



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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WHERE IS THE BAR?

Denver Thomas

***How might we fare if the Lord were to rate us
as He did the seven churches of Asia?***

In my high school days, there was a very competitive sport referred to as the Pole Vault. The object of the sport was to see how high one could leap with the assistance of a pole to cross a horizontal bar without knocking the bar down. The bar could be adjusted upward or downward as needed to correspond to the skills of the various participants. The participants were always striving to attain a higher level of skill since the one who could vault the highest would be declared the winner. A competitive spirit was evident in those who were in the game.

I have come to see a close parallel of that sport to today's religious community and especially within the Lord's church. Whereas, we, as God's elect, should ever be striving for higher standing and going on to maturity (Heb. 6:1-2), we have been "letting the bar down" to accommodate practices that we simply do not want to face up to. We boast of being a "first-century-like" church, but are we? I wonder if we are even like the church of fifty to a hundred years ago. We seem to forget that even though society may change, God's will (word) for His followers remains unchangeable! We *will* be judged thereby (John 12:48)! We have evolved into what I have chosen to call "A Happy Family Syndrome." The thought of offending someone has become the governing factor in so many of our practices and

decisions. We have become careful to avoid any number of topics. Space only allows for a few.

Same-sex marriage has been declared legal and binding by the high court of the land. So, what do elders and preachers do? Generally speaking, they act as if it really is of no concern. Oh, they may speak of the evil of it before the congregation, but to what avail? Telling a Christian that sodomy is an abomination to God is similar to telling a Christian that baptism is required for salvation. A Christian already knows as much. Instead of taking a stand against such enactments, they simply lower the bar.

Church discipline is something we simply no longer attempt to carry out in our congregations. Fear of reprisal may be a factor. Instead, being a "big happy family" has taken precedence over following the standard — God's Holy Word, the Bible. Quantity has become of much greater concern than quality. Church oversight has lost sight of Reprove, Rebuke and Exhort (2 Tim. 4:2). Unhappy folks are simply invited to go where they will be happy, no matter the reason for their state of mind! Down goes the bar!

The *oversight of the church* (Acts 20:28) has been passed from elders to "located preachers" and "pulpit ministers" in many congregations. "Problems" are placed in the preacher's hands for resolution which most gen-

erally never happens. Paul said "*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*" (Gal. 5:9). In any event, it is difficult to find scripture to support this type of organization. Again, we see the bar being lowered.

What does First Timothy 2:9-10 say about *modesty*? "*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*" We have lowered the bar to accommodate "anything goes" and in some cases "less than anything goes" so that the dress code is passé!

Earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 3) is yet another area where the bar has been lowered (maybe removed altogether). Over and over again we see those who sit in secure surroundings discussing the sectarian community and how they are abusing or misusing the scriptures, but they never go and face those they criticize.

When and how do we relate to *marriage, divorce and remarriage* among the elect? We just do not go there! Civil laws have eased the process and church leaders are simply unwilling to stand up and be counted. We just lower the bar.

Then there is the neglect in *at-*

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Where Is The Bar?...



Editorial...

VERBAL INSPIRATION

Garland M. Robinson

The Bible is the ALL inspired, infallible, inerrant, plenary, verbal, word of God. It is without doubt or fear of refutation, God's revelation to man. INSPIRED means the Scriptures are the product of the creative breath of God, not the result of human genius or opinion. INFALLIBLE and INERRANT means the Scriptures are incapable of teaching error or deception. PLENARY means all parts of the Bible are inspired alike. VERBAL means the Holy Spirit used the language form and words of those whom He inspired to reveal God's Will. The very words written were approved by the Holy Spirit and are the words of heaven.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 declares that "all scripture" is inspired, not just parts of it. It is inspired by God. Its literal words, every word, are "God breathed." That makes the Scriptures flawless, perfect. "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." God does not want anyone to be lost (2 Peter 3:9), so he has provided us his Word (Bible) that tells us what to do to be saved from our sins.

We are assured that nothing has been lost or left out. "...His divine power hath given unto us **all things** that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). We have everything we need (in the Scriptures) to live a decent, godly, upright life as he wants us to live. Doing God's will makes us a blessing to humanity. Refusing his will makes us a curse.

