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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

“AND GREAT FEAR CAME”

Acts 5:1-16

J. Franklin Camp

In order to appreciate the lesson in Acts 5:1-6, it is important to look at the background of some things prior to this time. The second chapter of the book of Acts records the beginning of the church. Luke then proceeds to show how it faced the hostility of the unbelieving world and won. After the beginning of the church, Luke gives a picture of the fellowship of the church: **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”**

Genesis 3 gives the origin of sin. The results of sin are shown in its consequences. The consequences of sin are separation from God, condemnation, and guilt. The fourth through the sixth chapters of Genesis shows how sin sets man against man, as well as man against God. An example of man against man is found in the fourth chapter of Genesis where Cain killed Abel. The fifth chapter of Genesis shows the conflict between the seed of Cain and the seed of Seth, until finally the world became so corrupt that God brought the judgment on the world by the flood.

The book of Acts is the story of redemption against the first chapters of Genesis. Sin separates, but the gospel unites man and God, and the result is unity and fellowship among men. It is of interest to notice that the gospel was preached and men obeyed the gospel before Luke gives a picture of men united and enjoying fellowship. Man’s problems with

one another can never be solved until man’s problem with God is solved.

This sets forth the utter folly of the so-called social gospel that rejects sin and man’s need of redemption. Following the beginning of the church, Luke records the preaching of the gospel and its results among those who accepted it. The picture of the church in Jerusalem is one that adhered to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship that was the result of this preaching.

The word translated **“common”** in Acts 4:32 is the root out of which we get the word **“fellowship.”** The church selling their possessions and having all things in common is often misunderstood. The principle here is not Communism as many think. The principle in this example is to show the superiority of spiritual values over material things. The blessings of Judaism were primarily temporal. The blessings of Christianity are spiritual, not temporal. **“...Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”** (Eph.1:3). The appreciation of these blessings was what led the early Christians to say that nothing they possessed was theirs. An appreciation of the spiritual values of life sets our priorities. The results are that what we have will be used for God’s glory. Here is the effect the gospel had when it was first proclaimed. This is the fellowship that the proclamation of the gospel produced. These people gave up their possessions voluntarily because of their appreciation of the spiritual values of life. The offer of redemption from sin and its acceptance is what produced the fellowship. Fellowship cannot be separated from the apostles’ doctrine that brings redemption.

This is a short background of Acts 5:1-16. In the preced-

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

MAY ONE CHURCH EXTEND FELLOWSHIP TO ANOTHER CHURCH?

The term *church* finds three different usages in the New Testament.

- 1) It means the one church Jesus built, containing all those saved from their sins by Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:38,47; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- 2) Also, the term *church* means the Lord's church in any geographic location, designated or not (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16). Such is the largest and smallest organized entity of the realm of the saved.
- 3) The term *church* also designates an assembly of Christians convened for religious purposes (1 Cor. 11:18, 20; 14:5, 23, 28).

The context of the verse in which *church* is found determines in which sense the term *church* is used. We may correctly conclude that in the question under consideration the term *church* means the largest and smallest organized entity of those saved by Christ—a church in any geographic location, such as Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, etc.

It must be understood that fellowship between churches must respect, adhere to, and comply with the authorized organizational structure of sister churches as such is revealed in the New Testament (Col. 3:17). The autonomy of each church means that one church has no authority over another church. However, one church must take note of what a sister congregation believes and practices and act according to New Testament teaching regarding the same. The letters of Christ to the seven churches of Asia proves as much and so does 2 John 8-10. We are to **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 The. 5:21, 22). If a congregation embraces sin(s) and refuses to acknowledge the same, much less repent of such, that is not **“good”** as Paul defines **“good”** in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Thus, the faithful will abstain from such **“evil.”** And, if nothing else, that rules out a faithful church extending fellowship to such a congregation, or continuing in fellowship with it.

