



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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PROGRESSIVISM IS NOT PROGRESS

Rusty Stark

Those who reject God’s word in favor of some newer more modern standard are spiritual progressives. It is digression wrapped up in bright paper with a pretty bow. It is a rotten egg with icing on top. It is apostasy!

You would think that being progressive would be a good thing—a positive thing; because, when I think of being progressive, I think of progress—being positive, going forward—being better and improved. Some churches of Christ are now advertising themselves as being progressive—and proud of it. But, being progressive when it comes to the Bible is an evil work of darkness (cf. Eph. 5:11).

Bing Dictionary defines progress this way: positive development, usually of a gradual kind, toward achieving a goal or reaching a higher standard, ...the general advance of human society and industry over time toward a state of greater civilization, movement forward or onward.

In spite of the fact of sounding similar, progressives, and the ideology and direction of progressivism, is not the same as progress. A striking and dangerous parallel exists between progressivism in the political sense of the word and progressivism in the religious realm.

POLITICAL PROGRESSIVISM

In the political realm, the term ‘progressive’ has different shades of meaning, but one basic concept of progressivism, one characteristic of those who are called progressives, is that of “not wanting to be governed by the Constitution.”

In America, progressivism was conceived and took root as our country was modernized. Advances in the scientific world brought about advances in business and industry. Manufacturing practices changed, electricity brought us ‘new light,’ and changes in transportation took us down new roads at faster and faster speeds.

In light of these many advances, people began to believe and argue that a modern country should not be governed and controlled by a document that, at the time, was 100+ years old. Progressives believed (and still do today) that the constitution of our country was (and is) out of date and out of touch.

Dennis Brady shows the view of President Woodrow Wilson: “Woodrow Wilson believed the constitution was outdated. He thought the founders had a ‘Newtonian’ view of government that was static, he believed that the current leadership of the nation should be able to legislate without regard to the constraints of the constitution, especially the limits spelled out by the enumerated powers of the federal government listed in the constitution. He was the father of the modern view of the constitution that it is a ‘living document.’” (www.brady-reports.com)

Granted, the founders of our country, those who wrote and eventually ratified our constitution, did not see it

as a perfect document. They even allowed an amendment process to change the constitution when such was necessary. But this is not what progressives want. They want the power to translate or even ignore the plain intent of the constitution as they see fit. Essentially, Woodrow Wilson “believed that the constitution means anything the current president and congress think it should mean with no regard to the original intent of the founders.” (www.bradyreports.com)

Another website (heritage.org/Research/Reports/2007/07/The-Progressive-Movement-and-the-Transformation-of-American-Politics) brings out this quote from Wilson: “All that progressives ask or desire, is permission—in an era when development, evolution, is a scientific word—to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle; all they ask is recognition of the fact that a nation is a living thing and not a machine.”

By referring to the “Darwinian principle,” president Wilson meant that the interpretation of the constitution should “evolve” rather than remain “static” (a fixed or stationary condition).

SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVISM

Sadly, political progressivism is

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Editorial...

COMMITMENT TO THE LORD

Garland M. Robinson

The Psalmist wrote, “*I have sworn, and I will perform [it], that I will keep thy righteous judgments*” (Psalm 119:106).

In being baptized, every person commits to being faithful to God all the days of their life. However, along life’s way, we make other commitments. It may be to go somewhere or to do a certain thing. While we need to keep the commitments we make, there is never a time when such commitments become more important than the commitment we made to God on the day we were baptized.

The Lord’s work trumps all other pledges or promises we’ve made. I’ve heard brethren say on occasion, I can’t come to the Gospel meeting because I have a prior commitment I can’t break. But, what about the prior commitment they made when they obeyed the Lord in becoming a Christian? We do not have a right to place ourselves under obligation regarding any matter, when in keeping that commitment, it’s going to take us away from the Lord’s service. It’s a matter of priorities. We must obey God rather than men. That’s what the apostles told the high priest, the captain of the temple and the chief priests when they were forbidden to teach in Jesus’ name. “*Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29).

