



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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WHY THE LORD'S CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS

Roger C. Campbell

Denominationalism is one of the most detrimental and disastrous curses in the history of the human race.

When we see the word “fellowship” in the New Testament, in most cases it is from the Greek word *koinonia* — a word which means a sharing in, a joint participation [Thayer, word no. 2842]. God has set boundaries on the fellowship in which His children are allowed to engage. It is a light vs. darkness scenario.

Our Lord wants us to extend fellowship to those who walk in the light (1 John 1:7). He does not, however, want us to share in the sin of others (1 Tim. 5:22). He forbids us to have fellowship with “*the unfruitful works of darkness.*” Instead, He wants us to expose/reprove such activities (Eph. 5:11).

Many people today speak of a “denomination” as being a part of the whole body of the Christ (like one piece is a part of the whole cake); that is, each Brand X or Brand Y denomination is part of the church, but no particular denomination is the whole body of Jesus. In truth, when one investigates the Bible, he never sees God's church described as a denomination. The Lord's church is not *part* of God's family. The New Testament church *is* His family (1 Tim. 3:15).

At the same time, the church of the New Testament is not made up of many different denominations. The

modern concept of denominationalism is not found in the Bible. The proposal that men can divide into different groups which have different names, teach different doctrines, and have different worship practices, is foreign to the Scriptures. Such an idea is a mockery of the Lord God — Who is not the source of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). Denominationalism also is contrary to Jesus' prayer for the unity of those who believe in Him (John 17:20-23).

Denominations are man-made. They exist by the authority of humans. They have zero “*thus saith the Lord*” to defend their existence. What did Jesus say about activities in the spiritual realm which are not from His Father? “*Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*” (Matt. 15:13). Denominations may appear to flourish in this life, but they face a fearful eternal judgment from the eternal God!

Denominations are a stumbling-block to people who long to receive salvation from the Lord. With their “Sinner's Prayer” propaganda, disregard for God's arrangement for the organization of the church, unauthorized additions to His prescribed worship activities, the fantasy about babies being born as depraved sinners, their ridiculous claims of the

Holy Spirit giving them direct revelation, and many other non-biblical teachings and practices, denominationalism is one of the most detrimental and disastrous curses in the history of the human race. We love every human, regardless of their religious affiliation, but we hate every false way (Psa. 119:104,128), and that is exactly what denominationalism is — FALSE.

Along come some well-intended brethren who are convinced that we need to reach out to denominations and work with them. Why? Because, to these brethren's way of thinking, the denominations are “doing a lot of good and we could learn from them.” It is evil, not good, to bring a message that does not harmonize with the doctrine of the Christ (2 John 9-11). It is evil, not good, to teach false messages which turn people from the truth (Titus 1:14). It is evil, not good, to be in competition with the Lord's one body.

“Why do we have to be so arrogant? What makes us think that we have it right and everyone else is wrong?” It is not about “us” and “them.” It is about God's truth! God's truth declares that there is “one body”

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Fellowship ...



Editorial...

MORAL DECAY How Do We Change The Trend?

Garland M. Robinson

God desires we contend for righteousness and moral decency.

No one can doubt it. This nation and the entire world is in the downward plunge of moral decay — heading ever faster and faster. It's always been this way. Every generation thinks their's is worse than it's ever been. We surely can say the same. Jesus even ask, "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8)? It may seem at times that we're just spinning our wheels and not making any headway. We teach and preach, encourage and rebuke, but it keeps getting worse. "...Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

What more can we do? Notice these valid points from the Holy Bible.

1) Become a Christian and live the Christian life. If you are not a faithful Christian, you are lost — for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). To be lost means you will exist through eternity in hell with the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). However, God desires to save you from that dreadful outcome. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). "The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God has provided the means of forgiveness for your sins. It is up to you to accept it by obeying his will. **Believe** in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24) and the holy Word, the Bible, which is able to save your soul (James 1:21). **Repent** of your sins and turn from them (Acts 2:38; 26:20). **Confess** faith in Christ as the Son of God and Savior of mankind (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32). Be **Baptized** (immersed) in water for the forgiveness

of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). This will make you a child of God (1 Peter 1:14). Live faithful unto God all your life, even if it cost you your life (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). Never turn away from following the Lord (Heb. 12:22-25).