The first church of Christ on earth was the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2). All others came into existence after it. It is a matter of record that the Jerusalem church extended fellowship to the church in Antioch of Syria (Acts 13:1). The church in Jerusalem did so only because the church in Antioch **“continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine,”** or put another way, they were walking in the light as Christ is in the light (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:7). Each church continued **“in the doctrine of Christ.”** Thus, they had **“both the Father and the Son”** (2 John 9; Col. 3:17). Neither church was

going “beyond the things that are written” (1 Cor. 4:6, *ASV*, 1901). All other things being scripturally equal, there is no other basis by which one church may extend fellowship to another church. If there is, we would like to know what it is. *Question*: If it is the case (and it is) that the only grounds by which one church may extend fellowship to another church is that each one must be functioning only on the basis described in the preceding paragraph, what if one church adopts a policy that causes her to go “beyond the things that are written”? Does the authority for scriptural fellowship remain? Is it “once in fellowship, always in fellowship” regardless of what either church believes and/or practices? *Answer*: No, faithful children of God may not fellowship unfaithful children of God, whether they are organized or not. If that is not the case, then churches of Christ remain in fellowship with the Christian Church. After all at one time we were all one in belief and practice. However, if a faithful congregation once extends fellowship to a sister congregation on the sole basis of both continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, but then one congregation embraces sin(s) for which it will not repent, then must it be that the faithful and the unfaithful remain in fellowship? Who believes it? That would mean that every church of Christ not in fellowship with the Christian Church has sinned. Such is

scripturally absurd to the Nth degree.

As surely as one member of the church can be overtaken in a fault and, thus, in need of being restored to faithfulness to God, then a church (a collection of individual children of God) can be overtaken in a fault and in need of being restored to God. Further, when children of God have the fellowship of a congregation scripturally withdrawn from them and are received into fellowship of a sister congregation, said receiving sister congregation is no longer “walking in the light” of gospel truth and is guilty of fellowshiping that which God does not fellowship.

There is no use advocating a doctrine, but then ignore and reject the implications of it. Such is implied by those who teach that once fellowship is extended from one church to another both are forever in fellowship with God and each other regardless of what each believes and/or practices. Whether one believes and teaches error, or believes the truth but practices error, the result is the same—sin is committed on the part of those who do the same and faithful brethren must not fellowship brethren who refuse acknowledge their sins and repent of them.

—David P. Brown, Editor



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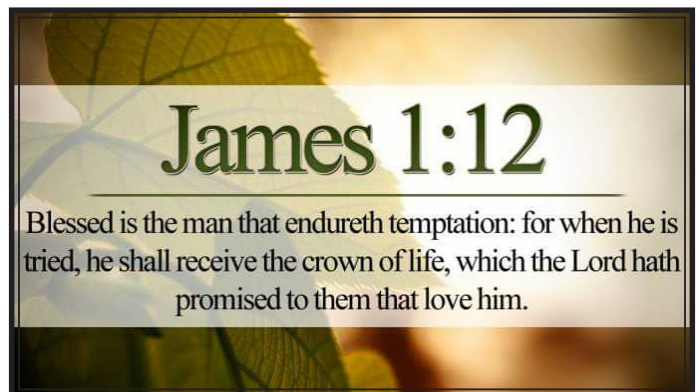
ing chapters, Luke has given a picture of the preaching, the progress of the gospel, and resulting fellowship. The example of Ananias and Sapphira shows one of the perils of this fellowship. The hostility of the world could not hurt the fellowship. The peril was on the inside. The outside can never hurt the church as long as it holds to the apostles’ doctrine and preaches it. The harm always comes from the inside.

Ananias and Sapphira failed to appreciate the spiritual values of life. Instead of their living by the truth of the apostles’ doctrine, they were living by a lie. Thus, we have the first instance of discipline in the church. While it is true that in this instance it was an act of God through the apostle Peter, and, we do not have such miracles today, the lesson still remains.

Discipline is important if the church is to maintain its purity and influence. The church is a refuge from sin, but it is not a place for one to hide his sins. When the world is allowed to come into the church, bringing its sins, and attempting to hide them, the results are disastrous. The church must practice discipline to keep the world out of the church, or the world will take over the church. The gospel must be preached so that men realize they must leave the world behind or the world will destroy the church. A lack of strong preaching today has allowed the world to flood the church with its ideals and practices.

A second thing that has allowed the world to corrupt the church is the failure on the part of churches to practice discipline. This has become almost a forgotten thing. A failure of the church to discipline members who follow their worldly ways allow their practices to corrupt the church. We are now reaping the bitter harvest in the apostasy of many congregations. The fact that the first case of discipline in the church was an act of God shows the importance of discipline to keep the church pure. God is concerned with pure preaching and pure practice. It takes both for the church to be pleasing to God. The first five chapters of the book of Acts teaches the importance of the church continuing in the teaching of the apostles’ doctrine and practicing it. If either of these truths are neglected, the world will take over the church, and the results are apostasy.

