

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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CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF

Jon Gary Williams

***Does not CCDRE solicit goods, services and funds from merchants?
Is this the way New Testament Christians carry out benevolence?***

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:
The following material was in response to some comments and questions regarding the DISASTER RELIEF program. Since I live in the Nashville area I am well acquainted with people directly involved with CCDR and, hence, have access to firsthand information.

REGARDING THE BOARD OF CCDR

At the beginning this program was simply identified with the name "Disaster Relief." It was started at the Tusculum congregation by the preacher, John Miller. Its first "board" was the eldership at Tusculum. However, the Tusculum congregation eventually dropped the program at which time it was placed under a generic board made up of various men in the Nashville area. John Miller became its first and only "president." I asked one of the present board members (a former elder at Tusculum, but who left that congregation because of liberal goings on) why the elders dropped "sponsorship" of the program. He explained it was because Tusculum had supported the infamous "Jubilee." Complaints coming to the elders made it

necessary (if the program was to continue receiving support from other brethren) to remove it from the Tusculum congregation. (However, this elder told me he felt it should be under an eldership and not a general board.)

THE TITLE: "CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF"

When word got out that the title "CHURCH OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF" was in the working, it was soon pointed out that this was an improper use of the expression "church of Christ." My understanding is that some suggested using the title "DISASTER RELIEF" with the subtitle "Supported by Churches of Christ." I, along with others, was under the impression the title "CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF" would not be used. However, the next thing I knew it was being used, with the modification of "CHURCHES" plural. I suppose they felt the plural sounded less objectionable. (Actually, the official title now is: "CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT, INC.") IS CCDRE JUSTIFIABLE? When discussing this with others I have made it a point to bring

out the following questions:

1) Is it the responsibility of the Lord's church to provide relief to the world at large? Is not this the premise on which CCDRE was founded? Is not this what CCDRE has become — a generic relief society? Why did not the early church organize such programs?

2) Is not CCDRE the creation of another "para-church organization?" Is it not true that well-meaning brethren become involved in this project without first ascertaining its right to exist?

3) Is the use of "CHURCHES OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT, INC." a scriptural concept? Is there such an animal? What is the difference between this and a "Churches of Christ Hospital," "Churches of Christ Home for the Elderly" or "Churches of Christ Half-Way House?" (In the Nashville area we have many hospitals. Many people come here for organ transplants and treatments. These transplants and treatments can become very, very expensive, often wiping out a family's financial base. I ask — could not con-

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Disaster Relief...



Guest Editorial

THE DIVIDED ASSEMBLY

The practice of dividing into two or more groups during the worship service is not a new thing to the Lord's church. It has been practiced for at least twenty five years to my first-hand knowledge, and probably much longer in some places. While this article will not cover every situation where such is practiced, we will look at 1) two specific examples of the divided assembly, 2) why the divided assembly is wrong in general, and 3) what is wrong with the two specific exam- ples.

TWO SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Accommodating children.

Many people practice the divided assembly by taking the small children out of the worship time and providing a different program for them during that worship time. This is done for differing age groups and to various degrees, and it is called different things, Children's Bible Hour, Youth Worship, Children's Church, etc. Some congregations might provide an alternative activity for their small children during all of the worship assembly. Other congregations might simply send the children out just before the sermon and deliver them a lesson they feel is more appropriate to their age and level of understanding.

There was a time in my life when I condemned the practice of taking the children out for the whole assembly, but rationalized that if a congregation sent the children out only during its sermon, it was at least having a general assembly up until the time the children went out, so it was not doing wrong. I have since come to believe that even sending the children out just for the sermon is wrong, and to regret of my tolerance of this wrong in the past.

Accommodating different worship styles. In more recent years, those who want to change the

worship style of the Lord's church to something they view as more "contemporary" and less "traditional" and yet finding some in their midst who feel uncomfortable with these changes have offered two worship assemblies, one traditional, the other contemporary.

Why the divided assembly is wrong. God demands a general assembly of the saints in a congregation. A list of verses written to the Corinthian church will suffice to prove this to any honest man. 1 Cor 11:18, "*For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.*" 1 Cor. 11:20, "**When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.**" 1 Cor. 11:33, "*Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*" 1 Cor. 11:34, "*And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*" 1 Cor. 14:23, "**If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?**" 1 Cor. 14:26, "*How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*"

God demands a coming together. It is in this setting of coming together that we partake of the Lord's supper, preach the doctrine of Christ, etc. Dividing the assembly is wrong because it denies the biblical imperative to come together. Coming together does not mean we cannot divide for Bible classes or other activities. But we must have a general assembly for the purpose of worship, where all in the congregation come together. This makes the practice of the divided assembly wrong.

