

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

November-December 2015

Vol. 49 / No. 6

Trouble in the Church

Barry O'Dell

Trouble has existed in the world since Adam and Eve decided to rebel against God's specific command (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6). Their home was later troubled with jealousy and murder (Gen. 4:1-8). Homes were further troubled when the practice of polygamy was introduced to the world (Gen. 4:19). Trouble remained in the world as “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). In His anger and grief, God determined to cleanse the world of its corruption (Gen. 6:6-7). Trouble would come again after the flood of Noah's day when men began to corrupt themselves in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 13:13; 18:20). As nation's developed more wealth and power, we find the practices of slavery, war, and oppression (Ex. 1:7-14). Even God's nation, Israel, had its share of trouble in the forms of immorality, idolatry, and willful ignorance (2 Kgs. 17). The Old Testament is full of examples of individuals and nations that brought trouble upon themselves as a direct result of their choices.

“... God's people must be more concerned about God's will and work than their own.”

What about the New Testament? All one has to do is read a verse such as Matthew 26:67 which says, “Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted (beat) Him: and others smote Him with the palms of their hands.” The student of the Bible knows that this verse is describing the treatment that Jesus was receiving the night before He was crucified. John recorded that Jesus had been arrested by a band (detachment – NKJ) of troops (Jn. 18:3). The word that the Holy Spirit used is a Greek term that meant 600 soldiers! Matthew simply stated that He was arrested by a “great multitude with swords and staves” (Matt. 26:47). These were the men who were spitting on, beating, and slapping Jesus

repeatedly! Jesus was very well familiar with the fact that trouble is a reality in this world.

What about God's people today? Sadly, it is the case that trouble still exists for those who strive to follow the will of God. We have been warned that this would happen (2 Tim. 3:12). It should not be a surprise to us when trouble comes (1 Pet. 4:12-16). The Timothy and Peter passages refer to external forces that face God's people because of righteous living, not because of sinful activities. What is far worse, in this writer's opinion, is when trouble exists among God's people because of actions taken or words spoken by members of God's family. False teachers can cause trouble in the Lord's church (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Immoral conduct can cause trouble among God's people (1 Cor. 5). Competition and a desire for preeminence can cause trouble within the church (3 Jn. 9-11). What is the solution to such problems in the church? Simply put, God's people must be more concerned about God's will and work than their own. Paul wrote, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cling to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:9-10). First Peter 2:17 instructs us to “Love the brotherhood.” Whatever we do is all to be done “to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Paul commanded the Romans, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19). Unity can be attained in the body of Christ! Jesus prayed for it (Jn. 17:20-21) and Paul commanded it (1 Cor. 1:10). The key to diminishing trouble in the church and between individuals is found in John 17:14 and 17: “I have given them Thy word... Thy word is truth.” Each child of God has responsibility in this area. The church is the body of Christ and we are members of one another (Rom. 12:5). To each of us the Bible says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). If there is trouble in the church, do not be the cause – be a source of encouragement and strength for those who are struggling.

Responsibility of the Offender

Brandon Baggett

Problems arise in the church, and often times, these problems arise as a result of improper dealings with our brethren. Interestingly, our Savior admitted and expounded upon the ever present reality of these difficulties. In Luke 17:1, Jesus said, “It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!” Jesus is telling His followers how problems will arise, people will be offended, and wrongs will be committed. He warns us to make sure it is not we who are personally causing these things to happen. We should strive to never be the offending party.

In this text, the term “offenses” is an interesting word commonly used in the New Testament. The actual Greek word denoted the portion of a trap or snare to which the bait was attached. This concept is used frequently throughout the Scriptures in noun form (“offenses”) and verb form (“offend”). In every occurrence of this word, the term is used figuratively or metaphorically to refer to anything which may hinder or impede the path of others and cause them to fall by the wayside. Jesus explained how we lay a stumbling block in the path of our brethren when we “trespass” (or, sin) against them (Lk. 17:3-4). When we sin against our brethren, do them wrong, and act improperly in our dealings with them, we hurt them and ourselves, and we create many problems in the body of Christ.

