

## "THE RIGHT WAY"

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The world needs more men like Samuel who was dedicated, come what may, to teaching people “the right way.” He stated to troubled Saul, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (I Sam. 12:23). The Psalmist expressed the desire to learn the right way of the Lord when he wrote, “Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies” (Psa. 27:11). One of the most sincere sentiments of seeking salvation is found in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Today, as seemingly in every generation of man, the right way is being forsaken. Peter wrote about false teachers that they “have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray . . . while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (II Pet. 2:15, 19-21).

The woman who leads the Poplar Grove Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Halls, Tennessee, and refers to herself as the “reverend pastor” reported to the *Commercial Appeal*, “We let go of believing we have all the answers and that we are right about what we believe, and we listen for what God is speaking to the community” (Sunday, July 6, 2003, Section B, p. 1). The word “reverend” is used biblically to refer only to God himself (Psa. 111:9). A solitary “pastor” never had oversight of a congregation in New Testament times (Acts 14:23). And, only men meet the qualifications for pastors in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Further, the church of the New Testament is not known as the “Cumberland Presbyterian Church” but by references such as “the churches of Christ” and “the church of the Firstborn” (Rom. 16:16; Heb. 12:23). It is a small wonder why she would write that they have “let go of believing we have all the answers and that we are right about what we believe” because they do not have the answers the Bible gives, and they are not right about what they believe. If they would not hear what God said in the Bible, then why would anyone seriously believe they would listen to him even if he did “speak to the community”?

The name of Benjamin Franklin is familiar as a statesman and educator in American history, but students of the American restoration movement will recognize the name as that also of a gospel preacher of former years. He wrote, “The religion of Christ is exclusive in its character. It claims not to be a form of Christianity, as good as any other form, or even better; but it claims to be Christianity itself. It claims not to be a system of Christianity, as good as any other, or even better: or a system of religion, as good as any other, or even better; but to be the very Christianity itself; the very religion itself, ordained by the Lord. It comes not, claiming to be as near the truth as any other, or even nearer, but to be the truth itself; not to be as near the right way as any other, or even nearer, but to be the right way of the Lord. It comes not, claiming to have as much authority as any other religion, or even more, but to have the supreme and absolute authority. Its Divine Author says, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.’ Again he says, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.’ The command of the Almighty Father is, ‘Hear you him.’ We are not to see who can come the nearest hearing him; but to ‘hear him.’ We must be led by him. All parties talk about ‘the religion of Christ;’ of being nearly like it, or being far from it, or not like it. How can we tell what is like it, or not like it, unless we know what it is? If we know what it is, why not accept it, and not something like it? All talk of the truth, and that which is nearest the truth; but how do we know anything about which is the nearest the truth, unless we know what the truth itself is? If we know what the truth itself is, why not accept it, and not something like it, or a mere imitation? All talk about the right way, and that which is nearest the right way, but how can we know which is the nearest the right way, unless we know the right way itself? If we know the right way itself, why not accept and walk in it? There is no reason in not walking in the right way, or in walking in a way like it, and not in it, if we know the right way itself. The religion of Christ itself is right, and no other religion is right. No matter what any set of people are, or whether they live up to it or not—the religion itself is right. If those who profess it come short, they are not right; but the religion itself is right. It will stand, but they will fall” (Benjamin Franklin, “Why Jesus and the Early Church Were Hated and Persecuted,” *The Spiritual Sword* 7:4 (July, 1976), p. 20).

The words of Jesus instead of suggesting that God is somehow speaking through the community today affirm the power of the written word of God to keep Christians from being led astray by a wicked world. Jesus said, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for

their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:14-21).