God watches over his word (Jer. 1:12) so that it cannot be lost. Jesus, the Lord and Savior of mankind, said, "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). A 'jot' is the smallest letter of them all, hence equivalent to the minutest part. A 'tittle' is the smallest accent mark or diacritical point, the extremity of a letter. Jesus verifies the fact that even the smallest squiggly (wavy and twisting) of a letter is inspired! Who can dare claim to be a judge and proclaim we don't know if the Bible is fully inspired or not?

How dare any man to come along and claim the Bible is inspired but not in every passage. Where did such a man learn that? He didn't learn it from reading the Scriptures. What evidence can he produce to verify that information. Who gets to decide which passages are inspired and which are not? How presumptuous and ridiculous pompous men can be! Either the Bible is inspired or it is not. If it's only partly inspired, then no one but God could reveal which parts are inspired and which are not. That makes it a useless book. If that be the case, we might as well trash it and go home.

Jesus argued the point concerning even the tense of a verb in Matthew 22:32 when he said "**I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**" "Am" is present tense, not past or future. Therefore, Jesus affirmed the fact that he is (not was or will be) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By making this argument he validates the teaching of the resurrection of the dead. The elite at Mars' hill mocked news of the resurrection just like many today (Acts 17:32).

It's not enough to simply say the Bible is inspired. Many people believe it is, but only in the sense that Shakespeare or Milton was inspired. If such is the case, then all we have is a work of fallible man and is no more than a product of human minds.

Some believe in the idea of *thought inspiration*. That is, God supplied the thought and left it up to the

individual to put into words that expresses what he thought God meant. We strongly deny this was the case. God not only supplied the thoughts, He chose the words as well! Some say, how then do you account for the variation in style and differences of some of the wording in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Consider an illustration of a man driving a well trained horse. "You draw the lines to the right or the left as you see that the horse needs guidance; you check him when he would go too fast, and urge him forward when he would go to slow; but he usually keeps the road and maintains the desired gait and speed of his own accord; still your hand is ever on the lines, and its pressure on the bit is constantly felt, so that you are controlling the horse's movements when he is going most completely at his own will. Indeed, the horse is all the time going very much at his own will, and yet he is never without the control of the driver." (*Evidences of Christianity*, McGarvey, p.213). Another illustration uses a musical instrument. "The exact tone brought about by the performer depends somewhat on the character of the instrument as well as on the skill of the performer, so when the Spirit acted on the inspired, the words came forth in the style and vocabulary of the writer." (*McGarvey*, p.214).

Every part of the Bible is verbally inspired. Every part of the Bible is God's Word to humanity. The words of the Bible are God's words! The Holy Spirit guaranteed each writer's words to be free from error. These holy men of God wrote what God wanted written in every detail! How did God accomplish this task?

The Bible teaches *verbal inspiration* (word inspiration). Verbal inspiration is not merely mechanical where God dictated and the scribe wrote. Rather, God used the vocabulary and style of the individual to express His Will. More than 3,800 times, in the Old Testament alone, the Scriptures claim to be the word(s) of God.

Throughout the entirety of the Bible, take note of these verses:

Exodus 4:10-12, "Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I [am] not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I [am] slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. ¹¹And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the

seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? ¹²Now therefore go, and *I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*

Exodus 17:14, “And the LORD said unto Moses, *Write this [for] a memorial in a book, and rehearse [it] in the ears of Joshua.*”

2 Samuel 23:2, “*The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word [was] in my tongue.*”

Isaiah 51:16, “*I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth.*”

Jeremiah 1:6-9, “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I [am] a child. ⁷But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I [am] a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. ⁸Be not afraid of their faces: for I [am] with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. ⁹Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, *I have put my words in thy mouth.*”

Jeremiah 50:1, “The word that the LORD spake against Babylon [and] against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.”

Matthew 10:20, “*For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*”

Mark 12:36, “*For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*”

Mark 13:11, “But when they shall lead [you], and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

Luke 1:70, “*As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.*”

Acts 1:16, “Men [and] brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.”

Acts 2:4, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

1 Corinthians 2:4, “*And my speech and my preaching was not with entic-*

ing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

1 Corinthians 2:12-13, “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*”

1 Corinthians 14:37, “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.*”

1 Thessalonians 2:13, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because *when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*”

2 Timothy 3:16, “*All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*”

2 Peter 1:19, “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*”

2 Peter 1:21, “*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.*”

Revelation 2:11, “He that hath an ear, *let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*”

What emphasis does God place upon his word? Of the 176 verses in Psalm 119, the Word of God is mentioned 182 times. Such distinction, reverence, respect and honor is paramount in the words: law (25), testimony(ies) (23), commandment(s) (22), statutes (22), precepts (21), judgment(s) (19), word(s) (42), way/ways (8).