Where I lived some years ago, the coach of the winning Little League team was always the coach of the All-Stars that played in the district and state tournaments after the regular season. That responsibility fell upon me one year since I was the coach of the winning team. I had to tell them I could not be the coach of the All-Stars because the team would be required to play on Sunday which would, more than likely, involve playing during church time. I was told that coaching the team was a commitment and I could not let the team down. My reply was that I had a prior

commitment to the Lord to worship on Sunday and that I would not forsake the assembling of the church to attend a ball game — even if I were the coach which also included my son who was on the team (cf. Heb. 10:25-26). My commitment to the Lord had been made many years before when I became a Christian. One very influential man in particular could not understand my decision and thought I was going “over-board.” I answered by saying; well, it’s a matter of priorities and where you place the emphasis. Being faithful to the Lord and going to heaven is more important than any worldly affair. Personally, I would have loved to coach the All-Star team. But, my commitment to God takes precedence over all other affairs of life. My illustration here is not to brag about myself — that’s not the point. I speak of it to show the thinking of worldly minded people when it comes to serving God. They half-heartedly “go to church” and pretend to be a Christian as long as it doesn’t interfere with what they want to do. They use the Lord as a crutch or only in an emergency; and, if it’s convenient!

By the inspiration of God, Paul wrote these words in Colossians 3:1-5: ¹*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* ²*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* ³*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* ⁴*When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* ⁵*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Col. 3:1-5). Several observations need to be made distinct and clear from these five verses:

Verse 1. Having obeyed the Gospel, we are to *keep on seeking* (every day of our lives) the things of God. “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Luke 12:34). “...Giving

all diligence [eagerness, earnestness, carefulness], add to your faith virtue...knowledge...temperance...patience...godliness...brotherly kindness...charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make [you that ye shall] neither [be] barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8). “*While we look not at the things which are seen [earthly], but at the things which are not seen [heavenly]: for the things which are seen [are] temporal [temporary]; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal*” (2 Cor. 4:18). “*For here [on this earth] have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*” [a heavenly city] (Heb. 13:14). “*For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 3:20).

Verse 2. We are to set our *affection, our mind, our interest, our focus, our goal*, not on things of this world, but on those things which are above, where Christ is. The Lord, his church and his word is not a crutch to lean on, only when we’ve been knocked down. He is not a life jacket, only to be used when we’re drowning. If that is all he means to us, we will lose our soul. Jesus said, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*” (Matt. 6:19-20). “*The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (1 John 2:17).

Verse 3. We are *dead* as far as the interests of the world are concerned. They are meaningless to us when compared to going to heaven. Our first and foremost pursuit and business is working in the Lord’s kingdom. As a Christian, our whole life is *hidden, concealed, covered, kept secret* from the things of the world by the life we live in the Lord. The world *escapes our notice* when our life is all about the Lord’s will. The Lord’s church is the center of our life, the most precious and valuable possession we could ever dream of having. Jesus expressed it this way, “*the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof*

goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44). Would you forfeit all you have to be faithful to Christ and his church? Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20). The problem is that so many fill their lives with things of the world instead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 4. Christ is *our life*. Can you say that? Is Christ really your life, your whole life? Are you so devoted to the Lord that you would forsake all else in order to obey him? We sometimes sing a song that speaks about our Lord and savior with these words: *“He is my everything, he is my all. He is my everything, both great and small.”* Those are fine words to sing at church. But do we mean them? Many say they do, but when the truth is fully known, their practice shows He is only their “life” when they don’t have something else they want to do. Jesus said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...”* (Matt. 6:33). The Psalmist said, *“Trust in the LORD, and do good...”* (Psa. 37:3). *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Prov. 3:5-6). *“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget [her cunning]. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy”* (Psa. 137:5-6). Jerusalem in these verses represents the Lord’s Way, his Word. He truly is our everything!