WHY "YOUTH WORSHIP" IS WRONG

The specific objections to this practice may be more numerous than we care to name in this brief article, but notice at least the following concerns:

Adult Christians who lead in youth worship are forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. It is not just the small children who miss the assembly. We don't send the young children out to take care of themselves. Where is the Biblical authorization for some members to miss our general assembly to provide an alternative program for the children? This is a violation of Hebrews 10:25.

Youth worship deprives the children of things they need to learn. Ephesians 6:4, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" Parents who want to bring their children up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4) should want their children in worship services from the earliest possible age to learn.

Each child needs to learn the discipline of sitting still, of concentration, of having an attention span longer than a 30 second commercial. When they are adults, they need to know these things in order to pray, listen to a sermon, etc. This means they must learn them as children.

Each child needs to learn what true worship is. True worship is not watching a puppet show. True worship is not playing musical chairs or "duck, duck, goose." Since children learn by observation as much as by instruction, why would we want them to miss what they can learn from observing adults in worship?

Each child needs to learn what true, good, sound preaching is. They will not learn this so long as we seek to entertain them in a setting alternative to the worship.

Youth worship may encourage attitudes in children which are detrimental to the soundness of the church. Is it any wonder that today's generation wants to be entertained during their worship services? If we raise and train children using entertainment, if we separate them out from the assembly and give them

something “more fun” until they are almost young adults, is it any surprise they find a “traditional” worship service boring? Can I prove that youth worship is the cause of the entertainment craze that is sweeping the Lord’s church? No, I cannot prove it is the sole cause. But can we not see the obvious truth that providing entertainment instead of contemplative devotion for the first years of their life is failing to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If you give a child youth worship to keep him entertained instead of teaching him true worship, if you allow Vacation Bible Schools to be primarily shouting, raucous, noise with a sporting-event atmosphere, and if you send him to Youth Rallies, many of which are primarily entertainment – skits, parties, and concerts, why would parents and elders be shocked when he doesn’t want to worship decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40) as an adult?

WHY DIVIDING THE ASSEMBLY FOR “TRADITIONAL” AND “CONTEMPORARY” WORSHIP SERVICES IS WRONG

Of course, dividing our worship assembly for different worship styles also denies the need for a general assembly during which the whole congregation comes together. Since the Bible commands such an assembly, any practice that denies the need for a general assembly is sinful. But there are also other reasons that dividing to accommodate different worship styles is sinful.

Much of what is called “contemporary” worship is itself sinful. Many of the modern innovations are not simply matters of opinion, expediency or judgment. Some of the things which go under the guise of “contemporary” worship are wrong. For example:

Special singing groups (solos, quartets, choirs, etc.) are wrong because they do not fulfill the Biblical obligation to sing to one another (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

Drama. The word of God is to be preached (2 Tim. 4:2). We have no authorization to act it out as a skit or a play. This type of sensationalism is the natural outgrowth of members wanting to be entertained and preachers wanting to be applauded,

but it is not biblical.

Hand-clapping. If hand-clapping is done as applause, it is the wrong tone and atmosphere for the formality of a worship service. Worship is not a sporting event. Not only are we commanded to do all things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), we are to retain an attitude of fearful respect for what we are doing and who we are worshiping (Eccl. 5:1-2). Turning the worship service into a sporting event or developing a carnival atmosphere does not demonstrate such respect. Applause shows praise to men as they perform certain acts, solos, etc., if we want to show respect to God and to the proper exercise of worship, let’s stick to the biblically authorized “Amen” (1 Cor. 14:16). On the other hand, if hand-clapping is done in time to music, to show the beat or the rhythm of the song, then it constitutes music. However, it is a type of music with no more authority than a piano or a guitar and therefore it is sin (Col. 3:16-17).

These types of things and more are being practiced as “contemporary” worship. These are sinful. They should not be practiced at all, much less having a separate assembly for those who want to practice such things.

