

# Old Paths

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. Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant. Psalm 25:14

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## Preferences vs. Convictions

By Allen Stump

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If you were to go to one of what we might call “the finer restaurants,” something like an Olive Garden, you would not just go in and sit down at a table, but you would be met by a greeter. That greeter would ascertain how many were in your party and then they would have a very simple question. They would ask you if you preferred to be in smoking or non-smoking. What they are saying is, “Do you want to sit where the smokers sit or do you want to sit where the smokers don’t sit?” Did you notice that they ask you, “Do you prefer?” You may not always, depending upon the availability, have a choice. We have what we call *preferences*. Now today, I have preferred to wear a necktie. Some of you haven’t. Some of you have. I have a preference about a lot of things and this is one, but it is not a *conviction*. I don’t have a *conviction* to the point that I would be willing to die for that conviction on the issue of a necktie if somebody put a gun to my head and said you either will or will not wear a tie, according to the opposite of my will.

What I am saying is, that there is a difference in having a preference and a conviction. A preference means that you prefer things. The dictionary says that a preference is the selecting of someone or something over another, but in a religious connection, a preference means that which we would choose, but not necessarily have, to have. A conviction means the state of being convicted. In the matter of faith, and in a religious sense, a conviction is something we feel so strongly about that we are willing to give our lives for that conviction!

Sometimes we hear someone say, “Well, he’s convicted about the truth,” or someone says, “I’m convicted about this matter.” We don’t really mean that we are convicted about something, in a spiritual sense, unless we are willing to die for it. What we simply mean, sometimes, is that we see the truth of the matter. We see the rightness of the argument. However, I want to tell you, friends, that in the context of matters of faith, a preference is something we choose, but something that we could, and are willing to, make a different choice in. A conviction is something that we will not change our choice in, even if it means life or death, for us, or even for someone else! That is what a true conviction is. True convictions come out of only one thing, and that is a belief in moral absolutes and a desire stronger than death to follow those absolutes! The dictionary defines absolute as “perfect in quality or nature, not mixed, pure, and unadulterated.”

## Prayer Requests

Over the last few years Brother Doug Goslin has been battling with some serious health issues and was recently hospitalized in ICU at the University Hospital at Louisville, KY. Doug has serious liver problems among other things. It appeared that Doug might not live, but God graciously spared his life. Doug is currently out of the hospital and we would like to encourage the saints to continue to remember him in prayer as his condition appears to be fragile at best. Many can trace their first knowledge of the truth about the relationship between the Father and Jesus to Doug’s ministry. Please also remember his family as they minister to his needs

Almost 13 years ago we began to publish *Old Paths* with the desire to help call God’s people away from the errors that have come in among His people to the “old paths, where is the good way.” (Jeremiah 6:16) We had hopes that Jesus would have come by now and we would be in

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Do we really believe as Christians in moral absolutes? Do we believe that God is a God of moral absolutes, and that the Bible, His Book for us, is a book of moral absolutes? In other words, when God says something, does He really mean it exactly as He says it? Or do we have an ability to change it, or to move it, or to say it really means something else?

We have this happen in our lives all the time. I was quite well reminded of this recently when someone mentioned another person's child and said the child doesn't obey his mother. The mother will have to tell him several times to do something. That is because the child doesn't believe what the mother is saying and has learned he cannot believe what the mother is saying about a requirement of obedience.

## God Means Exactly What He Says

When God says something to us, does He really mean it? Does He mean it 100% of the time, and does He mean it exactly as He says it?

I would like to turn to a couple of examples in the Old Testament, just briefly, to refresh our memory about the way God speaks and how He means things. We are going to look at some examples of convictions and preferences in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 15 we find the story of when God commanded Samuel to give a decree to Saul to destroy Amalek. Verses 1 and 2 state: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." The Amalekites were the children of Amalek, the grandson of Esau. Therefore the Amalekites had a connection with the children of Israel. When the children of Israel were passing through, God wanted the Amalekites to be good to the children of Israel and not to fight against them, but the children of Amalek were very

hostile toward them. Because their cup had become full, God told Saul to utterly destroy everything. These people had become so wicked and so vile, that they had passed beyond the border and the boundary of God's goodness and mercy, to where they could not even find salvation. Even their animals were so diseased, that they weren't to bring back any of the animals.

Saul and his troops went to battle. They destroyed the men of Amalek, but they brought back King Agag and what they thought were some of the "best" animals. What were they going to do with these folks? Samuel asked, in verse 14, "...What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" According to Saul, they were brought back for sacrifice unto God. They said that they were brought back to give God the glory! In effect they were saying, "We are going to disobey God's exact word and bring glory to Him by doing it!" As we noted earlier, Saul also brought back King Agag. Why did he do that? When a king wanted to show his greatness he would subdue another kingdom and bring the king back and parade him in front of everybody. It made Saul look good. In fact, Saul said unto Samuel in verse 20, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me." However, Samuel didn't agree with that in the least. Samuel declared: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (v. 22) Samuel told Saul that he didn't obey at all, and further, he told him the kingdom was taken from him. In verse 28, he said, "...The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." God gave the kingdom to David. When God speaks, it is our duty to listen and follow His directions exactly.

