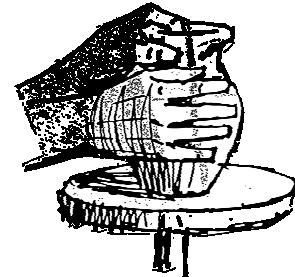


# His Workmanship at Westside

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”*  
—Ephesians 2:10



Vol. XXV

March 13, 2016

No. 11

Isaiah 64:8

## Restorationism, Sectarianism, and Cynicism, by Shane Scott

In his ancient epic about Odysseus, the poet Homer wrote of a dangerous strait between Sicily and the Italian mainland. The narrow passage was notoriously hazardous because of the presence of two perilous obstacles: Scylla and Charybdis. On one side of the strait was Scylla, a jutting rock formation, portrayed as a six-headed monster. On the other side was Charybdis, a swirling whirlpool of water gulped down by a giant sea beast. Because of the limited room to maneuver while passing through the strait, sailors who tried to avoid the one hazard inevitably fell victim to the other.

This story, almost three thousand years old, illustrates the danger of over-correction, of being forced to navigate carefully between two opposite dangers. Just as veering too sharply from Scylla was certain to send a ship plunging into the abyss of Charybdis, lurching from one extreme to another is a sure course for disaster.

Restoration of our spiritual lives and of true Biblical teaching is a noble objective, but two dangerous extremes threaten anyone attempting to reach that objective. The twin hazards are sectarianism and cynicism. Since none of these terms is explicitly found in Scripture, let's begin by explaining the meaning of each of them.

**Restorationism.** By *restoration*, we

mean that all Christians should constantly evaluate their beliefs and practices to see if they reflect the original apostolic teaching. Restoration is a good term to summarize this objective, because it assumes that we are always in need of restoring, and it assumes that there is some standard by which to gauge whether we are restored.

This definition, and this objective, are hardly unique. One of the best articulations of restorationism is in the preface to a book called The King Jesus Gospel: *“Part of the genius of genuine [life in Christ] is that each generation has to think it through afresh. Precisely because (so Christians believe) God wants every single Christian to grow up in understanding as well as trust, the faith [of Christ] has never been something that one generation can sort out in such a way as to leave their successors with no work to do,”* N.T. Wright.

Every generation must look to the apostolic teaching and *“think it through afresh.”* After warning about false teachers who deny the apostolic message about Jesus, John illustrated this responsibility to restore apostolic doctrine: *“I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Therefore,*

*let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He made to us—eternal life,”* 1 Jn 2:21-25. John called his readers to remember what they *“heard from the beginning.”* That is the standard. And so long as their faith is consistent with that original message, then it will be reestablished (restored) in their lives even though many years, or even decades, had passed since the apostles first preached to them.

However, this is not an easy goal to achieve. Like the travelers in Homer's poem, we find ourselves in danger of running into serious obstacles, dangerous extremes, in the way to restoration. **Sectarianism.** On one side of the strait there is sectarianism. By sectarianism, we mean the attitude that says, *“We have it all figured out.”* And since *“we have it all figured out,”* there is no work of restoration to do—the journey is over. There are at least two serious problems with this mindset, though.

First, who is the we that has it figured out? A cadre of preachers? A council of theologians? A collection of churches listed on the website? Whoever the we is, they will be an arbitrarily identified segment of people. Once a specific constituency of people becomes the

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**Extreme Dangers to Restoration: Sectarianism and Cynicism,** from p. 1 arbiters of truth, there is sectarianism. This is exemplified by the Jewish leaders, who in their unbelief asked the officers of the temple regarding Jesus, "Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in Him?" Jn 7:48. They had it all figured out.

The other problem represented by the "we have it all figured out" mentality is the it that is figured out. Just what is it that has been perfectly discerned? Unless someone is willing to claim infallible insight into the meaning of every verse in the Bible, what a person really means when he says, "We have it all figured out" is actually, "I have figured out all the things in the Bible that I have determined are really important." The Pharisees had tithing all figured out—as long as it only applied to mint, dill, and cumin, Mt 23:23.