Even if you're not a Christian, live a morally upright life even when those around you do not. There are scores of people in society who are not Christians, yet they live a life of basic morality. They do not steal, murder, lie, cheat, commit adultery or homosexuality, etc. They are good neighbors. They are not a detriment to society as those who live contrary to decency and uprightness. Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:2). However, he was lost and needed to hear what to do to be saved (Acts 11:14). Gladly, his heart was eager to learn God's will and obey it (Acts 10:1-11:19).

Teach your children basic morals of decency and how to live in this life. Morality begins at home! Multitudes of children (called latch-key kids) are left to themselves each day with no supervision. They have no real moral guidance from their parents. They are allowed to run wild and more than half the time parents do not even know where they are! Some parents think it is wrong to teach their children moral uprightness. That's a shame and disgrace! Children must be taught! "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Prov. 22:15; 29:15; Eph. 6:4). This world cannot continue to stand when morality continues to plunge!

Be the proper influence and example before your neighbors and working associates. Watch your language. Vulgarity and cursing has become common-place with many. Let it not be so with you. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). "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). Watch your actions. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (living, 1 Peter 5:8; 1:13).

Exercise your right at election time to vote for candidates that have a moral sense of decency. Far too often people vote merely because of political party or a promise of economic prosperity. It ought not be that way. There is a vast difference between many politicians in their moral stance. Too many run their campaign on the promise of defending the right of mothers-to-be to take the life of their unborn child. God forbid! Such thinking as this is twisted and warped and void of any moral decency! To vote for one with this view is disastrous to the moral climate of our country. Don't be guilty of contributing to moral decay. Learn where the candidates stand on moral issues and vote according to moral uprightness. We need to ask ourselves, what would the Lord do in times like these?

Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." God desires we contend for righteousness and moral decency. God will bless this nation when its morals rise to meet His stan-

dard. But, if we continue our downward plunge into debauchery, immorality, wickedness and corruption, this nation will not be blessed nor will God allow it to continue to stand. God will bring it low. God has done it many times throughout history and every indication is that he will do it again.

Wickedness and evil will succeed all around us because people yield to the devil's devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Will you let him have his way with you? Shall we stand idly by without striving to live as God would have us to live! Are you having a part in moral decline or in uprightness and decency?

Fellowship...

(Continued from page 33)

(Eph. 4:4). Jesus is the Head of that body (Col. 1:18). He is the Savior of that body (Eph. 5:23). And, His church, which began in a specific place (Jerusalem) at a specific time (the day of Pentecost, Acts 2) was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). No denomination can make such a lawful claim about its relationship with Jesus.

“Well, why do we have to be so mean-spirited about it?” If, in fact, any members of the church have been unkind in dealing with others as they discuss spiritual matters, then they need to repent. Unkindness is wrong in any setting, and we refuse to endorse it regardless of who demonstrates it. Please do not miss this point, though. Is it rude to open the Bible and show a person that there is one God (Eph. 4:6)? Of course not. Is it mean-spirited to open the Bible and show a person that Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5)? Of course not. In the same way, neither is it out of line or ugly-spirited to point out what the Bible says about false religious messages and practices.

God being our Helper and Witness, we will continue to love and reach out to people who have been hoodwinked by denominational teaching. We shall not, however, join hands with denominations to carry out joint worship, evangelistic, or benevolent activities — ever!

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IS THERE NO SHAME?

Wayne Dixon

Obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means today by which accountable people can be ashamed and blush when they depart from God's way.

At one of the times when the children of Israel rebelled against God's will for them, the “weeping” prophet Jeremiah rebuked them saying: “*Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD*” (Jer. 6:15).

From Genesis Chapter 3 we learn of the first time mankind ignored God's will. As the result of the sin of Eve and Adam (the first two sins on the face of the earth), God cursed the earth on which we live (Gen. 3:17-19). Paul refers to it in his epistle to the brethren at Ephesus by exhorting them to value their time in this cursed environment by saying, “*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:16). The apostle John adds a somber note in his inspired comment near the end of his first epistle by observing the following: “*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19).

Undoubtedly, there was no shame to be found among the vast majority of the inhabitants on the face of the earth at the time of the flood in Genesis as Moses recorded: “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5). The one exception noted was Noah as he “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (Gen. 6:8).

