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FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

From *The Contending For The Faith Archives* . . .

BIBLE LINES DRAWN CONCERNING FELLOWSHIP

John Weekley

What about the disciplined brother? This question deals with how far or what limits of fellowship we can extend to a brother or sister who has been withdrawn from as taught in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 1 Corinthians 5:11. The only way to answer this properly is to go to the scriptures and see the words used by the Holy Spirit regarding this teaching (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We shall note three passages and the specific words employed by the inspired writer. In Romans 16:17, we read, “**Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and AVOID them.**” In 1 Corinthians 5:11, Paul says,

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 idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no NOT TO EAT.

Also, Paul says, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6,

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye WITHDRAW yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye

received of us.

These three passages say “avoid,” not to “eat” with, and “withdraw.” If we can ascertain the meanings of these words (and we can) then, we shall know how far our association with a disfellowshipped brother or sister can go.

The word *avoid* means “turning away from those who cause offences and occasions of stumbling.” Another definition for *avoid* is “to shun one.” We find the same verb in 1 Peter 3:11 as found in Romans 16:17. In 1 Peter 3:11 we read, “**Let him eschew evil, and do good...**” The same Greek stem which translates *avoid* in Romans 16:17 also translates *eschew* in 1 Peter 3:11. So, whatever our association with evil should be, so would our limitations be with the disfellowshipped. We are to eschew or shun evil and that would mean to shy away from sin.

The next passage says that we are not to *eat* with a brother or sister who has been withdrawn from. The word *eat* is seen in Luke 15:2 where Jesus was condemned by prejudiced Jews for eating with publicans and sinners. Also, in Acts 11:3, Peter is condemned by prejudiced Jews for eating with Gentiles. So, what Paul is commanding here in 1 Corinthians 5:11 is that we cannot, with God’s approval, eat a common meal with one who has been disfellowshipped.

The third passage says *withdraw*. This term means “...to shrink from a *person* or from a thing.” Thayer says,

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

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**CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH
25403 Lancewood Dr., Spring, Texas 77373
Telephone: (281) 350-5516**

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Guest Editorial...

THE FIGHT IS NOT WON

George W. DeHoff

An article in a recent issue of a religious journal states, “Our watchwords are no longer Acts 2:38 and 2 John 9; we have won that battle.” The truth is we have not won that battle at all. It is never won. It is a continuing fight. Within the last two months, I have heard a preacher on the radio “explaining” that Acts 2:38 does not mean that we are baptized in order to secure the remission of sins. He gave his explanation of the Greek word *eis* as always meaning “because of.” Obviously, our own members need to know the meaning of Acts 2:38 and our religious neighbors need to know it.

On another broadcast I heard an “explanation” of Mark 16:16. The preacher said a parallel would be, “He that getteth on the train and taketh a seat shall arrive in Detroit.” I had heard this in the Wallace-Norris debate back in 1934 and our preachers have answered this fallacy so often through the years that I was amazed a false teacher would continue to use it. They seem “**ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.**” According to the false doctrine taught by this denominationalist, he should have said “He that getteth on the train is already in Detroit before he has time to take a seat,” in order to make it parallel with his teaching that “He that believeth is already saved before he has time to be baptized.” The point of this article is, these false teachers are still preaching their false doctrine and their people are still believing it. Those who are preaching “their doctrine” are growing faster than any others. If we want the church of our Lord to grow, we will have to teach the truth and answer denominational error. Indeed, in many places half the members of the church do not know what denominational error is when they see it nor how to answer it. Their children grow up never having heard a good old fashioned debate and never having heard any explanation of these errors.

It is a sad day when one thinks that the battle over denominational error has already been won. We are faced with the same fight in converting good and honest hearted people today that we have always had in the past.

—Deceased

**“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:
and be ready always to give an answer to
every man that asketh you a reason of the
hope that is in you with meekness and fear”
1 Peter 3:15**

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“to abstain from familiar intercourse with one.” These words chosen by the Holy Spirit simply prove one fundamental fact: that is God is hard on sin.

Another passage is Matthew 18: 15-17,

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a HEATHEN man or a PUBLICAN.

The heathen were Gentiles, and an examination of the Scripture reveals how the Jews felt about associating with them (Acts 15:1-3; Gal. 2:12). The feelings were so strong that such a background caused an apostle of the Lord to sin! The publicans were tax collectors and according to Vine, “such were naturally hated *intensely* by the people.” Of course, it is not the hate concept that the

Lord wants us to have towards the disfellowshipped, but the disassociation with them.

The purpose of this instruction is not to hurt the erring Christian, but to help him. If discipline (i.e., disfellowshipping) is carried out according to the divine plan, then only good will result. In most cases before a church withdraws fellowship from an erring brother or sister, every Bible effort to restore such an one is to be implemented (Mat. 18:15-18; Gal. 6:1-2). In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul says that the reason Hymenaeus and Alexander were delivered to Satan was “**that they may learn not to blaspheme.**” Also, in 1 Corinthians 5:5, the purpose of saving the soul of the erring brother was in view.