Sectarianism aborts the journey of restoration by imposing synthetic standards of human authority and tradition on the word of God. The solution to sectarianism includes carefully distinguishing God's truth—His absolute, unerring, and unchanging truth—from my understanding of the truth, which is sometimes mistaken and always subject to evaluation and correction, Mt 15:1-9. What I have always believed or practiced may not be right, but God is always right, and I should submit myself to Him. But sectarianism is not the only peril that faces a restorationist, and the frantic course correction to avoid sectarianism often leads to the other extreme—the chasm of cynicism.

**Cynicism.** By cynicism, we mean the suspicion that all of this talk about "restoration" is just mindless "Church of Christ" traditionalism, and anything that smacks of this—buzz words like "apostolic authority," "command-example-implication," or "patternism"—is just sectarianism by another name.

This cynical spirit may grow out of frustration with the truly sectarian spirit that some professed Christians possess. It easy for "restoration" to become a cover for simple posturing, for sloganeering about "speaking where the

*Bible speaks*" to take the place of actually digging into the word. Even worse, some professed restorationists have had horribly unrestored, un-Christlike attitudes. I can speak with some authority about these failures, because I have been guilty of all of them!

But none of these issues is justification for cynicism. Paul faced bitter sectarians who preached some truthful things but did so with selfish and envious attitudes, Phil 1:15-18. That didn't invalidate all that they taught, though. Paul could separate the truth ("Christ is proclaimed") from the failures of those professing this truth. While the Pharisees were wrong to neglect justice, mercy, and faith, they weren't wrong to tithe mint, dill, and cumin: "These you ought to have done without neglecting the others," Mt 23:23.



*Scylla and Charybdis*

At its worst, cynicism becomes another form of sectarianism, branding all of those who don't share the same frustrations or arrive at the same solutions as "sectarians." In the rush to avoid everything traditional, a new tradition arises: being anti-traditional. The sectarian reads the Bible with lenses looking to justify "the way we've always taught it," and the cynic reads the Bible with lenses looking to vilify "the way we've always taught it." But neither the sectarian nor the cynic reads the Bible with respect for the way God actually gave it, written in a specific historical context that should be understood before ever trying to apply it. Neither sectarian nor cynic ever asks, "What did the text mean to its original readers?" Both the sectarian and the cynic feel free to read the Bible in the purely reactionary way essential to each mindset.

To avoid the Scylla of sectarianism and the Charybdis of cynicism, all of God's people need to be good students of all the Bible to apply to all of life.

Only in this way can we reach the destination toward which restoration moves us, to the "stature of the fullness of Christ," Eph 4:13.

#### "What Does the Lord Require?"

by Harold Hancock

The prophet Micah once asked, "What does the Lord require of you..?" He then answered his own question by naming three things that God requires, Mic 6:8.

**"Do Justly."** Justice, doing justly, can never be separated from the law and righteousness. The Hebrew word here translated justly is *mishpat*, a word used for the law (over 400 times in the Old Testament): "a formal decree or verdict; justice, to be judged, judgment, just(-ice, -ly), (manner of) law(-ful), (due) order, ordinance, right(-eous), sentence, worthy, + wrong." The word describes God's dealings with men, His law, and the way men must treat one another. Micah says we must "do justly" in our dealings with other people because we are under God's righteous justice, His law, His *mishpat*. Human justice comes only from God's justice and law.

The idea conveyed by the word justly is righteousness. Another idea is fairness—we must treat one another fairly. We cannot show favoritism, or cheat, or defraud our fellows, Ex 23:6; Lev 18:4-5; 19:15, 35-37; 24:22; Deut 1:17; 4:8; 27:19; 16:18-19; Job 8:3. To do justly is to treat our neighbors in the manner God's law directs—with love, Rm 13:8-10. Justice always respects God's law.

**"Love Mercy."** An even greater intensity than "doing" is "loving," and beyond justice is mercy. Mercy tempers justice, and like justice, it flows from God, Ps 89:14. God is merciful to man. Mercy, or *cheched*, means "kindness; beauty;—favor, good deed(-liness, -ness), kindly, (loving-)kindness, merciful (kindness), mercy, pity." In the Septuagint *cheched* is often translated "to have pity" or "to show compassion." The most common Hebrew description of God extols His mercy, Ex 34:6-7; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:4, 8, 11; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Mic 7:18. God's great mercy is seen in the forgiveness of sins, Num 14:18-19, and in the

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Psalm 133:1

**God's harvest we'll glean in 2016** "Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." —Ruth 2:2

**What Does the Lord Require**, from p. 2 spiritual blessings given to us in Christ, Ax 13:34. David described God's mercy as plenteous (abundant) and everlasting, Ps 86:5,15; see 100:5; 103:17;130:7. How can we not love and appreciate God's mercy—we rely on it for any salvation or hope.