When we sin against our brethren, the Scriptures say we have a responsibility to repair the situation. Those who are on the receiving end of our incorrect actions have a Scriptural obligation too (Matt. 18:15-22), but Jesus also plainly expressed the responsibility of the offending party. These instructions are found in Matthew 5:21-26, but we find specific application to the offender in verses 23-24. When I sin against a brother or sister, two essential actions must take place.

First, Jesus said I must recognize my sinful actions. In Matthew 5:23, Jesus describes a situation where an individual is in the midst of worship and has remembered that they have a broken relationship with a brother due to his own improper actions. In verse 24, Jesus instructs such a person to leave their worship and return to their offering only after repairing the damaged

relationship. Implied in this scenario is a keen awareness and honest recognition of personal failure. The individual in the text understands they are at fault, and their mind now reminds them of this situation which is hanging over their head. In like manner, when we have done wrong, our responsibility begins with placing the blame on self. We will not make excuses.

“ . . . when we have done wrong, our responsibility begins with placing the blame on self.”

We will not blame others. We will assign the guilt to self. We, like the prodigal, must admit we have sinned (Lk. 15:17-21).

Second, if I sin against my brethren, Jesus said my recognition must lead me to full repentance. Unfortunately, many individuals in the body of Christ have ruined relationships, yet they allow pride to hinder them from making their wrongs right. However, there is far too much to lose if we refuse to repent and repair our injured relationships. In fact, Jesus said immediate action must be taken to restore the relationship. In Matthew 5:23, the ASV says, “If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar...” The image in this scenario is a person in the very process of worshipping, yet they are told by Jesus to immediately leave to rectify the situation (Matt. 5:24). Such urgency is employed because of the grave consequences connected to sinning against brethren (Matt. 5:22), and the ultimate consequence is hell-fire. Beyond this, troubled relationships hinder our worship as depicted in this situation and other passages like 1 Peter 3:7. Jesus is simply driving home the serious and pressing obligation to do our part to repair the situation when we sin against our brethren. We cannot sit around waiting on our brethren to come to us. We must go to those we have wronged with humble confession, honest change of actions, and complete restitution when possible. The end result is being “reconciled to thy brother” (Matt. 5:24). Even though we have sinned, we can enjoy a repaired relationship and a restored spiritual standing with God when we do our part to seek forgiveness and restoration.

Brandon preaches for the Glencoe church of Christ in Glencoe, AL.

Responsibility of the Offended

Wade Phillips

Humility will result in us removing those things from our lives that lead us toward sin (Matt. 18:8-9). This is not only for our own good, but it is also so that we might not offend others. Matthew 18:7 records that Jesus said that offenses would undoubtedly come and that the world would suffer because of them. In that same verse He also proclaimed a woe against those who caused the offense. It takes very little reasoning for us to understand that we must not offend others and that we should purge those things that might lead us to do so. Christians have a tremendous responsibility to pursue every possible scriptural way to prevent any from perishing. Every person is precious in God's sight and He is "not willing that any should perish" (Matt. 18:14; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is in this context that we must consider Matthew 18:15-18.

While it is easy for us to understand that we are charged with not being the offender toward a fellow Christian (Matt. 18:7-14), it is somewhat perplexing for us to think that we also have a responsibility toward the one who offends us. Matthew recorded these words of Jesus in 18:15, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." What? Is Jesus saying that since my brother in Christ mistreated me in some way that now I have to go to him and rebuke him? But he offended me! Yes, but he might not realize it. He may be under an unusually high amount of stress at his job. His wife or child may be very ill. Perhaps he simply does not care. Regardless of the reason, Jesus said to go alone and rebuke him. If the brother is as humble as he should be, he will repent and we will have gained back our brother. If the disagreement comes down to our word against the offender's, as there are no other witnesses, we must drop the issue. Each Christian should strive to live in peace even if confronted with a difficult and unrepentant brother (Rom. 14:19). We have done our duty by going to him alone. There are without doubt some brethren who are above rebuke both in their own mind, such as Diotrephes (3 Jn. 9-11), and in the minds of others, hence the need for other witnesses.

