

# 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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## "If You Need To Come, Do So Now"

*Ed Casteel*

Once there was a time when all gospel sermons were brought to a close basically the same way. After the lesson was presented the lost and the wayward were invited to obey the gospel as the plan of salvation was well defined and clearly outlined. Such was accomplished as the preacher would give the plan and quote the book, chapter and verse to establish the action. I am afraid in many congregations today, and even in many so called "gospel meetings" today that the simple plan of redemption is never or seldom ever explained to the audience. Many a sermon is being brought to a close and the preacher is heard to say, "if you need to come, do so now." Those in the audience are never told what to do to come to the Lord.

Is extending the invitation by giving the steps of salvation no longer necessary or needful? Do all the lost in our assemblies know God's saving plan to the degree that to outline it at the end of the sermon is only redundant? How can a gospel preacher hold a gospel meeting and never give the gospel plan of salvation?

During the past, when we would outline God's plan of redemption, the church was growing and was numbered

among the fastest growing religious bodies in the world. Do you suppose that the powerful preaching of God's Word, followed by the extending of the invitation and telling men and women what they needed to do, had any bearing on this condition? Do you also suppose the weak, watered down, people pleasing, ear tickling, non-committal sermon, without the plan of salvation has anything to do with our lack of growth today? When I hear a preacher end his lesson and say to the audience, "if you have a need, come now," I want to say, "tell them how!" It is clear and evident that not everybody knows how to obey the gospel.

Peter preached a great and powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost. The people were "pricked in their hearts," and before Peter could finish they were asking, "men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37)? Peter has already preached the need for faith, "therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). The expression, "know assuredly" is the same as calling them to believe the evidence that Peter had given to establish the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was

the Messiah and therefore the Son of God. This was another way of telling them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (H. Leo Boles, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 44).

Today, we need to tell people they need to believe in God (Heb. 11:6), as well as Christ being his only begotten Son (John 3:16). Jesus said, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). We need to extend the invitation by pointing men to faith so that our children and visitors can learn its importance, as well as what our faith ought to be in.

*"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). With the sin that fills the hearts and lives of people, they need to be told that if they are going to come to Jesus, repentance is demanded of them by God for not all the people know that. Repentance requires one leaving the path of sin because he has become truly sorry for his former conduct. Remember, "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow*

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**IF YOU NEED TO COME...**



Editorial...

## REPENTANCE

Garland M. Robinson

Of all the commands of the Bible, repentance is the most difficult to obey. One may find it difficult to convince people to believe the gospel, yet many believe without ever repenting. One may even hear a person's confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and still see that same individual refuse to repent. It would not be hard at all to get an alien sinner to be baptized if he would truly repent. From beginning to end, repentance is demanded in God's plan for man.

The greatest obstacle to one's salvation is the stubbornness of the human will. J. W. McGarvey once said, "I have often, in my preaching experience, studied and prayed and reflected and read, to find some way by which I could have more power in inducing people to repent. I would rather have that power than all the other powers and gifts that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher." It is frustrating to preach your heart out and stand to watch people reject the invitation of the Lord. People may have a thought to submit to God but it soon fades away with the passing of each movement of the clock.

Preachers need not feel rejected. God told Samuel, "*they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me*" (I Sam. 8:7). God made each of us with the right to choose our own way but in so doing he also warned: "*I know, that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23).

The people of Noah's day refused to repent and were all destroyed in the flood (II Peter 2:5). The cities of Sodom, Gomor-

rah, Admah and Zeboim perished in fire and brimstone because of their impenitence (Gen. 19). Thousands of the Israelites died in the wilderness refusing to repent. The problem of every generation has been the same.

Jesus experienced the same difficulty. He upbraided (rebuked) the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida — the very cities "*wherein most of his mighty works were done.*" It was not because they did not believe, not because they refused to be baptized of John but because they did not repent (Matt. 11:20)! Of all the Lord taught and did in an effort to bring people to repentance, most refused — they failed to respond! Not because he lacked the power or knowledge or means to bring about their repentance by divine means, but because he refused to interfere with their own stubborn will. Whatever God may do in this world he will not violate one's freedom of choice.

