

# 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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## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF ASHDOD

*Jack Simons*

The city of Ashdod was one of the five leading cities of the Philistines assigned to Judah in the conquest of the promised land. Israel failed to depose them because of their fierceness and their chariots of iron. They were a constant source of discomfort and trouble to Israel and were among those opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple as Judah began their return from the Babylonian captivity.

Nehemiah was very disturbed with those Jews who had intermarried with the people of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Their children *"spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language."* They had done *"great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives"* (Neh. 13:23-31).

In view of this passage, we often refer to someone SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF ASHDOD. By this we mean they are speaking in a way and are using terms that are polluted with worldly concepts that are foreign to the thinking and teaching of God. We mean they are speaking in reference to godly and biblical things using human phraseology blended with the philosophies of men rather than using biblical terms that reflect the true intent of God's will!

With this in mind, this article will attempt to define words and phrases commonly used by those among us whom we identify as liberal in their approach to biblical precepts and religious activity. We will address what we also refer to as REDEFINITION TERMS that are used by liberals in

churches of Christ today. The purpose of this definitive list of words and terms is to show what they really mean when they use them. THE TERMS ARE THEIRS — THE DEFINITIONS ARE MINE (JS). We refer to them as redefinition terms, because they use them to redefine and imply a different meaning to, or describe in deceiving ways, things, practices, methods, philosophies, doctrines, teachings and concepts that have long been used by members of the church of Christ based on our convictions of biblical precept.

I have gleaned these terms from their own writings (books, magazines, various publications, and correspondence), from conversations with them, and from listening to their speeches and sermons. They are literal quotes! Let's therefore consider these favorite words and phrases they use. In alphabetical order, they are:

1) **A change hermeneutics.** This is applying a different meaning to the teaching of God's word than what God intended in order to promote and/or justify error. Hermeneutics simply means the method one uses to interpret or attempt to understand and explain something. Applied spiritually, it involves how one approaches the Bible and what method one uses in trying to understand and apply its precepts. Correct hermeneutics promotes acceptable practice with God. Faulty hermeneutics promotes unacceptable practice with God. They charge our hermeneutics has been faulty and needs the changes they propose. I charge that

their hermeneutic is faulty and has no respect whatever for honestly and truthfully understanding and applying God's word in our lives!

2) **A narrow, criticizing, mean spirited attitude.** They apply this to one who opposes the liberal agenda or its unscriptural practices. However, they do not apply this to themselves when they castigate, demean, undermine, and oppose those who hold to truth and oppose the error they espouse.

3) **Accurate knowledge.** This is a better understanding of what denominational or modern up-to-date human philosophical views are which advocate the accommodation of present day cultural trends.

4) **An accepting atmosphere.** This is one that will compromise the truth to bring in members. It is a philosophy that will accept those in error as they are.

5) **An inclusive atmosphere.** One that will include almost anything regardless of whether or not it is scriptural. It is especially applied to compromising with denominational error and dogmas.

6) **Better experienced than explained.** One's religion, "better felt than told," is an old denominational dogma used to side-step biblical truth. It puts emphasis on how one feels, being more important than what one can justify by God's word. It minimizes adherence to biblical truth and

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**The Language of Ashdod...**



Editorial...

## SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD

Garland M. Robinson

**I**f any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). The word "oracle" here appears three other times in the New Testament. In Acts 7:38 "the lively (living) oracles" refers to the Mosaic Law. "The oracles of God" in Romans 3:2 speaks of all the written utterances of God through Old Testament writers. "The first principles of the oracles of God" is used to indicate the entire substance of Bible doctrine in Hebrews 5:12. The thought in First Peter 4:11 is that if any man (neuter: anyone, whomsoever) speaks, let him speak as the oracles (utterances, word) of God.

The most powerful influence in all the world is **the word of God**. It is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). It is through the Word that men **hear** the Gospel (Rom. 10:14). Through the word men are **convicted** of their sins (Titus 1:9). Men are **begotten** and **born** of God by the Word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). The Word of God is able to **save** and **sanctify** us (James 1:21; John 17:17). It is able to **strengthen** and **cleanse** us (Psalm 119:9,28). Through the Word we receive **instruction** (Deut. 4:36) and through the Word we **understand** God's will (Psalm 119:104). Therefore, when we speak, we are commanded to speak the word of God. Even in the common daily conversation of any and all Christians (men and women), we are to be governed by what God has said and as he has commanded and, with the Psalmist we should say, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

God's people are to speak the commands of God. We read in Titus 2:1, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." The Old Testament prophet Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kings 22:14). Paul instructed Timothy to "preach the word; be instant in season out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). God told Isaiah, "I have put my words in thy mouth" (Isa. 51:16). But those of Isaiah's day said, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). The terrible thing

of it was that the people "loved to have it so" (Jer. 5:31). We have no authority but the Word of God and when we speak, it must be from the Scriptures which are inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The first century preachers accepted this command and spoke boldly in the name of Jesus. To speak boldly means to speak *openly, plainly and without fear*. Paul sets the tone when he asks the brethren in Ephesus to pray for him "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20). The brethren in Philippi grew confident by Paul's chains and were "much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:14). After being commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, Peter, John and the other apostles were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:29,31). Please note several other passages which speak of these early disciples' boldness (Acts 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 1 Thess. 2:2).