No wonder Hebrews 4:12-13 reads as it does. “*For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*”

There is no salvation apart from the WORDS of God. One cannot be saved without WORDS. It is by obeying WORDS that God blesses man. The people on Pentecost had to hear WORDS (Acts 2:14,22,40,41). An angel told Cornelius to send for Peter “*Who shall tell thee WORDS, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved*” (Acts 11:14). Throughout all time we are told to “*preach the WORD*” (2 Tim. 4:2). Do your own simple search for “word/words.” You’ll be amazed at the emphasis placed upon God’s Word. According to the view of skeptics, we can’t tell which “words” are God’s and which are man’s. If you’ve bought into that, I still have that ocean-front property in Tennessee I’m looking to unload.

The Bible, particularly the New Testament, is the book from which all humanity (since the day of Pentecost in Acts 2) will be judged. Jesus said, “*...the WORD that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). The dead will be judged according to the Bible (Rev. 20:12).

Are YOU ready to be judged by the Lord? Why fight against him by refusing his word? You can’t be smarter than God! Read it, Believe it, Obey it, Keep its commands and you can have a home in heaven when you die and this world is over.

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COMING OUT OF PENTECOSTALISM #2

Bill Davis

Please refer to last month's issue (August) of *Seek The Old Paths* in order to get the full context of our discussion on "Coming Out Of Pentecostalism."

Another difficulty a Pentecostal has in his understanding is when he hears the truth that God does not work present day miracles, he believes we are saying that, "God doesn't answer prayer anymore." Just because the day for signs, gifts and miracles has passed does not mean God does not answer prayer. It is a mistaken idea to believe that in order for God to answer prayer he has to perform a miracle.

Let's look at Matthew 6:11 where Jesus encourages us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The question must be asked, does God have to perform a miracle in order to answer this prayer? After praying this prayer in the morning before starting my day, I've never walked downstairs to find a miracle supply of groceries on the table. However, I do go to work and make a salary which in turn is spent at a grocery store for buying my necessary daily provisions. I would never go to the refrigerator looking for milk to be there when I haven't purchased any and say, "Okay God, where's the milk? Don't you know I need milk today? I prayed this morning for you to supply my needs, so where is the milk?" Even those who believe in present day miracles don't do that.

God does supply my (our) daily needs, but I still have to get out of bed, go to work and labor that day to earn a salary in order to purchase what I need.

The same basic concept applies whenever I get sick. I go to the doctor who will decide a form of treatment or a certain medication I need. Do I pray for God's help for my health? Yes, of course I do. I pray for my health to be restored. Does a miracle take place? No. There is no miracle restoration of health to my body.

I think many Pentecostals and Charismatics in modern times do not actually know what a genuine Bible miracle is. In the early days of Pente-

costalism, true adherence refused medical treatment. They believed that divine healing was just that; divine without the help or aid of human intervention. Nowadays, the modern Pentecostal will have two surgeries and six drug prescriptions in order to get better and then claim a miracle healing! This is either dishonesty or ignorance.

Think about the difference in real Bible miracles and what people are calling miracles today. In these modern times the word miracle, like the word love, has been abused and misused until most people don't know what the real thing is. Advertisers misuse the word miracle every time they use it to try and promote a product. It's not surprising that Biblically ignorant people will call anything a miracle that is amazing or wonderful. It is surprising that people who claim to know the Bible do the same thing. A simple reading of the life and ministry of Jesus would clear up this confusion.

In the sixth chapter of Luke we find the account of Christ healing a man with a withered hand. *"But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?"* *And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.* Thayer's Lexicon says of the word withered, "of members of the body deprived of their natural juices, shrunk, wasted, withered." This is what we mean by a miracle. Jesus completely restored the man's withered hand.

Notice what else the New Testament says concerning the healing ministry of Jesus. Matthew records, *"And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: In-somuch that the multitude wondered,*

when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:30-31).