Because of His great mercy, we must extend mercy and favor to one another and be willing to forgive when others sin against us, Mt 6:12; 18:23-35. If we are not merciful, we will not receive mercy from God. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," Mt 5:7; see 6:14; Mk 11:25-26. We must love mercy and give it freely to others.

**"Walk Humbly with Your God."** To walk with God suggests we are associated with God, traveling with Him, have fellowship with Him. We consider Him "our God," the One Who personally cares for us. However, in order to have an intimate relationship with God, we must walk humbly with Him.

The Hebrew word *tsana* means "humbly, lowly (from the root humiliate)," and is used again only in Pr 11:2 where it is translated *lowly* and is used opposite pride. Those who are proud are presumptuous; they willfully disobey God and willingly pervert His word, Deut 17:12; 18:22. But those who walk humbly respect God and His word and are obedient to His commands.

God requires us to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. These actions assure that we will treat others fairly, seek God's forgiveness, obey God willingly, and choose right proactively. God's requirements are for our good in all our relationships.

## Discipleship Here At Home

**Porn Poisons Population**, from p. 4

Pornography has successfully normalized virtually every sex act, and as the result, perversion has become normal. According to a new piece of research by two American university professors, the more porn heterosexual men watch, the more it opens up their mind to be increasingly accepting of "non-traditional sexual situations." Our study suggests that the more heterosexual men, especially less educated heterosexual men, watch pornography, the more supportive they become of same-sex marriage." Indiana University Assistant Professor Paul Wright told The Washington Examiner. "Pornography adopts an individualistic, non-judgmental stance on all kinds of non-traditional sexual behaviors, and same-sex marriage attitudes are strongly linked to attitudes about same-sex sex. If people think individuals should be able to decide for themselves whether to have same-sex sex, they will also think that individuals should be able to decide for themselves whether to get married to a partner of the same-sex."

Rooting pornography out of our homes, schools, and churches is the single most urgent task before us—because pornography is poison, and it is murdering the moral character of millions who are drinking it daily and deeply. It is destroying relationships. It is rewiring the brains of adolescents who are learning about sex not from their parents or church leaders, but from contorted porn stars and smut-peddlers. As parents, educators, and church leaders struggle to deal with the cultural currents, they must address the evil of pornography! Many communities spent decades building their church walls thick and high. But Wi-Fi signals ooze right through the brick, bearing a soul-destroying payload. Prevention and education are the only weapons we have left, and it is time we used them.

**Rejoice** The **Shreves** are expecting their first baby, a girl, in April. The **Addys** are expecting their third child, a boy, in May. **Micaiah Fink** has been nominated for the Mayors' & Commissioners' Award, Clear Crk **Bereaved** **Lloyd Menard** was buried last Thursday. Please pray for **Virginia** and family at this time of loss.

**PRAY FOR healing, protection, help**

- **Samantha Harrod**—benign cyst removed from her back last week; 2-month recovery
- the **Boyd's** extended families are undergoing hardships: **Wendy's** father, **Dan Gutierrez**, in rehab; **Kenny's** sister and brother-in-law are divorcing, some cult activity, **Kevin** buried his father last week; pray for **Jennifer, Kevin, Chloe, and Elijah Whittemore**.
- **Linda Szymanski**—broken arm & wrist
- the **Addys** ask our prayers for **Levi's** former boss in Odessa—**MacDonald** family, 17-year-old son murdered parents, 19-year-old sister survives
- **Sarah McMurray's** mentee **Lakesha Griffin**—age 12; moved to Sarah's house last week
- **Judy Strand**—finished with chemo for liver transplant; testing in prep for transplant in April or May
- **Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
- **Berney Charo's** brother **Eliud**—prostate cancer
- **Ernesto Gonzalez's** father **Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma; to rehab center to gain strength
- **Ian Anderson, Mina Gonzalez's** nephew—rehab
- **Letha Fink's** brother **Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, diagnosed with neuro-muscular disease
- **Bill Dennis**—improving
- **Brittany Tope's** mother **Gayle**—biopsy of spot on liver shows breast cancer has spread; **Brittany's** grandmother—on dialysis
- **Sylvia Chapman, Brett's** grandmother—third stage pancreatic cancer; **Brett's** grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Connie Doss**—cancer returned
- **River** and **Forest Cox's** great grandmother **Martha Rowe**—in rehab after diabetic coma for knee strengthening
- **Judy Sartin's** friend **George Vernon**—stage 4 esophageal cancer
- **Judy Strand's** daughter **Shawntiel** and **Kory Tope's** uncle **Skeeter Schulz**—broken leg, hip
- **Kim Howell's** coworker **Rachel Daniels**—recently had baby, **Titus**, with genetic disease
- **Jordan Corray's** colleague and mentor **Craig Smith** and friend **Kylie Cabalka**—recovering
- **Andrea Songer Greer**, daughter of **Bill** and **Debbie S.**—chemo for stage I breast cancer
- **Connor Boyd's** friend **Christian Lyons**, high school freshman—leukemia

