



# 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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## COVENANT OR CULTURE? #1 (WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH)

Gary McDade

***We need to understand that when Paul said or wrote something, it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said it because Paul was an inspired apostle. A lot of people are using the fabrication of “culture” to do what they want over what God wants.***

**W**e are finding today (in contrast to former generations) more and more women preaching, leading public prayers, serving at the Lord's table, leading the singing, and teaching in a mixed class of both men and women. For many years people observed the Scriptures on this point and women taught women and women taught children, but never in the presence of men. In private settings, like that authorized in Acts 18:26, Priscilla along with her husband, Aquila, taught Apollos, a man who himself was *“mighty in the Scriptures.”*

The real challenge comes, not in seeing what the Bible says about what God wants men and women to do, but, rather, it comes under the heading of “order,” the order that God has revealed in this connection. Herein lies the real point at issue with this discussion. This is why the objections arise with the discussion of women's role in the church today. However, if we will stay with the Bible we can resolve all of these concerns to the glory and honor of God.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul wrote, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is*

*God.”* Paul is saying that he wants all to know God's order. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and, yes, **man is the head of woman.** This is the reality of what the Scriptures say about God's order.

The argument is being made, “Well our culture is different, and so that order does not matter and cannot be taken into consideration when determining women's role in the church today.” But, notice that Paul said this was something he wanted all to know. Please bear in mind that in 1 Corinthians 14:37 he wrote, *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”* We are directed to this passage because people today say, “I don't like what the apostle Paul teaches about women.” We need to understand that when Paul said or wrote something, it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said it because Paul was an inspired apostle. So, please, always keep that in mind. When he said, “Here's something I want you to know: that the head of woman is man, and the head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God,” we must recognize and respect God's order. When we do so we will be

able to serve God acceptably, but if we do not, then we are writing our own rules and leaving God out.

A lot of people are using the fabrication of “culture” to do what they want over what God wants. We are interested in the covenant God made through His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, a foundational choice to be made today regarding women's role in the church is an “either/or” choice. Will we have God's covenant or our culture?

On the subject of the covenant — so we can all understand what that is — Jeremiah saw a time when there would be a new covenant and he prophesied of it (Jer. 31:31-33). Beginning in verse 31, *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith*

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**Covenant Or Culture?...**



Editorial...

## THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM #2

Garland M. Robinson

### GOD'S WORD IS FINAL MOST WON'T ACCEPT IT

When Balaam inquired of God whether he should go with the messengers from Moab, "...God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12). Upon hearing these words from God, Balaam told the couriers he could not go back to Moab with them. When others returned from Moab with greater rewards and honor, Balaam responded by saying, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more" (Num. 22:18). What a noble statement of resolve! How great it would have been had Balaam followed his own admonition. However, in the same breath he responded, "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more" (Num. 22:19). Notice his last words: "that I may know what the LORD will say...more."

Balaam was not satisfied with God's answer forbidding him to go to Moab and curse Israel, so he inquired of God again. He wanted to see if God might say something else that would allow him to go. Multitudes of people do the same thing today; and sadly, many of them are members of the church who are not satisfied with God's word. They read and recognize plain and simple passages; but like Balaam, they want to see what more (what else) they can make God say. They want to find a loop-hole. They want to find another passage that overturns or allows them to ignore the plain and simple passages. They seek to make God contradict Himself. In effect, they make God a liar! Could this be you?

To not accept God's word and to keep on searching for something more from the Lord will end with no good result. Eventually, you will find what you're looking for — or at least you

will think you've found it. But, that's all a person needs to go ahead and do what they wanted to do all along. They pacify themselves as they run along full steam into error. For example...