DIVIDING OVER WORSHIP STYLES IS SINFUL DIVISION

1 Cor. 1:10, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* Are we to believe that Paul desired the Corinthians to have unity of doctrine, but not be able to come together to worship? If the difference in worship styles are matters of doctrine, we should be able to agree on what to do. If the difference in worship styles are simply differences of preferences, can we not put aside our preferences for the sake of unity? In light of God’s command that a congregation come together for worship, the solution of having two separate services is simply not acceptable.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

The divided assembly denies the

need for a general assembly. It is man’s substitution of his own idea instead of following God’s plan. Since God’s plan clearly requires a general assembly, anything which denies the need for such is wrong and sinful.

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Disaster Relief...

(Continued from page 81)

gregations organize a “CHURCHES OF CHRIST MEDICAL DISASTER RELIEF” and provide housing and funds to help needy families? I proposed this to a supporter of CCDRE. He rejected it as unscriptural. I asked him to explain the difference between this and CCDRE. No response as yet.)

4) Has CCDRE not become a community-wide project? Has it not become a co-operative effort with people of various religions seeking to offer assistance?

5) Does not CCDRE solicit goods, services and funds from merchants? Is this the way New Testament Christians carry out benevolence?

6) Will CCDRE accept financial aid from anyone who will contribute? (I am well acquainted with a brother who witnessed a check from Anheuser-Busch being counted in CCDRE revenues.)

7) Is it scriptural for CCDRE to pay a preacher to do “follow-up” work? What is the difference between this and the Missionary Society? (One of the board members confirmed to me that this is a part of CCDRE’s program. He said he objected to it but was overruled.)

These are my thoughts. I believe I have taken a sensible approach to the matter.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Brother Terry Joe Kee spoke about this group and others of like kind at the “Seek The Old Paths” Lectureship in 2000. There are several such organizations that usurp the work of the church and are diverting the hearts of many away from the Truth. Ephesians 3:21 says, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

“AM I BECOME YOUR ENEMY?”

Noah A. Hackworth

The book of Galatians, written to the churches of Galatia, argues that deliverance from the law of Moses means freedom in Christ Jesus. Some differences of opinion exist as to the time the Galatian epistle was written and from where. The book was apparently penned in Corinth or possibly in Antioch, near the middle of the first century [c.a. 40-56]. In Galatians 4:1-16, a number of significant items are discussed by the apostle Paul. Among them are: 1) bondage under the law, 2) redemption from the law, 3) sonship, 4) freedom in Christ, and 5) the devotion of the Galatian Christians to Paul. In verse 16 the apostle issues an interrogative: “So then am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

APOSTOLIC ENEMIES

Like Christ, Paul was falsely accused, but the apostle was not given to falsehood or the misrepresentation of truth; no one had more respect for truth than he, and he always spoke it in love (Eph. 4:15). It was Paul himself who called attention to the fact that in a given instance Peter was not “walking uprightly according to truth” (Gal. 2:14). No “right thinking” person seeks or thrives on making enemies, but sometimes it happens. Paul had made some enemies in the Galatian area, but such was certainly not his desire or intent. He had handled himself admirably among them, but there were some who not only dis-

puted the teaching of the apostle, they waged an attack on his person and upon his apostolic credentials. There are those who simply cannot handle truth. The Sadducees, for example, became “sorely troubled (i.e., they got all worked up and became indignant) because the apostles, Peter and John, proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. When we uphold the right and oppose the wrong, we often find ourselves in the camp of the unfriendly. Truth Makes Enemies!

Christians sometimes make enemies because they live and teach the truth. More correctly stated: people often become the enemies of those who consistently live and teach the truth. Consider some of the areas where this is true. First, in the area of putting the Lord first (Matt. 6:33). The fact that one may miss, because of uncontrollable things, the regular assembly on Lord’s Day does not admit of doubt. Such things can happen, but there are times when members of the church become careless and/or indifferent, and unnecessarily miss the established Lord’s Day worship in order to carry out some plan they have made. They apparently feel completely justified in missing the Sunday morning assembly under the persuasion that they can attend Sunday night. This is unwise, foolish and wrong, and it ought not be done. It is a sad commentary on one’s “spiritual strength,” and could cost more than one could “pay” at the judgment.

Both men and women are

required by the Lord to be modest (I Tim. 2:9). Modesty has never been required only of women. Brothers who circulate in public with “pot bellies” and “hairy chests” exposed, will have trouble convincing anyone they are “godly.” So will the brother who may be “lean” and “desirable.” A sister in Christ who thinks “short shorts” and bathing suits are acceptable attire in public, will, on a “godliness scale,” of 1 to 10 register less than 1. What a pity!

