



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 24, No. 11

November 2013

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Stephen Wiggins

Luke begins his Gospel account by referring to “those things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Of “those things” believed by God’s people today, one is that churches of Christ believe we must have *biblical authority* for what we do and say in worship (cf. Col. 3:17, i.e., we must have book, chapter and verse). For example, the Bible authorizes the weekly observance of the *Lord’s Supper* along with the *Giving of our financial means* every first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Another example of worship that is biblically authorized is when Scripture directs us in “speaking one to another” by “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Here, the Bible authorizes *congregational singing* within the weekly worship assemblies. How else could the entire church “speak one to another” in song? Another consideration is that the Bible authorizes a *cappella* singing. This means singing without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music such as a piano or guitar. The Bible authorizes the “instrument” to be used when inspiration tells us to make melody with “your heart.” Notice that the music is to come from the inner, spiritual part of an individual and not from a man-made instrument.

The practical application of this Biblical principle is that churches of Christ do not employ mechanical instruments of music in worship. This is a matter of Biblical authority. It is taught in the Scriptures; and, therefore commonly believed among us that

it is sinful to deviate from what God instructs his church to do. We believe worship “must” be “in truth” or it is unacceptable to God (John 4:24). God said to “sing” and “make melody” with the instrument of the “heart” and that is exactly what the faithful in the Lord’s church do.

Many who fail to appreciate this principle of authority will reply that the Bible nowhere explicitly prohibits mechanical instruments in worship. In other words, the Bible never says “you shall not use a piano in worship.” But this line of argumentation misses the significance of *HOW* the Bible authorizes. God does not have to *explicitly* forbid something for it to be wrong. The fact that he does not authorize a particular act is enough. For example, God nowhere specifically condemns Pepsi and Pizza for the Lord’s Supper, but such would be a presumptuous addition to his word and therefore sinful. Why? Because the only elements authorized for Communion is “unleavened bread” and “fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-29). Churches of Christ apply this same reasoning to music in worship. God said to make melody with your heart by “speaking” and “singing” in worship to the Lord. This is what the Bible authorizes. Any kind of music in worship other than “a cappella” is without biblical authority.

Churches of Christ believe God speaks to mankind today throughout the inspired Scriptures. There is no other way in which he relates his will except through this written medium. Therefore, churches of Christ are very

biblically oriented. We believe God offers divine direction by what he revealed and wrote down through his apostles and prophets. God left nothing out of the Bible that we need to believe or obey today in order to become and remain a faithful Christian. All the information one needs pertaining to life and godliness is contained within Scripture (1 Peter 1:3). There are no exceptions. The entirety of God’s revelation has already been revealed. This is what is commonly called the “all sufficiency” of the Scriptures. This concept is based on passages like 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where we learn that the inspired Scriptures are able to render one *complete* in the sight of God.

Consequently, churches of Christ today do not claim to have any inspired apostles or prophets among us. There are no miraculously endowed preachers as there were in the first century church during the time in which God was revealing his truth to mankind.

Divine inspiration in men and miracle working preachers no longer exists among God’s people. Furthermore, we believe that those who make the modern claim to be inspired prophets or miracle workers are *fakes* who are practicing deception. We do not believe they can substantiate their claims by working a genuine miracle like the apostles in the first century did. Our conviction in this regard is based on such passages as 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 where Paul speaks of the time when miraculous activity would

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Biblical Authority...



Editorial...

DESPISE YE THE CHURCH OF GOD?

Garland M. Robinson

Despite the belief of many, the church is not outdated. It never has been nor ever will be. The church of Christ is the beautiful bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2; Eph. 5:22-32). It is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). The Lord's church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Our beloved Savior, Jesus the Christ, is the owner and head of the church (Matt. 16:18-19). The church of Christ was purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). It is the eternal kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18-19; cf. Eph. 3:10-11).

It is through the church of Christ that God has chosen to make known his manifold (multiplied) wisdom (Eph. 3:10). What a blessing it is to be a member of God's eternal kingdom, the church. Countless numbers of people have enjoyed the blessings of being "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). That same number know what it is to be made free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Those under the altar "cried out with a loud voice, saying, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" (Rev. 6:10).