Note what happened when the word of God was preached with boldness. "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). The Gospel was preached to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:6,23). "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). When we get busy today teaching and preaching the Gospel around the world without favor or compromise, it will obtain the results for which God intended.

Speaking as the oracles of God is also respecting **the silence of the Scriptures**. God intended for us to respect his silence. Think of Nadab and Abihu who were destroyed by fire for their disrespect of the silence of God's word (Lev. 10:1-2). God had instructed the priests to use fire from the altar in their sacrifices (Lev. 6:1,12). God did not say another fire could not be used.

However, Nadab and Abihu used a "strange fire which he commanded them not" and were punished for it with their lives. By God telling them what to use, he eliminated everything else. When God says a thing, it is final, everything else is eliminated!

God's people say, "We will do only what the Bible authorizes" (commands, allows). Liberals and others say, "We will do everything the Bible does not specifically condemn." We respect silence in every other walk of life, why not when it comes to the Bible? When you go to a restaurant to eat, you tell the waiter what you want. You do not go through a long list of everything you do not want. By specifying what you want, you eliminate everything you do not want. There's no misunderstanding. The Bible is no different, God has given us exactly what he wants, no more and no less. Speaking as the oracles of God is simply a lesson on basic Bible authority.

God said to Jeremiah, "Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. 1:7). He has so commanded every child of God in this last age when he said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

The "language of Ashdod" (Neh. 13:24) is foreign to "speaking as the oracles of God." Let us use Bible words and terms and not speak as the world. Let us speak as the oracles of God.

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## The Labuage of Ashdod...

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emphasizes action guided by personal satisfaction.

7) **Break out, or break away churches.** Those congregations willing to *rebel* against God's teaching and *break away* from sound biblical doctrinal practices even to the extent of breaking fellowship with sound congregations. These are apostate churches!

8) **Building a supportive atmosphere.** Building an atmosphere that will support one's life-style or religious beliefs, whether they are biblical (scriptural) or not.

9) **Celebrative.** That which is geared more to emotion than the Bible standard. It leans heavily on the concept, "religion is better felt than told" (see also #6). It proclaims that attitude and feeling are more important than method. It is especially applied to methods of worship that reject what they call "traditional worship," which they deem dull and stoic. It promotes a worship atmosphere that is more vocal, theatrical and boisterous that reaches out more to man than God. It is more of a carnival atmosphere in worship.

10) **Change or radical change.** This is a radical or major restructuring of the doctrine, teaching, practices, concepts, organization, worship, and/or methods of evangelism of the Lord's church. It is especially against our attitude toward Scripture as the absolute guide for all we say and do religiously. This change is promoted without serious regard to God's Word and is geared to a zealous regard for present cultural trends that appease and appeal to people rather than to God!

11) **Church faces.** A demeaning way to imply that faithful Christians dedicated to practicing and defending scriptural worship are hypocrites. It suggests they put on their "church faces" when assembling to worship and are more concerned with doing things scripturally than they are with loving one another.

12) **Clear Biblical principles.** Biblical principles so plain they cannot be questioned, as opposed to principles where God has not specified. The philosophy they employ in using this phrase demands a specifically

stated "Thou shalt not," even though what God has specified logically rules it out! They apply this thinking especially to the use of mechanical instruments of music! Since God has not specifically ruled them out with a "Thou shalt not use mechanical instruments," they promote their use and condemn those who understand the Biblical principles that rule them out. They really acknowledge no such thing, for they violate the scriptures where it pleases them no matter how CLEAR the Biblical teaching may be!

13) **Comfort zones.** Implied areas of opinion and custom with which we are familiar and comfortable which in reality are practices geared to following God's divine pattern revealed in His infallible Word. This phrase is used to deride those who would follow the old paths and adhere to a "thus saith the Lord" in trying to do all we do and say in the name of the Lord. Liberals promote the acceptance of things that violate Biblical precept.

14) **Decisions made at the top.** A derogatory way of challenging godly elders whom they claim make their decisions without sensitivity to or the consent of the membership. They had rather demand and promote more of a democratic type of set up in the church where elders can't sneeze unless they survey, poll, or in some way try to ascertain the thinking of the people before they decide anything.