Verse 5. We are to put to death (mortify, cease) our lusts and passions. To name the name of Christ means we have set upon a new course in life, a new direction. The things of the world no longer hold our attention. Immoral and ungodly lusts, fornication, longing for that which is forbidden and sin of every kind brings God’s wrath down upon us. That is the way we used to live (v.6), to fill every desire of the flesh. But now that we have chosen to be obedient servants of the Lord, we stop them, put them to death. We serve a new master.

The Psalmist said, *“I have sworn, and I will perform it”* (Psa. 119:106). What was it that he had promised to

perform? He answered by saying that he would keep God’s righteous judgments. He must keep God’s Word. They are right. They are true. They are holy. Would to God that all men and women everywhere would feel the same way. It wasn’t that he “had” to keep God’s word. It was that he “wanted” to keep it. He delighted in

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strikingly and obviously parallel to what we have seen and are seeing in the spiritual realm. The United States was established under the rules and restrictions of the constitution. The church of Christ was established under the authority and restrictions of the Gospel. Political progressives no longer wish to be governed by the constitution. Spiritual progressives no longer wish to be governed or ruled by God’s word. And, make no mistake about it, progressivism in the spiritual realm is not progress; it is apostasy.

The restoration movement (as a whole) revolved around the point of being governed only by the New Testament. Denominational churches had departed from the Bible and no longer looked to it as their authority. They developed creeds and manuals. The Restoration plea called men back to the Bible — being governed by God’s word and God’s word alone.

The crucial question is this: Are we going to be ruled by the Bible or by man-made creeds and doctrines? The perilous and blasphemous answer that rings from many pulpits is, ‘No!’ We will not be governed by the Bible with its strict rule of conduct. Far too many today are ‘progressives’ in their thought and practice. They reject the ‘old’ because they feel we need something ‘new.’ They feel the Bible is out of date and don’t want to be ruled or restricted by it. They are ready and willing to go beyond the Bible because they feel it must be fluid — changing with time and circumstances.

Few are bold enough to say what they mean, openly declaring that God’s word is out of touch. Instead, they call for a new way of interpreting it — a new hermeneutic which allows it to mean whatever they want it to mean. Or, they claim we can

keeping it. It brought him great joy and happiness.

NOW, tell me if I’m right or wrong. We know what the Bible says, so many are just not willing to accept it and live by it. Are you willing to die by it? Remember, we will give an account of ourselves to God some day (Rom. 14:12).

never truly understand the intent of the original authors because we have a different cultural perspective — so why try? Or, they deny that the Bible addresses all of the spiritual needs of modern man, therefore we need to go beyond it. Their thinking is that a 2,000 year old document cannot possibly meet the needs of modern man.

Some brazenly claim that the church, patterned after the New Testament, is out of date — not meeting the needs of modern man. They claim this is because of how we have interpreted and applied the Bible.

Those who contend for the faith (Jude 3) and call men’s hearts and lives back to the ‘old Jerusalem Gospel’ are derogatorily called “bible thumpers.” They literally cannot imagine anyone who would cling to what they call that “old dilapidated document called the Bible.” To them, those who love the truth are thought of as “ancient relics of the past” who are out of touch with the “felt needs” of modern man. They love telling us that we are answering questions that no one is asking. The faithful know better than that and are not fooled by it. The trouble is not with us quoting Scripture and calling upon all men to repent and obey it (Acts 17:30). We have the right answers because they are Bible answers. The problem lies with people who are asking the wrong questions. The Bible is right and always has the right answer to whatever men face (cf. 1 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). This world will never out-grow the Bible!

SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVISM IS NOT NEW

There were those in Old Testament times who did not want to be ruled by the law of God.

In Jeremiah 6:16, we see those who rejected the “old paths” and refused to live by it. *“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.” These people were spiritual progressives. They did not want God’s “old paths.” They rejected the old and sought a new, unapproved, unauthorized way.