Likewise, the lack of shame exists today in our society. Have you noticed anyone lately with the blushed face of shame over the continual killing of unborn babies? We witness much clamor over the saving of animals, but not of the souls made in God's image: “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*” (Gen. 1:27). In many quarters, there is no shame in the efforts to legalize substances known to be addictive. Shameless movies and television shows full of illicit sex and profanity deluge the young and old minds alike.

Sins, unabated, result in the lack of shame and spiritual death. Ezra's prayer should be a model for all: “*...O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens*” (Ezra 9:6).

Obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means today by which accountable people can be ashamed and blush when they depart from God's way. Paul the apostle was not ashamed of God's remedy and so stated: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16).

Godly shame and the blushing that at times goes with it will return only when we answer the Gospel call.

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How We Got The Bible #5

PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION

Randy Kea

So far in our study we have considered the **Revelation, Inspiration, Confirmation and Dissemination** of God's Word. In this installment we will consider **Preservation**.

If God has the power to speak the universe into existence and verbally inspire all 66 books of the Bible, He certainly has the power (in His providential care) to preserve His words down through time. Preservation is essential for every generation to be able to obey God's will. Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). How can a person live by all the words of God if all of the words are not preserved? We emphasize again that *verbal (words) preservation* is just as essential as *verbal inspiration*. Otherwise, the Bible would be useless for us today.

The Bible is prolific in its claim and promise for verbal preservation. Consider the following points:

1) Old Testament claims. "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever" (Psalm 12:6-7). "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8). "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever" (Psalm 119:111). "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever" (Psalm 119:152). "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160).

The Old Testament record from Genesis to Malachi bears out these claims of verbal preservation. God's

written law given at Mt. Sinai is recorded in the Pentateuch written by Moses. Just prior to his death, it is recorded concerning Moses and the charge he gave to the Levites to preserve the written law: "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" (Deut. 31:24-26). This law was preserved during the days of Joshua (Josh. 1:7-10; 8:32-34). This law was available during the days of the judges (Judges 1:20; 2:17; 3:4). This written law was still preserved in 1 Kings 2:3 and also during the days of Jehu in 2 Kings 10:31. Other references of this written law in 2 Kings are 14:6, 17:37, 21:8, 22:8, 11, 23:24.

The record of 1 and 2 Chronicles demonstrates that the law had been preserved until that point in Old Testament history. Because of space, I will just give the references: 1 Chronicles 16:17, 40, 22:12, 2 Chronicles 12:1, 17:9. After the captivity, the law was still intact and preserved (Ezra 3:2; 6:18; 7:6), and for good measure, the last thing you read in the Old Testament is "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with statutes and judgments" (Malachi 4:4). Don't forget that Moses to Malachi spans roughly a thousand years of verbal preservation. It should also be emphasized that neither Malachi nor any other prophet or king down through the centuries ever corrected or amended the Law of Moses.

2) Jesus affirmed Old Testament preservation. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

'Jots' and 'tittles' were the smallest particles of the Hebrew alphabet and language. So, the Lord is saying that even the smallest parts of the Old Testament would be preserved. "...The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The word "broken" in this verse means "loosened, broken up, destroyed, dissolved, melted." Clearly, Jesus taught verbal preservation. When Jesus cited the Old Testament He used the formula "it is written" numerous times. The verb tense for "written" in this formula in the Greek is in the 'perfect tense' which denotes action in the past with results continuing down to the present (*Interlinear Grammar of the Greek New Testament*). Every time Jesus used this statement, He was asserting Old Testament preservation. He never corrected Moses and the prophets but maintained verbal preservation, even down to the 'jots' and 'tittles.' (Note: In Matt. 5:21-48, Jesus is not saying that Moses is wrong when He uses the phrase "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time..." He was actually correcting Jewish misapplications and misinterpretations.)

3) New Testament claims. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23-25). "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever" (2 John 2).

4) Jesus affirmed New Testament preservation. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). Further, Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Jesus says that

His spoken words would be preserved all the way down to the Judgment Day. Clearly, the Lord is teaching that His words would be revealed and confirmed and verbally preserved and opened to judge the world on that last great day. Keep in mind when the Lord said this, the New Testament had not yet been written.