—Deceased



“FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER”

W. L. Totty

[Originally this article appeared in four parts. We have edited it and combined the four parts into one article—Editor]

Fellowship is a question about which many people in the church throughout the country have become especially concerned. Just recently I have received a request to write some comments on this subject.

Some teach that we must fellowship every person who is a believer in Christ, regardless of what he may teach or practice, while others disregard the teaching of the Lord by binding where the Lord has not bound. But those who know and respect God’s word will be content with the teaching of the New Testament and turn not to the right nor to the left.

The apostle John said, **“But if we walk, in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). That is, those who are cleansed by the blood of Christ Jesus have fellowship as long as they walk in the light. Walking **“in the light”** means walking according to the teaching of the New Testament. All who walk after the teaching of the New Testament have fellowship one with another, whether they even know each other or not. Christian fellowship means working together for the cause of Christ as God commands. When a child of God refuses to walk according to the light, he then disfellowships himself from all who are walking in the light.

Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, said,

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 The. 3: 14, 15).

“Any man” refers to anyone who is a member of the church. The command to **“have no company with him”** does not mean to shun him in a social sense to the extent that one would not even speak to him, but, rather, not to fellowship him in the worship and service of the Lord. The apostle says definitely not to count him **“as any enemy”** but to **“admonish him as a brother.”** If we cannot speak to him, we cannot **“admonish him as a brother.”** That has reference to a member of the church of the Lord who will not abide by the teaching of Christ.

The same apostle, in his letter to the churches of Galatia, wrote, **“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”** (Gal. 6: 1). Thus, we see that if a child of God is overtaken in a fault (which means disobeying the Lord in any respect, whether in teaching or in practice), we who are Christians should admonish such an one to repent of his evil and thus be restored to fellowship. We are to do that in the spirit of

meekness, not with a self-righteous attitude that we could do no wrong. We are to consider ourselves, lest we should also be tempted.

Jesus said to his disciples, **“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”** (Luke 17:3.) That teaches us clearly that we are to make an effort to restore a person to repentance; and if he repents, then we forgive him and hold no grudge nor wait till such an occasion arises that we can retaliate, as some are disposed to do. Christ teaches plainly that we are to rebuke the one who sins against us. This should be done personally between the two, not telling everybody else about it.

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 shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Mat. 18:15-17).

After one has done according to that which the Lord commands and the man refuses to repent, he should not be fellowshipped by the church. Those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The influence of Satan is different. His encouragement is to talk to everybody else about the brother’s fault and craftily arouse resentment against him among the whole congregation before he is aware of it. Nobody should want to be like Absalom who sat at the gate and stole the hearts of the people when he sought to depose his father and take the kingdom for himself (2 Sam. 15:6).

Note that Jesus said, **“If thy brother trespass against thee.”** One must be careful not to build up a case against his brother because one does not like his personality, or maybe some of his little idiosyncrasies irritate one. If one does not sin against another, there is no justification for disfellowshipping him. Surely there is no person whose personality would exactly please everyone at all times. Even Jesus did not please everybody. We must beware of the temptations of Satan and follow always the words of the Lord.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the

Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

The church is the body of Christ and Paul said,

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

Jesus is the “**chief corner stone.**” He is also the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). By his being the head, we understand that he is the director. He gives the instructions to the church, and every member must listen to the head and do as the head directs. The church cost Jesus his blood.

The apostle Peter, writing about the members of the church, said, “**Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ**” (1 Pet. 2:5). Every member is likened unto a stone which would be used to build a house and Peter said we are “**lively**” stones; that is, we must be alive to the commands of God, ready to do what he says. God has added us to the church, and Paul says that the members are “**fitly framed together.**” Therefore, we understand that a member must conform to the commands of the head, else he will not fit together with those who are obeying the commands of God and cannot be fellowshipped.

The church is composed of individuals grouped together in congregations throughout the world which makes it convenient for Christians in all nations everywhere to worship the Lord according to his word. Just as every member must follow the instructions of the head, so must every congregation follow the direction of the head. The church is called the body of Christ. All the members of the physical body must act according to the mind, or head, of the body. We can imagine the chaos of the human body if every member of the body tried to act upon its own direction and not according to the direction of the mind, or head. Just so it would be with the church if every congregation wanted to walk according to its own reasoning and ignore the instructions from the head.