We are not told the specifics regarding what God had instructed regarding sacrifices in the early days of human history (Gen. 4:3-5). But what we do know is that Abel offered his sacrifice “by faith,” obeying what God had told them to do, and Cain did not offer his sacrifice “by faith” (Heb. 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17), Abel obeyed God’s word regarding sacrifice and Cain did not. It was not progress for Cain to depart from the revealed will of God; and, it is not progress for men today to go beyond that which is written (2 John 9-11; 1 Cor. 4:6). It does not matter how sincere we may be, “*to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams*” (1 Sam. 15:22).

Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire” that God had not authorized (Lev. 10:1-2). They were destroyed for refusing to obey the restrictions of God’s commands. They were not satisfied with the “old,” they wanted something “new.” They were progressives of ancient times and were condemned for it! No wonder progressives today tell us they are tired of hearing about Nadab and Abihu. I guess so! It shines the spotlight on their doctrine and practice and they hate it. They don’t want to be exposed. They have NO Bible authority to stand on; and as a matter of fact, they don’t think they need authority.

By the standards of modern progressives, King Saul was treated unfairly by God (1 Sam. 15). He was commanded to kill the Amalekites, all of them, even their livestock. He had a new hermeneutic, a new way of interpreting God’s commands. He kept king Agag alive along with some livestock for a sacrifice to God. In his estimation (interpretation), he had obeyed God. First Samuel 15:13 says, “*Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.*” When Samuel challenged and rebuked Saul for not obeying the commandment of God, Saul replied

that he had obeyed. But, in 1 Samuel 15:20 we read, “*And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.*” Regardless of his claim, he had disobeyed God and it was not progress, it was rebellion (1 Sam. 15:23).

THE NEW TESTAMENT ANTICIPATES AND CONDEMNS PROGRESSIVISM

The Gospel of the New Covenant was intended for all generations to come. In fact, departing from it in favor of something new (progressivism) is clearly condemned in Scripture.

Galatians 1:6-9, “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*”

Second John 9, “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*” The word translated ‘transgresseth’ is the idea of going onward and beyond. Thayer defines it this way: to proceed, go forward: in a bad sense, to go further than is right or proper. Sounds like progressives espousing progressivism doesn’t it?! Evil indeed.

Jude 3, “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*”

First Timothy 4:1, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*” Progressives wish to depart from the faith, and they do so in league with seducing spirits and demons. It is not progress to leave the word of God to follow Satan.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES TODAY

This article is more than an intellectual exercise. Those crying out for something new in the church today are progressives. They are ‘eat-up’ with progressivism. They may not call themselves that, and they may not appreciate being called that, but they are progressives just the same. Progressivism is not progress in the right way — God’s Way!

Let’s consider some of the ways progressives have rejected the Bible in favor of that which is new.

1) They reject the Bible as being adequate. Many want to be ruled by the dictates of modern philosophy or psychology. “Thus saith the Lord” has been replaced by thus sayeth Frued or Skinner or Rogers.

2) Modern progressives think the church should be shaped by the “felt needs” of modern Americans. They preach sermons full of modern buzzwords and the newest fads, yet sadly lacking in God’s word. They expose their weakness, cowardice, and liberal direction by what they won’t preach — the whole counsel of God. They are the opposite end of the spectrum from Paul who held back “*nothing that was profitable*” and declared “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:20,27). Progressivism is not progress, it’s rebellion!

3) Many seem to accept a strictly pragmatic, utilitarian viewpoint in preaching and practice. This means they will do whatever brings in the numbers. The cry is, “We have to be current. Forget Matthew 7:13-14! Let’s be with the many, not with the few.” One wonders why progressives, appealing to the masses and following the fads of the multitudes, cannot feel the heat of the destruction that awaits them at the end of the road.

Progressives are revealing themselves in the moral realm also.

1) Some have abandoned preaching about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. After all, in our society, marriage does not mean what it once did. In modern society, living together without being married is commonplace. Marriage vows are not as binding as mortgage contracts. Vast numbers of people have been divorced and remarried without knowing anything about God’s law on the matter. Their cry is, how can Matthew 19:9 possibly address all of these modern issues? And so, many shift their doc-

trinal position, or they simply leave out what God has to say about the matter.