### WHAT REPENTANCE IS

What is repentance? Some answer it is *godly sorrow for sin*. Granted, there is no repentance without sorrow for sin but it is not the same as repentance. Godly sorrow worketh repentance (II Cor. 7:10). Repentance is the result of godly sorrow, not sorrow itself. There needs to be more remorse over sin. Surely it cannot be that man can sorrow for his sin too deeply.

Some answer that repentance is a *reformation of life*. This is still incorrect. A reformation of life is the result of repentance, it is the fruit of it and not repentance itself. John the baptizer

commanded the Pharisees and Sadducees to "*bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*" (Matt. 3:8). Repentance precedes a reformation of life.

If repentance is neither sorrow over sin nor an amended life, then it must be something that stands in between the two. It very plainly then must be a *change of the stubborn will or mind* which is the very seat of all sin. We must change our heart, "*for out of the abundance of the heart*" proceed evil things (Matt. 12:34-35). A man must realize his utter inability to save himself in regard to sin. This will lead him to change his will and submit it to the Father of Mercies.

### WHAT PROMPTS REPENTANCE?

What is it that will bring about a change in a person's will? Some have supposed that God acts upon a person's heart directly to bring about this change (so preach the denominations and even now some in the Lord's church!). If this is so, why doesn't God do it for everyone? Acts 10:34-35 gives the answer: "*God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" God's eternal decree determines that those who do his will will be saved (Matt. 7:21). If God does not work directly upon one's heart, how then does he do it? How are men brought to repentance? What brings one to say, "not my will, but thine be done?"

There are numerous incentives found in the scriptures to induce men to repent. One of the primary motives is the **fear of the judgment and eternal damnation**. What was it that brought the entire city of Nineveh to sit in "*sackcloth and ashes*" in total repentance? It was the preaching of Jonah, saying, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*" (Jonah 3:4). When

Paul preached to those on Mars Hill in Athens and commanded them to repent, his appeal was: *“because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31).

Our Lord appealed to the terrors of the judgment in preaching to those in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. *“If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you”* (Matt. 11:21-22).

Friend, stop and contemplate the eternal consequences of your sinful life. Think of the consequences right now while you are yet alive. *“The way of the transgressors is hard”* (Prov. 13:15). Think of the awful fear of death that awaits you. There’s no savior to take you by the hand and lead you safely through the valley of the shadow of death. It was for these very reasons that Paul said, *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men”* (II Cor. 5:11).

Be persuaded to break your stubborn will and yield unto the Lord. Do not close the book, do not walk away, do not say as did governor Felix when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance (self control) and judgment to come, *“Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee”* (Acts 24:25). Do not be as King Agrippa when he said to Paul, *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”* (Acts 26:28). Obey while there is still time!

**Eternal reward in heaven** is a motivation that brings men to repent of their sins. The forgiveness of sins was preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost in

Acts two. The apostle John speaks of heaven to give us delight and courage through our struggle in life (Rev. 20-22). In heaven there will be no tears, sorrow, crying, pain or death. We will be eternally with that One who sits upon the throne. He will make all things new and the gates of that city shall not be shut at all by day or night. Only they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life will be there, the righteous of the ages. In heaven will be a pure river of

water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. There will be no night there for God giveth the light. *“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city”* (Rev. 14:13).

Truly, heaven is an incentive for men to repent of sins. How about you? Will you repent? God commands it of all men. It is a universal commandment! The choice is yours, heaven or hell!!

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## IF YOU NEED TO COME...

*(Continued from page 1)*

*of the world worketh death”* (II Cor. 7:10).

Contrary to the thinking of some, we cannot continue in sin and be saved at the same time. If we just say at the close of our lesson, “if you have a need, come,” one living in adultery may come but has not thought of forsaking that adulterous union, while repentance would demand such an action. Another may come who is a homosexual but having no knowledge of his need to repent of his sins before he can obey the gospel. People need to know what repentance demands and it is the duty of the gospel preacher to be sure those of his audience are well aware of their individual responsibility.

Also, Peter charged his listening audience to be baptized for the remission of sins. If people are not told of their need to be baptized why would they desire it? The nobleman of Ethiopia must have learned of his need to be baptized from Philip, for he said, *“see, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized”* (Acts 8:36). It was his desire but Philip must have taught him the importance and necessity of such an action.