In 2 Samuel, chapter 6, there is a story indirectly about David, who many times did want to do God's will, but sometimes he didn't understand the details as well as he should have, and

he got in trouble. David and the Israelites were going to bring the ark to the house of God. It had been specified in the book of Numbers (7:9) that the ark was to be carried with staves upon the shoulders of Levites, but they were living in new, modern times, and so they got themselves an ox cart. They decided they could transport the ark in a way different than God had commanded. So, they put it upon the ox cart, and as it was going, perhaps it hit a rut or a low place in the road, and the cart shook. It looked as if the ark might tip off, and a man by the name of Uzzah reached forth his hand to stay the ark, to keep it from falling off. It sounded like a good thing, didn't it? He is here to serve God. And what happened to Uzzah? The Bible says he was struck down dead that very moment. You see, they didn't follow God exactly as He said in every respect.

Beloved, I want to tell you that God does mean exactly what He says. His Word does not lie. He is not like us. Sometimes we think, after we speak, or we speak before we think. You've heard the old proverb about thinking twice before speaking once. Well, we speak twice before we think once many times, but God does not do that. God knows exactly what He wants to say and He means exactly what He says!

## The Giving of Ourselves

Now, let's look at some examples in the Bible about preferences and convictions. Let's consider first some texts in the Bible about our dedication to God and what it should be like. Mark 12:29, 30 records Jesus quoting from the Old Testament, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with..." 99% of thy heart, and with 98% thy soul, and with 70% thy mind, and with 65% of thy strength. Is that what it says? It says that we are to love Him with all of our soul, mind, and strength. Everything that we have should be His. Is that true? Do we believe it? Or, do we have a preference that that is the

way it should be? Or, do we have a conviction that that is the way it must be?

Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The Bible says we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and we are to present even our bodies to Him. It also says that, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

### **The Tithe Represents Giving Our Whole Self**

In Malachi chapter 3, we read about a principle God has given to help us to publicly demonstrate and to reinforce the concept that we are His, that all that we have, and all that we are, are His. God told the people they were "...cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:9, 10)

The word "tithe" literally means a tenth. We return the tithe to God in support of the ministry, as recognition that all that we have is His. It doesn't belong to us. The tithe doesn't belong to me. We sometimes feel that God has given us the tithe and then He gives us nine tenths to do with as we want. No, He doesn't do that at all. It is all His. None of it is ours. The tithe is simply a *recognition* that it is all His. So, God tells us that we are to give Him everything and we should be willing to do that.

### **Ananias and Sapphira**

Acts chapter 5 records a very interesting event. In the early days of the Christian church, people were bringing together pieces of land and goods that they had and they were selling them. They were making a gift to the early

church and to the work of the gospel with the proceeds. There was a couple by the name of Ananias and Sapphira and the Bible tells us that they sold a possession, but it says that they "kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied upon men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things." (Acts 5:2-5) And later, when his wife came in, she lied also and died as well.

Ananias and Sapphira had a preference, didn't they? They said they were going to give it all, but then they decided they really wouldn't give it all to God. They would hold back part of it, and so they didn't fulfill that which they promised to do.

### **Abraham**

There is another story in Genesis, chapter 22, about a man that was asked to give up everything he had. His name was Abram, later Abraham. God told him, in verse 2, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Abraham was asked to give up something far more precious than all of his goods or wealth, in fact, far more precious than his own life. He was asked to give up the life of his only son Isaac, who was worth more than everything else that he possessed in the earth. Ananias and Sapphira had a preference. They wanted to help the work of God, but only so much. They were willing to give God so much, but they preferred to keep back part. Abraham had a conviction that he was willing to give God everything he had. You know the story

of Abraham. He took the knife and he brought it to the throat of Isaac and was ready and willing to offer his son, if that was what God asked. Fortunately, in this case, God stayed his hand. Think about it today, friends. The giving of yourself today to God, is it a preference or is it a conviction?

### **Joshua and Caleb**

Sometimes God gives us a command telling us to do something. Are we willing to do it? Are we willing to obey God if it appears easy and doesn't cause us hardship? Or will we do things regardless of the cost and the consequences?

God had delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and had led them out in the wilderness. But God didn't want them to stay in the wilderness, He decided that they could go to the Promised Land if they wanted to go. So, He told Moses to send out twelve spies, one from every tribe, and look over the land and bring back a report. You know, they came back and told the people, "Listen, we have never seen anything like this in our lives. It is a land which flows with milk and honey." Do you know what it means to flow with milk and honey? For there to be a lot of honey, there has to be a lot of flowers. For an animal's milk to flow the mother must have a good diet and conditions must be just right. In other words, the expression "a land that flows with milk and honey" meant that the land was a super-producer. You know the story of the cluster of grapes that were brought back and the different things that were seen. Every one of those people wanted that land. Every one of them *preferred* to go to the land of Canaan, but some of them got a little scared because they saw the giants and they did not think that the Lord could deliver them. So, they did not have a *conviction* that they should go. They had a *preference*.