Among all these amazing miracles, let's pay particular attention to the healing of the maimed. Thayer's tells us that the word can mean a member of the body that is crooked, injured, disabled or mutilated. Notice how Jesus uses the word maimed when he says, *"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched"* (Mark 9:43). Then he goes on to say, *"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched"* (Mark 9:45). Jesus uses the words "maimed" and "halt" interchangeably. In these passages he describes what he means by the use of the words. He means a missing member of the body. Thayer's says that the word "halt" means lame or deprived of a foot, maimed.

The restoration of a limb (arm or leg) is a true Bible miracle. It is a miracle that cannot be faked. It would also be obvious for anyone to observe and would not be based on one's subjected, personal feeling.

When the Lord walked the earth there were many people with leprosy and various parts of their body missing. Jesus had no problem healing any of them. Many in modern times have claimed to have this ability and even the ability to do "greater works" than Christ did. Yet, no one in the twentieth century has ever seen even one miracle like Jesus performed, much less a greater one. I can remember the late Charles W. Conn (onetime General Overseer of the Church of God, 1966-1970) saying, "You can't do greater works than Christ did until you do at least the same works he did." Think about this amazing admission that came from a onetime leader of one of the world's largest Pentecostal denominations!

As a young man growing up in

Jacksonville, Florida, I can remember listening to one of the Pentecostal preachers on the radio declare, in his hyped-up manner of speaking, how that his church had all nine gifts of the Spirit in operation. Friends, that's a bold statement to make. It's obvious that people who make these kinds of statements don't fully understand what they are saying. They don't fully understand the true nature and character of God's miraculous gifts.

If any Pentecostal could perform just one miracle that Jesus did, the world would beat a path to their door. The New Testament refers to the fame of Jesus eight different times. Notice Matthew 4:24, *"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."* We have to ask the question; have you or anyone else ever heard of anything like this taking place in modern times?

With all of the claims of power, gifts and anointing we have not seen one genuine Bible miracle. The best the Pentecostal world can do is showmanship, hype, fast music, hand clapping, jumping up and down and for the main event, people falling backwards! This is a far cry from anything we read about in the New Testament.

After the three thousand were baptized into Christ on the day of Pentecost the Bible says, *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles"* (Acts 2:42-43).

We know the apostles did the same works Christ did because Christ said they would and the book of Acts bears it out. *"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch"* (Acts 5:12). There were no unsubstantiated claims of miracles in the lives and ministry of the apostles. Unlike the modern day charlatans, the apostles had what they claimed to have. Paul would later write, *"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds"* (2 Cor. 12:12).

Think about it. It has been reported by a reliable source that there are a half billion Charismatics on earth. If all these Charismatics had the same power and gifts of the Spirit the first century church did, don't you think we would have heard something outstanding, something won-

derful taking place by now?

Jesus and the apostles had real gifts, real power and performed real miracles. This cannot be said of any preacher or so-called apostle today.

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Elder's COLUMN

ELDERS HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

Mark Lance, elder

In matters of expediency, the Holy Spirit has given authority to the elders to make decisions that affect the church over which they are shepherds. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"* (Heb. 13:17).

Some, however, rebel against the word of God. Sometimes this is done by preachers who desire to have the authority over the congregation. Sometimes it is done by members who are more concerned with their own selfish will rather than God's will. Members of the church who only go along with the decisions the elders make when they agree with it because that is what they want to do, is in reality not going along with the elders authority at all. It just happens to coincide with their idea.

Elders do not have the authority to change anything that pertains to doctrine. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11). I know of congregations where the elders have decided to allow women to wait on the Lord's Table and/or lead public prayers. They do so without authority from God. First Timothy 2:12 is clear on this matter, *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."* Introducing a wider role for women than the Scriptures allow usually starts by the elders telling the congregation they will study and pray about it for several months. Then they go ahead and do what they had planned to do the whole time. They seek to please men, not God. The Lord had something to say about that also. *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matt. 15:9).

Elders also have the responsibility to know the Bible very well. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15). If the elders know the truth and are not afraid to stand for the truth, the church will remain strong. The eldership is not the place for "yes" men. There have always been those that will attack the word of God, and there always will be. The Apostle Paul said: *"I am set for the defence of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:17). This must also be the practice of the eldership.

Elders must understand what their work is: guarding the flock, advancing the Lord's cause. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16).

In far too many congregations there are elders that are functioning more in the work of deacons rather than elders. They make sure no windows are broken, nor any shingles off the building. Yet, they are not out conducting Bible studies nor checking on the sheep that have fallen away. Let elders do the work God has given them to do and members faithfully follow them in the Word.

