



# Seek The Old Paths

*“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein”*  
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 29, No. 4

April 2018

## WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER?

I am angry! Yes, the Bible says, “*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath*” (Eph. 4:26). I have no plans to do something that would cause me to sin, but I am angry. I am angry over the deaths of 17 people and the injuries of several others. Of course, the blame game has begun. The President is being blamed. Congress is being blamed. The NRA is being blamed. The FBI is being blamed. Parents are being blamed and the school is being blamed. Blame is probably being placed on others of whom I do not know. In my humble judgment, blame is being placed in the wrong place. While it is true that Nikolas Cruz pulled the trigger, there are fingerprints of so many others on that trigger.

Let’s go back a few years. From the fifties to the nineties we didn’t hear of school shootings. From 1966-1991 there were shootings that resulted in 33 dead (only one of them was a High School, the others were college). However, from 1991-2018 there have been 177 deaths from shootings in schools (114 in K-12; 63 in colleges or universities), ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School\\_shootings\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_shootings_in_the_United_States)).

Questions? From 1966-1991, did we have Presidents of the United States? Did we have a congress? Did we have the FBI? Did the NRA exist? Did we have parents? Did we have schools? You know the answer to all of those questions is yes! So what’s the difference?

Here is my list of those who “pulled the trigger” along with Nikolas Cruz.

The **ACLU** pulled the trigger along with Nikolas Cruz. They have litigated every case possible to remove God, Christ, the Bible, righteousness and morality from every facet of our society. If you so much as bow your head as if you are going to pray in a school they will sue you. Unfortunately, school boards and administrators have cow-towed to the ACLU. Their goal is to take any remnant of Christianity from our society. The good people of America have let them do it.

The **Supreme Court** pulled the trigger along with Nikolas Cruz. “In two landmark decisions — Engel v. Vitale on June 25, 1962, and Abington School District v. Schempp on June 17, 1963 — the Supreme Court declared school-sponsored prayer and Bible readings unconstitutional.” We are now suffering the fruits of those decisions. Yet isn’t it interesting (in this most horrific time of tragedy) that so many people have been praying on that campus.

**Atheists and Evolutionists** pulled the trigger along with Nikolas Cruz. Atheists have told us (and continue to tell us) there is no God. They say that when we die we just become dust in the wind. Evolutionists tell us that we came from some lower form of animal. If you teach this long enough, why would anyone be surprised people start acting like the animals they tell us we came from? Our precious children are taught evolution in school. What do you expect? The “good book” (the Bible) gives us a great principle regarding our lives. Galatians 6:7 “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall*

*he also reap*” (Gal. 6:7). “*For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind...*” (Hosea 8:7).

**Abortionists** pulled the trigger along with Nikolas Cruz. Babies are killed in the womb, even late-term abortion. “A late termination of pregnancy often refers to an induced ending of pregnancy after the 20th week of gestation. The exact point when a pregnancy becomes late-term, however, is not clearly defined.” Since 1973 (the year the supreme court “legalized” killing babies in the womb), the number of abortions number more than 60 million. The number of innocent little babies aborted last year was approximately 645,000. That number has been gradually declining from a peak of about 1.6 million a year. Does it make you happy that the number in recent years has been falling? If it is ok to kill a baby, why not a fourteen-year-old? Those who support and encourage abortion pulled the trigger.

**Parents** pulled the trigger along with Nikolas Cruz. Parents have allowed their children to play violent video games on iPads and other technology devises. These children have shot and killed many in these games, so it is no small stretch to do it literally in schools and other places.

When you consider these wonderful young people and adults who were gunned down, think of what all of us can do to restore the God of the Bible, the Bible, and Prayer back into our society. Work and Pray to get rid of evolution out of schools. Let the stu-

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**Who Pulled the Trigger...**



Editorial...

## PREVENTING WEAKNESS #3

Garland M. Robinson

**T**he weak must be exhorted and encouraged to be faithful in the Lord. Why is this so. Because it is right! It is God's will! God is faithful (Deut. 7:9; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 1:9). God's word is faithful (1 Tim. 1:15; Titus 1:9; Rev. 21:5). Faithfulness is taught in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 4:2; 1 Tim. 3:11; Rev. 2:10). Therefore, the Lord's people must be faithful.