But, there were two men, Joshua and Caleb, that had a conviction! "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their



clothes.” (Numbers 14:6) When they heard these spies tell this wicked report that they couldn’t go up and possess the land because the people are too great for them. It says they “...rent their clothes; And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.” (Numbers 14:6-9) Joshua and Caleb had a conviction, a belief that God wanted them to take the land and they were willing to die for the honor of God if need be.

Beloved, do we have a conviction or a preference about doing God’s will, no matter how easy or how hard it seems? Outwardly it seemed impossible for the Children of Israel to take the land. They had to believe in Him who was leading them.

## Daniel

Are we interested in following God in every small detail of our lives? When I say small, I don’t mean insignificant, though, but I mean things that other people might think we could get by with, things that might not show to other people. In Daniel 1, the Bible says that King Nebuchadnezzar came into Jerusalem, ransacked it, took out the vessels from the house of God, and he took certain of the princes of the children of Israel back to Babylon. He made them eunuchs and turned them over to people who trained them so that they could be skilled in all the wisdom of Babylon. Part of this regime involved a change in their diet. Instead of eating a very plain and wholesome diet, they were going to have a diet with all the fancy dainties of the king. This would include, no doubt, unclean meat. It would include fermented wine. Besides that, many of these things had been offered to idols.

Now, there were four individuals who had a conviction here. We don’t know how many of the princes of the children of Israel were taken to Babylon, but there were more than four. There were a lot of them that just went right along with the rest of the herd into the chow line and ate the king’s food. But, there were four that said, “We can’t do this,” and it says in Daniel 1:9, 10 that, “...God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.” What the prince of the eunuchs was saying was, “It’s fine if you want to go out and get yourself in trouble, but not if you have this *conviction* that gets someone else into trouble. It is fine if you want to do it to yourself, but only if it does not affect others.”

Friends, a real conviction is a conviction no matter what the consequences are. There is a statement I really like that says, “We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God.” (*Great Controversy*, p. 460) “Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.” (Daniel 1:11-15) So, they got what they wanted to eat. They had a conviction that they wanted to serve God in the best way possible and God honored

that conviction. “them that honour me I will honour.” (1 Samuel 2:30)

## Our Way or God’s Way?

How do we worship God? How do we serve Him? Can we serve Him in any way we choose? Or do we need to serve Him as He has asked us to serve Him? If we turn back to the book of Genesis, chapter 4, right in the beginning of the history of this earth, we find a conflict occurring very soon thereafter. It says, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” (Genesis 4:1-5) Here we have two different brothers, each claiming to worship the same God, one with a *preference* and the other with a *conviction*, Cain with his preference that he could serve the Lord in the way that he thought was fine, and Abel with the conviction that he would serve the Lord exactly as God had designated. God had made it clear to them that they would have to have a blood sacrifice. Cain brought some good things. He may have brought some very good things, but it wasn’t what God required and God did not accept it. We too can bring things before God and He doesn’t accept it, friends, if it is not what He requires of us. Many of the people in this world believe that they can honestly worship God on Sunday just as well as the seventh day, and yet they know that the seventh day is the Sabbath. God doesn’t accept that, friends. When we knowingly disobey God, He cannot accept it. Many times God has winked at our ignorance, but the days of that ignorance for many have passed, friends. How are we

today? Do we serve God with a preference or a conviction?

Some of you have been to the ocean and walked along the beach. You have seen creatures that sometimes get washed up on the beach or you see them in the water. They have a dome-like appearance and little tentacles coming down. We call them jellyfish. One of the great, distinguishing characteristics of a jellyfish is that it has no backbone. A jellyfish is an invertebrate and I wonder, friends, are we spiritual jellyfish? Sadly, many ministers have no backbone to stand up for what they know to be the truth. Jesus called them hirelings. (John 10:13, 13) Do we have any backbone? Are we full of preferences but no convictions?

### Death Decrees in Daniel

We are familiar with how Nebuchadnezzar set up a great image on the plain of Dura. It was made of gold, to represent him and his kingdom, and everybody was to bow down to it. The Bible says, in verse 2, that he brought together a great delegation of people from all over his kingdom. No doubt Zedekiah was there that day, representing the kingdom of Judah, a vassal kingdom at this time. Nebuchadnezzar said, "We are going to play some music and when you hear the music, you will bow down, and if you don't bow down, we have a fiery furnace to help encourage you." As they played the music, that plain with all those people standing erect suddenly became much more visible as everybody bowed down. But, there were three people who didn't—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How they must have stood out like a sore thumb! Do you know why? These *men* stood because they did not have a preference on the matter. They had a conviction. It wasn't a preference about who their God was and how they would serve Him. They had a conviction that they would worship the Lord God only and they would not bow down to images or give credence to any

such thing. This, truly, was a death decree situation for them.

