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The Good Way

By Jared L. Williams

God, through the weeping prophet said, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). Souls are precious and will live throughout eternity. A haven of rest has been promised for those who desire such. But the promise is made to those who walk in the good way. What is the good way? There are many ideas given as to what the good way is.

1. Some teach that the authority lies in the church and those holding "high offices" are to interpret God's law and set up new rules for changing times. Thus any laws that need to be changed are done through Councils. This is not the good way for many reasons.

A. The Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles, who would guide them into all truth (John 16:13, 14). Do you believe this to be true? If it is true, and we believe this to be the truth, then there is nothing to be revealed or changed by anyone today.

B. Do we really need someone or a group of men to interpret the Bible for us? All have the same word, and Paul tells us that when we read we may understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 3:3 - 5).

C. Furthermore, the church is the pillar and ground of truth therefore, it is to uphold, defend and teach the truth revealed by the Apostles. Further it has no authority to unveil any later day revelations (I Timothy 3:14, 15).

2. Some think and teach that religion is an experience that results from a personal encounter with the Lord. But the Bible teaches that the Lord speaks to us today through his Word (John 16:13, 14). Today we have the Word in the New Testament and Paul says that "... Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the

word of God" (Romans 10:17). Man is not to rely solely on his feelings. At one time Paul felt he was doing God a service by persecuting Christians (Acts 26:9, 10). But upon obtaining the truth he learned he was wrong. All have to come in contact with the gospel of Christ and obey it to be saved (John 6:44, 45).

3. Some claim to receive continuous revelations. Those who make such claims teach that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit along with receiving special insight into the word of God. Therefore, they have a direct message from God for man. Is this the good way? How can it be when all who make such claims tell a different story leading men into different directions. How can this be the good way when we have the Bible, the word of God, which is his COMPLETE revelation to man. The beloved John tells us that if we transgress, and fail to abide in the doctrine of Christ, we have not God (II John 9).

4. Then, there is the plea to come back to the Bible and restore New Testament Christianity as you read of it in the word of God. It is urgent that we speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. To do this we must heed the words of Paul as he said, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH" (II Timothy 2:15). Today, God speaks to man through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). The word of truth, the seed of the kingdom must be planted in the heart to produce:

A. Faith, you cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6, John 8:24).

B. Repentance, God has always demanded that man turn from his sin and Jesus said, "repent or perish" (Luke 13:3).

C. And baptism for the remission of sins. This is true conversion. This is the good way, we encourage you to walk therein.

PREACHING JESUS

By Harold Turner

Acts 8:26 - 39 records the events in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. When Philip met the Ethiopian he was sitting in his chariot reading from Isaiah 53. When Philip asked the man if he understood what he was reading, he invited Philip into his chariot to teach him. The eunuch asked Philip regarding the passage he was reading, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" Then Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

To "preach Jesus" has become a very popular motto today. But the modern idea is to preach about Jesus, but do not preach His doctrine. Preach about the man, but do not preach his plan. Such expressions are totally foreign to the Bible concept of preaching Jesus.

It is often contended that the apostles only preached Jesus, and did not emphasize doctrine, or the church. But this is not true. The apostles placed much emphasis on the doctrine of Christ. In I Timothy 1:3 Paul instructed Timothy to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." In II Timothy 4:2-3, Paul said, "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and DOCTRINE. For the time will come when they will not endure sound DOCTRINE . . ." In I Timothy 4:6, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good DOCTRINE, whereunto thou hast attained." Paul said that those of Rome had been made free from sin when they "obeyed that form of DOCTRINE delivered them (Romans 6:17-18.) Timothy was told to "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the DOCTRINE: continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16). The overseers of the church were to "Labour in the word and DOCTRINE" (I Timothy 5:17). The

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PREACHING JESUS

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elders are to use "sound DOCTRINE to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). And II John 9 teaches, "Who-soever transgresses and abides not in the DOCTRINE of Christ, hath not God . . ." Most certainly the apostles placed great emphasis on doctrine. By obedience to the doctrine men could be saved, and continue in their salvation.