Brethren, is there one good reason why we should not extend the invitation by giving the plan of salvation? Brother James Boyd at the 1993 **“Seek the Old Paths Lectureship,”** observed a lady asked him why he always gave the plan of salvation, even on Wednesday night. Such being the case, it sounds like he was doing what was required to remind people of their need and how to fulfill that need of salvation.

Can you think of one good reason why we should not extend the invitation by giving the gospel plan of salvation? I cannot think of a single reason; but, I can think of many as to why we should. Our children need to learn God’s plan of salvation, and repetition is one of the best ways of teaching. Our visitors, who are not regular attenders of our services, need to learn the gospel plan of salvation. The alien who attends on a regular basis but has never obeyed the Lord needs to be reminded of his need to obey the gospel and he needs to be encouraged to do so.

Let us not allow people to leave our services without the answer to the greatest question in all the world, *“what must I do to be saved?”* I am afraid many today are leaving gospel meetings and many worship services without this question ever being answered. How tragic.

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# CONVICTION OR CONVENIENCE

Ken Burleson

***To be pleasing to God we must act out of conviction not convenience. It may be convenient to go to a congregation of the church of Christ that does not follow the teachings of the New Testament. But, it takes convictions to drive past such in order to worship and follow God correctly.***

**C**onvenience: suitability, personal comfort, suited to one's personal ease or comfort or to one's easy performance of some act or function.

**Conviction:** a strong persuasion or belief. We might say a strong stand for what one believes, whether or not easy.

All acceptable servants of God have in all ages had conviction; they did not do merely what was convenient.

## OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

It was not convenient for Noah to build an ark. Noah built the ark out of conviction. He believed God, so "by faith" he built the ark. *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch"* (Gen. 6:14). Noah moved with fear. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Heb. 11:7).

Cain was a farmer. Therefore, it was convenient for him to offer of his crops.

Abel's sacrifice was by conviction. He had a strong belief. His strong faith led him to offer that which God had commanded. *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh"* (Heb. 11:4). Strong conviction won't allow variations.

Adam and Eve acted out of convenience. *"But of the tree of*

*the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:17). God clearly commanded them not to eat in Genesis 2:17. But, according to Genesis 3:1-6, they ate. A deep conviction would have prevented sin. It was convenient for them to eat.

God told Nadab and Abihu where to get the fire. Convenience led to their disobedience and, as a result of their disobedience, destruction came.

Naaman had no conviction about the healing of his leprosy, he looked for convenience (II Kings 5).

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego had convictions (Dan. 3:17-18; 6:10-11). One would not face the den of lions nor the furnace of fire out of convenience. It would take conviction to face such.

## NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

It was not convenient for Christ to be baptized. He walked 60 miles in order to be baptized. Conviction led Him to be baptized. *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"* (John 6:38).

It was not convenient for Him to die. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:5-8).

Conviction caused Him to willingly submit to the death on the cross.

It was not convenient for Paul to suffer the things he did. Conviction gave him the strength to do what he did (Acts 21:13; II Cor. 11:23-28).

## OBEDIENCE NOT ALWAYS CONVENIENT

It is convenient and the road to least resistance to overlook sin and error. *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Gal. 1:10). There are far too many men pleasers today. It seems that most are more concerned with pleasing men rather than God. There are many Biblical examples of this. The following passage is an example. *"Nevertheless 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"* (John 12:42). It takes conviction not convenience to stand for the right and against the wrong.

It may be convenient to go to some denomination because it is close by. But in Matthew 15:13-14 Jesus said, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* It may even be more convenient to go to a congregation of the church of Christ that does not follow the teachings of the New Testament. But, it takes convictions to drive past such in order to worship and

follow God correctly. To be pleasing to God we must act out of conviction not convenience.

It was not convenient for the Jews to go to Jerusalem. This was the enticing thing used by Jeroboam to keep Israel from going back to Rehoboam. Note what he did in I Kings 12:28. *“Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”* Jeroboam made it convenient for them so they would not go to Jerusalem. He led them into idolatry. God said, *“But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you”* (Deut. 12:10-13).