15) **Decision makers.** Similar to the one above. It is a demeaning way to refer to godly elders who will do their duty in taking a stand for truth as they oversee the church.

16) **Excellence in worship assembly.** Worship that is geared to appease and please man, not God!

17) **Exciting growth climate.** A climate or atmosphere that appeals to human appetites and panders to human lust in order to attract numbers at any cost rather than seeking to do things God's way. It is based on pragmatic cultural practices.

18) **Faith sharing.** A restating of the denominational practice of witnessing or testifying involving emphasis on personal experience rather than preaching the Gospel. It especially opens the door for an inordinate role for women in worship.

19) **Felt-needs (also stated as personal felt-needs).** This is what one perceives to be more vital and important to one's personal needs or

self rather than those addressed in God's word such as scriptural worship and godly living. It sets standards based on one's own thinking, concepts, and personal likes and dislikes rather than on the precepts of God's word. It is philosophy geared to pleasing self rather than God.

20) **Group continuum.** These are philosophies promoted in a small group setting that work together to propagate and continue its views and practices and ultimately promote them in the entire church.

21) **Growth sounds.** This is affinity with methods and teachings of other religions that promote growth. It is a philosophy that willingly accepts any and every gimmick man might contrive if it promotes growth, regardless of whether or not it adheres to biblical precept. It might be better called GROWTH NOISE!

22) **Important correlates to church growth.** Those things that correlate to growth stimulated by pragmatic (basic, fundamental) cultural practices and the inventions of men.

23) **Important variables.** Those things they gladly embrace because they appear to them as vital in order to please self or man even though they might vary with, or stand in contrast to sound biblical practices.

24) **Institutionalism.** This is a demeaning way to refer to those things which hold strictly to sound biblical practice and doctrine and seek to hold to the old paths.

25) **Inward friendliness.** This is a demeaning way to refer to those who refuse to compromise biblical principles and sound doctrine in favor of erroneous concepts and practices that may attract new members. It also indicts the belief that there is only one church and castigates those who refuse to fellowship those of any other religion.

26) **Inward orientation.** This is similar to the above. It is a demeaning way to deride thinking that is Bible oriented and rejects any other religious teaching.

27) **Lone Ranger.** It is a demeaning reference directed especially at church leaders (elder, deacon, minister, teacher, personal worker, etc.) who will use only biblical methods to reach the lost, and refuse to go along with the concepts of multiple staff ministries geared to placating cultural



whims.

28) **Mainline denominations.** All denominations (attempting to include conservative churches of Christ as such) that attempt to hold to conservative biblical views and principles in any way and who resist the erroneous practices of the liberals who wish to restructure the church into further apostasy.

29) **Major conceptual shift.** A major change in one's concept, philosophy and thinking on how we view things, especially changing from a Bible oriented thinking to a human oriented thinking.

30) **Major issues.** Those things that conform to present day culture and not biblical soundness. These are major and more important to the liberal than conformity to the Will and Word of God!

31) **Mechanics.** A demeaning way to attempt to relegate scriptural practice to mere human concept in method. It is used to blunt the force of Biblical teaching that questions unscriptural practice in worship.

32) **Ministry improvement.** Modifying our evangelistic methods to please men. This usually involves getting rid of a faithful Gospel preacher, replacing him with one that will go along with their attempts to radically change and restructure the church into apostasy.

33) **Ministry options.** These are program options that we may follow as we please in order to attract men and placate their whims. This is done without regard to doctrinal soundness or scriptural purity.

34) **Open leadership.** Leadership that is open to catering to the whims of man rather than dedicated to holding the line on sound doctrine. It carries with it the idea of the members of a congregation overseeing the church instead of God's biblical plan for elders to do it. It is geared to undermining the authority of godly elders!

35) **Other traditions.** This is placing the worship practices of churches of Christ (whether sound or not) on a par with the practices of all other religions. It attempts to relegate Scriptural worship to be no more important than the traditions and inventions of any denomination or religion!

36) **Outside sources.** This is thinking that opens the door to accepting the concepts and practices of other

religions or human sources, especially those of denominationalism. It is an attempt to remove God's word as our only spiritual guide and to reject the teachings and views of those in our brotherhood who are sound. It relies heavily on so-called denominational "scholars."

37) **Outward orientation.** This is thinking that goes beyond or even out of biblical guidelines and attempts to appease human whims and wants.

38) **Overflow friendliness.** Manifesting friendliness to non-members that will compromise Biblical principles and sound doctrine to attract them. It is a friendliness that will fellowship those in error. It is unfriendly to God and truth!