What did the apostles preach when they preached Jesus? They taught the facts about Jesus (I Corinthians 15:3-4); they preached the doctrine of Christ (II John 9); and they preached the promises of Jesus (Mark 16:16; I Corinthians 15:24). But, let us notice more in detail what they preached.

They preached Jesus as the justifier of sinful men. In Romans 3:24-26 Paul wrote, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . To declare . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The word, justify, means "to deem to be right, to pronounce righteous." Since Jesus is our Justifier, how and when does he justify us. As seen above, belief in Jesus is required of man. In Romans 10:10 Paul said that "With the heart man believes unto righteousness . . ." In Romans 6:16-18, obedience is required in order for one to be made righteous. Therefore, it is an obedient faith that is necessary for righteousness. But notice more specifically: there is no righteousness outside Christ, "For he (God) hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God IN him" (II Corinthians 5:21). To be right with God we must be IN Christ. But, how do we get into Christ? In both Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 the Bible states that we are "baptized into Christ." Now, if we

preach Jesus as our Justifier, must we not preach that we are justified in Christ? And if we preach justification in Christ, must we not preach how to get into Christ? Since we cannot be justified outside Christ, and since we are baptized into Christ, we must preach baptism to preach Christ. Notice, when Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, his response was, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Did Philip preach baptism in preaching Jesus? If not, why would the eunuch ask this question?

To preach Jesus is to preach him as our hope of eternal life. In I John 5:11, 12 we are told, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Life is available to all IN Christ. But there are some conditions to meet before we can receive this life. In John 5:40, Jesus said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." But, how do we come to Christ? From John 6:45 we learn that we must first be taught - "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Second, the Bible teaches that we must believe in Christ to have this life - John 3:16 ". . . that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Third, we learn from Acts 11:18 that repentance is required to have this life - ". . . Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Being taught the gospel, believing in Christ, and repenting of our sins are all necessary to receiving this life. But John said, "This life is IN His Son." We must be IN the Son to have life. And as seen above from Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27, we are "Baptized INTO Christ." So to preach Jesus as our hope of eternal life, we must preach the conditions to receiving this life. And since Life is in the Son, and we are baptized into the Son, we, like Philip, must preach baptism as a condition to receiving life in Christ.

To preach Jesus is to preach him as our Savior. In I John 4:14, John said, "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." And John 3:17 states, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In II Timothy 2:10, Paul shows that salvation is IN Christ - "that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." In Acts 4:12 Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other . . ." To be saved, one must be IN Christ. And, notice again Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 states that we are "Baptized INTO Christ." To preach Jesus as our Savior is to preach how one can be saved in Christ. This is, no doubt, why the eunuch, upon

learning about Jesus, asked about being baptized.

To preach Jesus is to preach Him as the way we can be united with the Father. The word, reconciled, in the Bible carries the idea of being united with the Father. In Ephesians 2:16 Paul shows that we are reconciled unto the Father in one body, by the cross. That one body is the body of Christ. Only in Christ can we be reconciled unto the Father. According to Ephesians 2:12, those outside Christ are lost without hope, and are without God in the world. In Colossians 1:21-22, Paul said, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." Thus, outside Christ we are enemies to God, but in Christ we are reconciled or united with God. Now, if we are united with the Father in Christ, to preach Jesus, must we not preach how to get into Christ; And as seen in each of the above, the only way the Bible teaches that we get INTO Christ, is through baptism.

To preach Jesus is to preach his plan for salvation. What is accomplished by preaching the man without his plan? His plan calls for an obedient faith. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This clearly shows how to be damned - just don't believe. But what does it teach that we must do to be saved? In I Peter 3:21, Peter stated that baptism saves us - "Baptism doeth also now save us . . ." In Acts 2:40-41, when the apostles encouraged, "Save yourselves, they that gladly received his word were baptized." Why? They had just been told to be baptized for the remission of sins.

