

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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I WANT TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS IN PREACHING AND TEACHING #2

Thomas F. Eaves, Sr., Deceased

JESUS CONDEMNED ERROR

In God's word a premium is placed on truth. The Psalmist stated, "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). The wise man admonished, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; yea, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23). Our Lord said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). On one occasion Jesus warned his disciples about false teachers and their false doctrines (Matt. 16:6-12; Luke 12:1). On other occasions the Master withstood and rebuked false teachers. Perhaps no clearer example, and no stronger rebuke is recorded than that which is found in Matthew's gospel, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of Hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15). Many today would declare that Jesus did not love these because he rebuked them, but we know that Jesus loved them because he died for them (Rom. 5:8,9). It is possible to love the souls of men and women while standing against their false doctrines and/or ungodly ways.

Telling people they are wrong in matters of religion is not in vogue today, but our Lord did not allow error to go unchallenged or unchecked. In conversation with

Jesus at Jacob's well near Sychar, a Samaritan woman asked a question concerning the proper place of worship, "Our Fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). Contrary to the philosophy of many today, only one answer would be correct since only one place of worship was acceptable to God. It was Mount Gerizim OR Jerusalem, not Mount Gerizim AND Jerusalem. Jesus (I am confident He acted out of love and with tenderness) told the woman, "Ye worship that which ye know not; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Jesus simply told the Samaritan woman that she was wrong, he did not allow error to exist along side of truth. If we are going to be more like Jesus in teaching and preaching, then we must stand against error.

It is sad today that error has free course in many congregations, and few, it seems, are interested in challenging the "uncertain sounds." In many areas some are maintaining that it is not possible to know the truth, i.e., one cannot read the Bible and know what God requires of His creatures. Lynn Mitchell, elder of the Bering Drive Church of Christ, Houston, Texas, stated in the Freed-Hardeman University Preachers and Church Workers Forum, 1990, "I approach this subject with at least two basic presuppositions which you

should know. The first is that the Bible does not provide enough information and none of us is infallible enough to ascertain with absolute or even reasonable certainty as to the meaning of some of the texts we will be discussing today." In the *Spiritual Sword* (July 1980), brother Thomas Warren wrote of an editor who maintained that one could not be certain of his conclusions in regard to Bible teachings so as to be able to identify the true faithful church of Christ. The word of God was given to enable man to be complete and furnish him completely unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16,17), yet some teach that man cannot know it. The apostle Peter wrote, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). Still, some teach that man cannot know God's Word. What does the Bible say? God declares to us that His word is truth (John 17:17), truth which can be known (John 8:32), obeyed (Rom. 6:17,18), lived (II John 4), and defended (Jude 3). How would this be possible if you cannot know truth. Brethren, it is possible to know something without knowing everything. If it is not possible to know the truth, then men will do that which is right in their own

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More Like Jesus...



Editorial...

A LETTER ABOUT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Paul & Shirley Matthews of Glasgow, KY write... *"First of all, my wife and I are Christian believers, and love the Lord above all else! We try our best to live according to the New Testament, but like so many others, we fall short on occasion. I just have some comments on your mailing that you send monthly. Please remove our name from your mailing list — we do not know who put us on it, but would prefer that we be contacted before being added to any mail list. We belong to an independent Christian church in this area, and we certainly enjoy the musical instruments that accompany all our praise and worship singing. I think you are missing so much — and it comes down to how you interpret the written word! I don't think it actually states anywhere in the bible that we are NOT to use musical instruments. Likewise, it does not state that we are not to build church buildings, or Sunday School rooms, or fellowship halls, yet we do this, and sometimes in magnificent fashion! We also do believe that the Lord's supper should be available to anyone (who has been saved) that requests it, whether a member of a particular church or not! We strive to please and honor the Lord every day, for it is His command that we "love one another." We need to keep God above everything else in our lives. Thank you for your time and understanding."*

ANSWER

In answer to your letter, we have removed you from our mailing list as per your request. However, some of the comments you make in your letter must be answered according to the Scriptures.