It is more convenient to be sprinkled for baptism, but the Bible says to be “buried.” *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:4). Why did Philip and the eunuch both go down into the water if sprinkling will suffice? It will not suffice! That is the reason both went into the water in order for Philip to baptize the eunuch. *“And as they went on their way, they came*

*unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing”* (Acts 8:36-39).

It is convenient to stay home from Bible Study, Sunday morning and Wednesday night. It is also convenient to stay home Sunday night. If one has true conviction he will not stay home. The stayers at home depict an attitude that is not acceptable to God. The attitude is one of seeing how little one can do and still be pleasing to God. The attitude that is acceptable to God is one of how much I can do, not of how little I can do. Faithful Christians are not stayers at home. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Tim. 2:15). Forsaking the assembling of one’s self together with the saints is sin. *“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. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (Heb. 10:24-26). The provoking one another to love and good works is to be done in the assembly. When one willfully forsakes the assembling together he has sinned willfully.

It is not convenient to keep one’s self unspotted from the

world. It takes conviction that leads to effort in keeping unspotted. *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”* (Titus 2:11-12).

It is not convenient to teach others. Based upon this, many excuse themselves from teaching others. Many that should be teaching have not properly prepared themselves to teach, therefore, they need to be taught. *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Heb. 5:12-14). Christians should study, not only to save their own souls, but to be able to teach others that their souls may be saved. *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to be faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (II Tim. 2:2).

It is not convenient to become a Christian. Conviction, brought on by hearing God’s word, motivates one to become a Christian. If one looks for a convenient time he will become as Felix. *“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee”* (Acts 24:25).

We must have convictions and live up to them, but be sure they are in strict conformity to God’s will.

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# ARE YOU A CHILD?

Brian Butler

Answering the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:1), Jesus says, "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Today, in this fast-paced world of modern inventions, most are not concerned with, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom?"

We ask the question, "How shall we enter the kingdom?" If we search the scriptures, we find the characteristics of the one who will go to heaven (Psalm 15). We also find the steps of the gospel plan of salvation. But is this enough? Jesus said "EXCEPT ye be converted...." This would indicate that obedience to the plan of salvation is a must. However, Jesus also said, "AND BECOME as little children...." Therefore, we can conclude that one must be a child to enter the kingdom.

Are you a child? Do you know how to be a child? I do not mean to cry about everything and throw fits when you do not get your way. I mean, do you know how to be the child that Jesus is telling his disciples would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 18:4)? Please note with me the inspired scriptures so you, too, may become as a little child, thus entering the kingdom of God.

To be a child one must be **Caring**. Have you ever noticed the caring attitude of a child? Whether it be about a pet, friend, parent, grandparent, or even a total stranger, the child has a deep concern about that person or thing. Too often we are more concerned about self and what self needs than we are about another individual. Adults tend to have that, "take care of number one" attitude. But, to become a child we must be caring toward

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**Are you a child? Do you know how to be a child? I do not mean to cry about everything and throw fits when you do not get your way. I mean, do you know how to be the child that Jesus is telling his disciples would be the greatest in the kingdom?**

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everyone. The parable of "The Good Samaritan" illustrates this very point. The Samaritan went out of his way to take care of a total stranger who had been ignored by others (Luke 10:25-37). We must be caring because souls are the most important things to Christians, and without a caring attitude toward others, many souls will be condemned to a devil's hell.

To be a child one must be **Humble**. James, by inspiration wrote, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). Peter also through inspiration wrote, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:6). Only if one has the humility of a child will God exalt him. Only if one has the humility of a child will one enter the kingdom of God. How can one be humble? First, by placing self on an equal basis with others. Never look down on others for their weaknesses. A true child of God is humble enough to help the weaker brother instead of mocking

him. Second, one can be humble by following the advice of Jesus who said to turn the other cheek. This does not mean that we should let people take advantage of us. Third, by obeying the "Golden Rule." "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

To be a child one must be **Innocent**. Innocent means to be harmless or guiltless. This is an attribute of all children until they reach the age of accountability. Yet, this will be the hardest part of becoming a child for an adult. Why? Because "...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). However, one should not give up hope because the "...gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). How can we be innocent in this sin sick world? First, we must repent of our sins never to do them again. Second, we must strive to walk in the light as He is in the light. We must be Christlike.

