

# The BEACON

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## An Open Letter to Those Among Us That Believe That Churches of Christ are All Wrong - by Tim Nichols

If you are among those addressed by the title I have some very sincere questions that I have long wanted to ask someone who might be willing to give genuine, transparent, and honest answers. The purpose of this article is not to try to convince you that you are mistaken or to solicit your explanations for why you believe as you do. We have devoted a good deal of paper and ink to these purposes over the past several years. Assuming that you have been around for these attempts at earnest discussion we conclude that you remain unconvinced after giving your best effort to considering the matter carefully. You still believe that the "traditional" doctrines and practices that are common among churches of Christ are mistaken. You believe that we are legalistic, exclusive, and unreasonably isolated from other religious bodies. You think that we misunderstand grace and that we have inflexible ideas about how one becomes a Christian. You are convinced that choirs and instrumental music in worship are not only allowable, but right and good. You feel certain that our hermeneutics are not accurate. You are confident that we are

incorrect about the nature and identity of the church. You are convinced that we are simply one denomination among many and that we are no better (and probably worse) than the others.

I will preface my first question with a few comments designed to prevent misunderstanding. I am not really inviting you to leave us. If you are content to remain among us without creating division as you continue to study these matters, I would recommend that you do so. If your feet are firmly planted and your convictions are fixed, however, my question is this: Why are you still here? There are religious bodies in your community that believe, teach, and practice the very things you are seeking. They would applaud your liberation from legalism and welcome you with open arms. They would bathe you in love and acceptance. The tension that you feel within yourself and that you are creating within and between others could be alleviated in one swift and decisive move.

My second question: Why did you come among us? You knew who we were when you came. The church hid nothing from you.

You came willingly whether you "grew up in the church" or, like me, sought out those who were following the Bible as you then understood it. If your reasons for entering are no longer valid, maybe it is time to resume your search elsewhere.

Are you still here because your parents or loved ones were (or are) members? If we had the right to grant all of the changes that you wish to make, you would not be a member of what they were members of, -- except for the name on the sign in front of the building. Do you really want the church of Christ to become something else, except for the name, only to accommodate your sentimental need to be associated with a "church of Christ" while, at the same time, having all that the denominations have to offer? Would it not be more reasonable to join a denominational group that pleases you and then work to have them change their name to "church of Christ" while keeping all else the same? This would cause a good deal less disturbance than the other way around. It would seem to be a move more consistent with the kind of unity that you profess to believe in. Even if you, and others who are like-minded, are successful in convincing a number of people to adopt your ways you will not have contributed to greater unity. Those of us who are committed to what we sincerely believe to be the old paths will have to separate from you (or you from us) and you will have become the hammer that drove one more wedge of division (a thing that you profess to despise) into what you consider to be the larger body of Christ.

If you would be willing to answer these questions, please write. If you would not like to have your response published, please clearly indicate this when you write. **Via - North Charlottesville church of Christ (Virginia) Bulletin - Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 2011.**

## THE OLD PATHS

I liked the old paths, when Moms were at home. Dads were at work. Brothers went into the army. And sisters got married BEFORE having children! Crime did not pay; Hard work did; And people knew the difference.

Moms could cook; Dads would work; Children would behave.. Husbands were loving; Wives were supportive; And children were polite.

Women wore the jewelry; And Men wore the pants. Women looked like ladies; Men looked like gentlemen; And children looked decent.

People loved the truth, And hated a lie; They came to church to get IN, Not to get OUT!

Hymns sounded Godly; Sermons sounded helpful; Rejoicing sounded normal; And crying sounded sincere. Cursing was wicked; Drinking was evil; and divorce was unthinkable.

The flag was honored; America was beautiful; And God was welcome! We read the Bible in public; Prayed in school; And preached from house to house

To be called an American was worth dying for; To be called a Christian was worth living for; To be called a traitor was a

shame! Sex was a personal word. Homosexual was an unheard of word, And abortion was an illegal word.

Preachers preached because they had a message; And Christians rejoiced because they had the VICTORY!

Preachers preached from the Bible; Singers sang from the heart; And sinners turned to the Lord to be SAVED!

A new birth meant a new life; Salvation meant a changed life; Following Christ led to eternal life.

Being a preacher meant you proclaimed the word of God; Being a deacon meant you would serve the Lord; Being a Christian meant you would live for Jesus; And being a sinner meant someone was praying for you!