39) **Pharisee.** A word used in an attempt to demean anyone who would stand up for what is Scripturally right or one who would "contend for the faith" or "be set for a defense of the Gospel."

40) **Participatory leadership.** Leadership that bows to public opinion.

41) **Quality ministries.** Programs geared to "personal felt needs" and human whims, not to saving the lost with God's Word, the Gospel.

42) **Quality preaching.** Preaching deemed acceptable because it tickles ears with witty and/or eloquent speech rather than preaching that adheres to the guidelines of 2 Timothy 4:2.

43) **Receptive population.** Those who will be receptive to our message only when we are willing to change and compromise it so that it caters to and pleases them!

44) **Rediscovering.** Going back to error.

45) **Rehearsed authoritarian presentations.** This refers to using sound evangelism programs that present the Gospel plan of salvation. It is an attack on teaching that is in line with Truth rather than modern methods that would compromise it.

46) **Religion better caught than taught.** Religion based on emotional response to witty or tear-jerking messages rather than plain, bold, Gospel preaching. This promotes the denominational error of "religion better felt than told!"

47) **Required significant changes.** Thinking that demands restructuring, altering, changing the church, changing methods of evangel-

ism, worship practices, etc., so as to please men. It has little concern for doctrinal purity.

48) **Restructure.** Thinking that demands an overhaul on every Biblical precept we hold dear and that will change the church into being just another denomination!

49) **Sensitivity to well informed members.** Being more concerned with those well versed in the newest denominational gimmicks geared to present cultural whims than with doing God's will. "Informed members" is the key here! By "informed" they mean "versed in error" and the "inventions of men," not grounded in Biblical knowledge!

50) **Small groups.** A philosophy that promotes dividing the congregation up under various ministry concepts and into small group settings so it can better be controlled by change agents. Small groups make it more difficult for godly leaders to oversee and makes it easier to remove them from under their control. It is the age old philosophy of "divide and conquer!"

51) **Speaking one's own religious experience.** The denominational view of witnessing or testifying rather than preaching the Gospel to convert souls.

52) **Spiritual renewal.** Thinking that attempts to employ methods that stir emotional response and generate good inner feelings without regard to sound doctrinal practice. It promotes a "make you feel good religion," based on human appetites or personal "wish lists." (See #60 for "wish list")

53) **Subcultures.** Religious thinking and practice that differs with other religious thinking and practice, but should respect the validity of all as part of the acceptable whole to God! Denominationalism to the core! In other words, we are all headed to the same place, just traveling different roads to get there. It advocates the philosophy that every one is right and there is no one true way!

54) **Team effort.** Going along with the change agent agenda rather than opposing it.

55) **Traditional.** By liberal definition, this term derides that which clings to sound Scriptural precept, practice and doctrine, relegating it to tradition rather than Biblical Cannon. Its purpose is to attempt to get us to adhere to human philosophies rather than the Word of God.

56) **Traditional church culture.** Thinking that indicts teachings and methods that are patterned after sound Bible teaching of being human opinion rather than biblical precept. It attempts to demean those who hold to God's Word as the only absolute infallible guide for all we say and do religiously. It is geared to intimidating us into accommodating human philosophy.

57) **Variety.** Thinking that attempts to pollute worship with pragmatic, cultural, unscriptural practices.

58) **Vital aspects of church life.** Programs and so-called ministries that are directed to "felt-needs," not to the edification of God's people through Biblically sound good works.

59) **Warm and accepting atmosphere.** An attitude that is willing to compromise rather than confront issues that concern Biblical principles or godly living.

60) **Wish list.** Thinking that would restructure our religious practices to meet the whims and desires of those we hope to attract.

These are but a few of the many deceiving and demeaning words, terms and phrases used by liberals among us today. They give us an idea of how to identify them, their thinking, their speech, etc., for what they are — **WORLDLY, SENSUAL, DECEIVING WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.** They use these to mask or cover up the true meaning of what they really are attempting to advocate from those who might not agree with their philosophies and/or would oppose them. If you agree with what they are saying, they hope you understand them. If you do not agree with them, they hope you don't understand them, at least until it's too late for you to take a stand and/or oppose them and try to do something about what they are trying to do to the Lord's church!

These words and phrases are deliberately designed to confuse those who might oppose them! They have no respect whatever for calling Bible things by Bible names, and doing Bible things in Bible ways. Their speech betrays them! It is filled with human terms and phrases that are foreign to God's word, are deliberately designed to confuse and deceive, and viciously geared to demeaning and showing despite for God, God's Word, and God's faithful who would hold

dearly to His Word and stand in defense of it!

