The Auburn Beacon

Are You Going Wrong Way?

by Eric Reynolds

Yesterday a friend of mine shared a news story from China about a man who rode a bike for 30 days in the wrong direction (link in first comment below). He was trying to go home, but ended up much farther away before he was stopped by some policemen. When they figured out where he was trying to go, they chimed in to help him a ticket home.

Can you imagine the frustration he must have felt when he realized he had traveled all that time going the wrong way? He said he had been given bad directions.

Spiritually speaking, how many people think they are traveling home, but are headed the wrong way? Fairly often I hear people say post things that are not consistent with what the Bible teaches. Many have been given bad directions and appear to be traveling down the wrong path. But I confess it is very difficult for me to know how to point this out. Surely we would all like to be like the police officers who helped the man get to his destination, but that wouldn’t be possible without first convincing him he was going the wrong way. When it comes to spiritual matters, the general reaction seems to be either: “who are you to say I’m going the wrong way?” or “it doesn’t matter, any path will do.” Even if it were true that “all roads lead to Rome,” so to speak, you’d still have to be traveling the right direction.

So let me put this out there: First of all, I want to be on the right path. If I’m traveling the wrong way, I hope someone will be kind enough to tell me. Secondly, I’d love the opportunity to help others find the right way. If you like to discuss spiritual matters, I’ll make myself available any way I can. If I can do nothing more than help us read the map together, I’ll be glad to do so.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” (Prov 14:12)

Sunday Evening
College Days and Singing at White’s
Ben Holcomb teaching

February Calendar

2 - Ken Sullivan
2 - Wesley Harld
2 - Chris Lane
4 - Emma Hayes-Biegels
5 - Jude Hensky
5 - Jami Coleman
6 - Jordan Flood
8 - Grace Dennis
11 - Blake Toucher
13 - Leslie Freeman
13 - Ruth White
14 - Lighthouse
15 - Alyssa Haddox
16 - Beth Fabbio
17 - Alex Tominack
17 - Caralise Hunt
18 - Julie Johnson
March 1 (334) 703-0650

Elders
Walker Davis (334) 703-0650
Larry Rousse (334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes 7:00 PM

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Larry Rousse Evangelist and Editor

The Bible is a supernatural revelation. The word revelation means uncovering. Since the Bible is an expression of the mind of God, it is a revelation. The New Testament is "God’s wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God hath ordained before the worlds unto our glory" (I Cor. 2:7). None of this world’s rulers knew about this wisdom before it was revealed for "Things which eye did not see, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared beforehand for them to look at him" these "God revealed … through the Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:9-10).

The word mystery means something previously hidden or covered that is now made known or uncovered. Human eyes, ears, and minds did not know this covered wisdom of God. The Holy Spirit did find it for himself. He searched the deep (the hidden) things of God. The New Testament then is a revelation to man’s discovery of the hidden wisdom of man. In fact, its words are those of the Spirit for Paul so affirms: "Which things also we speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:13).

The title of this article comes from 2 Timothy 3:16,17: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be fully furnished unto every good work."

The God-Breathed Word

The word scripture means writing and in this connection means a sacred writing. The word inspired has been misunderstood in this connection. It comes from two words: God and breathed. Literally then, it means God breathed. Every God-breathed writing is the idea. The heavens and the earth are the product of God (Psa. 33:6). Likewise the sacred scriptures are God’s product. He spoke them into existence. The scriptures are God-breathed, the result of God’s speaking. Man is the instrumentality used by God in giving the scriptures to the world. The Holy Spirit searched the mind of God and communicated the things of His mind to man who wrote them in words chosen by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). The men moved by the Spirit spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance (2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 2:4).

God did not inspire the scriptures in the sense of impressing His truth or breathing into the men but rather the idea is that the scriptures are the very words that went from God and came to man through the Spirit’s agency. The words never

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God is spoken of as the word. The only consistent conclusion is that the scripture is the word of God.

The Authority of the Scriptures

Since God has so emphatically declared that the scriptures are the word of God, what does that say about the authority of scripture? Jesus asserted that scripture cannot be broken (John 10:8; 34, 35). The word broken means to lose or to take out of effect. The point is that whatever God bound cannot be loosed. The same word is used by John the Baptist when he stated that he was not worthy to loose the latches of Christ’s shoes. What God has tied, no man can loose. What the apostles by the authority of Christ bound on earth had already been bound in heaven and what they loosed on earth had already been loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19; 18:10, 11; 1 Cor. 4:16,17). Consequently, the scriptures are even more trustworthy than eye witness testimony (2 Pet. 1:19).