These are but a few verses that could be cited to point toward the church of our Lord. However, there are those in every generation who care little to nothing about the body of Christ. It was no different in the first century. There were those who refused to listen to the Gospel, thinking it was foolishness to speak of the resurrection of one from the dead (Acts 17:32). John 12:42-43 records that "among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess [him], lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." There were even many of the Lord's disciples who "went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66).

Our purpose and goal is to not be

among the number who reject Jesus the Christ, the Lord and Savior. We must not cause hurt and trouble in the body of Christ. However, in **I Corinthians 11:22**, we read about how even brethren can do so. The church at Corinth was struggling with a number of problems, one of which was their abuse of the Lord's supper by turning it into a common meal and not allowing the participation of all the brethren. As a result, we read verse 22, "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or *despise ye the church of God*, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise [you] not."

What a terrible thing of which to be guilty — **despising the church of God** (1 Cor. 1:2; the church of Christ, Rom. 16:16)! The Greek word translated "despise" (*kataphroneo*) appears nine times in the New Testament. Thayer says it means "to contempt, despise, disdain, think little or nothing of" (p.338). Vine says, "to think down upon or against anyone, hence, signifies to think slightly of" (p.301). Strong's says, "to think against, disesteem."

Jesus used the word in **Matthew 6:24** when he said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and *despise* the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." A parallel account of this verse is found in **Luke 16:13**.

It is used in **Matthew 18:10** where Jesus said, "Take heed that ye *despise* not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." The "little ones" no doubt refers to anyone who has become a child of God. We must never look down upon an individual who is obedient to "the faith." Through the ages, racism has been a problem in some areas. This should never be! Peter revealed to Cornelius

that "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

In **Romans 2:4** we read, "Or *despise*st thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" In 2 Peter 3:15 we are to "account that the *longsuffering of our Lord is salvation....*" Every day that God delays his coming in judgment is another day that the ungodly have to repent and obey the Gospel. We surely must not despise God's goodness.

First Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no man *despise* thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." I have been so treated in times past and personally know of others that have as well. Truth is truth, whether it comes from the mouth of babes or from a wise old soldier of the cross. Some try to belittle any statement from the young saying "they are not old enough" or "you will learn better when you get older." The false teachers and ungodly members of the church do this when they are confronted with the truth. They always try to find some way to circumvent "the right way."

First Timothy 6:2, "And they that have believing masters, let them not *despise* [them], because they are brethren; but rather do [them] service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort." Servants (slaves) were commanded to not despise their masters because they are fellow servants (slaves) of God.

Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, *despising* the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The world counts many things as shameful, but to the child of God, we are happy to endure suffering and ridicule for the cause of Christ. We feel sorry for the worldly who don't know the truth in Christ Jesus. We must be more concerned about what the Lord thinks than what the world thinks.

Second Peter 2:10, "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and *despise* gov-

ernment. Presumptuous [are they], selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” Christians are commanded to respect government and authority, not look down on it. *“The powers that be are ordained of God”* (Rom. 13:1). The law enforcement agencies are for our protection. *“He is a minister of God to thee for good...a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”* (Rom. 13:4). We must never despise authority or those in authority.

Let’s think of some who “despised” the church in the first century.

Demas left the church *“having loved this present world”* (2 Tim. 4:10). All today who forsake the Lord’s church likewise despise, hold in low esteem, the precious body of Christ. *“...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”* (2 Peter 2:21).

There were those such as **Hymenaeus** and **Alexander** who blasphemed the precious name wherein they were called (1 Tim. 1:20). There were others who taught false doctrine (just like many today) such as **Hymenaeus** and **Philetus**: *“who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already...”* (2 Tim. 2:17-18). We must not forget **Diotrephes** who was represented as being resentful of inspiration’s authority and as *“loving to have the preeminence”* (3 John 9-10). There are many who think of themselves as “somewhat” (Gal. 2:6). The good book condemns those who think they are above others (Rom. 2:11).