Beware! When liberals use these terms, they do not mean what you think. They hope to deceive you. Beware of them, and when you hear their uncertain sounds, take note and search the Scriptures whether or not the things they say adhere to God's Word. Do not be duped by their fair

words and appealing speeches.

Hopefully, this list will help you know what liberals mean when they employ THE LANGUAGE OF ASHDOD so that you can protect yourself from being deceived by their error or being intimidated into compromising the truth because of them!

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## WHEN WE MISS WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Victor M. Eskew

It is common to look at the attendance figures of most congregations and find the Wednesday night attendance figures to be greatly below those for the service on Sunday morning. Sometimes the total attending on Wednesday is one-half the Sunday morning figure.

Those who cause this difference by deliberately forsaking the Wednesday evening Bible classes are sounding forth a message to God and others. Let us look at some of the things we proclaim when we forsake Wednesday night Bible study.

1) *One is saying that he does not need spiritual food.* The Bible contains the necessary ingredients for one's spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2). Every Wednesday night, some of these spiritual delicacies are set forth for those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Those who remain at home during this spiritual feast act as though they do not need this nutrition for their souls. At the present, these individuals may not be aware of it, but they are dying spiritually. One who doesn't eat in the physical realm will soon cease to be. This is also true in the realm of things spiritual.

2) *Those who forsake the Wednesday night services are saying with clarity there are some things more important than gathering with God's people for study and meditation upon God's Word.* Some of these "more important" things are television programs, the newspaper, housework, and the garden. Dear friends, a continuation in such a course will cause many people, even your brothers and sisters in Christ, to wonder whether you have been raised with Christ. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col. 3:1-2).

3) *Those who remain at home on Wednesday nights are also stating that Bible study is boring and dull.* It is amazing that one could call something more precious than gold (Psalm 19:10), dull and boring. It is beyond comprehension that the Book containing God's mind (1 Cor. 2:9-13) could be thought of as dry and uninteresting. It is astounding that the map which will direct us to the heavenly abode with the Almighty and his Son (Matt. 7:21) can be said to be stale and humdrum. Yet, that is what those who forsake Wednesday night are saying.

4) *Those who forsake Wednesday night are saying with certainty that obeying God's commands is not important.* Hebrews 10:25 commands that one not forsake the assemblies of the saints. Those who forsake the mid-week assembly undoubtedly think this command is not important. Could they be mistaken? *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14).

We urge all those who forsake the Wednesday night gathering of the saints to change their ways. Make sure to attend in order to receive the spiritual food which is offered. There is nothing more important. Upon attending regularly, you will find that it is refreshing and enjoyable. And, you will obey the Savior in the process. See you on Wednesday night!

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# WATERS SPLASHING OVER THE DAM

*James E. Farley*

Imagine the following scenario. Up river from a certain community, is a huge dam. It was built to control flooding. Now, after weeks and weeks of rain, the lake is filling up, even though workers are trying their best to relieve the pressure. The water is beginning to splash over the top of the dam. It is an awesome sight indeed.

Now, let's imagine the majority of the town's people gathered near the bottom of the dam and looking up at the spectacular sight. They can hear the creaking and moaning as the pressure of the water seeks to burst loose! They are amazed and even fascinated by it all. Day after day they gather there to experience the breathtaking and awe-inspiring sights and sounds. "Look! Look at the awesome power, and the beautiful water splashing over the top!" Some even stand at the very base of the dam and allow the waters to splash down on them. Cracks begin to form and small streams of water begin to flow down as the great structure begins to give in to the hydraulic power. This seems to fascinate and captivate the town's people even more. "You know," one of their leaders says, "if this thing bursts loose just right, we can use giant rubber rafts and charge people to ride down the whitewater! We can bring in a lot of people this way, and generate a lot of revenue for the town with this!"

Still, there are a few who are standing up on the hills above the river shouting down to these foolish ones. "Hey folks! The dam will soon burst and you will be drowned! People are going to be killed! Come up here with us where you will be safe!" The workers at the dam join in with shouts of warning. They issue bulletins in the newspapers and on the radio concerning the great threat. City and county authorities try, to no avail, to get these foolish ones to stop what they are doing. But, they simply ignore all warnings and just continue in their folly; laughing, playing and ignorantly enjoying their imminent peril. They have shown, by their actions, that they have no respect for authority. They cry out, "Why are you being so mean-spirited and hardcore? Why are you causing all this trouble? You are hurting people's feelings and making enemies! We hate it when you

always condemn us and judge us." You see, they only want to have their own way. We hear them declare, "Oh, those old fuddy duddies, and knuckleheads. They don't understand progress and how to enjoy themselves. If they haven't felt the refreshing waters splashing over the top of the dam, they don't know what they're missing. If they want to stay up on the hills, and be 'safe', well, let them. But they should not try to bind that upon us. We must follow our hearts! What we are doing feels so good, it can't be wrong! You folks need more tolerance of differences."