As Christians, we must be:

- 1) Faithful to the Lord (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 4:17; Col. 1:2).
- 2) Diligent to increase our knowledge of the Word (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:15; Psa. 1:2; 119:97).
- 3) Faithful to pray every day (Matt. 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12; Matt. 26:41; Prov. 28:9; 1 John 5:14).
- 4) Faithful to worship God at every opportunity (John 4:24; Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- 5) Faithful to seek the work of the Lord (Luke 2:49; John 9:4; Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 15:58).

The Scriptures give many examples of those who were faithful and strong. If they could be faithful, then we can also.

**Moses** was faithful in all his house (Heb. 3:2,5). *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Heb. 11:24-27).

**Abraham** is an example of faithfulness. *"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"* (Gal.

3:7-9; cf. Gen. 12:1-5).

*"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."* (Gen. 18:17-19; 22:1-13).

**Epaphras** is an example of faithfulness. *"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ"* (Col. 1:7).

**Tychicus** is an example of faithfulness. *"All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord"* (Col. 4:7).

**Onesimus** is an example of faithfulness. *"With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here"* (Col. 4:9).

**Silvanus** is an example of faithfulness. *"By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand"* (1 Peter 5:12).

Faithfulness is rewarded by the Lord. One day, the faithful will hear, *"well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (Matt. 25:21,23).

Nearing the end of his life, Paul said, *"...there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:8). James said, *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"* (James 1:12). *"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"* (1 Peter 5:4). *"...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10).

Preventing spiritual weakness among church members also falls upon the shoulders of the strong. Many passages exhort us in this most needed work. Paul said, *"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). *"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men"* (1 Thess. 5:14).

The strong **show the kind of living Christ demands** of every Christian. The first thing to do is to live right ourselves. This begins by not giving ourselves to a life of sin. Romans 6:12-14 says, *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* Upon our obedience to the Gospel we *"...became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:18). Being dead to sins, we should live unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). We should *"wake to righteousness, and sin not"* (1 Cor. 15:34).

The strong must **emphasize the spiritual above the material**. Paul shows this in Colossians 3:1-3. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"* (3:1-3). This is also illustrated in Romans 12:1-2. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* The apostle John wrote, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the*

Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). Paul told Titus, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). The rich farmer in Luke 12:15-21 did not look to the spiritual, all he could see was the here and now. He was weak and it cost him his soul.

The strong show the weak that **the truth is to be defended as well as lived**. Paul exhorted Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). And to Titus he wrote concerning elders, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). Jude 3 says we, “...should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The Truth is worth fighting for. Without it, no man can be saved for Jesus said, “...**If** ye continue in my word, **then** are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

Sadly, the weak sometimes say what was said to Isaiah, “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). We need more faithful, strong, brethren who will stand behind the faithful, sincere, straight-forward, uncompromising preaching and teaching of the primitive Gospel! We must not let the weak win the battle, but instead, we must watch, stand fast in the faith, act with maturity and be strong (1 Cor. 16:13). It will not only benefit ourselves but will help the weak as well.

The strong continue to **seek and save the lost and will not be deterred by the weak**. This is what Jesus did and it is what we must do (Luke 19:10). We must evangelize! We are saved to save. We must be as Philip who found Nathanael and told him of Jesus (John 1:45). We must be as Aquila and Priscilla who heard Apollos and “...took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). Teaching the lost is OUR responsibility. Many have rightly said, no one

will go to heaven alone and no one will go to hell alone.

The strong must seek to build up the weak as **we are all a part of the body of Christ**. “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour... That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

We should **pray for the weak**. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:18-19). “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

We should **restore the weak** when they fall away. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).

We should **treat the weak with kindness and brotherly love**. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). “And be ye

kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

We should **rejoice and weep with the weak**. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15).

We should **go out of our way not to cause the weak to abandon the Lord**. “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Rom. 14:21).