There were scores of others who cared little or nothing about the church of our Lord. There was the **man who had his father’s wife** (1 Cor. 5). Fortunately, after being disciplined, he repented and was restored to fellowship (2 Cor. 2). There was **Simon** who tried to buy the power of laying on of hands to impart spiritual gifts (Acts. 8:18-19). Even the apostle **Peter** at one time sinned in refusing to eat (fellowship) with the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14). **Ananias and Sapphira** despised the church when they lied about their giving in Acts 5:1-11.

All of the above were members of the church. Opposition from without

is understandable, but from within, it is reprehensible and intolerable! We are never to despise that which God has given. When we do, we stand against Him. We bring reproach upon

the church and count as nothing that holy calling wherein we were called (2 Tim. 1:9). Woe unto the individual that despises the church of God!

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

I never cease to be amazed how easily, and under what circumstances, depression sets in upon the child of God. Elijah experienced depression shortly after his victory over the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). One would think that following such a wonderful “high” he would have been able to dwell on the mountain for the foreseeable future. But such was not the case.

Once upon a time there was a man who felt he’d reached the end of his rope. It seemed that all interest had vanished from his life. His old friend, the family doctor, saw his depression and said, “Alright, you must do exactly as I tell you. I want you to find a lonely stretch of beach and spend all day at the shore. Take nothing to read. I’m going to give you four prescriptions. Take the first one at nine, the second one at twelve, the third at three, and the last at six. Don’t look at them now. Wait until you arrive at the shore.” Arriving a little before nine, he parked his car on a lonely stretch of beach, walked to a sand dune and sat down. He opened prescription number one and read it. It said, “Listen.” And so for three hours that’s all he did. He listened to the song of the buffeting wind and the lonely cries of the gulls. At noon he read the second prescription. It said, “Reach back.” And so for the next three hours he let his mind go back as far as it could, and thought of all the incidents of his life — the happy times, good times, struggles, and successes. At three o’clock he tore open the third prescription. It read, “Re-examine your motives.” He thought through his reasons for living, clarifying and stating his goals. Finally, at six o’clock, under a grey, darkening sky and with a taste of salt in the wind, he read the fourth and final prescription. It read, “Write your worries in the sand.” And so he did. Within a short period of time he watched as those worries were washed away by the tide. The young man turned homeward with a renewed attitude.

I wonder how often we allow the circumstances around us to chip away at our faith and lead us down the path into depression. If you are suffering from depression, may I make a couple of suggestions? Unplug your TV for 30 days. Dwell on things that are good, things that are of good report, and things that will restore your confidence in God and His providential watch care over us. Focus on that wonderful promise in Hebrews 13:5: *“[Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* There are no less than four keys contained within that passage for defeating depression. First, “Be free from the love of money.” Mammon is not your master; Christ is! Second, be content with such things as ye have. The mad race for things has destroyed the faith of many a man and plunged him into despair and destruction. Third, remember that God will not fail thee. This speaks of our Father’s power and ability to care for us. Finally, remember that God will not forsake you. This speaks of His will to care for you.

If you are depressed, discouraged, disappointed, or simply down and out, take some time to mediate on the word of God. Therein lies the power for overcoming depression.

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Elder's COLUMN

RESTORATION IS POSSIBLE

Victor M. Eskew

By inspiration, the apostle Paul prophesied that the church (as it was in the first century) would fall away from the truth. To the elders of Ephesus, he spoke these words: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). This same church was again warned of a falling away in Paul’s first letter to Timothy. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). The church in Thessalonica had also been warned of a great falling away. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

A study of church history reveals that the departure did come. The writings of the “church fathers” in the second and third centuries reveal some strange teachings that began to surface within the body of Christ. Many of the things did not reflect the teachings of the New Testament at all. The culmination of the apostasy was the formation of the **Roman Catholic Church**. This church was both a religious group and a political establishment. The Catholic Church established itself both by teaching and by force throughout the world.

After some 1,100 years of tyranny and oppression in the religious world, men began to see that the Catholic Church and the New Testament did not harmonize. At first, there was a call for *reformation*. Eventually, it was seen that a *restoration* was needed. Many desired to restore the church of the Bible to its original condition. It was

believed that if the New Testament were closely followed, the church of the first century could be reproduced.

