However, while this is true, it does call for *orderly* worship. First Corinthians 14:40 says, "Let all

things be done decently and in order."

The reason for this command is that the church at Corinth had a problem with disorderly behavior in worship. In chapter 14, they were reminded of these things:

1. They should not all try to be leaders in the assembly (v.26),

2. They ought to take turns when they spoke in tongues, and then only 2 or 3 at a time (v.27).

3. It was wrong for them to speak in foreign languages in the assembly unless an interpreter was present (v.28). (In New Testament times some men were given the ability to speak in tongues. This was not some unintelligible gibberish that only God could understand, these tongues were languages that the person could speak miraculously without having learned them (cf. Acts 2:1-11). First Corinthians 13:8-13 teaches conclusively that speaking in tongues, receiving direct revelations from God, miraculous healing, and prophesying, have long since passed away.)

4. Those prophesying should not speak over one another, but should take turns speaking (vs.29-31).

5. The spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets (v.32). This means they were not 'out of control' due to the influence of the Spirit.

6. Paul also reminded them that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (v.33).

The very things that are practiced and promoted by modern day Pentecostalism are clearly condemned in 1 Corinthians 14. God calls us to order, not to disorder, disarray and chaos.

Sadly, as some in the church imitate the denominations around us, we see some worship assemblies becoming less formal, more casual, and more disorderly.

1. We see preachers asking questions from the pulpit and encouraging people (even women) to answer out loud as if there is no distinction between a worship service and a

Bible class. This violates 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

2. We see people encouraging a sporting event atmosphere — 'high-fiving' each other as they come out of the pulpit, encouraging applause, and adding clapping to a *capella* singing. While worship can be considered a celebration of sorts, there is a formality demanded by the words 'decently and in order' that we must not abandon.

This trend is in the wrong direction. It is toward more disorder, not toward more order.

EDIFICATION OF OTHERS

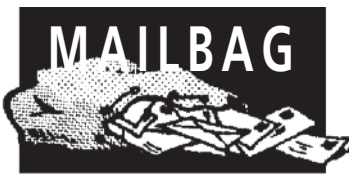
First Corinthians 14:26 commands us to do all things unto edifying. Disorder and chaos can not and do not edify. Always seeking to be the center of attention does not demonstrate a concern for others. When we care about others, we will make sure our worship is orderly so it can edify and teach.

Modern Americans love entertainment. We detest anything that is boring. We shout for that which excites the senses and shocks the sensibilities. But as spiritual people, we need to outgrow our childish urges for excitement and heed God's call for order. Remembering our purpose in worship will help us with this.

We worship to praise God, not to call attention to self. We worship to give Him the glory due to his high and holy name (Psa. 29:2). This desire should keep us from jumping up and down and trying to attract attention to ourselves. It should also call on us to do things as God has ordered them so that He will be praised and honored. The Glory belongs to God.

A Little Order Please...

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