

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

TESTS OF FELLOWSHIP

Roy H. Lanier, Sr

A reader recently asked some questions about fellowship which I think worthy of attention.

IS BAPTISM ALONE THE TEST OF FELLOWSHIP?

No, baptism is not the only test of fellowship. Immorality is most certainly a scriptural test of fellowship. Paul demanded that the church at Corinth deliver to Satan the man who had taken his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:1-7). It is unthinkable that murders, adulterers, liars, drunkards, and such like, be allowed to remain in the fellowship of the saints. To do so would encourage other members of the church to practice such things, and it would cause respectable people, not members of the church, to have no respect for the church.

Next, denying the deity of Christ is sufficient cause for denying a person the fellowship of the church. We are told that one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar, and **“whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father”** (1 John 2:22, 23). So the person who denies the deity of Jesus Christ is a liar and can have no fellowship with the Father. If he can have no fellowship with the Father, the children of the Father must deny him their fellowship, or they will lose their fellowship with the Father.

To deny the deity of Christ is to charge Jesus Christ with being deceived as to His real nature, or of being a

deceiver of others. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and worthy of equal honor with the Father (John 5:19-23). He said, **“I and the Father are one”** (John 10:30). The Jews objected to this claim on the ground that this made Him God. Jesus did not say they misunderstood His claim, but proceeded to justify His claim. Was Jesus deceived as to His true nature? Did He think Himself to be something which He was not? Or did He know that He was not God but wished to deceive the people and make them believe He was? I think this idea needs no refutation. But one who denies the deity of Jesus Christ must take one of these positions and is not worthy of fellowship among believers in God.

To deny the deity of Jesus Christ is to deny the inspiration of the Bible. We are told that Jesus was begotten in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit (Mat. 1:20). We are told that He is God (John 1:1; 1 John 5:20). We are told that He was on equality with God (Phi. 2:6). If these things are not true, the New Testament is not inspired; if they are true, the book is inspired, Jesus is God, and the one who denies it is a liar and unworthy of the fellowship of the church of Christ.

IS ANY BAPTIZED BELIEVER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST?

Our reader explains that a brother “recently taught publicly that we should offer full fellowship to any baptized believer regardless of his practices.” I assume that the statement “regardless of his practices” does not include immorality. He explains that the idea is that an immersed believer is a Christian and should be received

IN THIS ISSUE.....

TESTS OF FELLOWSHIP – ROY H. LANIER, SR.	1
EDITORIAL: THE CHURCH’S PRIMARY MESSAGE	2
IS THE CHURCH AN UNLOVING BODY? – W. N. (BILL) JACKSON	4

(continued on page 3)

Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

COMMUNICATIONS received by CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH and/or its Editor are viewed as intended FOR PUBLICATION unless otherwise stated. Whereas we respect confidential information, so described, everything else sent to us we are free to publish without further permission being necessary. Anything sent to us NOT for publication, please indicate this clearly when you write. Please address such letters directly to the Editor David P. Brown, 25403 Lancewood Dr. 77373 or dpbcftf@gmail.com. Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE—FREE

To receive CFTF free, go to www.cftfpaper.com and sign up. Once done, you will be notified when the current issue is available. It will be in the form of a PDF document that can be printed, and forwarded to friends.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES
FOR THE PAPER EDITION
Single Print Subs:**

One Year, \$25.00; Two Years, \$45.00

**NO REFUNDS FOR CANCELLATIONS OF
PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS**

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH exists to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:7,17) and refute error (Jude 3). Therefore, we will not knowingly print anything to the contrary.

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

**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

Editorial ...

THE CHURCH'S PRIMARY MESSAGE

To some brethren (evidently more than a few), unity among and between men is the fundamental and primary design of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To the contrary, the fundamental design of the Gospel is to bring men into unity with God. One is not ready to preach the Gospel if that one is going into all the world to unify men. *We go into all the world to get men to walk with God.*

Having stated what the primary purpose of the church via the preaching and defense of the Gospel of Christ is to accomplish, we hasten to add that we are not unmindful of our Lord's prayer for the unity of believers in Christ as the Son of God and their Savior (John 17:20-21). Any Christian desires to see our Lord's prayer for unity of all believers answered.

However, it is useless to seek unity among men simply for the sake of unity. Such an idea is foreign to the Bible. The Gospel is God's power to save men—men who are in need of salvation because they are separated from God by their sins (1 John 3:4; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 3:23; 6:23; 10:17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 The. 1:8). Thus, the unity that should first, foremost, and always concern every Christian is the reconciliation of men to God through the preaching and defense of the pure unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 4:1-3; John 12:48; Col. 3:17). It is vain to seek unity among men apart from **“walking in the light”** of God's Truth (1 John 1:7; John 8:31, 32; 17:17; Jude 3). Therefore, whatever causes any member of the church to deviate from the doctrine of Christ, no matter how slight the departure may seem to fallible man, such a departure ruins the ultimate, final, and logical end of the Divine Scheme of Redemption—the salvation of the souls of men.

If, therefore, the unity prayed for by the Christ and commanded by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:10), the planks of which are listed in Ephesians chapter four is to be realized, we must learn to put **“first things first”** or we will get the proverbial **“cart before the horse”** in the matter of unity and thereby corrupt the whole Divine system of unity (Mat. 6:33).

Without the doctrine of Jesus Christ believed and obeyed, no person can be saved and remain in a saved state with God. Only by a pure Gospel can men find and possess salvation from sin through the blood of Jesus

Christ. And, only those who are saved from sin have authority from God to unite with one another—and then unite only on His terms. To seek a “unity” among men apart from the doctrine of Christ is foreign to and against God’s Scheme of Redemption. Thus, the Holy-Spirit-inspired John instructs us to:

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the

Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 8-11).