Paul reminded the elders of the church at Ephesus that, when he left, grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, and that from their own midst would men arise, teaching perverse things, and draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28) Therefore, he instructed them to watch. He reminded them that he had warned them day and night with tears for three years about such things. Jesus Christ, while he was upon earth, instructed his disciples to beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing. When John was on the Isle of Patmos, Christ told him to write to the church at Ephesus and say,

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and

are not, and hast found them liars (Rev. 2:2).

Thus, we see that Paul’s admonition came true and that people even came, saying they were apostles. Notwithstanding the fact that they had tried those evil folk who claimed to be apostles and found them to be liars, they still were led to accept false teaching, for Jesus said,

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (Rev. 2: 4-5).

Jesus said, “**If ye love me, keep my commandments**” (John 15:15). Since they left their “**first love,**” the Ephesians had digressed from keeping the commandments of the Lord. Even though the Ephesians had some good things, such as hating the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (v. 6), Jesus was not pleased with them and was going to remove their candlestick if they did not repent. In other words, he was not going to fellowship them if they did not turn away from that which was evil.

Jesus commanded the church at Pergamos, saying,

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth (Rev. 2:13).

However, he condemned them also:

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth (Rev. 2:15-16.).

That teaches us that today a “**few things**” are enough to separate a church from Christ; and when a church is separated from Christ, it is separated from all faithful churches.

There are some among us today who say we cannot dis-fellowship a whole congregation; but Jesus did, as we previously pointed out. We must follow Christ, the head. If it were unchristian to dis-fellowship a whole congregation, we could not have dis-fellowshipped the Christian Church for putting instrumental music into the worship. Those who teach that we ought not to separate ourselves from such false teaching and practice should also be dis-fellowshipped for teaching false doctrine.

Paul wrote,

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And ill be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Some brethren do not understand the meaning of New Testament fellowship. We see occasionally that some church is going to meet after the worship for a period of “fellowship.” Working together in the worship and work, as God has commanded the church to do, is New Testament fellowship; and wherever we are, whether we are gathered together or separated, if we are serving God, we are in fellowship. To say that after the worship we are going to meet for a fellowship meeting is, to say the least, misleading. It suggests that there is no fellowship in the worship and work of the Lord. We understand that what they mean is that they would meet for a social gathering. But that is something that God has not commanded in his work and worship and, therefore, could not be included in the fellowship of the church, even though it may be engaged in as a social act. Yet, it should not be connected with nor spoken of as the work of the church.

The church at Corinth had perverted the Lord’s supper into a social event. But Paul said to them,

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating everyone taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament of my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come (1 Cor. 11:20-26).

Paul did not condemn social gatherings, as such; but he condemned it in the church. We do not mean in the church building; we are talking about the work and worship of the church.

Paul instructed the Corinthian church in the first chapter how to have fellowship in the work of the Lord, saying,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

If all people were “**perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,**” based upon the word of God, there would be no divisions among us. In that respect we would all be “**fitly framed together,**” and fellowship would prevail among us.

Division is based upon the opinions and doctrines of men. Jesus condemned the Pharisees and called them hypocrites, saying, “**But in vain they do worship me, teaching**

for doctrines; the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9.) It is wrong for anyone to fellowship any doctrine that is based upon the opinions of man. We must have a “thus saith the Lord” for everything we do in worship to God or our work in the kingdom. “**And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him**” (Col. 3:17).

For many years there has been an ecumenical movement among the denominations to unite, and many years ago it was embraced by many in the church. It has to one extent or another captured the colleges operated by the brethren. Today, it is exceedingly difficult to find a faithful congregation of the Lord’s people. However, there is but one way to please God in unity, and that is to be united on his word. To unite upon a compromise is disrespectful to God and will do nothing except to revamp denominationalism. God’s word is the same today as it was in the first century when it was written. It will be the same when Jesus Christ returns to the earth, and woe to the man who tries to alter it!

There were some in the church at Corinth in the days of Paul who were not satisfied with the word of God, and they sought to add to it by wearing the names of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, as well as that of Christ. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were good, faithful men who preached the truth of God; and there was nothing in their preaching that justified the Corinthians in wearing the names of men. Paul asked them, “**Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?**” (1 Cor. 1:13a). Paul was so displeased with their wearing the names of men that he said he thanked God that he baptized none of them except Crispus and Gaius, lest people should say he baptized in his own name (1 Cor. 1:14). This plainly shows that if two churches are teaching two different doctrines, at least one of them is not the church of Christ, and it is possible that neither would be the church. For two churches teaching different doctrines, to be right, it would be necessary that Christ should be divided. We must wear the name of him who was crucified, the one into whom we were baptized. Paul told them that he would not speak unto them as unto spiritual but as unto carnal because of the divisions among them (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Persons in the church, even the whole congregation, who are carnal and cannot be called spiritual certainly cannot be fellowshiped, according to the teaching of God.