5) Another point sometimes overlooked is the internal (scriptural) evidence that Jesus only used the Hebrew text safeguarded by divine providential preservation down through the centuries until His time. One verse already considered that I simply note here again is Matthew 5:18 where the terms “jot and tittle” are used by Jesus clearly showing that He was using the Hebrew text and not the Septuagint or some other text. Another passage that with clarity shows this is Matthew 23:35: “*That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*” We need to remember that the Jewish arrangement of Old Testament books differs from our modern arrangement in English Bibles. The Hebrew Old Testament Jesus used started with Genesis and ended with Chronicles; so from Abel to the death of Zacharias shows conclusively that Jesus is talking about from the beginning to the end of the Hebrew Old Testament. Today, we would say from Genesis to Malachi.

Let me emphasize that our Old Testament today as far as the material is concerned is the exact Old Testament that Jesus had and quoted from throughout His earthly ministry. The only difference would be arrangement and grouping. The Jews combined certain books. For example, 1 and 2 Samuel into one book, 1 and 2 Kings into one book, and 1 and 2 Chronicles into one book, etc.

A third verse to prove Jesus used the Hebrew Old Testament exclusively is Luke 24:44: “*These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*” The three divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament that Jesus used are: 1) the law, 2) the prophets, and 3) the writ-

ings (the Hagiographa). Jesus used the Psalms to represent this entire third category of the Jewish arrangement of Old Testament books (the writings). Once again, it is clearly seen by this text that Jesus is using exclusively the Hebrew Old Testament canon and not the Septuagint (which has an entirely different book order), some scribal tradition, or any other document.

Number six in this series will consider the **TRANSLATION** issue. The **King James Version** is based upon the *Hebrew Masoretic Text* and the traditional *Received Text*. Modern translations have changed the text base in both Old and New Testaments. More about this vital study next time.

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COULD FAITHFUL PREACHERS OF THE PAST PREACH TODAY WHERE YOU WORSHIP?

Clarence Lavender

For many years, the winds of change have blown rather strongly in the church of our Lord. Doctrines are preached and activities engaged in today would have been unthought of a just a few years ago.

It is a recognized fact that no building or institution can be stronger than the foundation upon which it rests. The foundation of the church in some places has eroded away to the point of having only a slight resemblance to the church of the Bible. It has declined due to *compromise*, which has led to *liberalism*, *agnosticism*, *modernism* and other hurtful teachings which drown men in destruction and perdition. Anyone who is only slightly acquainted with various teachings and movements within the church in our day is aware of the perilous conditions of our time.

Sound doctrine has been changed so drastically by some brethren, that faithful men who preached the Gospel in days gone by would not be invited to speak in many churches of Christ today. Take, for instance, the subject of the CHURCH. Do you know of congregations where the following could not be preached?

“There are many churches in the world with different identity and different doctrine, and yet the New Testament reveals only one church, with one doctrine or teaching. The New Testament speaks of doctrines in the plural, but only to condemn them; the

doctrine of the New Testament is singular. Christ has only one system of doctrine or teaching, and that is revealed in the New Testament. There is but one divine church to be found in the New Testament. Since there are so many different churches in the world and only one divine church in the New Testament, it makes it difficult to identify the true church in the midst of so many churches.” (*The Identity Of The Church*, **F. B. Srygley**)

Brother Srygley was/is right, but the church of today is on the road to producing a group of men too “mentally modest” and “intellectually humble” to proclaim New Testament teaching on the subject of the ONE CHURCH for the fear of offending their denominational neighbors.

There is no question, with those of us who believe the Bible, concerning the establishment of the church of Christ on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord (Acts 2). The establishment of the church is a subject that is also sensitive with religious people, thus it is avoided by some brethren for the fear of offending them. Faithful preachers of the past were distinctive in their teaching. Could brother N. B. Hardeman preach the message he once did concerning the establishment of the church where you worship? Notice his words:

“When the battle was being fought between the church of Christ and denominations, and when brethren were willing to contend

earnestly for the faith in public discussion, no questions were of more importance than the time when, and the place where, the church of our Lord was inaugurated, set up, and established. A clear conception of its origin has much to do with a correct understanding of what the will of the Lord is. By the church we mean that spiritual realm over which Christ reigns as head and in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Let it be firmly stated that no such an institution existed on this earth until the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. Denominationalism is founded upon the opposite of this fundamental truth, and, hence, their minds are blinded and a veil is over their faces until this day.” (*The Establishment Of The Church*, **N. B. Hardeman**)

In the past, there was no question as to where salvation was, and who had it. Today, some question where it is, or who has it! Brother C. R. Nichol had no question about the matter. Notice his words:

“A stock expression with preachers who hold union meetings, as well as some others, is: ‘We wish to see people saved, and then let them join the church of their choice.’ Often you hear: ‘One church is as good as another; the church does not save you.’ Many people hold the view that membership in the church the Lord built is not necessary to one’s salvation.”

