

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one another.



John 8:32
And ye shall
know the
truth and the
truth shall
make you
free.

**November
25
2018**

....The way, and the truth and the life....

by Jim Stauffer

Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 14:6 There is great specificity in this statement by our Lord.

First, He uses the term way, to indicate a specific path to be followed. We are taught to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as He is our example for avoiding the pitfalls of life on earth while in His service (**1 Pet. 2:21**). Jesus tells us there are two very different ways we can go. One is broad and easy and leads to destruction and the other is narrow and rigid and leads to life (**Matthew 7:13,14**). We know we can stray from the way and sometimes it is as simple as failing to understand the way. See Apollos in **Acts 18:25,26**.

Second, He indicates this way is connected to the truth. Truth has always been something men have compromised and vacillated over according to how it fits their desires. Pilate responded to Jesus' claim of being God's witness of the truth by saying, *...What is truth?***John 18:38**. We know from Jesus' teaching that God's word is truth (**John 17:17**) and that very truth will set us free from the burden of sin (**John 8:32**).

The third word He uses in His answer to Thomas is life. Jesus is the life. He tells Thomas all these things are necessary in coming to the Father and all are achieved in and through Jesus Christ Himself. We learn Jesus is life and as life He is the light of the world (**John 1:4**). His life shines light on a world of darkness. Paul tells us we have all become a part of that darkness and as a result have become alienated or separated from God by our sin (**Rom. 3:23; Eph. 4:17-19**). But when we have renewed access to the life Jesus brings it is because we have accepted the truth He has revealed to us and follow the way He has set before us. This life is promised to those who believe in Him (**John 3:15,16**). Those who believe in Him obey Him in recognition of His authority (**Heb. 5:8,9**).

Now, here is the plea made with these remarks. Please, for our own benefit, let us recognize the

demand of the biblical language. There is no compromise of the way, truth or life. They are not negotiable. We cannot make peace spiritually with anyone who does not acknowledge Christ as the way, truth and life.

The world we live in wishes us to soften our approach to Christianity. We cannot. We are not the authors of this great pathway from certain destruction to eternal life in heaven. We therefore, cannot accept false religions. False religions are those who teach things contrary to what Jesus and His apostles taught (**1 Tim. 4:1-3**).

We are warned about the dangers of the world and how those things of the world are at odds with the will of God (**1 John 2:15-17**).

Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you followed His instructions to be added to His church as one of the saved? (**Acts 2:47**) If so, stand up and be counted. If not, realize you are not following the way, the truth and the life sent from God.

CHRISTIANS NOT OF THIS WORLD

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (**John 17:14**). There are many Christians who walk hand in hand with the world. There is little discernible difference between the actions, attitudes, and concerns of some Christians and the world they are actively participating in. This kind of behavior detracts from the gospel. **1 Timothy 6:1** says: *"Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed."*

While evil men will speak against the gospel, we should never give them just cause to do so. But sometimes we do. What should we do in such cases? The best answer is that we see the need to abide by

God's will and His judgment. If our lives are not right, then we need to get right. Judgment is according to truth; the truth will set us free; we live our lives now according to truth. That is the only way things can be right in our lives and before God.

Jesus, in His prayer in **John 17**, targets His apostles. These men would be left behind to carry the gospel into all the world. Yes, when Jesus told them He was going away, they had great consternation (**John 14**). Yet, Jesus repeatedly assured them that they would be enabled to carry on the work of the kingdom. But they needed to remember that they were not of the world. Yes, they lived in the world; but they could not participate in the world or the things of the world (**Luke 8:11ff**). Because we are salt and light, we cannot totally isolate ourselves from the world. We seek to be people of influence. At the same time, we need to be aware of the harmful influences that this world (the people in it) can have on us. *"Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33).*

If your present company is wicked, then you might need some new friends. If your present actions in your personal life are wrong, you might need to do the radical. Partakers of the grace of God resist connections with people that will turn them away from truth. Christians are people who are motivated or find encouragement in the world or its allurements. Christians forsake the world in their apparel, associations, and lifestyle. It is really a heart matter. What kind of heart do you and I have? Have we a heart for Jesus? The prevailing philosophies of the world do not hold sway over hearts that are attuned to Jesus. Why would any Christian want to be *"conformed to this world?"* One good thing to remember as we live in but are not part of this world, is that our citizenship is elsewhere. **Philippians 3:20** says, *"Our citizenship is in heaven."* Heaven should hold all for you and me. When it does, we will have little time for the world. We then, as followers of Jesus, can get on with the business of spreading His message of salvation—the salvation that takes people out of this world and points them to heaven.