We should **bear the infirmities of the weak**. “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). We should assist them with their burdens. That does not mean we overlook sin or condone it. We try to help them grow in the Lord. “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations” (Rom. 14:1). Paul said, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

Just as the poor (cf. Matt. 26:11), there will always be those among us who are weak in conscience, knowledge and faith. As those who are strong in the Lord, it’s our job to bring them along. It’s our job to teach them the ways of the Lord. It’s our job to encourage them to become strong in the Lord and the power of his might.

The Hebrew writer speaks of some great men and women of faith who “...quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, **out of weakness were made strong**, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11:34). Could this be said of our faith?

**BE STRONG! OVERCOME WEAKNESS!**

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## Who Pulled the Trigger?...

(Continued from page 25)

dents and teachers place Bibles back on their desk without being threatened by the ACLU.

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# HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE #4 DISSEMINATION

Randy Kea

In this fourth installment of our series of articles, we will demonstrate how God not only confirmed His inspired word but saw to it that it was universally disseminated (spread everywhere). This being the case, by the end of the miraculous period, every church of Christ had a copy of the New Testament canon — all 27 books — in its entirety in written form.

Initially, and for a few years, the New Testament Gospel was revealed and made available through inspired or gifted men (apostles, prophets, evangelists, Eph. 3:3-5; 4:7-15). In the absence of a complete written New Testament, it was essential for the Lord's church to have inspired men making the truth available to each congregation. Since I take the early date for the writings of John, including the Book of Revelation, I maintain that the entire New Testament Gospel was placed in permanent written form, confirmed, and universally disseminated between A.D. 33 (church established, Acts 2) and A.D. 70 (the destruction of Jerusalem). However, even if one took the late date position on the Apostle John's writings, we would still maintain a written authenticated New Testament canon by the end of the first century was available to all churches of Christ.

The inspired men produced the inspired book. What originally was in oral form would then be in written form. The wide array of miraculous gifts present during this time (A.D. 33-70), having served their purpose, ceased and passed away (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:7-13). Let us remember that the Old Testament canon had already been revealed, confirmed, and preserved at this time. Remember that Jesus endorsed, as the Word of God, the entire Hebrew Old Testament text (not Septuagint, Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18; 23:35; Luke 24:44; Rom. 3:1-2). I will expand on this further in an upcoming article on *Biblical Preservation*.

The miraculous period from A.D. 33-70 therefore, can be divided into three parts as it pertains to the New Testa-

ment canon: *First period* — all New Testament truth was in oral form through inspired men (Acts 2:4); *Second period* — truth in both oral and written form while the New Testament was being written (2 Thess. 2:15); *Third period* — “all truth” in written form having been “once and for all delivered” (John 16:13; Jude 3).

The earliest portions penned were: 1) the letter sent to the Gentiles at the conclusion of the Jerusalem conference, kept intact by the inspired historian Luke in Acts 15; 2) the book of James; and 3) the book of First Thessalonians. These were written a number of years after the establishment of the church. This would mean the Lord's church functioned and did the work of the Lord for several years without one line of a “written” New Testament. The church was able to “continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42) because of the miraculously gifted men present in the churches.

The *internal evidence* is clear and conclusive that the entire New Testament revealed, confirmed, proclaimed, and ultimately written was universally disseminated in the first century. In fact, my position is between A.D. 33 and A.D. 70. Here's the evidence:

1. Mark 16:20 — “*And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*” Every where means every where!
2. Acts 2:5 — “*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*” This indicates the Jews who obeyed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost would have received spiritual gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-18) and would have taken the inspired Gospel back with them to the various nations from which they came.
3. Romans 10:17-18 — “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily,*

*their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*” If you wanted to say that the Gospel was universally disseminated by the time Paul wrote Romans, how else would you have said it?

4. Romans 16:26 — “*But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*” Again note the phrase “all nations.”
5. Colossians 1:5-6,23 — “*...The gospel which is come unto you, as it is in all the world...the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven....*” Paul declares universal dissemination (at least in oral form) even as he is writing this epistle.
6. And now for good measure, we note that even Jesus expressly said that His Gospel would be preached “in all the world” before the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember that Matthew 24:1-35 refers to the signs the Lord gave preceding the destruction of Jerusalem so that His disciples could escape. “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matt. 24:14) In this context, clearly the “end” refers to Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70.
7. Summary: “All nations,” “every creature,” “all the earth,” “ends of the world” — the internal evidence is conclusive in the fact that the Gospel was taken around the world by A.D. 70.