Many church members are not content with **God's pattern of worship**. Even though John 4:24 says worship is *in spirit* and *in truth*, that's not enough — that's too cold and boring, they say. They seek to spice it up. They refuse to recognize that acceptable worship is from the heart (spirit) and governed/regulated by the New Testament (truth). They abandon God's authority and incorporate their feelings and emotions into the worship. One of their proponents has said, "worship ought to be a party. There ought to be somebody on one side of the building singing "Amazing Grace" while somebody is on the other side of the building hugging Grace." They love to swing and sway, moan and groan, clap and hop, shout and roll, thinking the Holy Spirit is moving among them. Worship becomes "all about self" instead of "all about God." Their services are about what "I like, what makes me feel good, what brings me pleasure." They don't care they are seeking to satisfy themselves instead of satisfying God. Such so-called worship is vain — vain to the core (Matt. 15:8-9). When you travel the course of Balaam, you end up just like Balaam.

God's simple plan of **worship in song** is found in Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." They are not satisfied with acapella singing. They want to add mechanical instruments of music because they think it's better — they get more out of it (again, seeking to please themselves, not God). They want to see "what more the Lord will say" so they scour the Scriptures in order to make them say what they want. Before long, presto! They decide the words "making melody" can include mechanical instruments and whatever

they desire. But they do so contrary to the first century usage of the word. In their minds, they find all sorts of excuses to ignore *acapella* congregational singing. Some have gone so far as to presume to have found that God has not authorized congregational singing anyway; therefore, they can have solos, quartets and choirs even though "*speaking to yourselves*" demands the whole congregation participating with each other in their singing.

God's simple plan of **Gospel preaching** is found in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." "...The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). "...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). But that's not enough according to those who want to "see what more the Lord will say." People with this attitude are compromisers, progressives. The "good book" condemns being progressive (going beyond) when it comes to Scripture. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God..." (2 John 9). A compromising/progressive preacher once told me, "preaching just won't do it any more. We've got to have something more." So, people attempt to find what more they can do. They add entertainment and recreation — fun and games. "That is what attracts people" they say. That is what will bring people in. They attempt to justify non-authorized activities by saying, "if we bring 'em in we can teach 'em." But, sadly the teaching is never done. And, even if they did attempt to teach them, all they have to offer is man-made doctrines. If they taught the truth they would instruct these visitors, and themselves, that recreation and entertainment has no part in the Gospel message and/or practice. It is God's Word, not fun and games, that is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

God's simple plan of worship in the **Lord's supper** is found in Matthew 26:26-29 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. It involves unleavened bread and fruit of the vine in commemoration of the Lord's suffering and death. It was observed by the first century church every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).



But, people today are not content with God's order. They want to find more, so they do. Some now observe the memorial of the Lord's supper at weddings and funerals; and, on any day of the week. Some contend it is nothing more than a common meal and have therefore substituted items other than unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.

One congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, had barbecue in observance of the Lord's supper — and even charged each participant for it! They made themselves feel better about it by saying if any could not afford the price, someone else would pay for their meal.

When you approach the Scriptures to see what more the Lord will say,

you have abandoned the Scriptures. There's no end to where will can go or what you will find. When will such people understand that worship and service before God is NOT ABOUT US. It's about God almighty. He and he alone has to right to prescribe acceptable worship.

## Covenant Or Culture...

(Continued from page 17)

*the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

Now notice, God made a covenant with Israel. They broke that covenant, and since they did not do what was in that covenant — they thought they found valid reasons not to — God said, "You have broken my covenant, and I am going to establish a new covenant with other people." Notice the new covenant would be with the *house of Israel* and with the *house of Judah*. When he is writing this in the sixth century B.C., the house of Israel had already been taken away into Assyrian Captivity in 721 B.C. So, when he is talking about the house of Israel and the house of Judah he is talking about the combined houses of God's people at a point far distant from his time in the future, and significant to the point, today **the church of Christ is the Israel of God** (Gal. 6:16). So, we want to notice first concerning a covenant, that if you do not go by what the covenant says, then you have broken the covenant, and that is why today we must choose either the "Covenant or Culture."