In Daniel, chapter 6, we have another death decree. There are prophecies in the book of Daniel, aren't there? There are several prophecies and there are several stories. The prophecies tell us what is going to happen and the stories tell us how to live and how to be ready for those things. The book of Revelation speaks about a death decree and we will talk about it in a minute. In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel, we have another death decree mentioned. This one involved worshipping and serving the king only, and no other God, for thirty days. We know the story. The Bible says Daniel prayed three times a day. He opened his windows toward Jerusalem. It was very public. People knew where he stood. His witness was clear. In verse 10 it says, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed..." He wasn't ignorant about the writing of this law. He did not go into his house and then into his closet where no one would see him. Now, I am not saying that God couldn't accept His worship in a closet. In fact, Jesus says "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:6) However, to publicly pray had been a practice of Daniel for so long. People knew that Daniel would be coming to that window at that certain time and people had seen this decree just like Daniel had, and they were wondering, "Is Daniel going to open his window today?" Daniel, who wanted his witness to be clear, opened his window, and it says, "...he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." (Daniel 6:10, 11) And in the last part of verse 13, when they went to King Darius, they said very specifically that he maketh "his petition three times a day."

They didn't watch him just once. They didn't watch him just twice. They watched him all three times to make sure they had plenty of evidence, and Daniel gave them plenty of evidence. He didn't mind, because he had a conviction, and he was willing, if it were necessary, to die for that conviction. But, he also had confidence that the God He served would not allow him to die and he didn't die. The Bible says that the Lord sent an angel to stay the mouth of the lions, into whose den he was thrown.

### Easy America

Today America is one of the most financially and physically prosperous nations in the world. It is also one of the most spiritually bankrupt nations of the world. I received a letter last night that almost made me want to cry. I have this good friend in Romania and he was telling me how he had gone to the German camp meeting where David Clayton, and some of the others were, and he said, "Oh, you don't know how I missed seeing you. I wanted you to be there so much." And he said he thought more of me than anyone else while he was there, with the exception of his wife, Andy, who was home. I had talked to this brother about coming to America for our camp meeting last year, and he said, "America? Oh, America is so wicked. I don't want to go to America." Most people from the third world countries can't wait to come to America, but he says, "Oh, America is a wicked place. I don't want to be there." This wicked place, friends, is going to get more wicked, and the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 13, that it is going to form an image to the beast and it is going to cause anyone who will not worship the beast to not be able to buy or sell, and if they do not conform, they will have a death decree upon them and they will be killed. We live in a country that is very easy today. I don't know how many of us are going to handle it when we come up to those hard trials.

This last year the summer olympics were held in Athens, Greece, and

before anyone of those Olympians went to Athens, they had been practicing, many of them for years, their whole lifetime, to be prepared to participate in one, two, three, or four events at the Olympics. Recently Lance Armstrong completed and won his sixth straight Tour de France, and this man works out, they say, like no one else. If you gave me his best bicycle and you let me try to run just one of those stages in the Pyrenees, it would kill me! I wouldn't be able to do even one of the stages of the multiple stages he does, because I have never trained for that kind of thing. I have not gotten ready for it. We are living in America, friends, and we complain and we whine about the least little inconvenience. Someone makes us feel unwelcome at church and we are persecuted. Someone might accuse us of something and even get us arrested, and we think we are persecuted. The fact is, we hardly know anyone who has ever really been persecuted. Today, friends, there are people still in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and in China who are dying for their faith because they have convictions about things, and I don't know how many people in America really have convictions about anything. I don't know how many convictions I have today. Do you know how many you have today? There would never have been a martyr if nobody ever had a conviction.

### We Can Be Ready

Well, we have great times ahead of us and will we be ready? We can be ready, God has made every provision for us. Notice the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful..." Remember that friends, above all things. God is faithful. One of my aunts was recently diagnosed with a very bad and serious type of lung cancer from which only 5% of the people go into remission. No one, according to medical science, ever gets cured of this kind of cancer. I told my aunt the other day, "We don't know

the future, but we know who controls the future," and that the most important thing is to keep our hold upon God, knowing that He is faithful. "...who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) He doesn't say that He is always going to take the temptations or the trials away. We indeed may have to pass through much persecution. We will enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation, if you please (Acts 14:23), but God is faithful and God will be with us. Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Jude 24 says, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Paul says that Jesus is coming back for a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:27) So, yes, we can be ready. Will we want to be ready? That is an interesting question.

### Will We Be Ready?

In Romans 2:4, the apostle Paul says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Somebody says, "You know, I need to repent. I am convicted of something." Is this real conviction? Well, if you are willing to die about it, yes, it is, but what is it that brings us to conviction? It is because we believe in moral absolutes and we believe that there is a good God, who, because of His goodness, leads us, guides us, and directs us to repent, to change our thinking, and to change our ways. What is that goodness? "For when we were yet without strength, *in due time* [at just the right time] Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6) Sometimes we are not "on time," but I'm glad Christ was on time, aren't you? I am glad Jesus was on time. At just the right time, in due time, "...Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will

one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8) In 1 John 4:9, the apostle John says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." How do we know that God really loves us? God sent His Son. God so loved you that He did something special. He sent His only begotten Son. Do you know why He did that? It was because He had a conviction. God had a conviction! He didn't have a preference about the future of man. He had a conviction and a love about and for man that was stronger than even death! Jesus came and Jesus went to the cross and died because He had a conviction and a love for man stronger than death!

If we don't need convictions today, then we better be ready to apologize to the apostle Paul who was beheaded by the sword of a Roman executioner. We better be ready to apologize to Peter, who was crucified upside down. We need to be ready to apologize to James, who was killed with the sword. We need to be ready to apologize to millions of Christians who decided that they would rather die than sin. We need to apologize to those saints who were spread with pitch and tar and lighted in the Roman amphitheaters for light in order to have the games. Made to be human torches! We are going to need to apologize to the Christians in Rome who were fed to lions while their brothers and sisters were burning as torches to light their execution!