Let us preach the Jesus of the Bible along with his plan. After all, he is the "Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). Those who do not obey him will be lost eternally (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). The Jesus of the Bible has a plan for you to obey, Obey it!

HELD HOSTAGE

By Garry Stanton

The most recent case of terrorism leveled against the U.S. was the holding of the crew and passengers of TWA Flight 847. The threats and inconveniences caused by such irrational behavior are a

sad commentary on the world's state-of-mind. The Shiite Moslems apparently will stop at nothing in order to get their way. As long as their terrorism is profitable, they will continue to so act.

This case of "hostage taking" reminds me of a similar happening in the Lord's church today. There are some who practice the same techniques in the church as the Shiite Moslems, they take hostages and will not let go until the ransom is paid. They practice a sort of "spiritual blackmail." It seems that nearly every congregation is plagued by this extremist group in one way or another. It is usually the case that this group is in the minority but they make the most noise. The issues, over which the church is taken hostage, fall not in the realm of scriptural issues, but are nearly always in the realm of personal preference. They do not like the preacher or the way he preaches, they do not want to hear sermons on marriage-divorce, dancing, the sin of social drinking, immodest apparel, the sin of denominationalism, church discipline nor on anything else that might offend someone (usually they mean themselves). Summed up in few words, they do not want the whole truth and nothing but the truth preached, taught, and defended.

This group of "hostage takers" are not nearly as brazen as the Shiite Moslems, they do not wear ammunition belts across their chests, they do not have hand-grenades or dynamite attached to their clothes, they do not carry pistols and automatic weapons. Their work of treachery is done much more quietly and behind the scenes. Sometimes they make their ransom demands known (usually to the elders) and other times they simply keep quiet and let their treachery bring about the intended result.

How do these "hostage takers" hold a congregation hostage? First, there are those who hold the church hostage by withholding their friendliness. These feel like everyone is against them, or maybe they feel they have been wronged by someone in the church, and instead of going to the offending party personally (Matthew 18:15-17), they take the church hostage by refusing to talk, shake hands, or be friendly until they are appeased. The Bible does not tell us to so act, in fact, it tells us to do the exact opposite! When we are wronged we are to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39); we are to "pray for them which spitefully use" us (Matthew 5:44); we are not to overcome evil with evil, "but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Secondly, the "hostage takers" hold the church hostage by withholding their fellowship. When a decision is made with

which they do not agree or something is not to their liking, they simply refuse to attend the services. When they get their way, they will again start attending. But the Bible tells us that it is wrong to willfully absent ourselves from the assembly (Hebrews 10:24-26). This shows a lack of consideration for the others who do assemble and is sinful and thus harmful to the one who forsakes the assembly. John tells us that when we are not in "fellowship one with another" it is because we are not walking in the light and therefore we lose the continual cleansing power in the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).

The third way a congregation can be "held hostage" is by those who withhold their finances. "If they don't do things my way, I will not let them have my money!" or, "If they don't stop preaching on that subject, I'll send my money somewhere else!" There are many problems with this kind of thinking besides that of an un-Christian attitude. When we withhold our contribution, we are guilty of robbing God (Malachi 3:8-10). Secondly, that which we have is from God, even the ability to work on a job for a paycheck, is a gift from God. We are commanded to give in accordance as we have been prospered by God. When we refuse to give to support the local work and send our monies elsewhere, we are guilty of rebelling against the leadership of God's elders. The Bible says nothing about giving only when we get our way.

Hostage taking and ransom demanding are wrong in the world and a real tragedy. But how much worse it is when someone takes the body of Christ hostage!

Ask For The Old Paths

By Richard J. Bonner

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." (Jeremiah 6:16).