What would you think of such people? How would you view them? We would say they are silly and foolish in their thinking and in their actions, right? But do you know this very kind of scenario is being played out among the churches of Christ even today?

As I have traveled around the country preaching in meetings and lectureships over the past few years, I have seen it for myself. I have talked with those at the base of the dam! If sound brethren think we have seen the strength and power of these killing waters thus far, think again! There are troubles and innovations that are just barely splashing over the dam right now. A flood of error is about to burst loose upon the church. False teachers are getting bolder and bolder in their proclamation of damnable doctrines and lifestyles. It is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. There is an orchestrated effort by self-styled "change agents" that will (if not checked solidly and boldly) swamp congregations of the Lord's church all across this nation — indeed, throughout the world!

I have spoken to elderships who are saying, for instance, that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is "not really a salvation issue." I have heard preachers in the churches of Christ claim that there are faithful Christians among the denominations. There are those who are advocating more freedom for women to be active in the church. By this they mean that women should be allowed to offer public prayers in the presence of male members, that they should be able to teach mixed classes, serve at the table passing the Lord's supper, and even serve as

deaconesses and elderesses (whatever those are). More and more are openly proclaiming that God "may possibly save people without baptism." Some are boldly proclaiming that water baptism is simply unnecessary for salvation. We have some among us who are advocating the old Calvinistic doctrines of salvation totally by grace. We have seen very small streams of such foolishness in years past, but these small streams are growing larger and larger and will soon be a raging river! I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I have been preaching the gospel for 31 years now and have seen many changes toward these things during this time. Oh yes, they begin small, very small in some instances. Some just want to change things a little for the sake of change. Then, before you know it, these are advocating for bigger and more substantial changes. They like to build a following, especially among the younger members, and then, when they have a majority, they usurp the eldership and overcome the church.

Many of these refer to us as "the traditional church of Christ" and they refer to themselves as "progressive" and "contemporary." They have departed from the Truth concerning the Lord's supper and see it now as "a celebration" — "a happy time." Their emphasis, as they take the Lord's supper, is primarily upon the resurrection of Jesus from the grave instead of the suffering and death of the Lord on the cross (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26). They even take the Lord's supper on weekdays, at weddings and at funerals, and some have even begun to take it in conjunction with fellowship dinners!

They are interested in entertaining those who come to services, so they have quartets, and even dramatic presentations such as skits and plays. One congregation even had a dance recital depicting the "Life of Christ." We are seeing more and more "skits" and less and less "Gospel preaching." We hear them announce that "the age of the Gospel meeting is past!" They seem to want to read Mark 16:16 as, "Go ye into all the world, and act the gospel to every creature," or "Go ye into all the world, and sing the gospel to every creature." All they are doing is mimicking



the sectarians who have stressed entertainment in their churches for years.

Those who hold to the false teachings concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage are not finished yet, either. Many seem desirous of just ignoring this issue. Seemingly, they think it will just go away, and they are filling our churches with adulterers. "It is an old and tired issue," as one of them told me, "It's time to move on." They seem to want to place this into the realm of opinion, and just go along to get along. If this is not unity-in-diversity, I don't know what it is!

Some are advocating that it is right and proper for our young people to attend dances and proms, and that opposition to the modern dance is simply another tradition. One high school principle that I know personally (who is a member of the church of Christ) said, "It is a good outlet for the young folks." Along these same lines, another brother recently told me that he and his wife are "rethinking" their opposition to Christians frequenting the public swimming pools and "laying out" at the beach. I have talked to some in the church who say it is ok for Christians to be involved in "social drinking" occasionally. One proudly told me that he and his family often have alcoholic wine at their table with meals. At a political "victory rally" of a member of the church of Christ who ran for state representative and won, the bar was opened and drinks were served! I personally saw this, and left about as quickly as I came! When faithful members of the church openly oppose such as this, they are labeled as intolerant, even as "modern-day Pharisees."

Of yes, brethren, the waters have only begun to leap over the top of the dam. True, we have heard "sprinkles and splashes" of such things in the past, but there is a flood coming. Faithful workers are laboring fervently to hold it back. Sincere and faithful ones are busily and faithfully shouting out warnings. But there are those who persist in their erroneous ways, and insist on being left alone as they do. It amazes me that when the faithful warn individual Christians and congregations of God's people about these dangers, they are labeled as trouble-makers. This has always been so. Remember when Elijah went to the wicked Ahab, and Ahab said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah's response to this Old Testament "change agent" was, "I have not troubled

*Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim*" (1 Kings 18:17-18). The real trouble makers are those who pervert the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-10).