2) Those who will not preach against homosexuality for fear of being out of touch are acting in a progressive manner. The same with those who will not oppose same-sex marriages.

3) Those who vote for abortionists clearly do not think we should be governed by God's word. The Bible clearly expects us to uphold the sanctity of innocent human life. If we do not do so, in our votes and in our sermons, we are refusing to be governed by God's word.

THE CHURCH HAS A PERFECT, UNCHANGING CONSTITUTION

As long as we have for our foundation the Rock of Ages, and as long as we use for our constitution the timeless, flawless Bible, we will never be out of touch or out of date.

1) Jesus claimed a timelessness for his words: *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35).

2) It is only through the ageless, incorruptible Gospel that men in our modern age can be born again: *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* (1 Peter 1:23).

3) God's word meets all of our needs regardless of how modern our world becomes. *"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Peter 1:25).

4) *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

5) *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3).

It really does not matter how or why men reject God's word. Nothing new can replace the perfect pattern. There is no new need, no new cultural phenomenon, no popular fad, and nothing about modern society that God did not anticipate in his holy, inspired word. (Continued on next page)

"O HOW LOVE I THY LAW!"

David was not a liberal; he loved God's law (Psalm 119:97). Liberals do not love law. They think law is too authority oriented, and "grievous" (1 John 5:3). Liberals have a name for those who love law; they call them a "legalist." Liberals like to think they are too spiritual to be bound by any law. They are progressive, or so they call themselves. David loved the law of God because he loved God; liberals love themselves. They say they love God, but like idolaters of old, the gods they love are gods of their own imaginations. They love a god that lets them do what they want to do. They do not love the God of law (Gal. 6:2), or the God of commandments (John 14:15), or the God that will judge them by his words in the last day (John 12:48).

David loved God's commandments because they made him wiser than his enemies (Psalm 119:98). Liberals think they are smarter than commandment keepers, and some of them are in some things, but they are not wiser. Wisdom comes through humility; *"with the lowly is wisdom"* (Prov. 11:2). In Psalm 111:10 David sang, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments."* The devil himself is among our enemies and we cannot outsmart him, but we can be wiser if we have the humility *"to fear God and keep his commandments"* (Eccl. 12:13).

David loved God's testimonies because they gave him more understanding than his teachers (Psalm 119:99). Teachers know many things and we should learn all we can from them, but they do not understand the things they know if they do not believe we need to fear God and keep his commandments. Anytime you hear a teacher teach anything that is contrary to God's law you know he does not understand what he is talking about. Those who know God's word know how to weigh the value of what they are taught; they know what to accept and what to reject. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding"* (Prov. 9:10).

David loved God's precepts because they gave him more understanding than the ancients (Psalm 119:100). We like to think that wisdom comes with age, but that is not always so. In Job 32:9, Elihu said, *"Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment."* While it is foolish to lightly dismiss the counsel of the aged, it is even more foolish to follow their counsel when it is contrary to God's law. The young prophet believed the lie of the old prophet, and God said to him, *"Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee...thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers"* (1 Kings 13:21-22).

David knew God's laws would keep him from evil ways (Psalm 119:101). He resolved that he would not depart from them (Psalm 119:102). To him, they were "sweeter than honey" (Psalm 119:103). He knew that the mercies and salvation of God would come according to the word of God (Psalm 119:41). The entirety of Psalm 119 should be read as the psalm of a man on his knees seeking God through his word. It is because David loved God's law that he said *"therefore I hate every false way"* (Psalm 119:104). Show me a man that does not hate every false way, and I will show you a man that does not love the law of God.

It does not surprise me that David would sing, *"O how love I thy law"* (Psalm 119:97), for he had already said, *"Blessed in the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly... his delight is in the law of the Lord"* (Psalm 1:1-2).