We, therefore, must teach, believe, practice, and contend for unity with God first, which unity comes only through compliance with Christ’s doctrine. Only by such compliance with the doctrine of Christ is the unity for which Christ prayed and Paul commanded obtained and perpetuated.

(“Tests Of Fellowship” continued from page 1)

into fellowship regardless of what denomination he belongs to and regardless of its teaching and practice. We read of some baptized believers in Ephesus whom Paul baptized again before he would have fellowship with them (Acts 19:1-7). Paul tells us to mark and turn away from men who cause divisions and occasions of stumbling (Rom. 16:17). It seems a little inconsistent to mark and turn away from people whom we fellowship. And it cannot be denied that baptized believers do at times cause divisions, etc. And Paul tells us to withdraw ourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and to have no company with any man that obeys not his word in his epistles (2 The. 3:6, 14). And it must be admitted that baptized believers do at times walk disorderly and refuse to repent. How can we accept them into our fellowship and at the same time withdraw ourselves from and refuse to have company with them?

Paul told Timothy to withdraw himself from men who teach a different doctrine and consent not to sound words, even the words of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:3-5). This is in harmony with John’s statement that **“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God,”** and if any one comes and brings not this teaching, do not invite him into your house and give him no greeting (2 John 9). First, the **“teaching of Christ”** in this verse is not teaching about Christ, but the teaching given by Christ. Space forbids full proof of this, but if this is compared with Paul’s statement in 1 Timothy 6:3, you will find three terms **“different doctrine,” “sound words,”** and **“words of our Lord Jesus Christ”** of interest. The **“different doctrine and consenting to sound words”** of Paul are the same as **“goeth onward and abiding not”** in John. And the **“words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and doctrine according to godliness”** of Paul are the same as **“the teaching of Christ”** in John. So

both Paul and John tell us not to have fellowship with men who teach something different from the teaching of Christ. Paul said among these false teachers are men who for the love of money teach things which they ought not and overthrow whole houses by their false teaching (Tit. 1:10, 11). Whether they teach error for the love of money or because of their ignorance, their false doctrine will have the same effect. For this reason their mouths must be stopped, even if they have to be denied the fellowship of the church.

The only way these false teachers can overthrow houses (families) is to lead them to believe and practice what they preach. So we learn that people who believe and practice a different doctrine from what the Lord taught are overthrown. Peter teaches us that **“ignorant and unsteadfast”** people could wrest Paul’s teaching, as they can the other scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). How can we accept into our fellowship people who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, and by their teaching overthrow whole families? One may answer by saying that we should teach them the truth. I agree. But what if after being taught they refuse to accept the truth and continue with their false doctrine?

Jesus taught that people who worship God according to human tradition make their worship vain, make void the word of God, and reject the commandment of God that they may keep their tradition (Mat. 15:5-9; Mark 7:6-13). Can we accept into our fellowship people whom Jesus classes as vain worshippers and people who reject the word of God in order to keep their traditions? These people were guilty of nothing more serious than washing their hands as an act of worship. Yet Jesus denounced them and warned His disciples against them. I am aware that among such people there are always some sincere, God-fearing souls who think they are obeying God and

Contending For The Faith
25403 Lancewood Dr.
Spring, Texas 77373

doing the best they can. And I believe they should be taught the truth and I am willing to take all the time necessary to teach them. But I also believe it is scriptural, and for their best interest, that they be taught this truth before accepting them into our fellowship. I know the liberals among us say this is being narrow, bigoted,

exclusive, that we are trying to play God by judging our fellowmen. But as long as there is as much scripture for it as I have cited in this lesson, I am willing to allow the liberals to play God and condemn me.

—Deceased

IS THE CHURCH AN UNLOVING BODY?

W. N. (Bill) Jackson

It is extremely wearisome in our day to hear those, who would “restructure” the church, chastise her so harshly as an unloving body. Those who say so much about love use the most unloving language in speaking of the Lord’s body! Those who say so much about “Jesus, Jesus” tend to forget that the church is **“his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”** (Eph. 1:23). Some today speak of the church as though we were the most vicious and hateful people on earth, completely devoid of love.

Are we that unloving? This writer thinks not. I, with all you readers, have been in countless congregations where, just from the association before and after the services, it was obvious that these folks care about one another. In those services, by announcements of concern and wording of prayers, it is seen that the membership cares about itself and those around it. Notes of thanks are read from families that have known sickness and sorrow, expressing appreciation for expressions of love that had been manifest in their time of need.

Church budgets provide for evangelism, here and abroad, and in addition to funds for the orphaned and widowed in homes, local congregations take care to see to needs that may arise locally, within the church, and

without. Here is pure and undefiled religion (Jam. 1:27). It has been this writer’s experience that, rather than being unloving and unconcerned, the church of our Lord has manifested love toward all, in every type of situation, and hundreds of ways, in a commendable fashion.

To be sure, the church is made up of men, and none of them are perfect (1John1:8,10). It is granted that we do not have, nor will we have, any godly virtue to the perfect degree. The goal before us is to strive for perfection (Mat. 5:48; Phi. 3:14). But to admit that the church is imperfect is not also to admit that we have no love within us. What is the problem here, then?

Bible love is a virtue put to work. Indeed, faith is motivated by love (Gal. 5:6). Unless love is included in the action, then it is useless (1Cor.13:1-3). There is the talking kind and the doing kind. Some, who, speaking so unlovingly about the church having no love, talk love to death and end up with nothing but talk. I like the doing kind, and so does the Lord. Bible love is demonstrated at every service where the saints come together and are seen by all in the lives of most of the members of the body. The church is a loving body. The love is in the doing.

—Deceased