There are some who are skeptical about restoration. They are not certain that the restoration of the early church is really possible. We want to show that restoration of the first century church is possible today. Our study is going to take us back into the Old Testament. We will examine something that happened during the reign of one of the kings of Judah, King Josiah.

The days of the kings were not the glory days of Israel. The northern kingdom had no righteous kings to reign over them. The southern kingdom only had a handful of kings that served God. Most of the time, the Law of Moses was set aside and the worship of false gods was promoted. The temple in Jerusalem stood, but it was in need of major repairs. Worship was perverted. The sacrifices were perverted. The Feast Days were ignored. The priesthood was corrupted. There was hardly any part of the Law of Moses that was carried out during the times of apostasy.

When Josiah took his position as king at the age of eight years old (2 Kings 22:1), he gave orders for repairs to be made to the temple (2 Kings 22:4-6). During this time, Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law in the house of God (2 Kings 22:8). It had been some fifty-seven years since a righteous king had reigned in Israel. The practice of the Law of Moses had been completely set aside. If God’s law was going to be followed, there would have to be a restoration in Judah.

Hilkiah gave the book of the law to Shaphan the scribe. He, in turn, took it, and read it unto king Josiah. “And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king’s, saying, Go ye,

inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us” (2 Kings 22:11-13).

In these words to his advisors, Josiah sets forth the simple principles of restoration: HEED and DO the words of the book of the law. In chapter 23 of II Kings, the restoration process is carried out. All that was corrupt and vile and sinful was destroyed. The evil was replaced with the things found in the law of God. Josiah’s efforts at restoration are concluded with these words: “...that he might perform the word of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord” (2 Kings 22:24b). Josiah performed the word of the law. When this happens, restoration takes place.

Is restoration in any generation possible? Yes. The reign of King Josiah in Judah is proof that it can be done. Had Moses been resurrected from the grave in the days of Josiah, he would have recognized, appreciated, and commended the efforts of this righteous king. He would have been proud that the temple was restored, the priesthood was reestablished, the Passover was implemented, and all the elements of the law were being practiced. Moses would have told Josiah: “You have truly restored the law!”

In the late 1,700s and early 1,800s, a restoration movement began to arise in the religious world. The men who headed this movement knew that the Law of Christ had been set aside for many many years. Men had given ear to the Pope of Rome and to the creed books of denominations. These men, like Josiah, understood the need to go back to the original document, the Law of God, the Bible. One of their cries was: “Back to the Bible!” Another motto was: “Where the Bible speaks, we will

“speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” They were convinced that if they *heard* and *obeyed* the words of the New Testament, the original church of the first century would be restored. They, like Josiah, labored diligently to do this. Thankfully, the church found in the pages of God’s Word can be easily found today. That church, dear reader, is the **church of Christ**.

Let us close this article with two verses from God’s Word. One is from the Old Testament. The other is from the New Testament. Both of these verses set forth the concepts needed for restoration. *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”* (Isa. 8:20). And again: *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Peter 4:11).

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In memory of Jim Coffey.....	\$20
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Tiftonia C/C, Chattanooga, TN.....	\$100
Berea C/C, Rives, TN.....	\$100
Jackson St. C/C, Alexandria, LA.....	\$100
Beginning Balance.....	\$9,011.97
Contributions.....	\$2,373.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$ 1,878.02
Supplies.....	\$460.83
Ending Balance.....	\$9,046.12

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH ATTENDER ARE YOU?

Jerry Joseph

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25).

There are some in the church who believe it is not important to attend worship services. For them, attending church services are good if there is not anything else to do or someplace else to visit or some other activity to engage in. With some, as long as they show up occasionally or especially on Sunday morning, that is all that really counts.

Let us realize that even when we attend as we should, we must do so with the right purpose, motive and attitude. You see, if our motive and attitude are not right, then it matters not how many worship services we may attend.

It is evident that our attitude toward God, His Word and Worship itself will determine the kind of “attender” we’ll be. What kind of attender are you? Are you a...

1) **Special occasion attender?** Some believe that whenever there is a special occasion, a holiday, etc., that’s the time to be in attendance. To them, other regular times for worship services are not important.