The prophet Jeremiah delivered this message to the kingdom of Judah in the seventh century before Christ. Jeremiah was reared in the little village of Anathoth, a short distance north of Jerusalem; but as a young man he moved his residence to the city of Jerusalem where for forty years he was the messenger of God during the last period of Judah's apostasy. He witnessed his nation pass from the happy, prosperous condition under Josiah to

their state of iniquity under the last four godless kings. He lived to see the mighty armies of Babylon sweep mercilessly over the Jews and destroy Jerusalem, the very soul and center of their nation.

The great prophet made every effort possible to save the Jewish nation. He warned them of their sins and pointed out the consequences which they would suffer. Had they listened to Jeremiah, they could have avoided the calamity which befell them. They were destroyed because they sowed the seed of their own destruction. The Bible says, "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The Bible also says, "The wages of sin is death." The nation of Judah did not heed the message of Jeremiah and thus were destroyed.

"Ask for the old paths" was the refraining theme of the prophet's message. The "old paths" would simply refer to God's way, or his law. The Jewish nation had substituted their way for God's way. Probably they thought that God's standard was too old fashioned and not modern enough for the times. They chose to follow their own wisdom and walk according to the dictates of their conscience. The courageous prophet described the law of God as being "the good way," and he promised the people saying, "Ye shall find rest for your souls." They rejected and said, "We will not walk therein."

This should serve as a great lesson for us today as we find ourselves in very similar circumstances to that of Judah. Because of sin the world is heading for destruction. This is, indeed, a time to "ask for the old paths." Let not God's way be substituted with the human conscience, opinions, denominational creeds, or anything else.

REMEMBER GRANDMA?

Grandma used to get up on Sunday morning before daylight, cook a big breakfast for her large family, milk three or four cows, churn, clean house, kill and dress a couple of chickens, and bathe and dress the kids, then go with the family, in a wagon, five miles to the meeting house and get there early enough for Bible study and worship.

TODAY, breakfast comes in a cereal box, the milk man brings the milk and butter, and "Col. Sanders" does the chickens, and the church building is often blocks instead of miles, covered in a few minutes by an air conditioned car . . . YET some can't make it in time for Bible study and worship. Think about it!

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SATAN

By Malcolm L. Hill

1. Thou shalt have as many gods as thou shalt desire. They may be lands, houses, children, money, business, loved ones, bank accounts, and friends.

2. Thou shalt make unto thee graven images. Thou shalt make them in the form of anything. Ye may worship a cross, a picture, or anything thou shalt desire.

3. Thou shalt take the name of God in vain. There are times when thou wilt need strong words to express thy feelings. If others shall say that thou doest curse because thou art ignorant, ignore them and continue cursing.

4. Remember the Lord's day and use it as thou desireth. Six days are not enough for thee, so take seven and use all of them selfishly.

5. Honor thy father and mother as long as they shall agree with thee. When they give commands with which thou doest not agree, cast them from thee and then do as thou pleaseth. Also, forget about them when they are old. If they need the necessities of life do not burden thyself with them.

6. Thou shalt kill. Thou shalt also hate thy brother which is as bad as killing.

7. Thou shalt commit adultery. Thou shalt live in adultery if it pleaseth thee. Thou shalt also commit adultery in thy heart. Think on things that pleaseth thee.

8. Thou shalt steal. Surely many others are doing the same. Run thy business in such a way as to make the most money for thyself. Cheat others for they would cheat thee if they couldst.

9. Thou shalt bear false witness against thy neighbor. One way that thou canst fulfill a fleshly longing and ruin the character of others is to gossip. Do not try to find the truth about the matter for it mightest surely change thy story. Lie anytime when thou seest that it is for thy advantage.

10. Thou shalt be a covetor. Anything thy neighbor hast that thou lackest and likest go after it with all thy might. Yea, with all thy getting get it!

* * * *

You cannot make yourself the man you ought to be by letting God alone.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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