You say you love the Lord. I do not question your sincerity in that statement, but according to John 14:15, those who love the Lord are those who keep his commandments. Just saying we love the Lord is not

the proof of genuine love. Obeying the Lord (doing his will, keeping his commandments) is the real proof of loving Him. I once heard a man say that what really counts is to "know" the Lord in a personal, intimate relationship with Him. That caused me to remember I John 2:3 that says, *"And hereby we do KNOW that we KNOW him, if we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS."* I can claim to really know and love the Lord with all my heart and actually feel as though I do, but that does not mean it is so. The evidence or proof of loving Him and knowing Him is KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS.

Righteousness with the Lord is not a "better felt than told" emotion. It is a deep seated devotion to His will and word by doing (obeying) what He tells us to do. Remember, Jesus is the author of salvation to those who OBEY Him (Heb. 5:9). According to Matthew 7:21-23, there will be countless numbers of people who say Lord, Lord (and actually mean it), but who will be turned away from heaven because they did not OBEY the Lord. Obedience to the Lord is not determined by what we feel, enjoy, think or believe. It is determined by keeping His commandments. Faithful Christians are not missing anything by doing what Jesus tells us to do. Men may derive great satisfaction out of doing what they feel is good, but again, that is the wrong standard. Being right with the Lord is not based on feelings and satisfaction. It is rooted in faith and obedience to God's commands. It doesn't matter what we feel or what we think. We're not the ones to be pleased. Our work is to please the Lord. When we please the Lord, then we're pleased because we've done His will.

Where does the Bible actually tell us NOT to use mechanical instruments of music in worship? The answer is, "every single page of the Bible that does NOT authorize

their use." God is not please with those who high-handedly take it upon themselves to act and move ahead without His sanction. Colossians 3:17 makes it plain that whatever we DO or whatever we SAY, we must be able to turn to a passage and show a "thus saith the Lord" concerning it. So, the proper question is, "where is the passage that authorizes mechanical instrumental music to be used in worship in the church?" You can have all the space you need and all the time you want to find just one passage that gives authority for their use. But, I'll tell you now, you won't find it because its not there. The New Testament authorizes *singing* (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), but it does not authorize *playing* (???). It doesn't matter how much people like it or what enjoyment they get from it. To use them is simply ignoring God's will and saying in your heart, I don't care what God tells me to do, I'm going to use them anyway — oh, it sounds so good and feels so right.

Remember what the prophet Samuel told king Saul when he brought back king Agag and all those sheep and oxen to use in worship? In I Samuel 15:22-23 we read, *"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."* These are mighty stern words from the Lord. Saul's refusal to do what he was told to do by the Lord was counted as rebellion against God. His stubbornness in rejecting God's commandment was counted as iniquity (evil) and idolatry. It did not matter what good he intended. His actions were sinful and caused him to be rejected by God.

People today are no different than Saul when they introduce mechanical instruments of music into their worship. There is no excuse for it. It's no trouble at all to do what the Lord commands. We just have to believe what He said and obey what He said.

In regards to accepting everyone who claims to be a believer and par-

taking of the Lord's supper with them, Ephesians 5:11 says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Instead of welcoming

and fellowshiping those who have never obeyed the Gospel, this verse tells us to not fellowship them and also to show them their error. The Lord's supper is for Christians, those

who have obeyed the Gospel. People in denominations are not brethren. Their worship is in error. We cannot accept them.

SOME OF GOD'S ADMONITIONS FOR PREACHERS

Lawrence Williamson

1. Don't tickle people's ears by telling them what they want to hear. Instead, prick (cut) their hearts by telling them what God wants them to hear (Acts 2:37-38; II Tim. 4:2-4). This is the only thing that will save their souls.

2. Don't preach to please men. Instead, strive to please God (Gal. 1:10). This is done by preaching the whole counsel of God — His Word (Acts 20:20,26-27; II Tim. 4:2).

3. Don't worry what men are saying about you or to you. Instead, be concerned what God will say to you in the judgment (James 3:1; Matt. 25:41,47).