2) **Seasonal attender?** This attitude toward attendance is that it depends on the season of the year. If it is “camping season”, “deer-hunting season”, “baseball season”, “football season”, etc., then being in attendance for the services is not as important. These so-called “seasons” should never hinder us from being faithful to the Lord, including the attendance of the services.

3) **Spasmodic attender?** Some come for a while, then miss for a while. With them, this becomes a way of life. You can never rely or depend upon them to take an active part in the work of the church.

4) **Suit-your-self attender?** These attend only when it “suits them” and it does not interfere with doing something else they want to do. To them, attending the services is not a spiritual priority.

5) **Sunday morning only attender?** These do not see the need for Sunday night or Wednesday night services; and, most of the time, Sunday morning Bible class either. They think like the old Brylcream commercial, “a little dab will do you.” They are the ones who are always asking, “How many services do I have to attend?” Their attitude of mind is “how little can I do and get by with it?”

6) **Seeking-a-companion attender?** These only attend services seeking someone they can date and perhaps eventually marry. So, when they visit a congregation and no one is available, then they will move on to another congregation. They are not seeking the Truth and the Lord, neither are they looking for a place where they can worship scripturally and be blessed spiritually, but they’re just looking for a companion. That is their only motive for attending services.

7) **Sleeping attender?** These use the worship services as a time to catch up on their sleep that they didn’t get the night before. They did not use that time to prepare themselves to worship God acceptably on Sunday morning. To them, worship services are not valuable and vital to their spiritual well-being.

8) **Sorehead attender?** These enter the church building “mad” and “upset” and are just waiting for someone to say or do something they can attack and then they are ready to give them “a piece of their mind.” They don’t want to participate in worship nor anything else that might help them spiritually. They are in the “kick-a-tive mood.” They feel compelled to try to stir-up trouble.

Do you see yourself among any of these groups? If so, change your attitude and action, “Repent!” Yes, it is sinful to willfully forsake the services of the church (Heb. 10:24-25); and, it is sinful to not have the proper motive and attitude (John 4:24).

When our actions and attitudes toward church attendance are not right, we demonstrate a lack of love for God, for the Word of God, for the church, for ourselves and others (John 14:15; Heb. 10:24-26; Col. 3:1-3; Rev. 22:14; 2 Peter 3:18).

Let us develop an attitude of mind as David, when he said, *“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord”* (Psa. 122:1).

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PAUL'S PREACHING IN THESSALONICA

Roger D. Campbell

Probably a little less than twenty years after the Lord established His church on Pentecost, the apostle Paul, accompanied by other disciples, went to the European city of Thessalonica and preached the Gospel. The history of their work there is recorded in the early portion of Acts 17. Hear the message of the first six verses: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

Let's notice some aspects of Paul's preaching in Thessalonica.

1) *Paul's message was "out of the scriptures"* (Acts 17:3). That is exactly what must be demanded in every sermon today. We should not have it any other way! What is it that God wants an evangelist to do? "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2) and "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). You can attend some gatherings nowadays and hear a lot of stories and nonsense, but not much Bible. We must always demand book, chapter, and verse preaching. Folks may look at us as the old out-of-touch, conservative country church, but preaching the Scriptures is always in fashion with Jehovah, whether we are in the farmland or in a heavily populated city.

2) *Paul preached Jesus as the Christ* (Acts 17:3). Biblically speaking, to preach the Christ is the same as

preaching the Gospel (Acts 8:4,5,14,25,35). Preaching the Christ means preaching what the Bible says about Him, but it also includes preaching the message that comes from Him about what one must do in order to become and remain a saved person. When you read the Book of Acts, you never find the apostles preaching themselves. Here was Paul's outlook: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5).

3) *Some who heard Paul's preaching believed, while others did not believe* (Acts 17:4,5). Seldom is it the case that all of those in a particular crowd that hear the word obey it. "The rule" for people's response to Gospel preaching is summarized in Acts 28:24: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Yes, we are well aware that not all hearers become obedient believers. Jesus' parable of the sower reminds us of this fact (Luke 8:4-15). Let us remember, however, that we never know in advance which hearers will receive the word of the Lord and which ones will not receive the word of the Lord. Let us work diligently to get folks to hear "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). It will then be up to them to become doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22). Let us not be guilty of prejudging people's responses.