The Psalms of David are powerful and bold and challenging and beautiful because David loved God's law. I hate to think what insipid lyrics and deceitful ditties they would be if they had been written by a liberal.

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Those who reject God's word in favor of some newer more modern standard are spiritual progressives. And, spiritual progressivism is not

progress. It is digression wrapped up in bright paper with a pretty bow. It is a rotten egg with icing on top. It is not progress, it is heresy. It is a de-

parture from the truth, the truth that sets us free (John 8:31-32).

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RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Victor M. Eskew

Throughout Bible history, various objects were used by God in order to accomplish His will. One object that is well known is the *tables of stone* upon which the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 24:12, we read: *"And the Lord said unto Moses, come up to me in the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that thou mayest teach them."* These two tables of stone came to represent the entire Law of Moses. They were so important that they were stored in the ark of the covenant (Deut. 10:5) that was placed in the most holy place in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:34; Heb. 9:3-5).

Another object God used to carry out His will was a *wooden cross*. Upon this cross, the Son of God shed His blood to provide the remission of sins for all mankind. *"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:8). This cross was often the subject of Paul's preaching. It was not always received as it should have been. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"* (1 Cor. 1:18).

These two objects, and others like them, are well-known by most people today. When people hear of the Ten Commandments, they think of Judaism. When they hear of the cross, they think of Christ and Christianity. These objects have become symbols, or, material representations of the ideologies that comprise these things. Other objects also have a connection (symbols of) Christianity: a "so-called" nativity scene, the sign of the fish, steeples, and the Bible. The world in general give significance to these objects, but true Christians (those who truly know the Bible) do not attach any special importance on such objects themselves. They know these

things were just instruments God used to carry out His will. However, Christians will never eliminate how these objects are viewed by others. Thus, sometimes in our conversations, we have to speak of these things in the manner in which the world views them.

Dear readers, the religion of Christ (Christianity) is presently under attack in every place and in every way (as we well know). It is being attacked by atheists, communists, secularists, and Muslims. These individuals hate Christianity and everything that is attached to it. Remember, that they see things such as the cross and the nativity scene as symbols of the Christian religion. Because of this, they attack these symbols. They want to do away with the cross, the nativity scene, and the Ten Commandments. In their minds, ridding themselves of the symbols partially rids them of the Christian religion. Once the symbols are gone, they will go after Christian practices such as prayer and Bible reading and worship. Once these have been abolished, they will come after our freedom of religion and freedom of speech. They would rejoice to shut the mouths of all whom they believe are preaching Jesus. They would love to see every building close its doors that is in any way associated with the name of Jesus.

True Christians need to understand that the world does not understand the concepts of New Testament (first century) Christianity. They just know that the world views things like the Ten Commandments, nativity scenes, and the cross are associated with Christianity in spite of what the Bible teaches. The world despises the religion of Christ, so they attack what they think are its symbols. Because of their understanding of these things, we often have to communicate from their perspective whether that perspective is right or wrong. True Christians need to be concerned about

these things because we will ultimately be in the crosshairs of the enemies of Christianity. Our secular world will not allow us to continue to preach Christ just because we do not acknowledge the symbols of Christianity as holding any religious significance. Any message of salvation, submission to Christ, sin, the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, the church, the authority of the New Testament, the Second Coming, Judgment, Heaven and Hell will be opposed. The church will come under fire. May God help us to understand the mindset of the world. And, may we as Paul, be set for the defense of the Gospel (Phil. 1:17).

Before we leave the subject of religious symbols, we need to point out that the use of religious symbols as objects of worship and devotion are condemned in the Word of God. Take, for instance, the cross. Christians have always held the cross of Calvary to be something precious. Paul said that he gloried in the cross. *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal. 6:14). Man's esteem for the cross, however, has caused him to go too far and use it as something having power and protection for the believer. By the sixth century, the "sign of the cross" was habitually made by those who claimed to follow the Christ. It was not long after, that images of the cross and of the crucified Christ were made. Some were put in houses. Others were placed in church buildings. Some were formed into jewelry to be worn. When this happened, individuals began to show honor and devotion to the objects. They would bow before the crosses, kiss their necklaces, and say prayers through the crucifix.