4. Don't worry about your reputation. Instead, start becoming "fools for Christ" — one thought of as a spectacle and off-scouring of the world (I Cor. 4:9-13). This is well pleasing unto God.

5. Don't condone sin in congregations. Instead, start condemning sin in both congregations and individuals (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4; Gal. 2:11-14; I Tim. 5:20).

6. Don't love the praises of men more than the praises of God (John 12:42-43). Instead, be willing to be hated, persecuted and to suffer for preaching the truth (John 15:18-20; Matt. 5:10-12; II Tim. 3:10-14).

7. Don't preach only the pleasant things of the Bible. Instead, preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,26-27), which includes the hard sayings as well (John 6:60-66; Matt. 19:9).

8. Don't defend those in sin. Instead, rebuke those in sin (I

Tim. 5:20; Gal. 2:11-14; Rom. 16:17-18).

9. Don't condemn those who are rebuking others that are in sin. Instead, defend those who are rebuking others in sin (Prov. 17:15; Rom. 16:17-18).

10. Don't condone and sanction elders (or the men if there are no elders) that will not watch for souls and will not lead in church discipline. Instead, admonish them to repent and obey the Lord's commands (Heb. 13:17; II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:1-7).

11. Don't be fearful or afraid in your life and preaching (Rev. 21:8). Instead, start being a courageous soldier of Christ (II Tim. 2:3-4; I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7). Loving servants are fighting soldiers!

12. Don't be a hireling and worried about your job. Instead, start laying down your life for the cause of Christ (John 10:12; Acts 15:25-27; Isa. 56:10-11). Remember, you work for God, not for elders, the church or the brethren!

13. Don't be passive in the proclamation and defense of the Gospel. Instead, be aggressive by turning the world outside down (Acts 17:6) in preaching and defending the Gospel (Phil. 1:7,17; Rom. 1:14-16).

14. Don't be spineless cowards. Instead, be willing to be beaten and imprisoned for preaching the truth without compromise, regardless what men shall say or do to you (Acts 4:17,21,29; 5:17-42).

15. Don't forget that Christ was crucified for you. Instead,

start taking up your cross daily and following Him faithfully (Luke 9:23). Be willing to be crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20; 6:14).

16. Don't be like the world. Instead, be like Christ by saying woe to elders, preachers and Christians that are hypocrites and by so doing you will escape the damnation of hell (Matt. 23:13-33; I John 2:15-16).

17. Don't worry about people calling the church a sect that is everywhere spoken against (Acts 28:22). Instead, preach like Paul and proclaim the ONE body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God (Eph. 4:4-6). The way of truth has always been evil spoken of (II Peter 2:2).

18. Don't always preach in generalities. Instead, make specific application to the church (Rev. 2-3) and individuals (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17).

19. Don't strive for numbers. Instead, strive to see that souls are converted, indoctrinated and grounded in the most holy faith (Matt. 7:13-14; Col. 1:23).

20. Don't preach to be seen and heard of men (Matt. 6:1,5). Instead, preach the truth in love and humility while giving glory to God (Eph. 4:15; I Cor. 10:31).

21. Don't be a politician and pat people on the back. Instead, be a Gospel preacher and rebuke sin in people's lives when needed (Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 1:20).

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A NEW, STRANGE, INTRIGUING TEACHING

Roger D. Campbell

When the apostle Paul was working to spread the Gospel in the city of Athens, on a daily basis he reasoned with people in the marketplace (Acts 17:17). Some of the philosophers who heard him took him to a place known as Mars Hill or Areopagus. There they expressed interest in hearing more about what Paul had been teaching.

In the eyes of those ancient Greek philosophers, what kind of doctrine was Paul proclaiming? Hear what they said to Paul: *“May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would [want to] know therefore what these things mean”* (Acts 17:19-20).