4) *Paul's preaching caused an uproar* (Acts 17:5). This certainly does not mean he was in any way guilty of wrongdoing. In fact, the Bible indicates that the uproar came about because of the impure motive (called "envy") of some of the unbelieving Jews. Brethren, the preaching of the truth, combined with clear words that show the contrast between light and darkness, gets people fired up! It happened when Jesus taught, when the first century disciples taught, and it happens today. The truth pricked the hearts of the Jews assembled on the Day of Pentecost and led to the obedience of about 3,000 souls that day (Acts 2:36-41). However, when Stephen later preached the truth to his brethren according to the flesh,

"they were cut to the heart" and killed him (Acts 7:51-60). Let us never apologize for the soul-saving truth, even when people become angry at the message, the messenger, or the Almighty source of the message.

Consider these points about preaching the Gospel causing an uproar: Preaching *one God* stirs the idolater and atheist. Preaching *divine creation* stirs the evolutionists. Preaching *immortality* stirs the materialists. Preaching the *authority of Scriptures* stirs the modernist. Preaching *one church* stirs the denominationalists. Preaching on *love* stirs those who hate. Preaching the *headship of the Christ* stirs the Catholic. Preaching on *liquor* stirs the drunkard/social drinker. Preaching on *modesty* stirs the immodest. Preaching on *work* stirs the lazy. Preaching on *attendance* stirs the neglectful. Preaching on *proper speech* stirs the gossiper. Preaching on *faithfulness* stirs the unfaithful. Preaching on *dedication* stirs the uncommitted. Preaching on *giving* stirs the covetous. Preaching on *honesty* stirs the hypocrite. Preaching on *morality* stirs the immoral. [borrowed from "Banner of Truth" 5/11/2003]

5) *By preaching God's truth, Paul and his fellow-laborers were accused of turning the world upside down* (Acts 17:6). The exact accusation was, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." There is no doubt about it, preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) can cause division and bring about changes in people's lives which others adamantly oppose. Our intent in teaching the truth is not to cause division, turmoil, or heartache. Yet, sometimes that is the consequence of Gospel preaching. Remember, Paul's charge was to preach the Gospel was for a purpose: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). People sometimes react with animosity when they see others enter the light of God's Son.

There is, brethren, a good sense in which we need to be turning the world upside down. We need to be so zealous in trying to teach the Gospel to the lost that the community knows about us! We need to be so uncompromising with immorality that the world knows us! We need to be so strong in preaching repentance that the darkness-loving rebels of society know us! We need to be so staunch in our opposition to man-made religion that the denominationalists know us! We are not out to make a name for ourselves, but when we teach the truth without fear or apology, we will be noticed. Let us

be busy “turning the world upside down.”

6) *Paul preached Jesus as King* (Acts 17:7). The unbelievers of Thessalonica declared that Paul and those with him were saying “that there is another king, one Jesus.” Because Jesus is King, He has a *kingdom*, which is His church (Col. 1:13,14). Because Jesus is King, He has a *law* for people to follow, which is His teaching or doctrine (2 John 9). When one truly preaches the Christ, then his preaching includes God’s message about the kingdom of the Christ. When Philip preached in Samaria, he

preached the Christ (8:5), and that included preaching His kingdom (8:12).

The apostle Paul’s part of preaching the Gospel in Thessalonica was a success. Why? Because he did his part. He could not control the response of those that heard the Gospel, but he did what the Lord expected of him. Can the Lord count on us to do the same? Let’s pray for the spread of the Gospel. Let’s invite others to attend church services. Let’s all support the preaching of the truth.

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BE AS I AM

John D. Cotham

The apostle Paul introduced the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles of the Roman province of Galatia, and as a result, there were churches established throughout the region. They had their ups and downs (Gal. 1:7), but part of Paul’s instruction was to encourage them. In Galatians 4:12 he exhorted, “*Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am.*” Was this the statement of an arrogant person? NO! It wasn’t arrogance. Was it right for Paul to make such a statement? YES! It had everything to do with that which was right. Can you and I rightfully make such a statement to others today? YES! You and I can make such a statement IF we mean what Paul meant, and IF we are the example that Paul was.