The Bible says sin is the transgression of the law of God. (1 John 3:4) And, Jesus does say that the greatest of all commandments is to love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, mind,

*"We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God."  
(Great Controversy, p. 460)*



and strength, but let me ask you this. Is there any one of those Ten Commandments which God has ever given us a license to break, at any time, under any circumstances? Is it ever okay to commit adultery? Is it? No! But, it is okay if we allow the edges of the Sabbath to sneak past us a little bit, right? It is okay to hold back our tithe a little bit this week because an unexpected expense came up, such as a washing machine broke, or because I need to feed my family. Or it is okay that I over-indulge myself in working this week, because I know I can sleep Sabbath afternoon? It is the day of rest, but we make it a day of rust, and we steal from God! We are so selfish that we want everything for us the first six days and then when we give God the seventh day we are so tired from taking everything the first six days, that we rest the seventh day and really don't give that to Him either. If we lived temperately and righteously, and I know I am speaking to myself, we would never need the Sabbath for physical rest. We need it for spiritual time and that is what we need the Sabbath for.

Well, friend, do you have preferences or convictions? We may find out that we have a lot more preferences than we realize when we are brought to the test. Friend, let us be thankful that God chooses to allow us to have some trials and tribulations now, so that we might build up and be ready and convicted to do what is right because it is right, and that we might truly surrender every thing and every aspect of our lives and being to the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve Him all the way.

I want you to think about the things in your life that maybe you are not fully turning over to the Lord, things in your life that are just simply preferences and are not convictions. Remember this, the Bible says that every word of God is pure. Every word of God that He gives me is exactly what He says, in the exact way He means it, and He wants you to surrender all. May God grant you conviction and not preference. ✍

### *Prayer Requests continued from p. 1*

heaven. Our hopes are still high for we read, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Romans 13:11) During this time we have seen the work grow mightily, but sadly not enough. There is so much to do and so few workers.

When we first began to publish, I worked in a Sabbath School room in the Smyrna Chapel writing on an electronic typewriter. Within a year we had acquired a computer for desktop publishing. After building an extra room for a print shop I worked alone in a corner set aside for a desk. At first I did all the writing, layout, prepress, and printing work. Members of the fellowship would join me in folding, stapling, envelope stuffing, etc.

Later, God directed Brother Lynnford Beachy to come and help with the work. While Lynnford was already a good writer, he also learned to print and help with the press and prepress work. As the work grew we both became very behind in work that could be done by a secretary. At that point, our Father allowed Sister Ann Ford to work as a secretary and treasurer for us and later Sister Esther McDaniel came to help. Our greatest personal need then became someone to perform the print and post press work. Thankfully Brother Dana Uhl was able to work for about a year to help us, but due to personal family needs, he could not continue.

Today we are asking you to pray that the Lord will help us with this urgent need we have for a believer to be able to do the printing for us. While Lynnford and I are both well able to perform this function, we both feel as the apostles did when asked to help with the daily ministration to the widows as mentioned in Acts 6. The apostles stated, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." (Acts 6:2) Their desire was to devote themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the

word." (Acts 6:4) Of course we are not speaking of literal tables today, but the principle is that the "minister" should be able to devote his time and energies to spiritual matters and allow other aspects of the work to be covered by those who are able, but have not been called to the ministry, in the same sense, as the "minister."

While we are able to train someone to do this work, that is a time extensive project by itself and we pray that God will provide someone with some experience in offset printing who can help. We would appreciate your prayers concerning this as our supply of many materials is quite low due to neither Lynnford nor I having the time to print while pressing matters of ministry, as well as personal family needs, require our time.

*Allen Stump*

## **A Request from Brother Beachy:**

God has been gracious enough to give me an excellent secretary who has been very kind and helpful to me for several years. Esther McDaniel, is not only my secretary, she is my mother-in-law, and I could not ask for a better secretary nor mother-in-law, so I have really been blessed.

As you may know, Esther is also very involved with the Hearth to Hearth magazine as well as an orphanage project in Africa, so the time she can dedicate to performing the tasks as my secretary has become increasingly limited. She really loves the African orphans, and wishes to dedicate even more time to helping them. She has informed me that she will not be able to continue to work as my secretary for much longer.

I would appreciate it if you would pray that the Lord will provide just the right person who can assist me in this work.

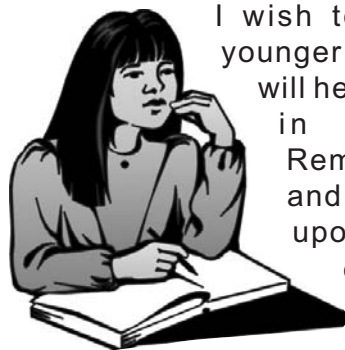
*Lynnford*

# Youth's Corner - Following on to Know the Lord

[Remarks by Ellen G. White, Sanitarium, Church School picnic June 15, 1913.]