Paul instructs the Thessalonian brethren to “withdraw themselves from every brother who walks disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Withdraw is from *stello* and means “to draw back” (Nestle). Peter had eaten with the Gentiles, which was permissible (cf. Acts 10-11), but when his Jewish brethren came he “drew back” (Gal. 2:12). “Here (2 Thess. 3:6) it is withdrawal from brethren who are out of step” (Rienecker).

CONCLUSION

Only a few areas where enemies are made have been discussed, but this is sufficient to establish the truth of the proposition. None of us need or want enemies, but if we do what the Lord bids us do, if we preach and practice the truth, there will be people who will disagree with us, resent us, and often alienate themselves from us. But the truth must continue. So, in the words of Paul, “Am I (we) become your enemy.”

A LOVE FOR THE TRUTH

Bob Spurlin

The most compelling need of our day is a love for the truth. Unfortunately there is a deficiency in this regard that is woefully lacking. Note the following illustration. As a boy my father, grandfather, brothers, and I would go to Bentley’s Barbershop in Hartselle, AL to get a haircut. My grandfather, J. F. Dean, was an elder in the church, and was

recognized as a walking Bible. Occasionally at the barbershop a question would be raised about the Bible or some Bible related subject. My grandfather would reply “the Bible says so and so,” and then would quote the scripture in question. My memory is clear, although more than four decades have passed, yet that place of business reverberated with a

resounding silence. The passion of his response was so thorough, so complete, that it left those present stunned. The presentation of truth silenced the would be querist, and convicted the hearts of those present. Beloved, there was a day when men and women would shudder at the truth and/or tremble at the spoken word (Heb. 4:12; Acts 24:25). Would

to God those days would return.

How do we show our love for the truth? Initially, we should love hearing the truth or Gospel proclaimed (Eph. 4:15; Acts 2:41). I've noticed over the last ten to fifteen years a lack of appreciation for the truth and the majesty of God's written word. One brother told a Gospel preacher that he should watch what he said because there were sectarian people in the audience. One even remarked that he should not speak on religious error due to certain people being present.

How would Peter or Paul preach today? Would they simply slap people on the back, shake their hands, and then declare some philosophical jargon? Most Bible students know better. If we truly love the truth then joy will soar in our hearts as the spoken word is preached and taught. A love of the truth will cause us to crave and hunger for it like a fine meal (Matt. 5:6). Solomon said, "*Buy the truth and sell it not...*" (Prov. 23:23). The truth should be the single pursuit of us all and no price is too high to secure it (Matt. 13:45-46). A love for the truth will cause us to be submissive to it (James 4:7-8; Matt. 7:21). Jesus with great clarity, said, "*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15).

A love for the truth will also cause one to live it to the uttermost. There can be no greater challenge to our love of the truth than living it daily. Paul said, "*For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain...*" (Phil. 1:21). Jesus was the personification of truth and truly exemplified how we should conduct our lives. Luke writes his treatise to Theophilus and said, "*...concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach*" (Acts 1:1). Note the perfect harmony in our Lord's life; he both lived what he taught and taught what he lived. The sheer complimenting of our religion with how we live is a necessary prerequisite if we love the truth. Paul said, "*Only let your conversation (manner of life ASV) be worthy of the gospel of Christ*" (Phil. 1:27).

Friend, a lover of the truth is not only the purpose of our being, but faithfully adhering to the truth (John 8:32) will be rewarded with everlasting life.

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WHY PREACHERS SHOULD USE A LOT OF SCRIPTURE

Occasionally the complaint is heard that the preacher uses too many Scriptures in his sermon. This may be a polite way of saying the man is not much of a public speaker. Merely reading verses from the Bible and stringing them together with no obvious arrangement makes for a poor discourse on spiritual matters. On the other hand, it may be that some in the audience are not very spiritually minded. To them, two dozen Scriptures might be hard to endure in a thirty minute lesson. Their idea of a good sermon might be twenty minutes of political commentary, poems or flowery speech designed to make people feel good about themselves.