Paul was simply pointing out that “example” is a powerful way to teach and persuade others. Paul also used this lesson in another incidence. To the Corinthians he said, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). Here, he clarifies the statement with “*even as I also am of Christ.*” The pattern of example (Christ) makes the difference.

Certainly none of us should be so arrogant as to try to influence anyone to follow our human ways. To the Philippians Paul noted, “*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*” (Phil. 3:17). The word “mark” means to observe or look to. He is showing that not only an apostle, but anyone who followed the same pat-

tern he followed would also be an example of Christian living.

Paul admonished the preacher Timothy to be an example, “*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (1 Tim. 4:12). Elders, as well as every Christian, are also to be good examples. Therefore it is not wrong nor arrogant for one to say “Follow me, as I follow Christ.”

In many cases such an admonition is understood: “*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost*” (1 Thess. 1:6). It is implied that the Christians at Thessalonica began to watch and follow the example of Paul and those workers traveling with him. Paul puts forth Christ as the prime example when he says “and of the Lord.” Peter also held Christ up as the ultimate example, “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*” (1 Peter 2:21).

God would have us understand that we must be “living examples.” We must practice what we preach. We cannot say that we belong to Christ and live as if we belong to the Devil. When one becomes a Christian, he is saying to God that he is willing to live in a glass house. We should understand that the eyes of the world will be upon us.

Christians must desire that others will become as they are, lovers of God

and followers of His will. This was Paul’s wish for King Agrippa, “*Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds*” (Acts 26:29). Notice that Paul would not wish his chains upon anyone, but he would hope that all could be saved in Christ as he was. We should hope for the same.

First, we should be as confident in our salvation as Paul was. Second, we should have the same love for the souls of others as Paul did. In order to do so, we must live the life of Christ.

Brethren, let us live the proper example and then let us encourage others to “be as we are.”

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Biblical Authority...

(Continued from page 81)

cease. The cessation of this miraculous phenomenon would happen “*when that which is perfect is come.*” The “perfect” or complete in this passage refers to the completed revelation of God’s word. When God revealed the entirety of his revelation, all miracles would cease. This took place sometime by the end of the first century. With the entirety of God’s will revealed and committed to written form, there is no longer any need for miraculous inspiration to be in men.

Therefore, if any religious practice is without biblical authority, such as the use of mechanical instruments of music, their employment in worship is sinful.

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to find a sound congregation. Too many of them let anything go on, like marriage and divorce, wearing shorts, missing services, teaching out of every kind of version and the list goes on and on. This is a gradual thing that has happened over the last 60 yrs and it will get worse. I think our elders in most congregations are responsible for most of the things that happen. To many unqualified elders. To many ear tickling preachers. I also think youth ministers have done some damage. It should be older men and women in a congregation to teach the youth. I was raised in the 30s and 40s, so you can say I can know about the changes. I pray you will keep up the good work. Thanks" ...**James R. Smith, Hornbeak, TN.** "I'm enclosing a check to be used in the printing of the paper. I have been receiving it for a number of years and look forward to each issue. Best wishes as you continue to print the wonderful paper. Thanks" ...**Name withheld by request, Oxford, MS.** "I continue to enjoy reading STOP after many years" ...**Wayne Lankford, Murfreesboro, TN.** "We have moved back to Oklahoma where we were raised up from childhood and would like to request you to please keep sending *Seek The Old Paths*. We enjoy so much reading it. God bless you all" ...**Howard & Lillie Jackson, Marlow, OK.** "Refused. Return to sender" ...**William Bryant Seamons, Cookeville, TN.** "I would like to receive the *Seek The Old Paths* new each month. I am a member of the church of Christ. Do I need to send any money for this?" ...**Josie Williams, Oak Park, IL.** [NOTE: The paper is free. It is supported by the free-will contributions of congregations and individuals.] "Please remove Cleatus Pollard from your mailing list. He is no longer living. Thank you" ...**Idabel, OK.**

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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