In the Bible, God condemns the use of physical things as objects of worship and devotion. The second of the Ten Commandments declares: *"Thou*

shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:4-5). Leviticus 26:1 repeats this commandment in these words: “Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God.” God does not want anything coming between Him and man. He knows that man has a tendency to put as much, or more, significance on material objects than upon Him as God, the true object of worship. Jesus said: “...Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). Therefore, what man sees as symbols of Christianity means nothing to true Christians and the true church. But at the same time, an attack upon these things is ultimately an attack upon our freedoms and the free practice of true worship. It opens the door for persecution.

In this article, we have done three things. First, we have seen that various objects have been used by God in order to carry out His will. Second, we have seen that man has turned some of these objects into symbols that represent a religion. The cross definitely represents Christianity to most. Those who hate Christianity seek first to remove these objects from the public domain. After removing these things, they will then come after the true substance of the Christian faith. Third, we saw that turning the objects that God used to accomplish His will into objects of worship and devotion is condemned in God’s Word. May all of us learn the Bible stories about these important objects. While such symbols as the ten commandments, crosses, etc. are meaningless to true Christians as objects of worship or devotion, let us also develop a concern about those who are attacking these objects because they see them as symbols of Christianity. May we never turn material objects into objects of worship and devotion. May all of us worship God, and Him alone.

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PRAYER

Prayer is man speaking to God. What a marvelous blessing to be able speak to the creator of the universe, the all knowing and all powerful God of heaven. Let us learn from the Bible more about the avenue of prayer.

God and man have spoken to each other since the beginning of man living on earth (Gen. 2:8,15,16; 3:9 13). God has spoken to man personally through inspired men and now through his holy word (Heb. 1:1,2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). Jesus taught his disciples to pray by his example and by his instructions (Mark 1:35; 14:33 36; John 17:1 26; Matt. 6:9 13).

Prayer can include supplications, intercessions, giving of thanks and praise (1 Tim. 2:1; Matt. 6:9; 1 Tim. 4:3,4). Prayer should be a part of our daily life (1 Cor. 11:28; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:3). Prayer is to be a part of our public worship as well as our private life (Acts 2:42). But who has the right to enjoy the blessing of prayer?

Peter writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16). The prayer of a righteous man is very powerful (James 5:16 18). These prayers are to be made through Jesus to God (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; Matt. 6:9). But who is a righteous man?

Paul writes that those who turn away from God are unrighteous and those who turn to God have righteousness through Christ (Rom. 3:10,11,20 26; 2 John 9). The righteous are those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, have repented of their sins, have confessed they believe that Jesus is the Son of God, have been baptized to remove their sins and are living a faithful life before God (Acts 8:31 39; 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-10).

If it is God’s will, the righteous person will receive what he asks from God (1 John. 5:14,15). Prayer is a great blessing from God for his children (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:10).

Do you pray? How often do you pray? How do you pray? Are you a

righteous man/woman? Is your life in harmony with the Lord so your prayers go up before him as a sweet smelling savor?