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THE POSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY

CAN A CHILD OF GOD BE LOST?

Robert N. Lambert

Salvation is a gift of God's grace in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. That gift is procured through our faithful response to the call of the Gospel. Like many other promises of God, the promise of salvation is conditional — conditioned on our enduring faithfulness until either death calls us home or the Lord returns.

The euphoria of receiving salvation through Jesus Christ is often soon replaced by the terrifying possibility that you may have sinned and will be lost. People express it in different ways, but the concern is the same: Once saved, will I always be saved, or is it possible to act in such a way that my eternal salvation will be in jeopardy?

There are those who believe that a Christian can never act in such a way as to be lost. Some argue that the question hinges on the use of the word "Christian." The argument is that a true Christian will always conduct himself/herself in accordance with Scripture and will never be lost. For support, proponents of this position cite 1 John 3:9, "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" Is this verse teaching that it is impossible for a child of God (i.e. Christian) to sin? The short answer to this question is an unequivocal "NO." Since that is true, then what is this verse teaching?

John uses three expressions in the context of this verse, an understanding of which is vital to this issue. The first two are found in verse eight ("committeth sin" and "sinneth from the beginning"). The latter phrase is from the Greek word *harmartanei* which is in the present tense. The present tense indicates a settled character, like that of the devil, who has been sinning from the beginning. The former statement concerns the continuation of sin. That is, a child of God will not continue to "live in sin" (*harmartian ou poiei*). Again, what is contemplated here is not an isolated act of sin, but the habit of sin, the continuation of sin. This is indicated by the

verb *poiei*, which means to "do" or to "practice." The third statement (in v.9) is that the Christian cannot "go on sinning" (*ou dynatai hamartanein*). Here, the verb is a present infinitive. This is important because it signifies that the Christian is not a habitual sinner. If the expression had been in the aorist tense, then it would indicate the impossibility of sin. What John is arguing, therefore, is not the impossibility of committing a sin, but rather that continuing the habitual practice of sinning is inconsistent with the character of being a faithful Christian. It logically follows that if a Christian acts out of character in a habitual sinful manner, then that Christian's salvation is, at best, in peril unless he repents.

Please note that the emphasis here is on a person who habitually turns back to a life of sin. All people, even Christians, will stumble and fall short of God's glory (see Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8). However, this is not to be interpreted to mean that when a Christian sins that all hope is lost. A person who has entered into a proper and covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, and who has dedicated their life as a living sacrifice to Jesus (Rom. 12:1-2), has two tremendous blessings which follow them. First, they have an Advocate with God. Jesus Christ stands eternally before the Father pleading our case (see 1 John 2:1-2). Second, we have the promise that as long as we are striving to walk in the light of God's way, the blood of Christ will continually cleanse us from all sin (see 1 John 1:7). Surely, walking in the light of God would include obedience to His commands, a penitent spirit, appropriate worship, etc.

Some will argue this implies that

salvation may be earned by "works" and that the position is in violation of such passages as Ephesians 2:8-9: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" Their argument is that salvation is by grace through faith and that works have no part in our salvation. It is agreed that we could never do enough to save ourselves, but part of God's grace that brings salvation includes service and obedience on our part. Notice carefully verse 10 of the same chapter: "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (emp. added). God has prepared a pattern of good works and expects His children to do them. It is to these works which Paul refers in Philippians 2:12, when he says to "work out your own salvation." The same is true in James 2 as he declares that faith in God is demonstrated by our obedience in doing God's works. To fail to walk in God's ordained works is sin (see James 4:17); and, unforgiven sin will cost you your salvation.

Further, scriptural support for the position that a Christian can so sin as to be lost is found in the following verses. "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*" (Gal. 5:4). "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...*" (2 Tim. 4:10). "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*" (Rev. 2:5). "*For if after they have escaped the pol-*

lutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

In the Galatian passage, baptized believers had returned to the practice of the Law of Moses rather than the practice of the Law of Christ. Paul declared they had fallen from the very thing that could save them, grace.

In the Timothy passage, Paul declares that Demas is now in love with the world. If 1 John 2:15 is a valid commentary on Demas’ love of the world, then Demas was in danger of being lost eternally because the love of the Father was not in him.

In the passage from Revelation 2:5, Jesus points out that the entire congregation in Ephesus had fallen, and that they must return, repent, and do the first works again. If not, Christ would remove their candlestick. In other words, He would cease to recognize them as a congregation of His church.