Such discipline seems hard, but it might be the only hope an erring Christian has to escape eternal punishment. It might be the only and last hope for one to see his true condition. This is seen in the example of the prodigal (Luke 15). Only when he realized and was conscious that he was away from the many blessings of his father (which at a former time were dear and precious) did he then come to himself. ❧

NEITHER CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT, NOR JEW!

Paul Curless

There is much confusion in the minds of men as to the nature of God’s church. Often I get asked the question, “What denomination are you?” My usual answer is, “I am not of any denomination; I am neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jew, but just a Christian (Acts 11:26), a member of the Lord’s church, the one you read about in the New Testament.” Usually this plain biblical answer is quite alarming to most people.

THE PROPHECY

However, when one consults God’s spiritual road map, the Bible, more closely the truth about the Lord’s church/church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) easily can be recognized.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed in Isaiah 2:2, 3 some 750 years before Jesus left heaven and came to earth, that the kingdom or church would be established in Jerusalem. The prophet Daniel further stated that the kingdom would be established during the Roman Empire and that it would last forever (Dan. 2:44).

CHRIST’S PROMISE

Several hundred years later, in Matthew 16:13-19, we

have Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, asking His disciples, “**Whom do men say that I am?**” Peter, one of the apostles, spoke up “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” Jesus then told Peter, that upon this rock He (Christ) would build His church (Mat. 16:18). Some mistakenly assume the church was founded by Peter, but the inspired Paul makes it clear when he says, “**For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ**” (1 Cor. 3:11). So one can see that when Jesus said, “**...upon this rock, I will build my church.**” He was referring to the statement or confession that Peter had just made: “**...thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” Yes, the spiritual kingdom church of Christ was established by Christ the Son of God.

THE FULFILLMENT

In the second chapter of Acts, one can see the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, and Christ’s promise being fulfilled: this was about six months after Jesus had said He would build His church (Mat. 16:18). The setting is in the city of Jerusalem, the year was around A.D. 33, on the day of the Pentecost (first day of the week/Sunday); thousands of Jews were gathered to celebrate the feast of the harvest

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or Pentecost feast, which was one of the three annual feasts which the Jews, who were under the Old Testament Law, were required to keep (Exo. 23:16, 17).

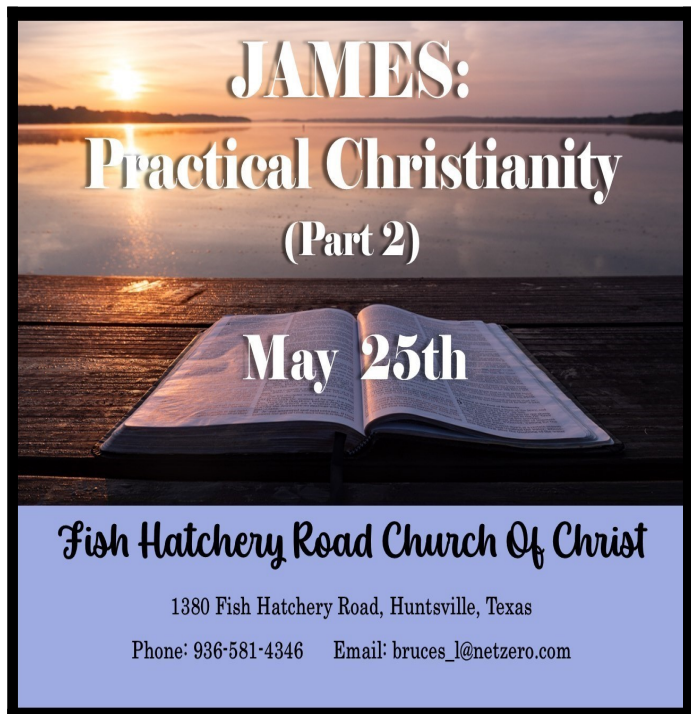
On this first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, Peter, with the other apostles, preached a sermon about Jesus and Him crucified. He proclaimed that some of those very Jews that were hearing his message had had a part in crucifying Christ. After hearing this, many exclaimed “...**what shall we do?**” (Acts 2:37). Then Peter told *believers* what to do to get their past sins washed away and become Christians, members of the church of Christ. In Acts 2:38, we read that Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (or by the authority of Christ—Matthew 28:18) *for* the remission of sins. This is consistent with Mark 16:16, which says, “**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved....**” Of all the Jews gathered on that Pentecost day, about three thousand precious souls *obeyed* the saving gospel of Christ and the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2:47). Thus we have Jesus fulfilling His promise to build His church.

CONCLUSION

The Bible makes it plain that Jesus is the *head of one* church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). He has promised to save

only His church (Eph. 5:23). So, one can see that members of the church of Christ are neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jew, but just CHRISTIANS!

—Deceased



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Fish Hatchery Road Church Of Christ
1380 Fish Hatchery Road, Huntsville, Texas
Phone: 936-581-4346 Email: bruces_1@netzero.com