

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



Volume 36

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Number 10

Completing Our Two Year Program

On Sunday, May 8, beginning at 6:00 pm, five students will receive certificates of completion following two years of intensive college level training. Thanks to generous individuals and local churches of Christ who see the value of faithfully training preachers, we are able to operate as we have since 1969. As Paul told Timothy, we say to each member of the Spring Class of 2016: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 2:1-2).



Forest S. Amtemesaris

Forest, a self proclaimed atheist, was led to Christ by his girlfriend and was baptized in 2013. He is a member of the Orange Street congregation in Auburndale. Before coming to FSOP, he worked at Walgreens as a high school student. He plans to attend Freed-Hardeman University in the Fall.



Federick Hicher

Federick was baptized in 2000. He served as preacher for the East End congregation in Grand Cayman before enrolling at FSOP. He and his wife, Lorna, are expecting their first child in June. He will continue working with the church in Aubundale and taking mission trips to Haiti, his homeland.



Shawn Sullivan

Shawn was baptized in the Fall of 2015. Before enrolling at FSOP, he worked for Winn Dixie, a grocery store chain. He is a member of the Dunellon congregation and lived in the student house provided by Orange Street congregation. He plans to continue his education and preach as needed.



Rico Brown

Rico was baptized in 1982. He had already served as a minister and when he enrolled at FSOP, he was serving as assistant minister for the Beville Road congregation in Daytona Beach. He and his wife, Latisha, have two children. He is currently looking for a full-time preaching work.



Hiram Kemp

Hiram was baptized in 2009 by Rico Brown and came to FSOP from the Beville Road congregation. He was a case worker for Volusia County. He and his wife, Brittani, have two children. On June 1, he will begin as the preacher for the South Florida Avenue congregation in Lakeland.

Thanks for Your Support!

Without your generous contributions, these men would not have been able to attend FSOP, but now, because of your sacrifice and love for the Lord and the proclamation of His word, five more capable men are better prepared to "Go ... into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." May God send more laborers!

Paul's Concern About Tolerating Sin (PART 2)

By Brian R. Kenyon

Sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1-2). If it is allowed to continue unchecked in an individual, his or her soul will be lost eternally (1 Cor. 6:9-10). If it is allowed to continue unchecked in a local congregation, the entire congregation's fellowship with God is jeopardized (cf. Rev. 2:5, 16, 20-22; 3:3, 19). The church at Corinth was such a congregation. The Corinthian Christians tolerated sin that would even cause the Gentiles to blush—a brother was committing adultery with “his father's wife” (1 Cor. 5:1-2), which probably referred to his step mother. It is bad enough when God's people become like the world, but even more tragic when they become worse!

In last month's Harvester, an examination was made of both the sin at Corinth and Paul's instruction how to handle that sin (i.e., “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,” 1 Cor. 5:5). Consideration was also given to the leavening influence of sin, which is the reason why tolerating sin in the local church jeopardizes the entire congregation! A continuation of Paul's instructions to Corinth concerning their toleration of sin is the subject of this article. God wants His church pure (Eph. 5:25b-27).

Applicable to Christians Only

Church discipline, including the withdrawal of fellowship, applies only to wayward church members, not to the world. Paul continued,

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: ¹⁰Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. (1 Cor. 5:9-10)

Paul was clearing up a misunderstanding from a previous letter he wrote to them about fellowshiping those in sin. This letter, however, was not providentially preserved for readers today (cf. the letter Paul wrote the Laodiceans, Col. 4:16).

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The command “not to keep company” applied only to brothers and sisters in Christ who were living in sin, not to those “of this world” (1 Cor. 5:10). Christians are to be in the world in order to influence others (Mt. 5:13-16), but they are not to be of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17; 5:19). If Christianity required no association whatsoever with the world, then Christians would have to be removed from the world, as the monks of the Middle Ages thought when they formed their monasteries in deserted places. Such isolation, however, is not the will of God (cf. Jn. 17:15-19; 1 Thes. 1:6-10).