I am glad to have the privilege of meeting with those that have gathered here today. I feel an earnest desire that every one of you shall be victorious in the struggle against evil. For many years I have been laboring for the salvation of souls. I began this work at a very early age, and all through my life the Lord has sustained me in telling old and young of the hope that we have in Christ.

I have always had an especial interest in the youth. I see before me today those whom I know God can use if they will put their dependence in him. Children, if you will be in earnest in serving God, you will be a help to all with whom you associate. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Christian. It is an honor to follow the Saviour. And it is by obeying the instructions that he has given that you are to be prepared to meet him when he comes. If you will ask God to help you to overcome what is un-Christlike in your dispositions, he will prepare you for entrance into heaven, where no sin can enter. Those who daily give the life to Jesus, and who follow on to know him, will be greatly blessed. Say, Christ gave his life for me, and I must give my life for him. If you give yourselves wholly to him, you will be conquerors in the warfare against sin. The Lord Jesus will be your helper, your support, your strength, if you will receive and obey him.



To the older ones who are present, I wish to say, Set before the younger ones an example that will help them to press forward in the upward way. Remember that your words and acts have an influence upon them for good or for evil. It is unworthy a Christian to neglect to make every effort in

his power to help those for whom the Saviour gave his life. Christ died that we might live, and we want to be sure that we are trying to do his will. Then we shall be acceptable to him. Angels of God will be near to help us, and we shall realize the aid of a power above ourselves.

I have recently been studying what we older ones can do to make the best impression upon the minds of the youth. What can we do? Let us study the Word, and as we have opportunity, talk Bible truth. As you do this, you will find that your own mind and heart are becoming subdued. As you strive to overcome everything that is displeasing to God, angels of heaven will help you to exert a right influence upon those who are younger. You will not be left to stumble along in uncertainty, not knowing what you are doing. Power from above will be given you, to enable you to show to others that we have a living Saviour, a Redeemer who can forgive our transgressions.

You can help the younger ones. You can be a blessing to them, even to the very young. And when Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, he will say: "You have followed on to know me. I acknowledge you as my servants." You will have light in the Lord, and the glory of the Lord will be your rearward.

To these students I would say, Do not think it is an amusing thing to take advantage of a fellow student, and to lead him astray. God wants you to be constantly reaching higher and still higher for attainments that will enable you to help others, to be an example to those around you. And as you do this, the Lord will surely let his blessing rest upon you. But do not go only halfway in your efforts to serve God. Do not feel that there is no need of being particular. From the oldest to the youngest, you do need to be particular to avoid evil, even the appearance of evil. It is possible for the youth to be such earnest Christians that through them the Lord will send the truth home to those who have never known him.



I was very young when I began to serve the Lord. I am now eighty-five years old. In my childhood affliction came to me, and I have been a sufferer all my life. But the Lord has been my strength to do his service, and I have been able to speak again and again to congregations numbering thousands of people. For a great many years I have been engaged in active labor, speaking to the people and writing out the instruction opened before me. At times sickness has come upon me, and then I would cast my helpless soul upon Jesus Christ, and say: "Thou knowest, Lord, that I have chosen thee as my Redeemer. Give me not only spiritual strength, but physical strength, that I may follow on to know thee." And the Lord has never forsaken me. Always he has been my helper, as he will be yours if you will trust in him. It is because I so greatly desire to work for the salvation of souls that I do not give up to infirmities. I am determined that as long as God permits me to live, I will proclaim the message of warning to the world. I want my voice to reach many more before I shall give up my labors. I expect to have trials, but I do not dread them. The Lord knows what I can bear, and he will give me strength to endure. He will sustain me in my weakness, enabling me to follow on, and to know that his going forth is prepared as the morning.

Students, be determined that you will follow on to know the Lord. Remember that angels are beside you. They see all your efforts against wrong. They understand all your difficulties; and if in meekness you will give up your own way for Christ's way, taking his yoke cheerfully, you will find that he will give you daily strength to overcome. As I see you all here, the thought comes to me, Shall I meet them in the kingdom of heaven? What a meeting that will be when the redeemed are gathered home, saved, eternally saved. They have fought the good fight. They have pressed the battle to the gates. They have done




Ellen G. White



all in their power to help others to follow in the Saviour's footsteps.

I know that there are many here who are trying to overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. I want to say to you, Jesus wants every one of you. He died that you and I might be among those who shall wear the crown of life. He wants you, from the oldest to the youngest, to place your influence on his side. He wants your help. I pray that those who today have listened to me will lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel. I pray that in the great day of Christ's coming, their voices will help to swell the song of joy and triumph that will be raised by the overcomers. I beg of you, dear youth, to link up with Jesus Christ. He died on Calvary's cross for you and for me, and in his strength we may overcome.

Follow on to know the Lord. If you will do this, you will win souls to Christ. Not only will your own soul be saved; the power that converts your soul will enable you to set an example that will win others to Christ. These older children can be an example to the younger ones, leading and guiding them aright, speaking a word in season to them. Thus you can be laborers together with God. I want to say to these boys, You can overcome evil—evil thoughts, evil desires—by the blood of the Lamb and the word of your testimony. We cannot afford to sin. It costs too much. May the Lord bless you all. We shall think of you and pray for you. I want to offer a word of prayer now.