Paul was invited to speak to those who considered what he had been saying as new, strange and intriguing. There are a lot of people today who have the same reaction when they hear the truth of God proclaimed, whether it be in public or private. To them, the Gospel message is new, strange, intriguing, or perhaps all three. But, is it really?

Is the Gospel NEW? Some of the Athenians thought it was. Yet, at the time Paul went there to teach the Gospel, it had already been some twenty years since Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended back to the Father. Before His ascension, the Christ charged His apostles to preach the Gospel in all the world (Mark 16:15). That was about twenty years before Paul arrived in Athens. In reality, the Gospel was *not* new at all. Yet, to the people of Athens who had never heard it before, it *was* new.

Consider an example outside of the spiritual realm. I well recall the year, it was 1984. We were living and working in Taiwan at the time, and that is the year that McDonald’s opened its first restaurant on the island. I personally am not a huge Mickey D’s fan, but the coming of this fast food giant was big news in the Republic of China. At that point in time (1984), was McDonald’s a new restaurant chain? To the people of Taiwan who had never heard of or

eaten a Big Mac before, yes, it was new. In reality, however, McDonald’s had already been in existence for decades before it opened its first restaurant in Taiwan.

I have had people say to me something like this: “The church of Christ, huh? I have never heard of it before. It must be a new church.” I then proceed to tell them that, no, the church of the living God has been in existence for nearly 2000 years, and you can read about it in the New Testament (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). On a few occasions, if I have been discussing this question with a person with whom I was more familiar, I have said, “Surely you have heard of the church of Christ. You have a Bible, right? It’s right there in your Bible — your Bible has ‘churches of Christ’ in it” (Rom. 16:16).

“So, you are telling me that baptism is for the remission of sins? I’ve been told that that is a fairly recent teaching that some man named Alexander Campbell came up with a couple of hundred years ago.” No, being baptized for the remission of sins has been Bible doctrine since the first century (Acts 2:38). There are a lot of other biblical matters that people may consider as “new,” simply because they are unfamiliar with them. When people inquire about some teaching or practice being “new,” that is an excellent opportunity for us to open the Bible and show them that such a teaching or practice has been in the Bible all along.

Is the Gospel STRANGE? Some of the folks that heard Paul preach in Athens thought so. They told him, *“For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears”* (Acts 17:20). In many instances we use the word “strange” to refer to matters, customs and habits that are different from that to which we are accustomed. I think back to a later incident which we observed in a McDonald’s in Taiwan (I know I said that I am not a McDonald’s man, but when you have three kids, well, you know who gets their way!). A man sitting at the table next to us was eating a Big Mac. Part of the lettuce had fallen out of his sandwich. So, what did he

do? He grabbed two straws, put them in his hand in the proper position, and used the straws just like he would use chopsticks to pick up and eat the lettuce. Now, some folks may count that as “strange” because that is not the way they are used to doing it, but to him, no doubt, it was as natural as it could be.

Americans find it strange that in foreign countries people drive on the other side of the road. Guess what? More than likely, they think that our system of driving on the right side of the highway is strange. When it comes to humor, well, each culture has its own, and those outside of a particular culture often find it strange when people laugh at certain things that they do not find funny at all. Again, in a lot of instances, we call a thing “strange” when we mean, “That is just not what I am used to.”

We encounter this frequently in modern religious discussions. I remember the first time I ever attended a service of the Lord’s church. I was raised in a Methodist background, so you can understand why I considered some things that I observed were strange, even weird. I mean, all of those people kept calling one another “brother” or “sister.” We never did that where I attended. I thought it was strange. And, the singing was not bad, but where was the piano or organ? Who ever heard of singing “church songs” without a musical instrument? Not only that, they told me they take communion every Sunday. We did it a few times a year where I came from. There is Bible authority or foundation for the three items I just mentioned — calling fellow saints “brother” or “sister” (Gal. 1:2; 3:26), singing without adding a mechanical instrument (Col. 3:16-17), and taking the Lord’s supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). But, because I was not well familiar with the Bible, they seemed strange to me at the time.