Randy Harshbarger

Whatever Happened to "Thanksgiving"?

Everybody makes the same observation every year. As soon as the Halloween decorations become commonplace the Christmas decorations begin! They don't even wait till Halloween's over anymore! I doubt that any reader of this column has forgotten but it seems like America has: There is an extremely important day that occurs midway between Halloween and Christmas and it's called "Thanksgiving". Stores don't decorate for it anymore and it doesn't seem to be

acknowledged much in school either, not like it used to be. I think it's a sign of a very serious and deep seated problem in American Society, we don't know how to be grateful. Even among nominal believers there is this entitlement philosophy that God is just so happy to have them acknowledge Him in any way He owes them blessings. Nothing could be further from the truth for He owes us NOTHING! The gratitude street is "One Way" and it goes from us to Him, never the other way around!

What is 'gratitude' anyway? Webster defines it as, "coming from the Latin 'gratus', thankful, a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors received; thankfulness". That's good as far as it goes. Sometimes Webster is woefully inadequate. There has to be more than mere acknowledgement, there must be a proper response. Without that, all the acknowledgement in the world is inadequate. With gratitude toward men this response may vary but toward God it is always the same: Praise and Obedience.

In **Romans 1:21**, Paul says of the gentile world, *"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks"* and then goes on to list the sins of which they were guilty. Their lack of gratitude helped lead them into that state. Let's learn from THEIR mistakes!

Cleveland Reddinger

NAMING OF DENOMINATIONS IN SERMONS?

If you saw a house, with a prominently posted sign which read "No Trespassing" burning, would you attempt to warn the people inside? Only the most hard-hearted would answer, "No!" If you believed that individuals were going to be lost in the torments of eternal hell, would you warn them? Countless thousands, by their actions or lack of actions, scream "No!"

A question was asked, during our period of preaching on the radio, in southern Indiana, concerning the practice of *naming denominations in sermons or in worship services*. We were happy then, on the radio, to deal with the question, and also now in this article. The asking of all honest questions is encouraged, it does not hurt our feelings to have our practices called in question.. If the practice is right (scriptural), we can defend it; if it is not right, we need to repent and abandon it.

Naming Verses Name-Calling

There is a big difference in the naming of a religious group, denomination, or person (for identification or clarity) in a sermon, and, on the other hand, in *name-calling* (i.e., being insulting). Let me illustrate this difference (using, so as not to offend anyone, the

church of Christ, the church of which I am a member): “To be a good member of the church of Christ all one needs is to be as stubborn as a mule, with the intelligence of an earthworm. The church of Christ is composed of a bunch of dunderheads who don’t have enough sense to come in out of the rain.” Surely, all would agree that this was, to say the least, unbecoming and inappropriate in a sermon. Such would be a violation of the command of Jesus in **Matthew 7:12**, and would not be “speaking the truth in love” (**Eph.4:15**). Nor, just to be perfectly clear, would it be the truth. One the other hand, no one ought to object to a fair representation of what is believed and/or taught: “Members of the church of Christ teach that water baptism, in obedience to Jesus’ command, comes before salvation (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; etc.**).” Nor should a denominationalist object when reference is made to the Discipline, Manual, Catechism, Minutes, etcetera of the denomination -- these were written to inform. Such, of course, must be kept in context. There should be no objections when a doctrine is fairly represented . . .and *scriptural* objections raised thereto.

What Saith the Scriptures?

We have been given examples to emulate. The life of Christ was made known as “an example that (we) would follow his steps” (**1 Peter 2:21ff**). We are urged to be “*imitators*” (**1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1**) of Paul (and of the other apostles. . .is implied).