In regard to women's role in the church today, there have been elderships in some congregations that have made a re-evaluation of the subject of women preaching and women serving in roles that have been served in by men in times past; and, their re-evaluation is not in harmony with the Scriptures. Instead, it blends in with today's cultural norms. They are saying things like, "We've taken a look at our culture," "We have gotten with the scholars on this," and "We studied the subject a long time." They claim to have done this for months. Sometimes it is even a few years. The implication is their lengthy, in-depth study guided by so-

called scholars on the cutting edge of today's modern culture has revealed new information from the Bible no one else considered. Yet, the new covenant was put in place a long, long, long, long time ago! It was put in place long before anybody now living was around. It was put in place in the first century, and it states very clearly what God's will regarding women is in the new covenant. And, that covenant prohibits women from preaching and from teaching over men and from leading the singing and leading public prayers. The New Testament or new covenant does that. So, these elderships aver that they had a long, involved study guided by some self-proclaimed scholars that yielded information never before known by them or others to be in the new covenant to which they will now submit.

In 2011, the **Oak Hills Church** in San Antonio, Texas, from where **Max Lucado** hails, commissioned a "Doctrinal Advisory Group" to establish policy on women's role in the church today. Many are deferring to the creedal statement generated by this panel on the subject of women's role without realizing Oak Hills Church is a denominational church complete with instrumental music. Their creed book on women's role is a 119 page document (available online) that stands in precisely the same place in the spiritual guidance of that church as the *Baptist Faith And Message* stands in relation to the Southern Baptist Denomination. A common position held by both the Oak Hills Church and the Southern Baptist Denomination is espousing and incorporating into the hearts and minds of those with whom they are associated, a man-made creed setting aside the inspired Word of God. And, they decided that women could preach. They are not going to do it right now, they say, but they said they could, and they have their document about that which you can read online. They fell into the same trap that the denominations did

in creating a creed. What is a creed? It is a covenant different from the new covenant. That is the problem. So, the point here is that we already have a new covenant. It is from the Lord and not from man (1 Thess. 2:13). We honor God when we practice His covenant. We honor man when we practice man's creed.

In evidence of this truth, an example appears in Hebrews the eighth chapter. In Hebrews 8 the apostle Paul writes exactly what Jeremiah spoke about in Jeremiah 31:31-34. He quoted that passage, and said in Hebrews 8, "*For finding fault with them*" — why? They broke the covenant — "*for finding fault with them he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant,*" that is, "*which my covenant they break,*" "*and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*"

When God gives a covenant, he expects people to continue in that covenant. So, that's where this discussion begins and ends as we are talking about "can we have women preachers or not?" It centers on the fact that we are under a covenant today, it is a new covenant, and when you break that covenant you no longer enjoy the privileges associated with that covenant. God said in this connection, "*I regarded them not.*" Why did God disregard them? Because they disregarded His Word and His covenant. Now, our choice today is identical with theirs: will we stand by God's covenant or lean on contemporary culture?

Part 1 of 3

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# IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN #2

Stephen Atnip

***Worship that is based on a decree that comes from man is in reality a worship in which man presumes the right of sovereignty over the God he claims to worship, and thereby fails to fear and reverence him.***

Isaiah 1:11-15 says, “*What purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?*” Whatever purpose you intended is not met. “*I am full of the burnt offerings.*” I have had my fill of it. I don’t want anymore. “*I delight not in the blood of bullocks.*” Remember the intent was for God to delight in it. He finds none in worship that ignores the teaching of God that requires the righteousness of the worshiper.

Verse 13, “*Bring no more vain oblations.*” Whatever your gifts were intended to do for me, I see them as vain gifts — worthless. “*Incense is an abomination to me.*” Literally, it fills me with disgust. “*It is iniquity, even your solemn meeting.*” What you intended as a sacred moment in my presence is pure wickedness to me.

