



The Reflector

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Such Were Some of You

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“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor 6:9-11 NKJV).

When Paul tells us that “such were some of you,” he tells us something about several people. He tells something about some of the Christians at Corinth — their past and their present. He tells something about those who converted these people. He tells something about the brethren who were willing to receive these people.

Someone had made profound changes. When Paul said, “such *were* some of you,” he means that they were no longer “fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners.” They had been cleaned up. They had been forgiven and no longer practiced their former sins. The adulterers (married or unmarried) who had been committing adultery no longer did. The homosexual was no longer a homosexual because he no longer practiced homosexuality. The drunkard was no longer such because he did not still get drunk. The fornicator had quit his fornication. One apparently did not quit his fornication or else he took it up after becoming a Christian. Paul told the Corinthians what they

needed to do about him (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

Someone had converted these people. Some one was willing to reach out to these people with the gospel. It is one thing to boldly preach against the fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness and such like, warning that such “will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.” It is another thing to be willing to take the time and expend the effort to teach a fornicator, a homosexual, a thief, or a drunkard. Could our problem be that really, deep down in our hearts, we would prefer not to have people with such unsavory backgrounds as members of the church where we attend? We had rather reach those folks across the street who are well-respected people in the community. Or that nice couple who would not really have to make too many changes in their life-style. But that woman down the street, who entertains men regularly, would not make “us a good member.” Nor would that man we see staggering home almost every week-end. Nor would that fellow that everybody in town knows to be “gay.” Nor would that woman who has been married five times and presently living with a man who is not her husband (cf. John 4:17, 18). No, they would not be “good members” without changes in their hearts and life styles, but, should we assume that the gospel will not touch their hearts and change their lives, without even trying to approach them with it?

If someone had not been willing to reach out to these people at Corinth, Paul would have had to say “such *are*” instead of “such *were*.” The gospel is not just for those good neighbors who only need some minor doctrinal or moral

adjustments — it is also for those who are steeped in the vilest of sins.

Someone had received these people. They were part of the local “church of God which is at Corinth.” Not only had someone reached out to convert these people, after they were converted the brethren at Corinth had received them into their fellowship. Notice Paul said, “such were *some* of you.” This means that not all the brethren had such vile backgrounds. Yet, they were willing to receive those who had been of such unsavory character. Today, if we are not careful, those of us who have been given a proper Christian upbringing may become rather smug and self-righteous and find it hard to accept with open arms those who were formally of such “low character.” Oh, we give lip service to the power of the gospel to save sinners — all sinners — but still find it hard to unconditionally accept those with backgrounds described by Paul in our text — even after it can be said “such *were* some of you.” This writer has known preachers to get in trouble with congregations for their efforts to study with and convert such “low life.” After the studies produced results, these brethren let it be known that they had rather not have people with such backgrounds as members. No matter that the gospel had reached them, changed their hearts and live and lifted them to a higher plane — the fine cultured (?) brethren with good backgrounds (at least in their own eyes) could not bring themselves to fully accept them as members of the congregation. They are often allowed to be members but not really “received” because their every move is watched for any signs of their former life that might be used to discredit them and those who were willing to reach out to convert them.

Brethren, we all need to remember that “while we were still sinners” that Christ died for us. He died for every man — regardless of his previous record. When any person will hear and obey the gospel of Christ the Lord will save him.

Let us not forget that we were ourselves sinners — some guilty of the same sins listed in the text,

while some did things not considered as vile by good people— but all guilty! The same grace that saved us will save any sinner. The Lord accepted us when we turned from our sins and obeyed His terms of pardon. The Lord will accept the fornicator, the homosexual, or the drunk when he turns from his sin and obeys. We need to reach out and try to convert them. When they are converted, we had best not only accept them, but accept them with the joy that befits rejoicing over one who was lost and is found. (Read Luke 15). Our Lord said for us to preach the gospel to “every creature.” (Mark 16:15). Let us not pick and choose our creatures, let us try to reach every creature possible regardless of his or her background. Who is wise enough to know, in advance, who will or will not be changed by the gospel? ■

A Godly View of Sin

Sewell Hall

“What happened to sin?” This question, occasionally asked these days, can be answered with another question: “Whatever happened to God?” When people lose sight of God, sin cannot be far behind.

The World's View Of Sin: -- Worldly people usually have in mind some vague definition of sin. In their view murder is sin because it hurts other people. If you asked the average person to name a sinner, he might well name Saddam Hussein; look how many people he has hurt! On the other hand a psychology professor I knew insisted that sexual relations between two unmarried consenting adults is no more than a handshake if no one gets hurt.