“If one church is as good as another, it must follow that the Mormon Church, built by Joseph Smith, is as good as the church built by our Lord. Mr. Smith was finite, limited in knowledge, and imperfect in character; the Lord was infinite, perfect in character, and possessed all power. Do the two compare favorably?”

“The Lord ordained that through his church the ‘manifold wisdom of God’ is to be made known (Eph. 3:10). The church of Christ is the ‘pillar and ground of the truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15), and unto the Lord is glory to be given ‘in the church’ throughout all ages (Eph. 3:31).”

“Christ is the head of the church he built (Col. 1:18), but the churches built by men exist by no higher authority than that residing in the men who built them. Unless a human institution is as good as a divine institution, it must follow that a church built by a mere man is not as good as the church the Lord built.” (*Does The*

Church Save? **C. R. Nichol**)

Is what brother Nichol said too strong for the pallet of some in our day? Brethren, you know it is! He would not be welcome to preach in many places. There are elderships and preachers alike that would not permit it. He preached the truth, but some simply love the praise and popularity of men more than truth!

What is the mission of the church? Seemingly, today, it is who has the largest attendance, greatest contribution, biggest building and gymnasium, etc. Who would hear and heed H. Leo Boles?

“The mission of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an important subject. The mission of other churches is not included in this study. There could be no substitute for the church of our Lord; hence, no other church can take its place and fill its mission. The church of the New Testament is the greatest institution known to man, and membership in that church the highest privilege granted to man.”

“What, then, is the mission of the church? Paul, in writing to Timothy, said: ‘That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is the ‘pillar and ground,’ or support and stay, ‘of the truth.’ All truth harmonizes, whether scientific, philosophical, moral, or spiritual. The church is in harmony with all truth, but it is not the mission of the church to become the ‘pillar and ground’ of the truth. The church is under no obligation to support scientific or philosophical truth; it is under obligation to support the truth that came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). It is ‘the pillar and ground’ of all truth that pertains to the redemption of man. The church is the only God-ordained support of the truths of the gospel. The church is to hold ‘forth the word of life’ (Phil. 2:16), and to ‘make known through the church the manifold wisdom of God’ (Eph. 3:10). The church is the institution through which God is to be glorified in propagating and supporting the truth of the gospel.” (*The Mission Of The Church*, **H. Leo Boles**)

It is said that Napoleon had three rules for messengers conveying information during battle, they were: BE CLEAR, BE CLEAR, BE CLEAR! In

the battle for the souls of men, all who preach should be as distinctive in their preaching on the ONE CHURCH, its ESTABLISHMENT, IT IS COMPOSED OF THE SAVED and its MISSION, as faithful preachers of the past.

How clear are you when you teach or preach concerning the church of the Bible? Do you leave the impression with religious friends they are saved in their denominations? Brethren, we are not being unkind anytime we teach the truth with genuine love for lost souls (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Preachers of the past loved the church and preached the word without fear or favor. Many today do the same, may God increase their tribe.

As you consider the importance of the church, I ask you, could men like F. B. Srygley, N. B. Hardeman, C. R. Nichol, H. Leo Boles, etc. preach today where you worship?

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LOOKING TO JESUS TO SEE THE BASICS OF FELLOWSHIP

John Chowning

The Bible's teaching on fellowship has many facets and vital areas of study. It also has a firm foundation of basic, fundamental truth. In the third chapter of his Gospel, Mark records: *"And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth [unto him] whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the [son] of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the [son] of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house"* (vs.11-19). This passage illuminates three basic points about fellowship as the Sinless Son of God lived in perfect harmony with His Father's will.