### CHRONIC CONDITIONS

**Christian Harrod; Addison Tope; Rocco Jr. Ann Cox; Logan Corray; Pat Wilkes**—asthma  
**Orchid Cox**—chronic blood clot condition  
**Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease  
**Jonathan Hadders**—RA  
**Kirk Johnson**—MS; **Amanda Mailloux**—IBS  
**Virginia Menard**—macular degeneration  
**Sandra Perry**—diabetes complications; oxygen  
**Eric Perry**—recent pre-diabetes diagnosis  
**Cheryl Reames**—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis  
**Judy Sartin**—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis  
**Judy and Mike Strand**—hepatitis treatment  
**Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness



## Exposing current trends pornography

**Porn Poisons Population**, by Jonathon Van Maren

Nothing has shifted our culture faster than the spread of online pornography. Think about it: If over 80% of men and close to half of women are viewing pornography every single month (and studies show they are), how can we possibly expect them to be shocked by the exhibitionism and lewdness of the Gay Pride Parade? Within the confines of our homes we are watching thousands upon thousands of naked people committing every sex act imaginable, over and over again, day after day. When we emerge blinking into the sun, should it be any surprise that parades or movies prominently featuring public nudity and bizarre sexuality would not ruffle us in the least? For many, it's just as if the scenes on the home screens have leaked onto the street.

It's Christians, too. About 77% of men Christians between the age of 18 and 30 view pornography every month. In a [pastors.com](http://pastors.com) American survey last summer, more than half of "pastors" responding copped to having viewed porn in the past year.

Many complain that there is a lack of moral leadership on issues surrounding pornography and sexuality in the church and the culture at large. Should that be any surprise when many so-called "Christian" leaders have themselves been implicated? Shame and hypocrisy are tremendously powerful forces.

The Sexual/Feminist Revolution may have been the explosive event that blew a hole in the Judeo-Christian dam holding back pent-up floods of depravity. But it is the porn plague that has infected us all. The sexual sins surfacing on every screen have made quislings of the very men who were tasked with rallying the forces of the church against the forces of the Revolution.

That is why the Porn Generation, even those growing up with godly parents and spending each Sunday within the walls of church buildings, pay little attention to sexual morality. It's a trend that's being referred to as "sexual atheism"—those who claim to be Christians, perhaps even attend church services, admit the existence of God—but don't think that their sex lives should be impacted by any code of conduct. They do what they please and with whom they please. They have taken their cues on sex from porn, not from Scripture. Trees without roots easily blow over.

Pornography is also the reason so many young evangelicals and Catholics flocked to join the ranks of those calling for the redefinition of marriage. After all, homosexual and other sex acts are mainstream in pornography. Can anyone expect those raised on this sexual diet to mount any protest against those calling for the state to formalize and endorse "alternative" sexual relationships? Studies show that young Christians are beginning to experiment with alternative sexual lifestyles themselves, without respect to or for God and marriage—so why shouldn't they approve of government redefinition of marriage?

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### Pastors

Larry Campbell (303) 246-8810  
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

### Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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## Assembly Schedule

### Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

### Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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### Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, studies on the attributes of God: "Show Me Your Glory," Jim Reingrover
- **sermon**, "Anger of Man vs. Anger of God," Payton Miller

### Sunday afternoon

- **sermon**, "Anxiety: Philippians 4," Westin Cox

### Wednesday night study:

***The Thessalonian Letters***