God and The Bible

God and scriptures are identified with each other. Scriptures are spoken of as if they were God. “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8). Yet when one reads the account of this Old Testament utterance, he learns that the Genesis record says God spoke to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Paul says that scripture preached the Gospel, but Moses says that God said this to Abraham. We are forced to conclude that God said in scripture that the Gentiles would be justified by faith. The point is that the scripture controverts the Genesis record. A similar reference to scripture as if it were God is in Romans 9:17. Paul says that scripture said to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show thee in mine power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth.” But when one turns to Exodus 9:16 and reads the statement, it is attributed to God. The point is that the scriptures are the words of God.

The reverse of the preceding is true-God is spoken of as if He were scripture. Christ refers to marriage as if it were in the beginning and stated that the One who made them shall make a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife” (Matt. 19:5). A study of Genesis 2:24 where this statement occurs does not mention who spoke the words. In fact, a casual reading of the passage seems to indicate that Adam says the words but Jesus affirmed that God said them. In this instance God is spoken of as the scripture. The only consistent conclusion is that the scripture is the word of God.

The restoration Movement Christianity of the 18th and 19th centuries

In my early years, before Daddy got steady work in town, we lived in the country and did small time farming. We heated and cooked using wood for fuel. There were two lessons country dads taught their boys about cutting wood to ensure that it was at a consistent length and thus fit nicely into the fireplace and cook stove.

Lesson 1: Do not guess at the length.

The reason for this should be self-evident.

Lesson 2: Measure each cut by the stick it had originally cut and give you as a pattern.

The reason for this, if one uses the stick just previously used as a measuring stick, #3 by #2, #4 by #3; #5 by #4, etc., it won’t be long until none of the cuts will conform to the original. These lessons also applied to cutting lumber for building buildings on the place.

There is a spiritual application in all of this as we go about building up the church in each generation.

Lesson 1: The building up of the Lord’s church is not guess work.

There was a pattern cut by the Lord in the New Testament and all succeeding generations are to follow it; rather than guessing what would please the Lord. We can know what pleases him by using the original cut as a pattern for whatever else is under our consideration, the Lord’s, or the church’s will, or the purest judgment. That ought not to be,were it not for the apostles and prophets.

Lesson 2: Each generation must not measure its cut by the cut of the immediate previous generation.

Nor should it go back several generations and cutting by that generation. Such a method will only make the present measurement to be an accumulation of all mis-cuts that may have been made from the beginning up until the cut being made today used for measurement. Any adjustment that this generation makes must be measured by the original pattern cut by the Lord at the beginning.

We hear a lot about the need to restore New Testament Christianity. This is a noble and needed pursuit, but we need to know what we are seeking to restore. Are we seeking to restore “Pre-papal Christianity” of the 5th and 6th centuries? The “Reformation Movement Christianity” of the 16th and 17th centuries? Or, the “Restoration Movement Christianity” of the 18th and 19th centuries?

Much that I read about the need for Christians to correct errors that have crept into their preaching and practice leaves the distinct impression that it is a call to go back to the Christianity of the “Restorers” of the 18th and 19th centuries. Like one cutting wood, after having made 100 cuts, each time using the just previous cut as his pattern, deciding to go back to the next and start over from there making new cuts. He will still have any mis-cuts that may have taken place between the 1st and 75th cut. The only smart thing to do is to use the first stick as pattern and make all cuts by it.

We can and should profit from past generations as well as from those of the present generation. They have contributed to our learning and understanding of New Testament Christianity. I have profited immensely from reading about and from Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, J. W. McGarvey, “Racoon” John Smith, Granville and David Lipscomb, Tolbert Fanning, etc. They have pointed out things that I might have missed by my independent study, but still I cannot be of “Campbell, of McGarvey, of Smith of Fanning (though his preaching started the congregation where I received most of my early training as a preacher). Nor can I be of the “Restoration Movement” as a whole. I have to be “of Christ” which I am and are the church, as Paul said, his body. He will heal the mis-cuts that I have made my way through the apostles and prophets.

There are two extremes that often happen among my brethren toward what is historically known as the “Restoration Movement.” One extreme is to have set out with an action, and plan such as that made it up, that it virtually becomes the pattern which we should seek to duplicate. The other extreme is to have almost a total disdain for the movement and those who made it up.

Let’s make a conscientious and determined effort to avoid either extreme. Let us not blindly follow anything they may have taught, but rather “search the scriptures … to see if the things are so.” (Acts 17:11). But let us show due respect for the movement and those who made it up, by recognizing and being thankful for their contributions to our understanding of the scriptures.