God’s wisdom is above man’s wisdom (Isa. 55:8,9). Man sometimes looks at God’s plan or teaching and calls it “foolish” (I Cor. 1:18,27). But, be assured that God’s way is always the wisest, best, most beneficial

teaching and course of action. Thus, while people who are not used to speaking and acting as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11) may call the Gospel's message "strange," you and I know better. In our dealings with others, it is important that we try to learn all that we can about their religious background because this will help us better understand "where they are coming from." We need to set forth plainly what the Bible teaches, but we need to be patient and considerate of those who are struggling to get past their initial reaction to the truth, which might be, "A lot of this is so strange to me."

Is the Gospel INTRIGUING?

Some that heard Paul's preaching were interested in hearing more about "this new doctrine." Of course, the Bible also tells us: "*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing*" (Acts 17:21).

People today may be interested in hearing what the Bible says for a variety of reasons. Some may have a relative that is a Christian, and they just wonder what Christianity is all about. Some are raised in a different religious setting and are just curious to see what differences there might be between what the Bible teaches and what they have been taught. Others take an interest in the Bible because they are hoping that it will say something that supports an idea or practice which they already have and do not want to abandon. There are also those hard core blasphemers that take an interest in the Bible because they want to find something in its pages they think they can somehow use to turn people's minds against it.

Thank God there are also those precious people who sincerely hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6), and they find the Bible more than intriguing; they find it fascinat-

ing, eye-opening, and life-saving.

God draws men to Jesus through the message of the cross (John 12:32-33; 6:44-45). You and I know that such a message is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:18). Intriguing? Absolutely, it is, for those that have an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15). Here is a marvelous message that shows us that Jesus *was* our Creator, *is* our Savior, and *will be* our Future Judge. And, though He does not sit on a material, earthly throne (and never will), still He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). Fascinating!

Just like those whom the apostle Paul encountered in the city of Athens, so today there are a lot of people who find the message of the Gospel new, strange, and maybe even intriguing. Regardless of people's response, let us keep sowing the seed and not grow wearing in so doing.

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More Like Jesus...

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eyes.

Another subject which is generating a lot of attention and much discussion is the work/role of women in the church. Robert Randolph, one of the preachers of the Brookline, Massachusetts church of Christ during the Freed-Hardeman University Preachers and Church Workers Forum, 1990, spoke of the activities of women in the congregation where he preaches. "Eventually women, as we studied these issues, came to take part in all portions of our worship service. Now they lead worship, pray in public, and preach if they have a word to offer the church and the gifts to be effective in offering that word." From what I have read and heard, several congregations are following this course of action, and others are defending the rights of congregations to make this decision, and the right of women to so participate. There are many things that our sisters in Christ can do in the Kingdom of God, but God's word still teaches that in her activity she cannot have dominion over man. "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over man, but to be in quietness"

(I Tim. 2:12). The reason for this is explained in the scriptures (Gen. 3:16; I Tim. 2:13,14).

Several years ago someone asked me what I thought would be the next issue the church would face. My reply was, "instrumental music in worship unto God." Time has proven this to be true. Statements similar to the one made by Larry James, while preaching for the Richardson East Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, are being heard throughout our brotherhood. "And so I would conclude that to praise God from the heart with an instrument of music is not wrong, it is not sinful nor will it result in anyone being lost, and to condemn someone who uses such an approach, I think is a tragic mistake." Consider this statement in light of God's revelation (Rom. 15:9; I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; 13:15; James 5:13). If we are to be like Jesus in teaching and preaching, we must stand against error and present the truth so that men might come to a knowledge of God's will for him. The apostle John warned about false teachers and admonishes Christians to "prove the spirits, whether they are of God" (I John 4:1). The apostle Paul expresses his amazement that the Galatians had departed from the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-

9), and admonishes the Ephesians, "*and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Eph. 5:11). Truth and error can not stand together. May we confront error, and uphold the truth at every opportunity even as Jesus did.