As we conclude this article, consider that Jesus said that He would send forth inspired men, but also inspired scribes — “*Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, wise men, and scribes...*” (Matt. 23:34). The scribes in this text are not Old Testament scribes for they are listed with gifted

and inspired men that would be sent forth under the New Testament period which was at that time yet future. Both Paul and Peter had inspired scribes (Rom. 16:22; 1 Peter 5:12) to assist them. This would mean that the New Testament canon could be reproduced profusely and infallibly by these inspired scribes in written form.

By the end of the first century, all churches of Christ had all 27 books of the New Testament canon in perfect written form. Again, we emphasize that the New Testament canon was not voted on or developed years later by uninspired men on some council of men, but was revealed, written and confirmed by the miraculous gifts

present in the first century church. There yet remains two more articles in this series — *providential verbal preservation* and *verbal translation* before we get to our accurate and reliable **King James Version** of the Bible.

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## PARENTS, HANG IN THERE

Roger D. Campbell

**F**rom the outside looking in, being a parent looks like one of the most stress-free, easy tasks that one could imagine. Reality hits home, though, once we become a dad or mom and we are the ones taking care of and being responsible for the little kiddies. Then, without our permission, those little ones turn into turbulent teens. Parents, hang in there!

God wants parents to love their children (Titus 2:4-5). He wants parents to teach them His righteous instructions (Deut. 6:7). He wants parents to be a pattern of good behavior for their children (Matt. 5:16). God also wants parents to discipline their children (Heb. 12:9-11). None of those matters are negotiable — God wants parents to do them, and He wants them done His way.

Sometimes we struggle to maintain our cheerful demeanor and sanity when dealing with our children — dealing with their facial expressions, attitudes, mouths, irresponsibility, ever-changing likes and dislikes, and their day-in-and-day-out stuff. Parents, hang in there! Keep on loving them, keep on praying for them, and keep on helping mold them into instruments conformed to the image of God’s wonderful Son (Rom. 8:29).

If you feel challenged to “hold it together” as a parent, believe me, you are not the first parent who has encountered some testy trials of your patience. Think about Jacob. Two of his sons, Simeon and Levi, acted inappropriately and caused Jacob’s name “to stink” in the land (Gen. 34:30). Your children may make choices which make your family name stink, too. Hang in there.

God’s children, those whom He had “nourished and brought up,” rebelled

against Him (Isa. 1:2). If that ever happens to you, God knows your pain. Parents, hang in there.

David’s son, Absalom, sought to undermine David’s authority and peaceful life (2 Sam. 15-18). Your children may try that with you one day. Parents, if that ever occurs, hang in there.

David’s heart was broken when he lost more than one child to physical death (2 Sam. 18:33). Parents, if you have to face the horror of losing a child, or worse yet, experience the horror of seeing your own child turn away from the Lord and die spiritually, hang in there.

If your child tells you, “I hate you,” “I can’t wait to turn eighteen so I can move as far away from you as possible,” or “You have to be the worst mom/dad in the world,” hang in there. When people get all worked up, they say hurtful things that they do not really mean. Keep on loving them, praying for them, and doing your best — that is all you can do, right?

When the Jews were working feverishly to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, their adversaries made a mockery of what they were trying to accomplish (Neh. 4:1-3). Sadly, some people today, out of ignorance or meanness, or both, make fun of Christian parents who are trying their best to raise their children in harmony with the Scriptures.

It is a real tragedy when other members of the church make fun of or talk behind the backs of parents who discipline their children, “drag” them to every single worship service and Bible class, restrict their use of the internet, phones, and TV, refuse to allow them to flaunt their nakedness in public, and demand that they speak respectfully to and about others. Brothers and sisters, if you are striving to raise

your children by God’s Book, do not feel intimidated by the devil’s snickers, and do not let the whispers of worldly-minded children of God deter you from being the godly parents that your children need.

Parents, hang in there!