Verse 14, “*Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hates.*” What should elicit soothing pleasure in God, instead evokes hate. “*They are trouble to me; I am weary to bear them.*” What should lift the spirit of God with delight, instead, sits like a leaden weight upon Him, burdening him with a load to bear that worship was never intended to give to God.

Verse 15, “*And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.*” Instead of looking upon his people with pleasure and hearing their petitions as a soothing odour of sweet incense, he will turn his eyes, and refuse to hear. This was never the purpose of worship when God granted the capacity within us to worship him. He always wished to delight in both the giver and the gift, but this will happen only when the gift is by the commandment of God and not based on doctrine made up by the commandments of men.

Ah, but someone will be quick to say, “You condemn men also for those things that have come from the precept

of God in the Bible. You are too narrow in what commands of the Bible you allow to guide your worship. For example, you condemn men for bringing instrumental music into the assembly worship of God today, and yet God has shown that He is not offended by instrumental music. He delighted in it in the corporate worship of the Old Testament faithful worshipers. Why should it not delight Him when the same act of worship is done today?” And, I will respond to you that God did not always delight in instrumental music in Israel, even in the time after God instituted it by prophetic decree in the temple. And I would further respond, that even in Israel’s day, God showed another principle of worship that forbade Israel’s doing an act of worship in a covenant previous to their own covenant of Moses, an act which their Patriarchal fathers had done, which had previously brought delight to God, and yet was forbidden to them.

Note with me the book of Amos. This was a book written about 20 years before Isaiah wrote, to the same mindset that Isaiah rebuked and Jesus condemned. Note with me the prophecies of Amos. In these prophecies we have three discourses, followed by five visions, ending with a powerful Messianic proclamation of hope to the nation. In the third of the three discourses aimed at exposing the iniquitous condition of the Northern kingdom, God gives two great woes aimed at manifesting their sick spiritual condition, with an attendant warning of punishment. In the second great woe of this third discourse, Amos addresses their worship habits. He states in Amos 6:5 that they “*chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David.*”

This has caused no end of trouble to many students of the Bible. Some

have gone so far as to say that David was the originating source of authority for instruments of music in the temple worship and that God had never decreed the use of instruments in the Old Testament. Now if David could do this without jeopardizing his soul, why do we need a command from God today? But, dear reader, it is simply not true that instrumental music in Old Testament worship originated by the human authority of David. Turn to 2 Chronicles 29:25, to a time of the restoration of the temple worship. King Hezekiah “*...set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer; and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.*” David would not have dared to place instruments in the temple worship by his own authority. Instruments were placed in the worship of the temple by the commandment of Jehovah God through his prophets. That is inspired scripture.

What then was the problem in Amos? It is the same problem the Jewish leadership faced in the 18th and 19th centuries A.D. in Europe when some among their number decided they needed to bring instrumental music into their synagogues. You see, for nearly 18 centuries after the fall of Jerusalem, they continued their Mosaic worship of God in their synagogues for they had no temple in which to worship. But they also had no decree from God to place instrumental music anywhere in their corporate worship except in the temple at Jerusalem. Therefore, for nearly 1800 years they dared not place instrumental music in their corporate synagogue worship, for God had only decreed its use in their temple worship. And when they first began to bring

instrumental music in, a great cry arose, “You are Christianizing our synagogue worship”, for they were following the Catholic church that had started using instruments in their assemblies. Even these Jewish leaders who had the right to instrumental music in temple worship under Mosaic law, dared not bring it outside of Jerusalem’s temple into their synagogue corporate worship, and that applied even in the days before Christianity began, when the Mosaic law was still in effect. That, by the way, also puts the lie to those who claim that early Christian assemblies which worshiped in first century synagogues would have worshiped with instrumental music since they were used to it in synagogue worship. Some of these supposed scholars need to read the Jewish Encyclopedia and research the time period, and get their facts straight.