Laws were based on the Bible; Homes read the Bible; And churches taught the Bible.

Preachers were more interested in new converts, Than new clothes and new cars. God was worshiped; Christ was exalted; and the Holy Spirit was respected.

Church was where you found Christians on the Lord's day, rather than in the garden, on the creek bank, on the golf course, or being entertained somewhere else.

I still like the old paths the best !

## **PSALM 33**

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord..." **Psalm. 33:12.**

"When America ceases to be good, it will

cease to be great," said Alexis de Tocqueville. In this statement we are reminded that the greatness of a nation does not rest in its military power, medical advancements, political acumen or its national wealth. A nation's greatness is found in the quotient of its righteousness. Righteousness is the determining factor in a country's future. Solomon, the wisest of men, said "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (**Prov. 14:34**).

Theodore Roosevelt warned, "The things that will destroy America are prosperity- at - any- pride, safety-first, instead of duty-first, the love of soft living and the get-rich-quick theory of life."

Is it possible that this day is drawing near? To a great extent our objectives have become: success, status, and security. These are followed closely by self-indulgence, pleasure, and comfort. Our permissive society turns freedom into license, rights into riots, and pornography into profit.

Concerned about a higher standard of living we often fail to live by a standard. Riches are elevated above righteousness; power over piety; and science above the Savior. We abandon the moral law then shake our heads in disbelief as crime increases. Look out, America! Remember the words of Will Durant: "No great nation has ever been overcome until it has destroyed itself."

If you really desire to be a patriot; if you are truly concerned about America; if you earnestly want God to bless America -- Then

live a life in harmony with the will of God. --- **John Gibson via, Gospel Power, Vol. 11, No. 49, Dec. 12, 2004.**

## **Chariots of Fire**

Read **2 Kings 6:8-18**. In this passage Israel is in jeopardy of being vanquished by her powerful neighbor, Syria. Ben-hadad was the king of this wicked and potent foe of God's people. But, all of Ben-hadad's strategies failed because the Holy Spirit revealed the king's top-secret plans to the prophet Elisha. So Ben-hadad sent a large force to kill the prophet. Facing an inescapable plight, Elisha's servant cried out, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Who was Elisha talking about? "Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." All the protection needed was there though beyond the reach and capabilities of the five human senses! Let's consider three points.

1) **We're Surrounded By The Enemy.** We live in sin-sick world filled with evil, problems, difficulties and death. "Alas...what shall we do?" There's only one answer...Christ! Salvation is only in Him! (**Acts 4:12**) We must do all God requires to "put on Christ" (**Gal. 3:26-27**), to "take up" our "cross daily" and follow Him (**Lk. 9:23**), to ever "abide in" Him (**Jn. 15:1-8**). We must "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (**Eph. 6:11-18**). We must be ever obedient to Christ for He is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (**Heb 5:9**). We must show our love to Him by keeping His commandments (**Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3-5**) and laying "aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (**Heb 12:1-2**).

2) **God Is Greater Than The Enemy.** Elisha's servant was dismayed at the odds, because he didn't include God! Even though the odds appear insurmountable we can overcome if we are in Christ, for "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (**1 Jn. 4:4**) Also, there is more to the material universe than what we see, touch, smell, or hear. Paul said Christians should, "not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (**2 Cor. 4:18**). We can't always see God's providential care with our physical senses, but we have His assurance it's provided if we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (**Mt. 6:25-34**). God will help us handle every situation if we walk by faith (**Phil. 4:13**). This doesn't mean the absence of pain, suffering, or even death. But, if we keep the faith He assures us "that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (**2 Cor. 5:1; 2 Tim. 4:6-8**).

3) **God Will Deliver Us.** God delivered Elisha as he followed three steps we must imitate: A) Prayer (**2 Kings. 6:17**). God hears our prayers only if we do His will (**1 Pet. 3:12**). Remember, God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (**Eph. 3:20**).

B) Faith. We can't please God without it! (**Heb. 11:6**) Our faith is an objective faith based on His revealed word (**Rom. 10:17**). By faith, like Stephen, we can envision God's throne and appreciate the heavenly city where we'll join the Lord one day, if through faithfulness, our name is "written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (**Acts 7:56; Rev. 21**).

C) Obedience. It is only by faithful obedience (**Jas. 2:18-26**) that we build our spiritual house on the rock (**Mt. 7:24-27**). For Jesus has become "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (**Heb. 5:9**).

Author Unknown