The example of Jesus is that of a hard, name-calling (identification, clarity) preacher in the **23rd chapter of Matthew**. Repeatedly he says, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*” (**Matthew 23:13, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29**). He also called them *men-pleasers* (“*to be seen of men*” - **23:5**), “*son(s) of hell*” (**23:15**). “*fools and blind*” (**23:17**), “*whited sepulchres*” (**23:27**) and “*offspring of vipers*” (**23:33**). Did the LORD have a bad attitude? Was He a negative example as a teacher? Certainly not. . .but many people today (in the church and in the world) would say that Bill Beasley had a bad attitude if he preached like that. It is fully recognized that Jesus could see into the heart of man and could therefore judge motives. Even with his difference, the example is one of a hard, name-calling (identification and clarity) preacher.

The example of the apostles is of the same character. To Elymas the sorcerer, Paul said, “*O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord*” (**Acts 13:10**). He also rebuked, in writing, Brother Demas for “*having loved this present world*” (**2 Timothy 4:10**). Note also his word to Titus concerning the Cretans (**Titus 1:10-13a**). John, the apostle of love, wrote of Brother Diotrephes as one “*who loveth to have the preeminence*” (**3 John 9**), and that Brother Diotrephes spoke “*lying words*” (**3 John 10**), and that his example was “*evil*” (**3 John 11**).

In preaching/teaching we need to be careful lest we give forth with “an uncertain voice” (**1 Cor. 14:8**).

Ezekiel’s admonition to the people of his day (**Ezekiel 33:1-9**) is good food for thought for those who would teach or preach today. We, like Paul, need to be *declaring*. . .*the whole counsel of God* (**Acts 20:27**) in terms that not only can be understood, but also cannot be misunderstood. Naming, in the proper spirit, helps in understanding. In Tennessee I preached a sermon showing that baptism is a burial (**Romans 6:3-4**). A visiting Methodist lady complimented the lesson. Either I was unclear in my presentation (a very real possibility). . .or she refused to make the application. I would, thinking back on the situation, that I had said something like, “This is not in keeping with Methodist doctrine which says (and quoted from my copy of the Methodist Discipline). . .” In Kentucky I had preached a number of times on attendance (**Heb. 10:25**), with little visible results. One morning after services I cornered an elderly brother and said something like, “Brother _____, you need to come to the evening services; your family comes, and I know you have a way to get here.” The shocked look on his face let me know that this was the very first time he made an application to his life, to his conduct of the sermons he had been hearing. He began to attend the evening services.

Where Is Your Conviction?

The spirit of compromise is alive and well in our society. What we call *tolerance* might well be called a *lack of conviction* or simple *cowardice*. When one takes a firm stand, that one must be willing to defend what he believes and teaches (by word or example) – this many are unwilling to do. “If the preacher calls names I might be called upon to defend what is said.” If the truth is preached defend it; if the lesson is not true, rebuke the preacher. “So-and-so is here from the _____ church.” One may mean, preach what is needed (**Acts 20:26-27**). Another may be saying. “Walk on egg-shells, don’t say anything that might hurt their feelings.” One has convictions, the other has a spirit of compromise! The very closest of human relationships can be torn asunder by the preaching of the gospel (**Mat. 10:34-39**). The gospel divides! A gospel preacher presented a lesson, mentioning a prominent denomination by name, and comparing what that denomination teaches with what the Bible teaches. Among the visitors that Lord’s day were two couples, members of that particular denomination. Results? One couple left in a huff. The other couple (individually) obeyed, to the salvation of his/her soul, the gospel of Jesus Christ. What made the difference? Certainly it was *not* the preacher, the message, the spirit in which it was delivered. These were identical. The difference was in the ones who heard the message. One couple was seeking truth (**John 8:32**), the other may have received “*a working of error*” (**2 Thess. 2:11-12**). An unclear, compromising sermon has never helped anyone . . .except the Devil.

William V. Beasley

Let us be reminded to pray for those we support who are preaching in other areas of this country and also of the world. Remember to pray for Kyle Bennett in Boston Ma., Matt Hodge in Marshfield, Mo. and Cleveland Reddinger in El Dorado, Ks. Overseas we need to remember, Wilfredo Pelino and Jonathan Sapitula in the Philippines as well as Arao Uchaio, Francisco Vascob in Mozambique.

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CANNOT BE SHAKEN



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10