But what was the problem for Amos’ day and time? Amos is preaching at the Northern king’s chapel at Bethel, not in Jerusalem, and adding to their other errors of worship, Bethel’s worshipers were now placing instrumental music in their corporate worship so they could sound like the music of the temple. But they had no decree of God to set Jerusalem’s worship anywhere but in Jerusalem, including instruments of music. Here they were under the Mosaic law in a time when instrumental music in worship was allowed by God himself, but they were placing it in some other place than God had set it in Jehovah’s temple in Jerusalem. These at Dan and Bethel took it outside the temple claiming their right to use it wherever they decreed. This was a transgression, even as it is today. It did not bring “blessing” upon them but “WOE.” God did not delight in instrumental music in any place other than the place he specifically put it — at Jerusalem in the temple under Mosaic law by the decree of his righteous prophets. A pronouncement of WOE is not a display of delight from God. Their worship did not delight the Living God, therefore, it did not attain its purpose, and thus, even in the Mosaic time period, instrumental music in any assembly for worship outside of Jerusalem’s temple met with the disapproval of God. So says Amos, the inspired prophet of God.

And then here, our supposedly bright academic scholars and Bible students, point us back to Jerusalem’s

temple worship and seek to bring its musical cadence to our ears today, and tell us we can please God today without a single command to remove it from Jerusalem and install it in the magnificent church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The far-reaching shades of the false worship of Bethel still spread like icy fingers of death upon the hearts and souls of ignorant worshipers. Bethel’s priests are still trying to place instrumental music into a place that Jehovah God never commanded by His prophets. And the same WOE is upon them.

Others still say that the worship of yesteryear that pleased the God of Israel at one time surely grants to God in every age the delight he felt in the worship of yesteryear and under another covenant system. I turn your eyes to the third vision of Amos with its ‘plumbline’ of coming destruction (Amos 7:7-9). In verse 9, Amos prophesied, *“And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”* It is at this point in the prophetic declaration that the priest at Bethel has had enough of inspired preaching and tells Amos to go home and preach for his living in Judah. What caused Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, to break in at this point and reprove Amos? In verse 16, Amos notes what was bothering the high priest of Bethel, *“Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.”* Notice “altars of Isaac” (v.9), “house of Isaac” (v.16).

What was the problem here? Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary states, “They boasted of their following the example of their forefather Isaac, in erecting high places at Beer-sheba; but [Isaac] and Abraham erected [their altars] before the temple was appointed at Jerusalem. ... the [Bethel] worshipers did so, after the temple had been fixed as the only place for sacrifices.” John Gill in his commentary writes, “[These] ten tribes of Israel, who descended from Isaac, built at Beersheba, in imitation of Isaac, and pleading his example.” In other words, though the Mosaic law forbade such worship at any place other than where Jehovah had put His name, at that time at Jerusalem, even though the Mosaic law forbade any other place, the religious system

at Bethel produced this argument, “If our forefathers could worship God at Beersheba, then so can we. If God delighted in the worship of our forefathers at places other than Jerusalem while they lived under Patriarchal law, before the law of Moses, then we may follow the example of the worship of the previous covenant and still delight the heart of God today in spite of the fact that we are under the Law of Moses. In other words, we are not bound solely to the covenant system that we are under today. Any act under the previous Patriarchal system is just as valid for us today as it was for our forefathers. Therefore, we are not limited to Jerusalem.

This is identical to the argument made today by those who say that though we are under the covenant of Christ, we may just as validly use the concepts and worship acts of the previous covenant of the Law of Moses to worship God today. We may go to the Law of Moses and use its instrumental music in worship, or its tithing systems in worship, or its hand clapping in worship, and God will delight in those acts now as he did under the previous covenant.

Friends, listen well, the priest at Bethel knew that Amos had just undermined the pillar of the worship principle of the Northern kingdom. Each covenant system replaces the previous covenant system, and none may validly worship according to the tenets of the previous system. Those who do not abide by that principle, though it be the king of Israel himself, shall suffer the wrath of a holy and righteous God. At this point the priest at Bethel said, “ENOUGH!!!, Go home, Amos”, and (in essence) Amos said to him, because of your highminded attitude against God, you will lose your wife to prostitution, your children to the sword, and all your lands, and you will spend the rest of your life in captivity. Every false teacher among us that has dared to condemn the proclaimers of the righteous and patterned worship of the New Testament, shall be held just as accountable as was this false priest and teacher of Bethel. You may say, why do you say that? Note Hebrews 2:1-4, *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels [that is, the Mosaic law that Amaziah*



broke] *was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward* [every word prophesied in Amaziah's punishment came to pass]; [if it happened to him...] *How shall we escape* [we who are under the covenant of Christ], *if we neglect so great salvation* [transgress the New Testament of Jesus as Amaziah transgressed the Mosaic law]; *which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*"

### Conclusion

It is a precept of man that takes the musical instruments of temple worship (or any other act of worship of the previous covenant) and apply

them anywhere but in the temple of God at Jerusalem under the Mosaic dispensation. It is a precept of man that decrees any act of worship as valid simply because it was used by faithful worshipers under another covenant system. That reasoning did not stand the test in the covenant before ours, and neither will it stand the test under our covenant. To know the precepts of God that render worship that soothes the heart of God and delights Him and gives Him pleasure in His spirit, then study the precepts of the New Testament covenant under which we live and serve our Creator. And, may it never be once said among us, *"And in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."*

The restoration concept of "back to the Bible" for all we do; book, chapter and verse for all we do, may not appease the post-modern relativity

that permeates our culture today, but it is absolutely accurate according to Jesus, and that is really ALL that matters. Give me the Bible in its proper covenant system for every act of worship in which I engage today. Give me the voice of Jesus, the voice of his Father, the voice of the Holy Spirit, one voice which is the written word of eternal life, and then I shall delight God and He shall be filled with pleasure by a soothing sound for the heart of heaven. And, I shall delight in my own soul that this simple created thing that I am, has met its purpose before its Creator. And the capacity for worship which our Creator has given for His reverence and adoration shall not have been given in vain.

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## DUTIES OF GOSPEL PREACHERS

Marvin L. Weir

*Forty plus years ago, many elders and congregations were not that concerned as to what their preacher believed about doctrinal matters. Should it then come as a surprise that so many congregations today are in total apostasy?*

**M**uch has been written and orally taught about the duties of those who profess to be preachers. In doing such, those who write and teach about this matter have surely consulted many sources for information. One source, however, that is often neglected or completely ignored is the Bible — God's Word!

Many years ago this writer traveled for an interview with a congregation who had advertised they were seeking to employ a preacher. The interview occurred in the presence of five to seven elders (the exact number has been forgotten). The length of the interview was approximately one hour. The thing that stood out in my mind then and even more so today is that they did **not** ask a single religious question or what I believed about any Biblical matter! These men were only interested in two things. First, they wanted to know how many Bible de-

grees I had and what major "Christian Universities" they came from. Second, they inquired about my "community skills and involvement." It was imperative their preacher be heavily involved in the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and be in good standing with city officials. Needless to say, I fell far short of their expectations, and was emphatically told they did not believe me to be the man that could do the job they wanted done. And, with that assessment, I agreed wholeheartedly, and gladly left the meeting!

Even forty plus years ago, many elders and congregations were not that concerned as to what their preacher believed about doctrinal matters. Should it then come as a surprise that so many congregations today are in total apostasy? For years brethren have been "dumbed down" (East Texas and not University grammar) in regard to Bible doctrine. Brethren, the Rotary

and Kiwanis clubs, serving on the city council, and all the social skills in the world will **not** save a single soul from sin!

