

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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The Way Things are Supposed to Be!

--by Dr. Todd Dill

(Adapted and modified from Jim Shannon-Northwest Church of Christ)

There is an old saying: "A man should be as 'vigorous' as a panther, as 'swift' as an eagle, as 'fleet' as a stag, and as 'strong' as a lion, to do the Will of his Creator."

In the above saying, everything is doing what it was created to accomplish and they are recognized by that.

- ↳ Panthers are vigorous.
- ↳ Eagles are swift.
- ↳ Stags are fleet.
- ↳ Lions are strong.

Man is supposed to do God's Will. We are the pinnacle of God's creative work. We should be doing what we were created to do and be recognized by that, just like each of these examples.

You and I were created to be the way we were supposed to be! What is that? How are we supposed to be?

1 Peter 2:21, NAS – "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps."

There it is.... You and I were called/created for this purpose – for this reason, to follow in the steps of Christ. We are to be like Christ!

Interestingly – in that text you see the word "example". All of the 14 English translations I checked used the very word, "example". That is the Greek word, "*hupogrammos*". It literally means, "to write under" or "copy to write after".

The idea is that of a copybook that a child would be given to trace letters for copying.

This tried and true method of teaching penmanship is still used today. At the top of the page is a specimen of beautiful numbers and letters flawlessly penned. The page below is white and spotless, prior to the student's attempts to transcribe the copy.

Initially, the awkward attempts to properly duplicate the writings and the top of the page would be made, but with diligence and patience and practice – writing over and over again – success is achieved.

What a beautiful illustration of the Christian life. That is exactly what the inspired apostle Peter is wanting his readers to grasp. Jesus is the beautiful writing at the top of the page. He is our copy head!

Peter goes on to write, **1 Peter 2:22**, "He committed no sin, no deceit was found in his mouth."

Jesus is our *hupogrammos*! He is the "copy for imitation."

Ironically, this is the only place in the Bible that the word "*hupogrammos*" is used – why is that?

My opinion, we have only one example to follow; there is only One

worth imitating. We have only one *hupogrammos*.

The writer of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 1:3**, "The son is the radiance of God's glory and the **exact representation** of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Paul, in the book of Colossians, puts it this way:

Colossians 1:15-16, "15 He is the image of the invisible God the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Hupogrammos – worthy of imitation! Paul clearly told the Church at Corinth: **1 Corinthians 11:1**, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." NIV

"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." NAS

The Greek word that Paul uses here is *mimetes* – to imitate or follow.

You will quickly notice that this word "*mimetes*", is very similar to our English word, 'mimic' or 'mime'. We all know what those words mean.

I can think of no better example than my grandson, Harrison. He is 2-years old and at the age where he 'mimics' people. I bend to put air in the tire, he bends to put air in the tire. I pull a weed from the garden, he pulls

“something” from the garden, not necessarily a weed!

Why does this happen? It is because he is very attentive and observant to follow or mimic my example. How attentive and observant are we to follow the example of Christ?

Harrison will gladly follow in my steps all over the yard. How willing are you and I to follow the examples that Christ left and follow in His steps? Would you be willing to exhort others as Paul did in Philipians?

Philippians 3:17, “Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.”

That’s scary! Do we want others to pattern their lives after ours and follow our example? You should, if you are a true Christ-follower! That is the way things are supposed to be. You and I were called to follow Christ. We should be clearly recognized for these qualities and others should follow our example.

TEXT: Genesis 1:26-27, 31, “26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.” NIV

God created things the way they were supposed to be. God has told us how we are supposed to live our lives, He didn’t leave us to guess. He even sent us the perfect example...His only Son!

God has preserved His perfect Word and it is readily available to constantly reference to know His Will for us. As Christians, He has given us His Spirit to guide and direct us. We really have no excuse for not being the way were supposed to be; and yet many things today are not the way they are supposed to be.

But there is a way things are supposed to be...our text in **Genesis 1** tells us God created the world and things were good. That is the way it was supposed to be!

1. There is a Way Things are Supposed to be...a Good Way! God created man. **Genesis 1:27**, “He made them male and female.” Those are His Words, not mine! I have searched the Bible top to bottom and found no other options offered!

Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that He had made and it was very good.” From this I think we can conclude that things are supposed to be good.

2 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.”

Do you see the word, “righteousness”? What is righteousness? It is being the way you are supposed to be. That is what God wants us to be! He has given us His very Word (God-breathed) so that we know: right from wrong, good from evil, light from darkness; the way it is supposed to be!

Paul continues in **2 Timothy 3:17**, “So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God’s work of creation was good, at the completion it was very good. He expects us to do likewise, and He has thoroughly equipped us to accomplish that.