Paul’s present injunction applied only to the family of God. The apostle said,

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. ¹²For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? ¹³But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (1 Cor. 5:11-13)

If a “brother” (or, by implication, a sister) continues in sin, and all efforts to bring him back have failed, the church is to withdraw fellowship (cf. Mt. 18:15-17; 2 Thes. 3:6-15). The word translated “keep company” (from *sunanamignumi*, συναναμιγνυμι; literally, “mix up together”) means to mingle or associate with; to be intimate with; to have dealings with (also in 2 Thes. 3:14) (Bauer 784; Thayer 601; Newman 172). The word translated “railer [reviler, ASV]” is from a Greek word (*loidoros*, λοιδορος) that refers to one who reviles by the use of abusive speech; slanderer (1 Cor. 6:10 cf. that which is spoken by these kinds of people, 1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:9).

The KJV’s “with such an one no not to eat” is a bit awkward, and is perhaps clearer in other translations: “with such a one no, not to eat” (ASV); “not even to eat with such a person” (NKJ); “not even to eat with such a one” (NAS; ESV). The point is that in the first century, as well as today, to eat with a person usually was to acknowledge fellowship and friendship (cf. Lk. 14:15-24). Therefore, to eat with a brother who had been withdrawn from was equivalent to recognizing fellowship and friendship with him, and thus endorsing his error (cf. 2 Jn. 9-11). However, all eating together is not a sign of fellowship or endorsement. In some situations, it is possible to share a meal with those in sin without endorsing their sins (cf. Mt. 9:10-11; Jn. 4:9; 2 Thes. 3:15).

Paul then added,

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? ¹³But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (1 Cor. 5:12-13)

By inspiration, Paul taught that God will judge those in the world. The church is to judge those that are in the church. What Paul means by “judge them” is not to condemn (as per Mt. 7:1-2), but to choose the correct course of disciplining church members according to God’s standard (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3). Jesus demanded that His followers, “judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24). Not even Paul had jurisdiction over those in the world! The local church’s work of discipline only involves those who are members of that local church!

God takes care of judging those “that are without” (1 Cor. 5:13). In a sense, “God judgeth” those that are in the world now through civil government (Rom. 13:1-7), and ultimately through His own righteous judgement at the end of time (Jn. 5:25-30). The one who was persistently practicing sin in Corinth was to be “put away” from the church’s fellowship because in his present state, he was as the world, a “wicked person [evil person, NKJ].”

Church discipline, including the withdrawal of fellowship, only works with the church! Not only does the church not have fellowship with the world, but the lost of the world’s souls are already in Satan’s grasp. The local church cannot “deliver such an one [of the world] unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). The world needs to be evangelized, not withdrawn from (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16)! The local church, however, is to practice what Paul instructed if it is to keep itself in good standing with God.

Consequences of Neglect

There at least six consequences when the local church fails to withdraw fellowship from the disorderly (adapted from Stearsman 20). First, the eldership (or faithful men if none is present) disobeys God. Since Paul’s directives are “the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37), members of the church are lost if they do not continue following them (Lk. 6:46; 1 Jn. 3:4). Second, the church members living in sin remain lost in their sins. The purpose of withdrawing fellowship is to cause the wayward church

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member to repent so that his “spirit may be saved” (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14-15), but if he is allowed to continue in sin, the local church is not helping him to do either! Third, Satan’s cause is advanced. The more the devil can keep people from following God, the more territory he gains (2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Jn. 3:8-10). Fourth, the world gets a distorted view of Christianity. Imagine what the world would think of a church that allowed its members to openly practice fornication that “is not so much as named among the Gentiles.” The world would not be attracted to what they perceived as the Gospel and thus remain lost. Fifth, faithful members of the church would become discouraged in trying to live the Christian life (cf. 2 Thes. 3:13). Why should they make sacrifices to live faithfully, when someone living for the “lust of the flesh” is treated as being exempt from “walking in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7)? Sixth, a strong motive for spiritual growth is removed. Paul said, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear,” and that was to be done “without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Tim. 5:20-21). God’s people always fail to grow spiritually when a part of His word is not being put to practice.

Conclusion

God’s people can never go wrong by following His instructions. The withdrawal of fellowship may not be the most pleasant part of God’s instructions to practice, but it must be done in love when a situation calls for it. Perhaps one reason why local churches are not as strong and respected as they could be in a given community is because local elderships allow members to continue in sin. The leaven of tolerated sin not only infects the local church, but it also destroys the reputation of that church—and for that matter, the Lord—in the eyes of the community! 🙏

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