If the brother will not hear our rebuke Jesus instructs us to go back to the offender, this time taking one or two others with us to witness what is taking place (Matt. 18:16). Under Mosaic Law, two or three witnesses were required to convict an offender (Deut. 19:15). The precedent was not removed when that covenant ended, as Paul wrote that before an elder can be accused of wrongdoing, there must be "two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19). If the offending brother listens to us and the other witness or witnesses, and subsequently repents, we have gained our brother. We have saved a soul from death, hiding a multitude of sins, according to James 5:20.

When we have gone to him and he ignores us or denies the charge, and we have then taken one or two other witnesses with us and he still will not listen, we must take the case before the church (Matt. 18:17). It is the church's duty to then rebuke him as one body. If

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he still refuses to repent, Jesus said, "Let him be as an heathen man and a publican." He has decided that he will not subject himself to

the authority of the commands of Matthew 18 and, therefore, he is to be treated as one who is not a member of the church. The church must do her duty to ensure that he knows that he is no longer a part of her. He is not to be then mistreated, but to be the subject of prayers and good will so that he may one day see the error of his ways and repent (1 Cor. 5:4-5). The authority for such action is binding here on earth and in heaven if, of course, the case is handled correctly and Jesus' commandments are followed concerning it. It must also be recognized by all other faithful congregations. So it behooves the congregation in question to let it be known to other nearby congregations. Throughout the entire process, we must remember the end goal, and that is to gain our brother (2 Thes. 3:14-15).

Wade preaches for the Twin City church of Christ in Batesburg-Leesville, SC.



CONTRIBUTORS FOR SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2015

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Viola (Viola, AR)	50.00	Bakersfield (Bakersfield, MO)	50.00
East Side (Lexington, OK)	60.00	Sturkie (Sturkie, AR)	100.00
Lowell (Springdale, AR)	150.00	Mammoth Spring (Mammoth Spring, AR)	2000.00
Crossroads (Gepp, AR)	100.00	Camp (Mammoth Spring, AR)	80.00
Pritchett (Big Sandy, TX)	100.00	Hilltop (Eufaula, OK)	50.00
Clarkridge (Clarkridge, AR)	150.00	Cottage Grove (Cottage Grove, TN)	100.00
Moody (Moody, MO)	100.00	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>	
Agnos (Agnos, AR)	100.00	Wilene & Luceile (Franklin, AR)	30.00
Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	700.00	Gary & Ann Wilson (Hot Springs Village, AR)	40.00
Elizabeth (Elizabeth, AR)	100.00	Milton Smith (Pineville, WV)	50.00
		Brenda Porter (Harrison, AR)	20.00

Service Times for Mammoth Spring church of Christ

- Sunday AM Class - 10:00
- AM Worship - 10:45
- PM Worship - 6:00
- Wednesday Night Class - 7:00

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued bimonthly by the church of Christ at Third and Bethel (PO Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251.

POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.

FCGN is mailed free of charge to any who care to receive it. If you send in a name we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or RR, or HCR number, plus box number, or a PO Box number and the **NINE DIGIT ZIP CODE**. This paper is supported by voluntary contributions for which we are grateful. Financial information will be furnished upon request.

Mail address corrections to:

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
PO Box 251
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554**

Editor - Barry O'Dell
Phone - (870) 625-3217
E-Mail - cocfcgn@centurytel.net
Website - www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
Webmaster - Brian Dixon
E-Mail - sales@halopages.net

Church Website
www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com

God's Authorized Worship
- ***Colossians 3:17*** -

1. Lord's Supper - Acts 20:7;
1 Corinthians 11:23-24
2. Prayer - Acts 12:5;
Philippians 4:6-7
3. Singing - Ephesians 5:19;
Hebrews 13:15
4. Giving - I Corinthians 16:1-2;
2 Corinthians 9:7-8.
5. Preaching - Acts 2:42; 20:7

The Churches of Christ

1. The Bible is the only guide -
Rom. 1:16
2. A Biblical name - Rom. 16:16
3. Established in Jerusalem
Acts 2:1-4
4. Established by Christ - 1 Cor. 3:11
5. Established in 1st century -
Acts 2:47
6. The body of the saved - Eph. 5:23
7. You can be added to the church of
Christ by being baptized into
Christ for the remission of sins -
Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13

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Publication #211780