

TRUTH FOR TODAY

VOL. XXVI, NO. 10

AUGUST, 2018

CHURCH TROUBLE #2

In our last article, we noted a number of problems that plagued the first century church of Christ at Corinth. We also observed that the church today is not immune from difficulties either, understandably from without, and unfortunately from within. Further, we began to discuss the reactions of some with regards to such, such as quitting altogether or migrating to other congregations. Let's now continue our discussion of what others do when conflict arises in the body of Christ.

SOME IGNORE THE PROBLEM

Some close their eyes to the difficulties, adopting the proverbial ostrich complex. They assume that by "burying their heads in the sand" problems will automatically take care of themselves and disappear. Indeed, the thought is wonderful, but such is only wishful thinking!

Suppose one takes this "closed-eye" approach toward problems he confronts in everyday living - would it solve them? Hardly. A student who makes an "F" in Algebra will not make one letter grade improvement by ignoring his studies. An employee warned repeatedly about being late to work will be dismissed with rapidity if he continues to spurn the admonishments of his boss.

Church troubles are not solved by this approach either. Was Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church: "Close your eyes to your problems and perhaps they will go away?" No, he repeatedly reminded them of their problems, realizing that when one recognizes and admits there is a problem, he has taken a colossal step toward solving it.

It was God's desire that the Corinthians themselves see the sordid condition in which they were:

....there are contentions among you (1 Corinthians 3:11).

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Corinthians 3:3).

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Other examples could be given, but these should suffice to show that Paul plainly and pointedly told the Corinthians to face their problems and deal with them accordingly.

While closing one's eyes to physical maladies can be detrimental to one's health, closing one's eyes to spiritual maladies can produce far graver consequences - inevitable problems later on, including a deterioration of the spiritual well-being of the church and the eventual destruction of one's soul.

SOME COMPOUND THE PROBLEM

Mountains can be made out of molehills because of a variety of factors, including prejudice, misunderstandings, preconceived notions, hatred, distrust, rumors, etc. Aggravating a problem is no solution to the problem.

No doubt, there were certain at Corinth who compounded the conflict there, especially the Judaizing teachers and the license party. Neither were particularly fond of Paul, since his inspired message ran counter to their false teachings.

Although Paul's admonitions to the plagued Corinthians were sharp and stern, they were written - not for the purpose of making matters worse - but for that of healing this spiritually declining body of believers. One cannot detect any hesitancy in Paul's commands to the Corinthians to "straighten themselves up." True, he realized that such would not be

accomplished overnight, and gave them ample time to correct the situation, even delaying a visit for that very purpose:

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:23).

However, their problems were neither to be multiplied nor prolonged indefinitely, since, as he had earlier warned them, a reckoning day was coming:

What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness? (1 Corinthians 4:21).

Let's now view a more constructive approach that should be taken whenever church trouble arises:

SOLVE THE PROBLEM

It was Paul's desire to try to rectify the plagued situation at Corinth; certainly every child of God should have this same concern in the church today. For problems to be resolved, a number of factors should be noted.

First, one should recognize the problem. This is the thrust of Paul's inspired correspondence to the Corinthians - he in no uncertain terms revealed the numerous troubles there: division (*1:10*); carnality (*3:3*); incest (*5:1*), etc.

Second, one should realize that problems are detrimental to the spiritual welfare and growth of the church as a whole and of individual Christians in particular. Paul referred to Israelite history (*1 Corinthians 10*) to reveal the tragic consequences to which unresolved problems can lead.

Third, every problem should be approached with the proper attitude of love - love for

God and respect for what His word says - love for the sinner, and hate for the sin. Love was evidently lacking among the Corinthians (*1 Corinthians 13*), and no doubt this contributed to the bickering and division there. Even though Paul's words are at times sharp and stern, one can still see his magnanimous love for these people throughout the two Corinthian epistles. He addressed them with thanksgivings, grace, and peace (*1 Corinthians 1:3,4*); he wrote with tears (*2 Corinthians 2:4*); he closed both letters on a high note of love (*1 Corinthians 16:24*; *2 Corinthians 13:14*). Paul truly cared for these troubled brethren!

Fourth, one should be patient. Problems may arise overnight, but seldom are they solved as rapidly! Again, Paul delayed a visit to Corinth to give the brethren ample time to rectify the situation. Result? In reference to at least one problem, Paul said, "*ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter*" (*2 Corinthians 7:11*).

Finally, never compromise the truth to remedy a problem! Such will only lead to further problems with God.

Wayne Cox

EXHORTATION

What do the words "*exhort*" and "*exhortation*" mean to us as God's children? Are we actively engaged in exhorting the brethren? Can we truly say that we are our "brother's keeper" and fail to exhort him? Can we be pleasing to our Father and neglect this positive precept?

Consider that "*exhort*" and its derivatives occur some 34 times in the Bible (KJV), being translated from four different Greek words. These terms mean "*to call on, entreat; to admonish, exhort, to urge one to pursue some course of conduct; to advise, exhort, warn; to impel morally, to urge forward, to encourage*" (Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New*

Testament Words, p. 60). Some synonyms of “*exhort*” include incite, encourage, urge, warn; antonyms would include discourage, dissuade, and dismay.

Do we need exhortation today? To ask is to answer! We all become disheartened and discouraged at times, and we are thankful that there are those who will pick us up, and help us see that light at the end of the tunnel. New converts especially need strengthening in the faith, since the immediate period after conversion can be a difficult time - the devil wants them back! Mature disciples need exhorting due to the ever present reality of the searing and hardening effect of sin (*Hebrews 3:13*). Fallen members need exhorting, encouraging, and warning (*Galatians 6:1*). How many delinquents are in torment today who might otherwise have been saved had they been encouraged to do better and had been warned of sin?

Let us be so concerned about one another that we will encourage the discouraged, lift the fallen, strengthen the weak, and try to save the lost. Let us, as did Paul, exhort one another to continue in the faith (*Acts 14:22*).

Wayne Cox

LADIES DAY

September 8, 2018

Registration begins at 9:00 a.m.

Cindy Rodgers, speaker (Nesbit, MS)

Theme: “*There’s Sunshine in My Soul*”

Lunch will be provided

VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST

AREA-WIDE YOUTH MEETING

September 9, 2018

Jameson Steward, Speaker

Subject: "The Lord is My Shepherd"

6:30 p.m.

VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST

GOSPEL MEETING

June 28 - 30, 2019

Mel Futrell, speaker

VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST