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

Faye Elaine Cruz .....	\$40
Verneta Cummins .....	\$20
Grider Town C/C, Opp, AL.....	\$300
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Baker C/C, Baker, FL.....	\$25
Anonymous .....	\$40
C/C at Friendship, Stout, OH.....	\$500
Anonymous .....	\$250
Marion C/C, Marion, NC .....	\$100
Neely’s Bend C/C, Madison, TN .....	\$100
Anonymous .....	\$25
Bradford C/C, Bradford, TN .....	\$50
Del Brantley .....	\$50
Beginning Balance.....	\$7,124.10
Contributions .....	\$2,200.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$1,743.41
Supplies .....	\$695.06
Ending Balance.....	\$6,885.63

# I WILL TAKE HEED UNTO MY WAYS

Marvin L. Weir

The Psalmist remembered to consider his own ways. Since these verses are written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they serve as a reminder to each of us. The apostle Paul affirms that such self scrutiny is needed in saying to the brethren at Corinth, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). All of us need to, like David, take heed to certain matters. May each of us be inclined to say, I will take heed to:

**My Ways!** “I said, I will take heed to my ways...” (Psa. 39:1a). An ever growing number of people seemingly have only the desire to please self while living in this life. Their motives, habits, manners, speech, and dress matters little to them. How dare anyone question the way they have chosen to live!

A humanist and hedonistic philosophy encourages people to become their own god. These people then justify and rationalize that everything they do is acceptable — cause they approve it! And, for support, our government is now hard at work to deny most of what is godly and right while approving and encouraging ungodliness and wrong doing. A Christian, however, was never to be a part of this world. “Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:17). One seeking to save his soul and go to Heaven will search out whether his ways are in harmony with God’s word and ways!

**My Mouth!** “I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me” (Psa. 39:1b). Why bridle or muzzle one’s mouth? The Lord and His church are often judged by the ways and mouths of His people. The tongue is a most important but dangerous instrument. Regarding the tongue, the New Testament teaches, “For in many things we offend all. If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). If one can control the unruly and rebellious tongue, he should be able to control the rest of his body. It must be realized, however, that while the tongue can and must be controlled, it can never be tamed (James

3:8). In a moment of anger or despair, one can momentarily lose control of his tongue. One seeking to live godly and right will give heed to his tongue!

**My Heart!** “My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue” (Psa. 39:3). Blessed is the hot fire that burns in one’s heart regarding the holy things of God! There is far too little of this type of fire burning in the hearts of Christians today. The warning is clear: “Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Can a child of God fall from grace and lose his soul? The writer of Hebrews thought so and warned against doing such! One must consider whether he has an evil or a godly heart.

**My End!** “Lord, make me to know mine end...” (Psa. 39:4). One of the most important questions one can ask is, “What shall be my end?” Do you remember an individual by the name of Balaam? He wanted his end to be with the righteous, but he also wanted the money Balak promised him to curse Israel. It is a truth that “no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Greed and a divided loyalty guarantees failure! One will do well to consider the end of this life!

Even though Balaam initially spoke to Balak only the words of God, he yearned to somehow get the money Balak had offered (Num. 24-25). Peter speaks of false teachers who have followed the way of Balaam (2 Peter 2:15). Jude notes those who “ran greedily after in the error of Balaam for reward” (Jude 11). John mentions those who “hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). Evidently, Balaam gave the Moabite king the plan to corrupt God’s people (Num. 25:1-3). Balaam was slain by the sword (Num. 31:8). One would do well to consider his end!

**My Days!** “Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth; and my age is as nothing before thee” (Psa. 39:5). As our life in this world is only a few “handbreadths,” we need “to number our days” (Psa. 90:12) and redeem the time (Eph. 5:16). What one chooses to do with his days on earth (living in disobedience or obedience to God) will determine his eternal destiny.

**My Hope!** “And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee” (Psa. 39:7). One must take heed that his hope is in the Lord and Savior and not in man-made creeds, man-made churches, experiences, circumstances, or self!

**My Transgressions!** “Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish” (Psa. 39:8). To transgress is to go beyond God’s authority. Yielding to sin is “lawlessness” or “transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). One must take heed that he does what God requires to be delivered from his transgressions (repent and obey the Gospel).