Jesus commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). He also taught them to teach the disciples to do what they had been taught (Matt. 28:19,20). Clearly, this means every Christian should be involved in preaching the Gospel in one way or another. Gospel preaching is also an act of worship which the church engages in on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Preaching the Word pleases God since it is part of his plan for saving mankind from sin (1 Cor. 1:21).

Jesus clearly specified what he wanted proclaimed. It is the Gospel of Christ. It is not to be the opinions of man or speculations about religious matters. Paul reminded the church, "*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake*" (2 Cor 4:5). Preaching the Gospel means preaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42).

When a preacher prepares his sermon, of what should it consist? Obviously, it should contain God's Word since the Scriptures testify of Jesus (John 5:39). Faith is developed by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). If a person lacks faith, he cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Must

a lesson contain only Scriptures? No, this would be taking an extreme position. To communicate the saving message of faith means explaining it so the audience can understand and correctly apply it. At times this may mean giving the precise meaning of words as they are used in the Bible. Certain words in English have a broader meaning than the original Greek words. Some words actually convey un-Biblical concepts. One example is the word baptize. The Greek word means to immerse yet to many, baptize also conveys the idea of sprinkling or pouring a little water on a person.

A preacher's sermon should contain only the Truth of God's Word — never a corrupted form of the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul expressed his concern that the Christians of Galatia were accepting a perverted message. Believing a lie does not make it the truth. Obeying a false Gospel cannot save a person. On the contrary, obeying any doctrine other than the pure Gospel will condemn souls to hell. This is why it is imperative that preachers make sure they are preaching "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Since preachers are fallible men, they will make mistakes from time to time. They may accidentally misquote a verse of Scripture. In their study they also may come to an incorrect conclusion regarding some passage. Preachers who want to please God will admit and correct their mistakes when they are discovered. Unfortunately, some preachers want to please men more than God (Gal. 1:10).

If you value your soul, you should always check out what a preacher is teaching to see if he is preaching only the Gospel of Christ or if he has added his own opinions and doctrines.

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WOULD YOU BAPTIZE A COUPLE THAT IS IN AN UNSCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE?

Mark Bass

A preacher friend asked me whether I would baptize a couple who were in an unscriptural marriage. With no hesitation, I told him that I could not do it in good conscience (he was in full agreement). When he asked me why, I gave the following reasons.

First of all, the Bible makes it clear that baptism must be preceded by repentance (without repentance

we cannot be saved, Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30,31). Repentance is a change of mind (godly sorrow) that leads to a change of mind and life. Biblical repentance demands that one give up any and all sinful practices and/or relationships.

One who will not repent is not ready to be baptized. He needs more teaching. I have listed several reasons below for this conviction. To date, no one has refuted the logic or the Scripturalness of this position.

1. I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a homosexual couple who refused to give up their sinful lifestyle. If they are not willing to change their lives, they have not repented and are not Scriptural candidates for baptism.

2. I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a man who was living with two wives. As long as he remains in that polygamous relationship, he is living in sin and baptism will do him no good. Clearly, he is not a Scriptural candidate for baptism.

3. I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a woman who worked as a prostitute and was unwilling to change her occupation. Obviously, she was not penitent and not a Scriptural candidate for baptism.

4. I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a man who ran a bar or tavern. In view of plain Bible teachings, one cannot sell liquor and be pleasing to God. One who is truly penitent would give up such a business. One who refuses is not a Scriptural candidate for baptism.

Some have said that I am making adultery the unpardonable sin; but I would beg to disagree. One who is Scripturally immersed is forgiven of all sins, including adultery (Acts 2:38; 22:16). But when they continue their sinful activities (whether it be

lying, stealing, cheating, drinking or adultery), they are separated from God and need to repent (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9) lest they be lost. So the man or woman in an unscriptural marriage can be forgiven, but they cannot remain in that unscriptural union and be pleasing to God.

There are two great problems with the idea that some have of “Let’s baptize them and maybe they will learn the truth and repent later.” First, it gives them the idea that they are right in the sight of God and saved. Second, what kind of message are we sending to other members of the congregation (especially our young people and new converts) when they see someone taken in as a faithful member and used in a public way who is known to be living in adultery? If that is not bidding “God speed to error” (2 John 10,11), I don’t know what it would take to do so!

Occasionally, someone will argue that “brother so-and-so” (well-known and respected preacher) said he would baptize them regardless of their marital situation. That might be the case, but what does it prove? Since when do we prove what is right or wrong by appealing to a man or group of men? Even if a majority of preachers agreed with this unscriptural position, that still would not make it right. God’s Word (i.e., New Testament) is our only source of authority for determining right from wrong (Col. 3:17).