1) Jesus refused the fellowship of some. On several occasions (including this one), unclean spirits voluntarily offered their willing participation in declaring the truth about Jesus' deity. Every offer was instantly and sternly rejected. Even these unclean spirits who fell down before Him in their offer of fellowship were refused. There are distinct and definite boundaries and landmarks to fellowship. Because of this, every invitation to transgress and not abide within these God-ordained boundaries must be promptly and firmly refused.

There are at least two very easily discerned reasons why Jesus refused this offer of fellowship. First, the moral character of these beings obviously required a refusal of their offer. These spirits were morally and spiritually filthy. What fellowship can/does righteousness have with unrighteous-

ness? And, what communion does light have with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14)? Second, in the most practical of terms, acceptance of their offer would have proven disastrous to Christ in the future. Three verses further in this chapter it is written that the scribes from Jerusalem tried to slander Jesus by saying that He has Beelzebub and it is by the prince of the demons that He casts out demons (Mark 3:22). If Jesus had been allowing the unclean spirits to proclaim His identity, there would have been credible evidence to support their profane charge. This would have shipwrecked His ministry.

2) Jesus entered into fellowship with some. It ought to be noted that those with whom He entered into fellowship were those who He first called and then they responded. The holy, sovereign God desires genuine fellowship with all humanity, and all humanity has the ability for fellowship with God. However, fellowship with God is not something humans can demand or view as a spiritual entitlement. God offers His wondrous fellowship on His terms. There is no negotiation. There is no give-and-take. God makes His offer and each of us can either accept it or reject it. Regardless of whether it is Jesus' call of apostleship 'then' or His call of discipleship 'today,' the wise come to Him when He extends His offer of fellowship.

3) Jesus understood the two-fold purpose of fellowship. Jesus called a dozen men so they could be with Him and thus be transformed by their daily communion with him. Fundamentally, spiritual fellowship is the deliberate, active involvement with other disciples of Jesus so as to encourage spiritual growth. Jesus' fellowship with the apostles is breathtaking. Simon, an impetuous, outspoken fisherman, was transformed into Peter, a fearless fisher of men (cf. Mark 1:17). Jesus' fellowship with James and John transformed and harnessed the passion of their spirits so that they became the Sons of Thunder. His unrivaled power to

transform through fellowship is still at work today in all those who will refuse to be conformed to this world and choose instead to renew their minds (Rom. 12:2).

Jesus' transformative power can also be seen when considering the obscure and diverse collection of men He called. He called men with varied different occupations. He called men from various locations in Palestine. He even called men with extreme political affiliations — a publican and a Zealot (Judaism's version of the "Alt Right" and the "Alt Left"). Yet, what a metamorphosis occurred as this cadre of men heard, saw, looked upon, and handled the Word of Life (1 John 1:1). So complete was this transformation that even the enemies of Christ could easily tell that *"they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). *"Christ be formed in you"* (Gal. 4:19) is not only the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), it is also the transformative purpose of fellowship as one walks with the Master in daily communion.