To be a child one must be **Loving**. This is another obvious attribute of a child. Most children never have a problem loving another person. And, most children have a hard time understanding why adults find it so easy to hate others. To love another individual is commanded by Jesus himself (John 13:34,35; 15:12,17; I John 4:7-8). If you do not love others, your heart will eventually be hardened with hate. Too much hate will destroy a person in this life time as well as after death.

To be a child one must be **Dependent** upon the Father. A child is dependent upon its parents for life. Likewise we must be dependent upon God the Father for eternal life. Why must we be

so dependent upon the Father? Because he sent his only begotten Son that all may have everlasting life (John 3:16). That Son, Jesus, is the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8-9). He is the way to God (John 14:6). He cares for us (I Peter 5:7).

To become a child one must be **Caring, Humble, Innocent, Loving, and Dependent** upon the Father. Are you a child? If not, you will not enter or be a part of the kingdom of heaven. You will not enjoy the wonderful things that are in heaven. You will not know what heaven is really like. You will know only what Jesus Himself has told us all, *“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 19:14). If you do not become as a little child you will know what hell is like. You will feel the weeping and gnashing of teeth. You will feel the torment of the lake that burns eternally with fire and brimstone. Why not strive to become a child now?

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# GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

*Dan Sikes*

In Numbers 16 we find recorded the rebellion led by Korah the son of Izhar against Moses and Aaron. In verse 3 of Numbers 16 Korah and those who followed him rose up before the congregation of Israel: *“And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD”* (Num. 16:3)? Moses responded in Numbers 16:5: *“Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.”* God fully intended to consume the whole congregation at this time but because Moses pleaded for the people, God spared them. However, we know that God caused the earth to open up and swallow Korah, his followers, and all that pertained to them. Two hundred fifty men lost their lives.

In Numbers 16:26 we find a verse that has very important implications. The Bible says, *“And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.”* Why did God instruct them to depart from their tents and touch nothing that belonged to them? Because, had they failed to separate themselves totally and completely from those who were evil, who rebelled against God and taught error, they also would have been consumed. **GUILT BY ASSOCIATION!** Many today do not accept the principle of guilt by association, but this and other passages teach it very plainly (I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11). In order to keep our reputations pure and unspotted we must be careful whose company we keep, and with whom we are identified. In addition, preachers who appear on programs and lectureships with known false teachers need to *“depart from their tents and touch nothing of theirs”* if they want us to believe they do not condone, approve, nor agree with the false teacher. Read Romans 1:32; 16:17; I Tim. 6:3-5; and II John 9-11.

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## WANTED: PREACHERS LIKE THE PROPHETS

Men cannot be prophets today. But we need the same caliber of men today as the prophets we read about in the scriptures. Notice some of the qualities of these men.

**They were men of deep convictions.** They were convinced of their message and the need for the people to respond to it (Jer. 4:19).

**They did not "beat-around-the-bush" in getting the message across.** Nathan, in confronting David with sin, said, "*Thou art the man*" (II Sam. 12:7).

**They did not fear the reaction of men.** Elijah denounced King Ahab's sin (I Kings 2:1).

**They did not go along with the crowd.** Read about Michaiiah in I Kings 22, who stood against 400 prophets.

**They were willing to suffer and die for God's cause** (Heb. 11:37).

**They had grief and pity.** See Jeremiah 8:18.

**They proclaimed judgment.** For most of the prophets this was a re-occurring theme (Micah 3:12). Judgment must be preached today (Acts 17:30-31).

**They rebuked false prophets and leaders** (Micah 3:11).

**They spoke out on morality and ethics.** Amos said, "*therefore as ye trample on the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted vineyards, but ye shall not drink...*" (Amos 5:11).

**They became discouraged, but not defeated.** Jeremiah did not quit! He said, "*If I say I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain*" (Jer. 20:9).

Are you a preacher with the character and integrity like the prophets? We must be careful of "*smooth things*" (Isaiah 30:10).

— author unknown

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