**My Prayer!** “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry” (Psa. 39:12). One must take heed that he is in a praying relationship with God or his prayer will simply be an abomination (Prov. 28:9).

Take heed to your ways!

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## WHY TAKE HEED?

Because God is supreme. He is worthy of our devotion and service. “Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 100:3).

Because God wants us to live with him. While some believe God is coming to live with us, Jesus said we go to live with him. “I go to prepare a place for you. ...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). “We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

— Editor, gmr

# No...NONE...ZERO...NADA...ZILCH...NIL

Victor M. Eskew

The words in the title of this article all mean the same thing. If these words are used in an adverbial form, they mean: “to no extent, in no way, not at all” (www.dictionary.com). In some areas of Biblical teaching, these words cannot be emphasized too much. Why? Because it seems that some individuals just do not understand the definitions of the words.

One of the areas wherein the word “no” cannot be understood by some is the realm of fellowship. When a person becomes a Christian, he enters into a unique group of people. These people are referred to as “the church.” *“The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47). This group of people is a fellowship known as “the called out ones,” which is the definition of the word “church.” By means of the Gospel, this group of people were called out of the sinful world (2 Thess. 2:14). This group is composed of the saved. They have been forgiven of their sins by the blood of Christ. They have died to sin. Their lives are no longer given over to sinful practices. *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”* (Rom. 6:6). Christians leave the world and enter into a group that is a holy fellowship.

Holiness involves purity, sanctification, and consecration. God wants His people to be holy as He is holy. *“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:14-16). Holiness is not perfection. It is not a life completely free from sin (1 John 1:8-10). It is a mindset that displays itself in one’s thinking, words and behavior. A member of the church may sin from time to time, but he does not actively engage in and practice a lifestyle of sin. Sinning is no longer a part of his life. When he sins, he repents, confesses the sin, and asks God’s forgiveness (Acts 8:20-24; 1 John 1:9). Instead of being a slave

to sin, he is a servant of Jesus Christ. His life is spent in seeking to accomplish the purposes God has set forth in His Word.

As we continue in this study, we must understand what sin is. Simply put, sin is the transgression of God’s law. *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). There are two broad categories of sin: moral sin and doctrinal sin. *Moral sin* involves engaging in things that are wrong instead of things that are right. Lying is an example of moral sin (Eph. 4:25). *Doctrinal sin* involves teaching and the practice of what is taught. When a person holds to and advocates something contrary to the Word of God, he is committing doctrinal sin. Advocating that baptism is not for the remission of sins is an example of doctrinal sin (Acts 2:38).

The world is filled with both types of sin. It is possible for a Christian and/or a church to embrace one or both of these sins as well. This is why the Scriptures warn Christians about falling away. *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12). And again, *“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”* (Heb. 4:11). When a Christian or a church involves himself/itself in the habitual practice of sin, fellowship with the church is going to be affected.

When Christians or churches depart from the faith, fellow-Christians and sister congregations are to have NO fellowship with them as long as they persist in sin. Let’s listen to a few passages that exhort us in this matter. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which causes divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”* (Rom. 16:17). *“But now have I written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat”* (1 Cor. 5:11). *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”* (Eph. 5:11).

*“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us”* (2 Thess. 3:6). *“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness...from such withdraw thyself”* (1 Tim. 6:3-5). *“A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”* (Titus 3:10-11). *“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).

These passages mean exactly what they say. When a Christian involves himself in moral or doctrinal sin, and will not repent, other Christians are to have NO fellowship with him. If an entire church is involved in moral or doctrinal error, they are not to be fellowshiped. There is to be NO joint-participation with them. Paul goes as far as to say: *“...with such an one no not to eat.”* Those who do fellowship those in error become partakers of their evil deeds (2 John 11).

This is not a hard command to understand. It is, however, a difficult command to put into practice. This is especially true when it comes to family and close friends who are in sin. When we are put into a circumstance where we must choose between God’s will or a family member or friend, we need to follow the example of Abraham. He was commanded to slay his son Isaac upon one of the mountains of Moriah. And, *“by faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac”* (Heb. 11:17).

By faith, we must have NO fellowship with those who habitually engage in sin.

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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