[Praying] Heavenly Father, we come to thee just as we are, needy and dependent. And we ask thee, Lord, that the few words spoken here today may lead those who have heard to seek with all their hearts to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Lord, wilt thou work by thy Spirit, and let the light of truth shine into human hearts, that souls may turn to thee, and repent and be converted, that we may meet them in the kingdom of glory. Amen. (*Youth's Instructor*, June 9, 1914) 

# 2005 Smyrna Camp Meeting Survey

*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. (Malachi 4:16)*

This coming year Smyrna will be hosting our 5<sup>th</sup> camp meeting. We are thankful that the interest has continued to stay high for these meetings. For many it is the high light of their year.

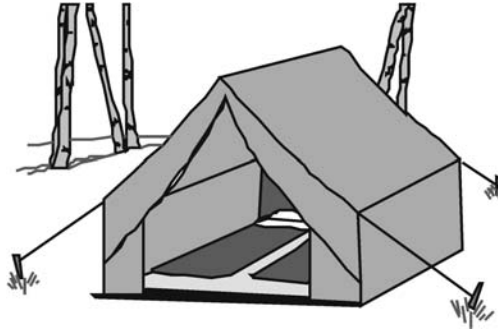
In looking back at the last four years we can see that we have tried a variety of different formats and different schedules. Sometimes we have used several different speakers with each having a limited number of meetings and other times we have used a limited number of speakers with each having enough meetings to be able to establish a theme. We have had different seminars from sermon preparation to cooking schools. We have tried different time schedules and dates to have the camp meeting.

We pray that this year's camp meeting might be the best camp meeting we have ever had. To help make this camp meeting a positive spiritual experience we need your help. Please let us know what we have done in the past that has been a blessing as well as what we should have done that we have not. Please be honest and tell us what we have done or arranged that has not been so good. Let us know the speakers and subject matter that you do and do not have an interest in.

This year we are strongly looking at having the camp meeting during the last full week of June (21-25) so that those attending from overseas can stay over to attend some of the General Conference session at St. Louis, MO. This is not finalized yet, but we hope to finalize the date soon. However, we are interested in your thoughts concerning the scheduling of meetings during the day. Are you one who enjoys a moderate amount of meetings and wants time to meet with others before or after the meetings; or are you a marathoner who wants as many meetings a day as possible?

What can we do to help make the camp meeting better for young children and mothers. You youth and young adults, let us know more of your interests and what we can do to provide a better spiritual experience for you.

Any suggestions concerning the camp ground itself or the meeting hall and rooms are welcome. Sorry about the



weather. That we can not schedule, however, our Father can help to make it just what we need.

Your suggestions will be given consideration and will be appreciated. Having said that, I must say that there will be no way we can implement all the suggestions we expect to receive. There is no way to please everyone in some of these matters. However, we will try to take as many of the suggestions to the implementation level as possible. Please try to respond very soon as we need to be making plans

shortly that will enable us to have time to make the necessary preparations. Thank you very much for your input.

Please write to us soon and address your envelope:

**SGM (Att: Camp Meeting)  
HC 64 Box 128B  
Welch, WV 24801-9606**

You may email me at: [allen@smyrna.org](mailto:allen@smyrna.org). Please note "camp meeting" in the subject line of your message. Any suggestions that are noted as confidential will be kept in strict confidence.

Above all things, we want the camp meeting to have the favor and presence of our Heavenly Father and his Son.

"Every campmeeting may be a love feast from the beginning to the end because God's presence is with His people. All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand are commissioned ministers to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. Have we not reason to be thankful every moment; thankful even when there are apparent difficulties in our pathway. 'The Lord Himself is our Helper.'" (*Loma Linda Messages*, p. 537)

Thank you for your help in this matter. Please start planning now to attend. I know that you will be greatly blessed.

*Allen Stump*

# Succession of the Faith

(The following article was first published in the July 1995 issue of *Old Paths*. We felt it contains information that our many newer readers would find helpful. . . . . Editor)

On June 2, 1947, A. W. Spalding wrote a two-page letter to H. Camden Lacey. The letter began:

Will you extend your helping hand to me once more? I am in Washington making the last revision of my manuscript for the first volume of *An Episodic History of Seventh-day Adventists*. Two or three large questions confront me.

One of these is the history of the trinitarian and antitrinitarian doctrines among us. I understand that some of our leading men in the beginning were opposed to the doctrine of the trinity, at least as expressed by certain trinitarians.

After making certain observations in relation to the subject, Spalding wrote:

Now I should be grateful for any light you have to throw upon the subject. D. E. Robinson says that you are the first one he knows of to teach the straight doctrine of the trinity, in Australia. Perhaps you were Jashobeam the Hackmonite, but I am supposing there were also other Twenty-nine of the Mighties. There is to me a twilight zone in this history which I wish to have lighted. Did all the fathers sin? And if so, did they repent? How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and we are Athanasians?

Lacey replied in a three-page letter dated June 5, 1947. The reply read in part:

I will attempt now to answer some of the queries you propound in your recent letter of the 2nd.

Most assuredly our people were anti-trinitarians, when we (the Lacey family) accepted the 'Truth' in 1888. At least, that is how it appeared to us at that time.