The 2nd Peter passage is one of the most vivid expressions of the possibility of apostasy to be found in Holy Writ. Notice that those whom the apostle addresses had escaped sin through Jesus Christ. However, they became entangled in worldliness *after* their deliverance by Christ. Peter is plain: it would have been better had they never known salvation than to have accepted it and then forsaken it. He compares it to a dog eating its own vomit and a pig returning to the mud. There is no indication that their initial conversion was lacking in sincerity. They had come seeking salvation, found it, and then rejected it. The logical conclusion is that those who persist in such behavior, even those who had once tasted the heavenly gift of salvation, can be lost.

There are some who respond to all of this by saying that if it is possible for a child of God to be lost, then there is no way of being assured of salvation. Not true! The certainty of

salvation comes from a careful examination of our lives against the word of God. For example, Paul tells us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:1-5). Again, Paul says that we can remain blameless and above reproach in the sight of Jesus IF WE CONTINUE in the faith. Peter tells us to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10) by applying the qualities listed in verses 3-9 of 2 Peter 1.

In summary, salvation is a gift of God’s grace in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. That gift is procured through our faithful response to the call of the Gospel. Those who hold true to the principles of Christianity, even though they may sin from time to time, will benefit from the never-ending flow of Christ’s blood as a means by which those sins can be forgiven. However, those who are in the faith may, by abandoning the faith, return to the ways of the world. If they leave this life without having repented of going back into the world and then returning to the works of God, they will be lost. There is simply no other conclusion to be reached.

Like many other promises of God, the promise of salvation is conditional — conditioned on our enduring faithfulness until either death calls us home or the Lord returns. “*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*” (Matt. 24:13). Knowing this, the admonition of Revelation 2:10 surely becomes most urgent: “*...be thou faithful unto death...*” (Rev. 2:10).

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Where Is The Bar?...

(Continued from page 65)

tendance, service, study and doing what is expected of one claiming to be a Christian. Apathy and complacency are taking their toll in our congregations. Sermons are often innocuous making the hearers feel good and comfortable rather than being encouraged to do better and be active in the work of the Lord! Zeal for the Lord’s work is lacking. We just lower the bar.

Then, there is that area having to do with *seeking the lost*. We like to preach baptism, but fail to go and teach candidates worthy of baptism. We are more inclined to preach baptism as it conflicts with sectarian use, but we never face them. Debates went away in previous generations. We like to quote Mark 16:16 skipping over verse 15. We avoid Matthew 18:18-20 as it puts us where we just do not want to be! Why do we choose to ignore Paul’s many examples (cf. Acts 20:18-21 for example)? We just lower the bar.

So, where does the bar hang in the Lord’s church of today? Does it reflect the high standard the Lord requires? How might we fare if He were to rate us as He did the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1-3? Might He say, “I have somewhat against thee?” Most likely, we need to examine our practices and correct as appropriate. But will we?

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WHAT’S WRONG WITH USING THE BIBLE?

I keep hearing cries and wails from faithless preachers and church members who hold, with disdain, “book, chapter and verse” preaching. They call it “proof-texting;” and, they do not mean that in a commendable way — quite the opposite! But aren’t we commanded to handle the Scriptures rightly (2 Tim. 2:15)? We can’t do that without quoting the Scriptures. Proving all things is required is it not (1 Thess. 5:21)? How do you do that without referring to the words of inspired men in the Bible? How could anyone in their right mind hate pointing to the Bible for everything we say and do (Col. 3:17)? Friend, if you take the Bible away, we can’t preach anything with God’s approval. His approval is still sought after isn’t it? Is He not the one Whom we are seeking to please? Seems to me like Paul desired to please God when he preached. He didn’t care what men thought or wanted. I won’t apologize for directing you to Galatians 1:10: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” Our brethren in the churches of Galatia were moving away from the sound and faithful preaching of the Gospel. A tribe of brethren today are doing exactly what they were doing, listening to false teachers who are persuading them to NOT listen to “book, chapter and verse” preaching. Does that describe you? — *Garland M. Robinson*