Yes, baptism is important and essential, but let’s not be guilty of baptizing those who are not ready, just for the sake of baptizing or increasing our numbers. [*Banner of Truth*, 6-3-01]

EDITOR’S NOTE: In an e-mail letter to me, brother Bass made this plain statement regarding what he said in the above article about not baptizing those who are in an unscriptural marriage: “I was referring to cases where they want to be baptized, but make it clear that they have no intention of getting out of their unscriptural marriage.

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Anonymous	\$60
Booklet Maker	
Charles Dinkins.....	\$25
Ronald H. Allen	\$30
Beginning Balance.....	\$1,964.55
Credits	
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Booklet Maker	\$55.00
Debits	
Booklet Maker	\$355.00
Postage	\$1,075.42
Paper	\$915.28
Ending Balance.....	\$1,345.85
Bookletmaker	\$13,500.00
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JEHOSHAPHAT'S DEPARTURE FROM GOD

Marvin L. Weir

In the beginning, Jehoshaphat did not let the sins of others become a stumbling-block to him. He knew that God is the perfect example, and he chose to follow God. God was with him, as He will be with all who determine to walk with Him.

Many today teach that if one is ever saved he can never sin so as to be lost. But the Bible contains warning after warning against apostasy! Why warn people of sin that cannot be committed?

The writer to the Hebrews warned, *“Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb. 3:12-13). To the Galatian brethren Paul said, *“Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth”* (Gal. 5:7)?

We can learn much from the life of Jehoshaphat. He has a great beginning, but his bright morning soon became clouded with the dark sorrows of failure. Let us see both the good and bad in the character of Jehoshaphat.

We see him highly honored. *“And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim”* (2 Chron. 17:3). If one chooses to walk with God, his success is guaranteed. In the beginning, Jehoshaphat did not let the sins of others become a stumbling-block to him. He knew that God is the perfect example, and he chose to follow God. God was with him, as He will be with all who determine to walk with Him.

We see him greatly encouraged. *“And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah”* (2 Chron. 17:6). Jehoshaphat guarded against his heart becoming consumed with pride at the beginning of his reign. He evidently realized that *“pride*

goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). When the devil can use pride to lift up one’s heart, it is lifted from the ways of the Lord into the way that will bring defeat and death.

God gives no encouragement to one who chooses to live a manner of life that is in opposition to His will. Only when we choose God’s Holy Word to be a *“lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path”* (Psa. 119:105) can we expect His blessings.

We see him unequally yoked. *“Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab”* (2 Chron. 18:1). It was the Savior who said, *“It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 19:23). More often than not, Satan uses affluence as his tool to hinder man’s loyalty to God. It is true that the *“love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Tim. 6:10). We must control our riches and not allow our riches to control us.

The Bible also reminds us to *“Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals”* (1 Cor. 15:33). Ahab was a well-known enemy of God. Why would a righteous person desire to associate with one of Ahab’s reputation? We read that *“Ahab did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him”* (1 Kings 16:33). A tremendous lesson is now taught. When one chooses to form a **friendship** with a worldly person he will soon be in **fellowship** with his worldly ways!

“And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria” (2 Chron. 18:2). The ungodly Ahabs of today are always ready to have the servants of God come down to their level. Nehemiah resisted the temptation to

visit with Tobiah and Sanballat. Nehemiah’s answer should be our answer: *“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you”* (Neh. 6:3)? Why should a faithful child of God willingly depart from the highway of holiness to travel the path of ungodliness?

Christians must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Light does not mix with darkness. Darkness may need the light, but light can have **no** fellowship with darkness (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

We see Jehoshaphat completely surrendered. No, he did not surrender to God, but to the unprincipled Ahab. *“And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war”* (2 Chron. 18:3). When will we learn that **compromise** is a killer? The moment Jehoshaphat promised to help Ahab he was worthless to the cause of God! One does not fraternize with the enemy and come out unscathed.

The Lord warns, *“He that is not with me is against me...”* (Matt. 12:30). We must always be the bond-servant of Christ while refusing to be a sinful slave of men.

Good beginnings are important. A good ending, however, is essential if heaven is to be our home. May we as Paul, *“press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:14).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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