Now your questions: 'Did all the fathers sin?' Well, 'sin' is perhaps too strong a word. But they certainly 'all' held inadequate views on both the 'Eternity of the Son' (and therefore His essential Deity) and the 'personality of the Holy Ghost.' (And why do we not more generally speak of

Him in that way, as does our authorized translation, and the Early Writings of Sr. White, until she came under the influence of her husband and other of the pioneers?)

'And if so, did they repent?' Not so as you could notice it, I fear. The attitude of some of those pioneers to the preaching of 'Righteousness by Faith' in 1888, illustrates pretty well their reactions to any 'new light' that might come to them: Nevertheless they were wonderfully used of God in laying the foundations of our message.

'How prove the unity of the faith in our succession if our pioneers were Arians and we are Athanasians?' Well now, the answer is obvious - to you, as well as to the rest of us; so: let us leave it there!

Lacey's last statement should be given careful thought. The basis for succession of the faith is unity in the truth. Few on either side of the issue (trinitarian or non-trinitarian) question the importance of a proper understanding of the doctrine of God. Lacey is saying very plainly that as a trinitarian he cannot claim unity of the faith with the pioneers. Yet truth is the basis for succession of the faith. The implications should be as clear to us as they were clear to Lacey. If there is not succession of the faith between the pioneers of the movement and today, then we must admit that either we or the pioneers were in error. If they were in error on this vital subject, then how can we claim that God raised up this movement? No wonder Lacey said, "... let us leave it there!" However, this need not be. We do not have to repudiate the teachings that were established in truth! *What we must do is quit desiring the favor of the world over the favor of God.*

When Walter Martin and Dr. Donald Barnhouse met with R. A. Anderson and LeRoy Froom, the first thing that had to be established was whether Adventists believed the trinitarian doctrine or not. (See *AR*, Sept. 8, 1983, p. 4 and taped interview with Walter Martin at Loma Linda, Jan. 26, 1989) While these evangelicals hated the Sabbath, did not agree with the mortality of the soul, and made fun of the sanctuary doctrine, they could accept Adventists as long as they accepted the doctrine of the trinity.\* While compromises had to be made on the incarnation and the atonement, these concessions would never have been made if the doctrine of the trinity had not been conceded earlier.

Allen Stump

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\* Barnhouse stated: "I hate Saturday as a Sabbath religious day. I hate it because Christ hates it." (Taped telephone conversation between Barnhouse and A. L. Hudson, May 16, 1958 - printed in *The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955- 1956*.)

Martin wrote concerning the state of the dead: "As far as this writer is concerned, although he is in definite disagreement with the doctrine ["Soul Sleep"], it does not constitute a bar to our having fellowship with them, ..." (*Eternity*, January 1957)

Barnhouse wrote concerning the investigative judgment: "It is to my mind, therefore, nothing more than a human, face-saving idea! .... We personally do not believe that there is even a suspicion of a verse in Scripture to sustain such a peculiar position, and we further believe that any effort to establish it is *stale, flat, and unprofitable!*" (*Eternity*, September 1956 - Emphasis in original.)



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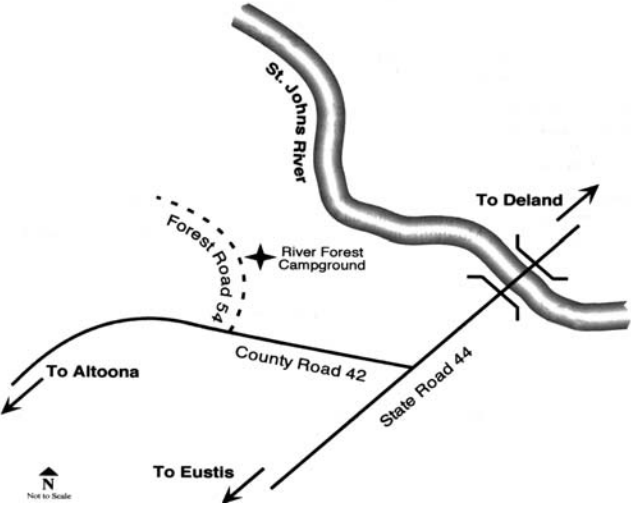
**CORRECTION regarding the Florida Camp Meeting**

The church in Orlando, Florida, has asked us to announce that they will be hosting a Camp Meeting, **January 26 -31, 2005**, (*this date was incorrectly published last month*) at the River Forest Campground located in the southeast corner of the Ocala National Forest, on the scenic St. Johns River. All are invited to attend.

Meals will not be provided, but a nice kitchen is available. You might wish to consider bringing simple fruits and pancakes or waffles for breakfast, and simple salads and bean dishes for dinner, enough for your family. This way, if you choose to combine your meals with others, they will be compatible.

There are no RV hookups, but plenty of room for RVs and tents. There is a main building for meetings, showers, restrooms and, as mentioned earlier, a kitchen. If you can make it, please come. Mosquitos may be present, so be prepared. For more information please contact Bill James by calling 407-446-7654 or email him at [abj1818@earthlink.net](mailto:abj1818@earthlink.net). Please begin planning now to attend. ✍

Directions to River Forest Campground



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