Paul said unto those who were faithful at Corinth,

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them? and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;

and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

In this Paul was speaking of spiritual things, not of marriage, as it is sometimes misinterpreted, for the context clearly shows that it refers to the worship of God. We are not to have fellowship with people who pervert God’s plan in any respect.

From whence canes division? It comes by following false teachers. The prophet Jeremiah said,

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord (Jer. 23:1-2).

False teachers are sometimes cunning. They may emphasize love to the extent that it covers every false idea. We must not, of course, minimize love. God is love, and we must have love in preaching the gospel; but our love must be for the truth. The Holy Spirit inspired David to say that he hated every false way (Psa. 119:104). And Solomon said,

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19).

If the Lord hates those things, we must hate them too in order to be like him.

When Paul went to Thessalonica to preach the gospel, the unbelieving Jews stirred up a riot against him, saying, **“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also”** (Acts 17:6). The apostle Paul, when he came to the end of his life, said,

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

We must, likewise, love the truth enough to fight for it if necessary and always be ready to suffer for it if we expect to receive a crown of righteousness as did Paul.

The Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they searched the scriptures daily to see whether or not Paul was preaching the truth. Many today would say the Bereans did not love or they would have accepted Paul’s teaching without question, but they demonstrated their love for the truth by investigating. Let us be as noble as the Bereans were and prove all doctrines and practices by the Bible before we accept them as being worthy of our fellowship, for we cannot serve two masters. [*The Informer*: ed. Ben Vick, Vol. 53, numbers 49, 50 and Vol. 54, numbers 1, 2. October, 1, 8, 15, 22, 2000 (Shelbyville Road Church of Christ, Indianapolis, IN)]

—Deceased

“SPEAK THOU THE THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE”

Bill Jackson

That is what Titus 2:1 says, and I wonder, “What ever happened to this verse?” Do those men in the church, in every place, who stand up to preach and teach no longer believe the passage? Have they ceased to believe that care must be exercised in all teaching, knowing that the teacher will receive the HEAVIER JUDGMENT (Caps mine.—BJ) (Jam. 3:1, *ASV*, 1901).

In the various controversies raging in the kingdom over the last several years, so much of it has been due to a preacher/teacher’s effort to be unique, novel, “intellectual,” or simply denominational. He will set forth the most sectarian and non-Biblical views, and then when he comes under fire, the claim is that “I was misunderstood.” But in so many, many of the cases, his efforts to explain himself has done nothing to clear up the matter, and what becomes increasingly clear is that he indeed was speaking beyond what is recorded in the Book!

There is simplicity in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3), and one reading after the inspired apostles can, simply upon reading, understand just what the apostles understood in regard to truth (Eph. 3:3, 4). Wherein is the problem, then? The problem is created when men who have spent far more time with theological rantings of sectarian infidels than they have with the words of Jesus, Paul, Peter,

etc., propose to issue forth denominational doctrine. On the matter of the Holy Spirit, and grace, and saints in the denominations, and baptism for remission of sins, and instrumental music, and premillennialism, and God’s marriage law, etc., etc., etc., so many problems are being made today because men who stand up to speak, or take pen in hand to write, do not take care to “speak the things in keeping with sound doctrine.”

Why should they be surprised when the saints rebel against them? Why should they be so hurt when some journalist writes them up as unsound? The highest and worst kind of presumption and audacity is for one to take advantage of his audience, who are expecting the Bible from him, and he comes forth with rank sectarianism! If we are going to betray the confidence brethren have placed in us as teachers of the Word, and rather than help the church we labor to turn it into a denomination, we should be severely chastised!

It is nearly 2,000 years old, but Titus 2:1 still says the same thing. Of the same age is the charge from Paul, **“Preach the Word”** (2 Tim. 4:2). We who stand up to instruct others should either do just that, or QUIT!

—Deceased

[The foregoing article was written in the Spring of 1986. It was timely at its writing, but much more timely today.—Editor]

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