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Look forward every month for STOP. Bless you for preaching God’s Truth” ...**Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK.** “You have been sending my dad (**Virgil Ferrell**) this paper for quite some time now. He loved to read them and looked forward to receiving them. He passed away in March and Mom passed shortly after him in May. Please remove them from your mailing list. Thank you and God bless” ...**Renea Cagle, Mountain Home, AR.** “We enjoy receiving *Seek the Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Willard Cox, Searcy, AR.** “John Dickison has passed away. We express sympathy for his family” ...**Gordon, TX.** “Thanks” ...**Roger Comstock, Sevierville, TN.** “Thanks” ...**Knoxville, TN.** “I preach at a small congregation in Roanoke, VA. If possible, could we receive your monthly publication by mail. Could we receive at least 5 copies? Thank you for your work” ...**Michael Carter, Roanoke, VA.** [NOTE: We mail bundles to all who desire them. Tell us how many you want and we will send that number every month. They are free.] “What a joy it is to receive the TRUTH each month through *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you to all who are involved in getting this publication out. STOP educates, strengthens and encourages us and we are blessed because of it. We send our love and appreciation to our brothers and sisters at Leoni church of Christ. You’re in our thoughts and prayers” ...**Michael and Cheryl Cook, Adrian, MI.** “*Seek The Old Paths* is a great publication. Keep up the good work. I have been preaching for the Pulaski church for the past 20 years. Just turned 80! I can’t believe it, but its true. Time passes so fast anymore” ...**Clarence Lavender, Christiansburg, VA.** “Thank you” ...**Mount Hope, KS.** “Please change my address and continue sending me *Seek The Old Paths*. I love it” ...**Durham, NC.** “Thank you” ...**OH.** “After 24 years we are sad we are closing our doors. We have enjoyed your publication over the many years. You can remove the bundle you’re sending. The individuals that are left have secured their own subscription. Thank you for the many years of telling the truth of God” ...**James Oliver, for the church of Christ at 4th & Lewis, Vienna, IL.** “Thanks a lot for the ‘*Old Paths*.’ I appreciate each article. Your paper will help a lot of people. Thanks a million” ...**Don Potts, Meridian, MS.** “Gladys Hutson has passed away. We express condolences to the family” ...**Corinth, MS.** “Thank you” ...**Brad Bradshaw, Norcross, GA.** “Thank you for sending the paper to us” ...**John & Edna Humphries, Murray, KY.** “Jason Mosely has passed away. We send prayers and sympathy to his family” ...**Albany, GA.** “Dear brother Robinson: The latest issue of S.T.O.P. (July/17) is a real winner in my book. I am tired of the expression ‘times have changed,’ more accurately it is the modern day preachers who have changed. The first two articles show very clearly why the Lord’s church is where it is today. Brother Jon Gary Williams very aptly shows what can be accomplished when the Lord’s work is done according to the standard (the Bible). Your article demonstrates what those who find the Bible insufficient for their needs have done and continue to do. I pray we can see a lot more from those who are not afraid to say it like it is. Keep up the good work!” ...**Denver Thomas, Milton, WV.** [NOTE: all back issues are online at seektheoldpaths.com/stop.htm]. “Louis Clark has passed away” ...**Rockwall, TX.** “I enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Carl Griggs, Waynesboro, TN.**

“A gallon holds 128 ounces. If one puts 138 ounces into a one gallon container, 10 ounces will spill over the side. This is a simple idea to grasp. I believe the same concept is part of the reason attendance suffers, especially on Sunday and Wednesday evening. Not only attendance, but participation in the work of the church is certainly not engaged in as it should be. In our society we have more than enough material possessions and activities with which to fill our time, so many that we are unable to contain them in the 168 hours we have each week. Just as with the gallon container, if we try to fill our week with more than 168 hours, some other activity must be sacrificed. How often is it that one’s service to the Lord is that which is sacrificed? Let us fill our lives with more activities for the Lord. When we do, we will naturally rid ourselves of things that steal our time and service from the Lord” ...**Tom Wacaster, Talco, TX.**

Money can’t buy *friendship* — friendship must be earned. Money can’t buy a *clear conscience* — square dealing is the price tag. Money can’t buy the *glow of good health* — right living is the secret. Money can’t buy happiness — happiness is a mental attitude. One may be as happy in a cottage as in a mansion. Money can’t buy *sunsets, songs of birds and music of the wind through the trees* — they are as free as the air we breathe. Money can’t buy *inward peace* — peace is the result of being right with God. Money can’t buy *character* — character is what we are when we are alone with ourselves in the dark. Money can’t buy the *most valuable treasures life* — they come as a reward of obeying the Gospel and living a faithful Christian life. —*unknown*

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