Because of their transformation, the apostles fulfilled the nitty-gritty purpose of fellowship — the increase of evangelism and benevolence. Jesus did not call these men to be with Him just so they could enjoy an amazing meal made from five loaves and two fish or one with seven loaves and a few small fish. They were not called to be His apostles so they could incessantly argue over who was the greatest among them. His previous night was not sleepless and prayer-filled because He wanted to make sure He chose the correct fun-and-games organizers, gymnasium builders, or meal planners. As conceived in the mind of God and practiced by the Son of God and revealed by the Spirit of God, the end result of fellowship is not an increase of giggles and laughs in one's social life nor better fitness for the body in one's physical life. Rather, it is the increase of evangelism and benevolence in a world that is lost and hurting in its spiritual life.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“My father (Joe Rowe) went to be with God in January 2018. The elders at the church have asked that you cancel sending the bulletin *Seek The Old Paths*. Dad would hand them out and loved reading them. Thank you” ...**Kevin Rowe, Paragould, AR**. “Andy Erwin is our preacher at the West Fayetteville C/C in Fayetteville, Tenn. He loaned me his copy of **STOP**. I appreciate the soundness of the publication and I rejoice to know that many of our brethren are still not ashamed of God’s word. Please accept this small contribution for your support. Please add some addresses to your list” ...**Van Massey, Fayetteville, TN**. “Please remove us from this mail out. Thank you” ...**Jerry & Janice Dorman, Tulsa, OK**. “Please send **STOP** to my friend. If you have extras, please start with the Jan/18 issue (part one on the subject ‘How We Got The Bible’). I enjoyed the article about our ‘Christian Colleges’ (Feb/18). Thank you for the paper” ...**Dorothy H. Strattis, Sevierville, TN**. “Harold Wood has passed away” ...**Paducah, KY**. “Thank you so very much for teaching the ‘whole counsel of God.’ I was overjoyed to see brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr.’s (Feb/18) wise statement (my mom’s first cousin)” ...**Hurley, MS**. “Please remove our name from your mailing list. We are able to access the paper online. Thank you” ...**Ron & Sandy Puckett, Kevil, KY**. “I would like to subscribe to *Seek the Old Paths*. Thank you for all you do!” ...**Katie Smith, Bucyrus, OH**. “Is **STOP** still in print or is it only in PDF form now? I would like to subscribe to the newsletter if possible” ...**Don Wade, Pikeville, TN**. [NOTE: We mail paper copies every month and will be glad to anyone to our mailing list]. “I truly enjoy the *Seek the Old Paths* publication. The articles are very enlightening. Over the years I have noticed several small errors in interpretation and they have been so small that I have just let them go, however, I saw one in your article ‘Repenting of Adultery’ (Jan/18) that I can not let go. You wrote: ‘When individuals repent of adultery and stop living in adultery, they are forgiven.’ (I agree with that statement). To continue... ‘If they continue living faithful to God they will go to heaven when they die.’ I am 87 years old and I have listened to many old preachers and sat in numerous bible study classes and I have always been taught that when a faithful person dies they go to Paradise to await the great day when everyone will be judged. Remember the record of Lazarus and the rich man? I sometimes cringe when I read an obituary in the newspaper where it is stated that so-and-so died and went to heaven to live with their Heavenly Father. I only know of three men that lived on earth that went directly to heaven and they are Jesus, Enoch and Elijah. When are our preachers and teachers going to teach the truth that people that die go to *hades* and wait for the judgement? It is my opinion that you owe your readers an apology for this misinformation. Thanks for letting me sound off regarding this error” ...**Paul Powell**. [EDITOR’S NOTE: Thanks for your good letter. You are absolutely correct in your observation. It was not my intention to say that someone goes to heaven ‘as soon as’ they die. As soon as one dies, he/she goes to *hades* to await final sentencing, at which time they will either go to heaven or hell. I was not intending to say that faithful Christians ‘go straight to heaven’ when they die. However, it is true they go to heaven when they die; but it will be ‘after judgment’ as good Bible students know. I jumped from death to beyond judgment day without mentioning the intermediate state in between. Astute readers, such as yourself, caught that omission. There are several similar omissions in the Scriptures themselves. That is, not every text mentions all there is to know on

a given subject. For example: Mark 16:16, Jesus said, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ Repentance and confession are omitted. Acts 2:38, ‘repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins...’ Faith and confession are omitted. And then, neither of these passages mention ‘living faithful unto death’ (Rev. 2:10). That phrase is omitted. Romans 5:1, ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.’ Repentance, confession, baptism and living faithful are omitted. On and on and on the list could continue. However, your point is well taken. I pray this has clarified the matter. —Editor, gmr]. “Would you please send us your publication *Seek The Old Paths*? I read the Jan/18 issue and was very impressed with the good articles. Thanking you in advance” ...**H. C. Brown, Chattanooga, TN**. “Please send my sister *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Verneta Cummins, Oak Park, IL**. “I have a copy of this publication (Oct/2016). I pray you’re still printing *Seek The Old Paths*. I find it to be Bible based scripturally. Enjoyed so much! Please add me to your mailing of this vital Christian paper. Thank you very much for your help and understanding in this matter. Again, thank you” ...**Faye Elaine Cruz, Marietta, GA**. “Will you please put me on your mailing list? Thanks” ...**Gary Buxton, Doniphan, MO**. “Larry Cook has passed away” ...**Omaha, AR**. “Church of Christ, Serenity Lane. Refused” ...**Ellisville, MS**. “Rudine Jones has passed away” ...**Newport, AR**. “I believe in following the old paths and want to connect with others who feel the same” ...**Kathy Voorhees**. “Thank you” ...**Foy Curry, Millport, AL**. “Please add me to your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Donna Ames, Newcomerstown, OH**.

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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