

March, 2004

Pause Ponder Profit

Beating Our Own Path To God

By Shane Williams

We have been truly blessed that we have been given the Word of God, by which when we read it we can understand what God expects of us (Eph. 3:3-5). I believe, however, that there are many people who do not fully appreciate this. They do not place an importance on the fact that God has revealed His will to us. How sad it is that there are those who will never understand just how valuable this is. God has provided the pattern for us to follow (II Tim. 2:13). All we have to do is determine to follow this pattern and then obey it to the best of our ability. As basic as this sounds, it seems that by far the majority of people try to beat their own path to God.

What I mean by this is that people will not follow the path that God has given us to obey, instead they choose to try and pave their own way to heaven. It is a shame when God's own Word is not good enough for someone. They have to try and come up with their own solution to the problem of sin.

The problem with this is that we have the truth! Truth is unchanging. No matter how much we may want something to be true, that just doesn't make it so. What makes it true is whether or not God has said something is right or wrong. When Jesus was praying to the Father, He said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Their word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). The word of God is truth. It is the truth that sets us free (Jn. 8:32) provided that we are obedient to it. Because God's Word is truth, it is the path that we are to follow.

Men Who Recognized A Path

Job said, "But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:10-12). Job recognized that there was a path to follow. Job had been walking in that path and had not turned aside. He viewed the path of God as being more important than food. If Job viewed this path as being so important, shouldn't we?

David said, "Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For I delight in it." (Psa. 119:35). He also said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path." (Psa. 119:105). David understood that there was a path to be walked. In fact, the Word of God was a lamp to guide his steps.

Solomon said in Pro. 4:26-27, "Watch the path of your feet, And all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil." There is an urgency in watching our steps. We must not get off the path that God has established. To do so leads to evil.



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Paul said to Timothy in **II Timothy 2:18**, "*They have left the path of truth, preaching the lie that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; and they have weakened the faith of some who believe them (TLB)*". Hymenaeus and Philetus had left the path of truth. If they had left the path, this necessarily implies that there is a path of truth. Not only is there a path but it is necessary for us to follow that path. Otherwise, we have gone astray and are no better off than these two men.

Beating our own path to God is no way to God at all. When we attempt to find our own path, we are denying and turning our back on the true path. Have you ever wondered why the majority of people follow the wrong path? It is the broad way. It is the path that is wide. It is so easy to just ignore what God has to say and simply do what we want to do. This, however, is not the right thing to do. The correct path of God is the narrow way. Few are those who enter it (Matthew 7:13-14).

If we are to be saved in the last day it will be based upon our obedience to God's Word. It won't matter how well we followed our particular "church's" teaching. It will only matter how well we obeyed the commands of the Lord. "*...the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.*" (John 12:48). Are you on the correct path or have you been trying to find your own?

Will Your Children Go to Heaven?

by Jim R. Everett

Several years ago some congregations began to explore why we were losing so many of our young people. One congregation discovered a correlation between the interest the parents manifest in their assembling practices and the faithfulness of their children. They discovered that the greatest impact on the children came from their parents, not from the preacher, elders or Bible class teachers and special congregational teaching work. The statistics were very alarming and revealing.

When both parents were spiritually minded and active in assembling 93% of the children remained faithful. However, if only one of the parents was faithful that number dropped to 73%. Then, when both parents were only reasonably active and faithful in their worship and study, only 53% of the young people stayed with their faith.

PARENTS, READ THIS NEXT STATISTIC CAREFULLY -- WHEN BOTH PARENTS ATTENDED INFREQUENTLY THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THE LORD DROPPED TO 6%!!!

Your interest and attendance say a lot to your children. It tells them about your faith, values and priorities. Whether or not your children go to heaven, to a great degree, depends on you. Do you want

Remember Our Gospel Meeting

Speaker: Dudley Ross Spears

Sunday, March 7th

9:45 A.M. 10:45 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Mon. — Fri., March 8th — 12th

7:00 P.M.

God Commands All Men To Repent

by James A. Brown

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31) (NKJV)

The apostle Paul addressed these words to the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34). The Athenians who had built altars to many gods, had also erected an altar to “The Unknown God” (Acts 17:23). The God Who was unknown to them was the true God; they knew nothing about Him or how to worship Him. So, in Paul’s address he discusses a deity Whose existence they had acknowledged, but about Whom they were ignorant in other respects.

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked” — The phrase “these times of ignorance,” describes the time before God was revealed through the revelation of Jesus Christ—

ignorance,” because the past history of the Gentile world was a history of idolatry, involving glaringly obvious ignorance of God, and all that was good. These Athenians confessed their lack of knowledge concerning the true God by their inscription of an altar to “The Unknown God.” This long period of ignorance, Paul says, God “winked at” (KJV), “overlooked” (NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV). To “wink at” in our language today means “to pretend not to see”; to “overlook” means (a.) “To fail to notice or consider; miss.” (b.) “To ignore deliberately or indulgently; disregard.” Our text does not say that God “overlooked” their sins. For would someone be so bold to affirm that God “winked at” or “overlooked” the sins of the people of Noah’s day, the sins of the Canaanites, Amorites, Ninevites, or the sins of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is true that God was longsuffering with them and desired that they repent. But God never failed to notice, deliberately ignored, or disregarded their sins. In our text it is the “times of ignorance” God overlooked.

The idea in the word translated “overlooked” is “looked beyond.” When God was giving a partial revelation (the O.T.) to the Jews only, He “looked beyond” to the time when the revelation of His will would be complete (the N. T.) and be made to all (Gentiles as well as Jews). Instead of immediately coming and wiping out the sinners, God permitted the times of ignorance to continue, allowing the Gentiles to remain in ignorance and proceed unrestrained in their idolatrous practices (Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; Eph. 4:7-19). During this time, God patiently worked toward another time, looking beyond to the time when there would be a full revelation of His will. Now, through the preaching of the gospel, God was actively seeking to end the times of ignorance. And here in Acts 17:30-31, Paul says, that time has now come.

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“but now commands all men everywhere to repent” — The gospel was now being preached in the Gentile world (Mk. 16:15-16). The darkness associated with the ignorance of God and his will for man was being replaced with the light of truth. Those God once allowed to continue unchecked in their ignorant ways were now being commanded to repent. Now “all men” (Jew and Gentile) are commanded to “repent”, i.e., change their minds regarding sin, make a determination to forsake those sins and serve God. Why repent?

“because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness” — Here is the motivation for men to repent: the judgment. If men do not repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19), they will not be forgiven of their sins and will therefore be held accountable for them at the judgment.

“by the Man whom He has ordained.” — Specifically, Jesus Christ, through whom God will exercise judgment (Jn. 5:22, 27; Matt. 25:31ff; Acts 10:42). God **“has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”**

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