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

brother Pigg tried to warn the church of it's dangers. Wonder if we will listen now? Thank you for your help" ...**Debbie Walker, Valdosta, GA.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: There are no paper copies left of his tract on ISLAM. However, the material is available on our web site at: www.seektheoldpaths.com/pdf/articles.html. You are welcome to print as many copies as you want.] "W. L. Sides has passed away" ...**Goldthwaite, TX.** "Dorothy Gilley passed away" ...**Midland, MI.** "Please add these names to your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Ruby Sells, Albany, KY.** "I have enjoyed *Seek The Old Paths* very much. *He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might he increases strength*" ...**Mable Carter Maddux, Baxter, TN.** "Thanks" ...**Garden City, MI.** "Thank you so much for your sound and righteous preaching of God's Word. We always look forward to every issue. God Bless" ...**John Lupanoff, Midland Church of Christ, Midland, MI.** "While looking around on the web I discovered *Seek The Old Paths*. It looks like this is mailed (snail mail) to folks. It may instead be e-mailed. If possible, I would like to be put on the mailing list" ...**Patrick Jones, Murfreesboro, TN.** "Dear Brother: The article (LET US PRESS ON!) written by Brother Ivie Powell (page 52 in the July 2016 issue of STOP) is so very true and evidently characteristic of a vast area of the country, possibly of the whole world. Within some 30 mile radius of where the good Lord has planted my feet, there are a number of congregations where most, if not all, of those 'offenses' the brother enumerates are known to exist. There are pianos, organs and bands, there are adulterous situations, there are women in leadership roles and there are dramatic sessions. Elders seem to have become more concerned with numbers than with zeal, commitment and holding firm to God's Holy Word. Frivolity and false teaching have become prevalent in contrast to the worship in spirit and in truth that Jesus spoke of. Sermons are quite often innocuous lest the numbers shrink. Further, there are topics that are simply 'off-limits' lest the congregation be split in half. Church discipline has become passe. On the one hand I am deeply saddened to observe what is happening to the Lord's church in recent years, but on the other I am happy that there are still those who are willing and able and do take a firm stand for the truth. There are still those whose robes are white and for that we give thanks. So, it is my prayer that STOP will continue to strive for the truth in all matters where the Lord's church is concerned. God Bless!" ...**Denver Thomas Milton, WV.** "Royce Ingram passed away in Dec. 2014. Roy enjoyed so much the messages he found in *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you all for the work you do bringing God to those who need it. God bless you all" ...**Sandra Ingram, Crane, MO.** "Please remove from mailing list. This individual is no longer located here" ...**John R. Vaughn, Columbia, TN.** "There is a monthly publication I'm reading (*Seek The Old Paths*) 'Why I Am No Longer A Pentecostal.' I have #1 and #2 but I don't have #3, I would like to know how I can get it. May God bless you, your sister in Christ" ...**Lydia.** [NOTE: All back issues are posted online at: seektheoldpaths.com.] "I have received

"I would like to thank you for the great work that STOP does in helping keep me encouraged and faithful to the truth of God's word! Do you know of anywhere I might get a copy of the booklet brother Walter Pigg did on Islam? I know for so long

the bulletin for many years but my eyes are not so well anymore to read. So please stop. I thank you so very much and what I have learned from them" ...**Terry Baisden, Fort Gay, WV.** "Please remove the St. Joseph Church of Christ from your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Stephen Pylkas, St. Joseph, MI.** "Russel Austin has passed away" ...**Randolph, MS.** "Please send me three copies of *Seek The Old Paths* for my two sisters and myself. I appreciate it greatly" ...**Rosemary Caine, Lagrange, GA.** "Thank you for a sound publication. It seems many publications have departed from the narrow way. Yours is the only one I continue to take" ...**H. Dean Leuch, Lawton, OK.** "We would like to have 12 copies of *Seek The Old Paths* sent to the Ephrata Washington Church of Christ each month. Enclosed is a contribution to help with expenses of production. Thank you very much!" ...**Merrill Spence, for the elders, Ephrata, WA.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you for your request, however, we only mail bundles in multiples of 10. This allows us to mail 'bulk rate' with the Post Office. For example, we can mail one bundle of 10 for 60¢, two bundles of 10 (total of 20) for \$1.20, etc. To mail one bundle of 12 costs \$2.48. If you need 20, we will be happy to send that amount. Thank you]. "We enjoy STOP very much. May God bless your work" ...**Bob & Susanna Austin, Lake Placid, FL.** "I would like to subscribe to your newsletter" ...**Stacy Simmons, Ripley, MS.**

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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