JESUS WAS LOVING

Of the many characteristics of God's son, perhaps the most outstanding is his love for all humanity. John said, "*having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end*" (John 13:1). Jesus loved his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 11:5), and when he wept at Lazarus' grave the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him" (John 11:36). The Lord loved his associates (John 13:23), those who came to him seeking abundant life (Mark 10:21), and wept over those who were lost and would not turn to him (Matt. 23:37). Without a doubt the greatest evidence of Jesus' love for mankind is his death on the cross (John 15:13). Writing to the seven churches of Asia John declared, "*and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed*

us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5). It is through the death of Christ that sinners can become children of God. To be like Jesus we must be loving, and as Paul wrote, we must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Yes, we must act out of love, but the **TRUTH** must be spoken!

GO PREACH THE WORD

If we are to be like Jesus in teaching and preaching, we must be active. As Jesus came into the world to do the will of his Father (John 6:38), he expects us to obey the will of our Father (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). As we strive to be more like Jesus in teaching and preaching, may we so live and teach that the world will take knowledge that we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

MORE LIKE JESUS

I want to be more like Jesus,
And follow him day by day;
I want to be true and faithful,
And every command obey.

I want to be kind and gentle
To those who are in distress;
To comfort the broken hearted
With sweet words of tenderness.

I want to be meek and lowly,
Like Jesus our Friend and King;
I want to be strong and earnest,
And souls to the Savior bring.

More and more like Jesus,
I would ever be;
More and more like Jesus,
My Savior who died for me.

J. W. Stillman

Preaching the Gospel of Christ is the means chosen by God to save the world. He did not choose angels or miracles or the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. He chose human beings to preach the simple message of the cross. Men think it's foolish, but I Corinthians 1:18,21 reads, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” God did not say “foolish preaching” — there's plenty of that and it will not save. God chose preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. — Editor

ADVERSITY EVANGELISM

James E. Rogers

Adversity seems to come to us all. When we try to please God, sometimes, we are taken back when things do not go as we wish. Somehow we convince ourselves that since we are doing right, everything will go as we desire. The Bible shows that even good people suffer (Job) when they are doing right. The challenge is to use that suffering as an opportunity to let others see God.

We hear much about evangelism and much needs to be said. God expects His people to take His message to the world (Mark 16:15). Some have introduced “friend evangelism.” Others talk about “canvass evangelism.” I would like us to think about “adversity evangelism.” What can I do, when faced with adversity, to help others think more about God and the doing of His will? Let us look at some Bible examples of adversity evangelism.

Joseph is an example of adversity evangelism. He was sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:25-36). However, Jehovah was with Joseph (Gen. 39:2,3,21,23) in adversity and Joseph used opportunities to tell people about his God.

Joseph told Mrs. Potiphar about God. When she tried to seduce him, Joseph told her he could not “do this great wickedness and sin against God” (Gen. 39:9).

Joseph told the butler and baker about God. When told about their dreams, which they could not understand, Joseph asked: “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (Gen. 40:8)?

Joseph told Pharaoh about God. When called into Pharaoh's presence to interpret a dream, Joseph answered, “It is not in me: God will give Pharaoh an answer ... what God is about to do he hath declared unto Pharaoh ... what God is about to do he hath showed unto Pharaoh ... the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass” (Gen. 41:16,25,28,32). Pharaoh was so impressed that he said: “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so

discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou” (Gen. 41:38-40).

Joseph told Asenath about God. When she bore his sons, Joseph used names that told about his God. With Manasseh, Joseph said, “God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house” (Gen. 41:51). With Ephraim, Joseph said, “God hath made me fruitful in the land of affliction” (Gen. 41:52).

Joseph told his brothers about God. In his dealings with his brethren, Joseph referred to God (Gen. 42:18; 43:29 45:5-9).

Joseph could have done a lot of things in adversity, but he chose to evangelize. We will have to get to heaven to know how successful Joseph was in his efforts. It is, however, interesting that it was Joseph's steward who told Joseph's brothers that “your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks” (Gen. 43:23).