The apostle Paul describes what is most important of the duties of Gospel preachers and Bible class teachers in the second chapter of Second Timothy. The apostle likens preaching to four secular occupations. Let us learn and make application as we observe:

**A Teacher.** Paul taught his beloved Timothy many things regarding **Biblical** matters. He instructed, *"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Tim. 2:1-2). The "grace" necessary to strengthen is found only **in Christ**. One must continue *"steadfastly in the apostles'*

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42) in order to be strengthened by the grace of God. The things that Timothy had heard refers to the totality of the Gospel that Paul proclaimed in every city (Acts 15:36). Paul did not rely upon earthly wisdom or involvement in social or civic activities to be a successful preacher. As he stated to the Corinthians, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

Timothy, having been thoroughly instructed in doctrinal matters, now has the obligation to teach these matters himself. Paul did not teach Timothy sacred truths so that Timothy could teach others social pabulum!

**A Soldier.** Paul did not mislead Timothy to think that a preacher could entangle himself with the world in such a way as to live a life with most everyone’s approval. Quite to the contrary, Paul admonished, “*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). So many today who claim to be preachers have figured out that “hardship” can be avoided if they tell people what they want to hear. One can soft-pedal the Gospel, and carefully tiptoe around issues like **dancing, cheerleading, gambling** (lottery tickets included), **alcohol, fornication, marriage-divorce-remarriage, instrumental music, direct operation of the Holy Spirit, and woman’s role in the church**, and suddenly be at **peace** with all the congregation. If, however, the unadulterated Bible truth is taught and preached regarding the aforementioned matters, one will **suffer hardship** for being a good soldier of the cross. The moral is simply this — one cannot usually please men and the One who enrolled him as a soldier!

**An Athlete.** A dedicated athlete will put forth every lawful effort to be victorious in his endeavors. Timothy is cautioned, “*And if a man also strive for masteries, [yet] is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully*” (2 Tim. 2:5). As Coffman observes, Paul uses another metaphor — “to stress the necessity of doing it God’s way. ‘Contending lawfully’ means that the child

of God must recognize the divine rules, endure the discipline, fulfill all requirements regarding the proper enrollment, always abiding by the rules of the contest, if he hopes to receive eternal life. The great thesis of current times to the effect that ‘I’ll do it my way,’ ‘I’ll work out my own religion,’ etc. — all such notions are refuted by Paul’s words here.”

Preachers should possess a burning desire to attain the victor’s crown of life for themselves and those they teach. Such cannot be done, however, by denying the inspiration of the Scriptures and selectively rejecting a “thus saith the Lord.” Far too many so-called preachers today quickly compromise their convictions and trample underfoot the Word of God in order to appease ungodly members or to align themselves with the false positions of their relatives, alumni, or some “brotherhood giant.”

**A Farmer.** This metaphor simply reinforces what was said regarding the athlete. Soil must be cultivated before a farmer can expect a successful crop, but the rules of agriculture apply. Ignoring the rules of agriculture will not produce a successful harvest!

A Gospel preacher will always teach that if we deny Christ, He will deny us (2 Tim. 2:12). A faithful preacher can always say, “*...I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27).

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

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## WHAT IS YOUR POINT OF VIEW?

**W**hat’s your opinion? How do you see it? What’s your point of view? These questions surround us. It’s as if one’s idea or feelings about a matter is the deciding factor in how we live. However, we must form our thinking by looking to see what the Bible says. What is God’s view? Notice these plain and simple passages: Isaiah 55:8-9, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*” Psalm 92:5, “*O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.*” Psalm 139:17, “*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!*” Isaiah 5:20, “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*” Proverbs 17:15, “*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*” When the wicked things of the world shape what we see, read, and hear on a matter, we have departed from the inspired Word. When our pulpits and classrooms become silent in proclaiming the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), we have doomed ourselves to eternal destruction.

Garland M. Robinson — Editor



## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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