The faithful are obligated by God and by love to continue to warn those in error (Ezek. 3:17-21; Acts 18:6; 20:20,26-32). Paul wrote that the church must "warn them that are unruly" (1 Thess. 5:14). These are in danger of being eternally separated from God (James 5:19-20). They need to be told, lovingly yet boldly, that if they are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ, they do not have God (2 John 9-11). Erring ones can indeed return, but they must do so while the Lord can be found; while He is near (Isa. 55:6-7). They must know that they can and must repent and confess their wrong, so they can pray for forgiveness (1 John 1:7-9; Acts 8:22). However, if they will not repent, they must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18). We are commanded to withdraw ourselves from every brother that walks disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6). These are to be noted so that we will have no fellowship with them. This is designed so they will be ashamed of their actions and teachings, and repent. These are still our brethren, and must be treated as such (2 Thess. 3:14-15; Eph. 5:11). Even when we have withdrawn from them, we must still take every opportunity to admonish them as brothers and sisters.

So, not only must faithful Christians warn those in error about their ultimate fate if they continue in the broad way, but faithful Christians must warn other faithful ones about them (Rom. 16:17-18; Matt. 7:15-20; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 4:14). It is obvious that it is not sinful to call the names of those who are causing trouble within the church. How can we mark them unless we call their names? As long as we say, "some brother in Tennessee teaches" or "a congregation in Texas," without specifically naming the real trouble makers, we will continue to have trouble. Let us be brave and bold enough (indeed loving enough) to warn them of their error, and if they will not repent, MARK THEM (Rom. 16:17-18). Thousands of souls are at stake here. These false ones are wily and they will "creep in unawares" and cause terrible trouble within our congregations if they are not specifically and clearly MARKED!

It is certainly amazing that when faithful and loving brethren will obey God and mark these erring ones who will not repent, the faithful are labeled as "the troublemakers." The real trouble makers are those who would pervert the Gospel of Christ, teaching things that are contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Gal. 1:6-10). To the Galatians Paul said, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)? Be sure of this one thing; if you speak out against these false ones, you will make enemies. You will make enemies like the wicked Ahab who asked the godly Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" To which we must respond as did Elijah, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord..." (1 Kings 18:17-18).

One strategy that false teachers and false leaders obviously have is to attempt to lay the blame on others. If they can make the faithful look bad, they look better. They hate the faithful, for the faithful have nothing good to say about their erroneous ways (cf. 1 Kings 22:1-8). You see, our Lord said that darkness hates the light, for light exposes and reproves. Light and darkness cannot co-exist and fellowship (John 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:6-17). In my 31 years of teaching and preaching the Truth, I have seen this over and over, even among those who are my brethren. This is the most hurtful, for we expect non-Christians to spread lies and innuendos about us, but when members of the church begin to whisper and gossip with false rumors and lies about faithful proclaimers of the Truth, it is like a knife in one's belly!

Brothers and sisters, these are indeed perilous times for the body of Christ. Like never before, the faithful need to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). Are you? Are you willing to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3)? We can and must do so without being contentious. We must have love as our primary motive. Love for God, for Jesus the Christ, for the church of Christ, for the Word of God and for the souls of men and women everywhere. Love always sounds out a warning of danger ahead!