The **little maiden** is an example of adversity evangelism. She was taken captive by the Syrians and “waited on Naaman's wife” (II Kings 5:1,2). She told Mrs. Naaman about God and this evangelism resulted in Naaman's conversion (II Kings 5:3-19).

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and **Azariah** are examples of adversity evangelism. In Babylon as captives, they told the rulers and others about their God. They told about God when it came to their diet (Daniel 1). They told about God in the matter of dreams (Daniel 2,4). They told about God when they needed deliverance (Daniel 3). They told about God with their dedication (Daniel 6).

Paul and **Silas** are examples of adversity evangelism. Having received “many stripes,” they were delivered to the jailor who was charged to “keep them safely” (Acts 16:23,24). In order to fully discharge his duty, the jailor “...thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners

heard them” (Acts 16:24-25). Such faith and evangelism resulted in their teaching the jailor and his family and the conversion of the same (Acts 16:26-34).

You and I can be examples of adversity evangelism. We can use opportunities in adversity to glorify God (Matt. 5:13-16). People are watching us. How we react to the set-

backs of life may very well open a door of opportunity to teach about God. We meet people in adversity which we probably would not meet otherwise. Let us talk to them about God.

As we take the great commission seriously and as talking about God becomes a part of our nature, we will find that souls are prepared for eter-

nity as a result of our efforts. Adversity has a way of causing us to become self-centered. Let us use it as an avenue of helping others and thereby helping ourselves.

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ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL? NO WAY!

Douglas Hoff

Paul began his lengthy treatise on justification by faith with this bold affirmation: *“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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”* (Rom. 1:16,17). When there is only one way to be forgiven, and thus justified before God, it would be quite foolish to downplay its importance. Each Christian must be committed to upholding and defending this great message from God (Jude 3).

This commitment will bring the righteous in conflict with the ungodly of the world. This can tempt some to compromise their convictions. Whether the pressure to yield comes from persecution (as it did with first century Christians) or simply the desire to fit in with the world (Rom. 12:1,2), followers of Christ need to recall the words of the Master. Jesus warned His disciples, *“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels”* (Luke 9:26).

Some early Christians apparently were tempted to avoid controversy as touching the Gospel. Paul told Timothy, *“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”* (II Tim. 1:8).

What are some ways people show they are ashamed of the Gospel? Perhaps the most obvious is **silence about religious matters**. In some circumstances, silence may indeed be golden but when it comes to God’s Word, silence probably shows one is yellow. That is, he is a chicken, afraid of engaging in a discussion about the Gospel. Recall that Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 10:32,33). Occasionally, however, silence is the wisest course of action. Jesus showed this during His sham “trial” (Mark 14:57-61; 15:3-5).

Why might some members of the church not wish to talk about what ought to be the heart and center of their lives? Perhaps they think by not bringing it up they can still be faithful and avoid upsetting non-Christians. Taking this thinking to the extreme means one would never attempt to teach even one soul, contrary to the command Jesus gave (Matt. 28:18-20). Would this be counted as being faithful to the Lord and His will? Obviously not. The devil knows very well how to shut the mouths of weak members.

Another way people show they are ashamed of the Gospel is in **failing to stand for the truth** (Gal. 2:5). Apparently some do not believe in the uniqueness of the Lord’s church, do not have strong convictions about it or are unwilling to defend it (Phil. 1:7). The Gospel is a very narrow way which obviously excludes many (Matt. 7:13,14; Acts 4:12).

Some disciples feel so uncomfortable with this message that they may compromise the message. However, by so doing, they have denied their Lord and His church. Others show their discomfort with being identified as Christians in not praying at public places (e.g., restaurants). Still others fail to openly carry a Bible lest they are taunted. In an increasingly anti-Christian society, such wishy-washy followers will probably soon fall away (Luke 8:13).

Paul wasn’t ashamed of the Gospel because he knew it was the only way for man to be saved. How about you? Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Hopefully, you will be able to say with confidence, “No way!” Only then will Jesus claim you as one of His (Heb. 2:11; 11:16).

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