Not only that, Jesus tells us that He will not make us do it on our own. **John 14:18**, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

Orphans have no parents, they lack guidance. Parents are supposed to be guides; that’s what they are supposed to be. Jesus promises to ask His Father to not let us act as orphans. **John 14:16**, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor/

Comforter/ Helper to be with you forever.”

God thoroughly provides therefore we should be ready to be what we are supposed to be: But...

2. We Do Not Live Perfect Lives. Does that surprise anyone?

Romans 3:10-18, “10 As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” 13 “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” The poison of vipers is on their lips.” 14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know.” 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

NIV

Paul quotes a bunch of Old Testament here which essentially is God’s view of man. Basically, all of us are not the way we are supposed to be!

If we keep reading in the third Chapter of Romans, we will see the summation in **verse 23**, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Yet in our text from **Genesis 1:27**, it stated that we were originally made in His image and now none of us is in His image, except one, our *hupogrammos*, our example – Jesus!

Since we mess up, since we sin, since we are not what we are supposed to be, God provides Jesus, His Holy Spirit, and His Word, all to bring us back to where we are supposed to be.

Have you ever heard someone say, “In a perfect world...” and then complete the sentence to illustrate how they thought it should be? I always want to ask, “How would you know?” How many actually saw THE perfect world? Only two, Adam and his

wife, Eve. Yet even though they saw it and experienced it, they didn't appreciate it!

We certainly don't live in a perfect world today. We have a perfect Creator. He gave us a perfect Law. He sent us a perfect Son. Be we are not perfect, we need divine assistance. We need help – **2 Corinthians 5:17**, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

Jesus is our start-over, our second chance...in Him we can be what God wants us to be. But God in His goodness, doesn't stop there. Even after our start-over, our second chance, those "in Christ" have **1 John 1:9**, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

How many remember what the definition of "righteousness" was? Being what you are supposed to be. Right? What might the definition of unrighteousness be? NOT being what you are supposed to be. **1 John 1:9** says, He will purify us from all unrighteousness.

God desires righteousness and not unrighteousness. He wants you to be the way you were created to be and He is willing to do everything possible to help you get that way and stay that way. He wants you to be complete/perfect like Him.

Return to **2 Timothy 3:17** and notice something else we didn't address initially when we read that verse. Paul wrote, "...that the man of God may be perfect." KJV or "...the man of God may be complete." ASV, NKJV

The idea that Paul is expressing is something that has all its parts like a pie that has all its slices together. Something that has everything that goes with it. What gives us the ability to be this way – perfect, complete? **2 Timothy 3:16**, "All scripture..."

God's Word, by studying His Word, we can get all our parts together. We can learn what God wants us to be; how we are supposed to be.

3. We Do Not Get Back on Track by Lowering the Standard.

So many churches today are advertising with slogans like...

"No matter what you have done, you're welcome..."

"Come as you are..."

I don't disagree with their intent as we are all sinners; but those slogans which imply so much more...

"No matter what you have done, you're welcome here at Grace Church, where you can continue in your sins..."

"Come as you are...and we'll let you stay that way! You'll never be judged here!"

NO – we've all messed up, we have all sinned, but we don't get back on track by lowering the standards. In the beginning God set the standards and they were very good (perfect), it was the way it was supposed to be – that is, the goal we are to strive to attain!

Finally....

4. Don't Look for "Fake" Christianity, or a Reproduction.

The original is always worth more than the reproduction. Often when we fail at the real we look for something close but easier...exchanging the way it is supposed to be with that which was NEVER meant to be. Don't fall into that foolish trap. The apostle Paul mentioned this in his letter to the Roman Christians.

Romans 1:22, "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." NIV

We may not bow to images of birds, animals, and reptiles, but

often mortal man ends up being the object of worship.

Sadly today, so many are satisfied with "fake"; willing to believe a lie. This is certainly nothing new as our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell for a lie and were eternally separated from God. This was not what God desired for His creation; not the way it was supposed to be, but He allowed it as they followed their own free will.

2 Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. KJV

Mankind has taken pleasure in "unrighteousness"! They take pleasure in NOT being what they are supposed to be. This is so rampant today! It seems like nobody wants to be the way they are supposed to be!

In the book of Proverbs we find:

Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is disgrace to any people. NIV

Being the way God wants us to be exalts a nation.... The NLT translates this verse – "Godliness makes a nation great..."

Godliness is the real answer. As my friend and teacher, George Faull often says, "Godliness is God-like-ness."

As our original text says in **Genesis 1:27**, we were created in His image. To be the way we are supposed to be, we need to strive to be like God.

That is the way it is supposed to be!