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

I can know. I know there are a lot of false teaching and I wouldn't want to go the wrong way. And I know everything the church of Christ knows comes from the Lord's book. Thank you and God bless you" **...Charles Lupez, Hondo, TX.** "Can you please send me your monthly magazine? I got a copy from a friend and I think this is a great magazine with important issues that must stay with the Scriptures. Thank you so much for putting me on your list" **...Ken Mittler, Ft. Pierce, FL.** "I am now receiving *Seek the Old Paths*. Please continue sending it to me and any other articles you print" **...Howard & Martha Haynie, Ashland City, TN.** "I have just finished reading *Seek the Old Paths*, a wonderful monthly publication, defending and standing for the word of God. We have too many powder-puff preachers and elders afraid to stand and defend the word of God because they will lose their job. How sad! The true body of Christ is hard to find. Church worship has turned into Drama (clapping hands, etc.). I like what I read and it's the truth. Continue to stand for the word of God. Elders and preachers are weak in this area (standing & defending)" **...Reba Miller, Plumerville, AR.** "I am writing to you to tell you how much I enjoy reading your publication and I appreciate so much that you are sending it to me. I also wish to be left on your mailing list. Thank you again for sending your publication" **...Charlie Turner, McMinnville, TN.** "Please add these names to your mailing addresses because these individuals need to read of the wonderful articles of truth. First, let me say I've been a member of the Lord's church for 13 years and a minister for 12 years and your paper has helped me so much. Keep up the good work" **...John Jenkins, Fort Deposit, AL.** "Greetings and blessings to you, and may God continue to bless a good health as you go along to serve Him, so that, continue the good work being done through *Seek the Old Paths*. This is to let you know, and would like to tell you how much I enjoy receiving and reading STOP. It is very uplifting and interesting article. I hope you will continue to keep my name on your mailing list. I'm happy to inform you also that, since I received STOP, we have 10 souls was baptized and added into the Lord's church, and 4 families was restored. We have 30-35 membership in this new congregation right now" **...Emelito V. Solon, Philippines.** "A brother from Magnolia, Arkansas, brought a copy to our church for the brothers to read. I enjoyed it so much and would like to be placed on your mailing list for your monthly publication" **...John H. Lewis, Saratoga, AR.** "First of all we would like to thank you for sending us the video tapes. We greatly appreciate them. As I told you on the phone we currently do not have a preacher, and these tapes allow us to hear some very good gospel sermons. You are involved in another work we appreciate very much also, the publishing of *Seek the Old Paths*. The congregation here is grateful to be able to benefit from your excellent efforts. We pray you will continue your work in these areas. Thank you again" **...Duluth church of Christ, Duluth, MN.** "Hope this finds you all well. Keep up the good work. I frequently use STOP as a reference in teaching and preaching" **...William Schwegler, Bossier City, LA.** "I enjoy *Seek the Old Paths*" **...Nolan Isbell, Joppa, AL.** "Please take me off your mailing list" **...Barbara Mathis, Cookeville, TN.** "Please remove my name from the mailing list. Thank You!" **...Kathy Burgess, Rayville, LA.** "Check enclosed to aid the church there in its work with *Seek the Old Paths* and as an expression of appreciation for the support of my book in its paper" **...Frank Chesser, Montgomery, AL.** "Thank you for another year of Old Paths lessons and keeping us informed of what is going on in the brotherhood. It is so sad that the liberalism road is getting longer and so many churches are choosing to follow it! May the new year see your mailing list continue to grow and your year be healthy and safe" **...Name Withheld.** "Thank you so much for your dedication for the truth and for revealing the much-troubled problems that are facing us in the church today. Please continue to send *Seek the Old Paths* because so many are falling away" **...Art Harris, Bowling Green, KY.** "Keep up the good work" **...Floyd Roe, Cushing, OK.** "Christian greetings in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior! May the grace and peace of our heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I am happy to write you again, brother. Thank you very much for helping my ministry

"Brethren, please find enclosed check to help in the work. Much appreciated" **...Bill & Kay Williams, East Wenatchee, WA.** "I would like to get your monthly publication of *Seek the Old Paths*. I'm incarcerated and trying to get stronger in my faith in God. I'm also going to get baptized in the church of Christ. But I would love to know all

through your paper. It is very useful in my work of preaching and teaching of the Word of God. You can visit the Philippines to know the spiritual and physical condition of the churches of our Lord, especially in the provinces. I cannot still afford to pay my subscription to *Seek the Old Paths*. So I request again my renewal to it to be free. I thanked you for continue helping my ministry in this country through your paper. As an evangelist, my works are: to evangelize and to edify churches by setting them in order, by straightening them up that are out of order, and by training laborers. I need your assistance in order to accomplish my works. I need your prayers for my works, health, and family. I need some reading materials for free distribution that will and can be used for Sunday Schools. Christian books on various doctrines of the church, and bibles (especially KJV) are needed. Video and audio tapes on evangelism, worship, and holiness are needed also. If you can financially support my ministry in this country, it is very much appreciated. Yes, I visit to edify churches by preaching and teaching the pure Gospel for God's glory. I invite you to visit the churches where I visit and preach the Word. I pray to our heavenly Father to continue bless you and to give you the heavenly wisdom and good health in order for you to continue doing His will in your area and out" **...Serafin M. Calixto, Batangas, Philippines.** "This note is to let you know I have moved again. *Seek the Old Paths* is my paper, I enjoy it so very much. I get 5 papers, only 2 of them teach the truth as the Bible teaches" **...Gertrude Peacock, New Albany, MS.** "I ask you to please accept my small contribution to your work in defending the faith. I also ask that you not print my name for I would rather remain anonymous. I am praying for this work" **...Name Withheld.** "Keep up the good work. I appreciate the work you are doing. Keep sending it" **...Ray Swanson, Wauneta, NE.** "We appreciate your sending us the *Seek the Old Paths*. Thank you" **...Francis E. Davis, Neenah, WI.** "Thanks for the great work you are doing! We are proud to help you spread the word" **...Donald Ginn, Saks church of Christ, Anniston, AL.**

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