Some take another step to call things sin if they hurt the one who does them. These days some people think of smoking as sinful because it harms the body. At the same time, drunkenness is winked at as long as one does not harm himself or drive under the influence.

Things may be thought sinful once they become socially unacceptable; speaking against

homosexuality is just about the most heinous sin some people can imagine. Illegal things are considered sinful if one is caught and, if not, they become clever. And, of course, anything that makes you feel bad about yourself is probably a sin for you.

Notice that all of these involve horizontal relationships. Sin is defined in purely human terms. The only authority acknowledged is human authority. The guilt or innocence of any action is judged by its visible and foreseeable effect on people here and now. God is not in the picture.

The Godly View: – As godliness is defined, however, everything is judged in reference to God. The word sin, as used in the Bible, is “missing the mark.” Crime is missing the mark set by men: sin is missing the mark set by God (1 Jn. 3:4). Murder is sin, not because it is illegal or because it hurts someone but because God has forbidden it. The mark God has set may be missed by going beyond it (1 Jn. 5:17; 2 Jn. 9) or by coming short of it (Jas. 4:17; Rom. 3:23).

The act by which “sin entered into the world” (Rom. 5:12) was an act that few people in our godless age would call sin. In fact, I am asked sometimes, “What do you think that Adam and Eve really did?” Well, what they really did was eat a piece of fruit (Gen. 3:6), and it was sin because God had forbidden it. Whether men see anything wrong in their action is beside the point.

When God told Abraham to offer his son on an altar (Gen. 22:2), he would have sinned if he had failed to obey. His faith was demonstrated in his willingness to do what God said, regardless of his own human sense of right and wrong.

Fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, covetousness, drunkenness, and extortion were socially acceptable in Corinth, but the Holy Spirit through Paul insisted that those practicing such things would not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9,10). “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:6).

Even worship can be sin if it is not what God

desires (Matt. 7:21-23), and a failure to worship is also sin (Jas. 4:17).

God And Sin: – Once God is brought into the picture it becomes clear that sin is man's greatest problem. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...” (Rom. 1:18). What man on his own can escape the wrath of God? Since sin is an offense against God, only God can forgive it. And forgiving sin is not easy even for God. It cost Him the life of His Son.

The just penalty attached to sin by a just God is death; consequently, justice demands that the penalty be paid if sins are to be forgiven. If the sinner paid it he would be forever separated from God. But “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). He allowed His Son to be “cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people, to whom the stroke was due” (Isa. 53:8).

Whenever we are tempted to sin, even in ways that the world considers innocent, we should ask with Joseph, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). And when even the world pronounces us guilty, we still must confess to God along with David, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...” (Psa. 51:4). ■

Convenient Preaching

Robert Harkrider

Christians are being tried and tested for their love of truth. Many are courageously standing for that which they know to be right, while others, not studying the Bible for themselves, are swept away by the pleasant and fair speeches of teachers and preachers who seek only to scratch itching ears with...

*“great swelling words, **showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage**”* (Jude 16).

Myriad of Christians are confusing the

difference between convictions and conveniences. They conveniently stand for doctrine which is most popular, receiving the “*praise of men*,” rather than standing for doctrine of Christ by conviction, being rewarded with the “*praise of God*” (John 12:43).

Such an attitude is manifested by the failure to teach against worldliness, looseness and laxity in moral living, and by putting emphasis on number and size rather than spiritual stature. Many seem afraid to condemn anything, but stand ready to praise everything.

We have watered down our convictions, sweetened our dispositions, and become so sophisticated with worldly wisdom and intoxicated with our “place under the sun” of prominence in the religious world that we stand powerless in the face of error and evil. ■

United In Christ

Wayne Teel

Jesus prayed that those who would be His followers would be united (John 17:20-21). If Jesus’ followers were united, then the world would know He was from God. The Bible says we must have a “thus saith the Lord” for all we do in religion. In other words, we must be able to give book, chapter and verse to show what we do in the name of the Lord is indeed found in the New Testament and approved by Christ (Colossians 3:17).

It is very obvious to any serious Bible student that God condemns religious division (1 Corinthians 1:10). We cannot be united if we do not stand on the same foundation, and that foundation is Christ and His teaching (1 Corinthians 3:11). The church of Christ is built upon that one foundation. The Bible says that “Christ is the head of the church” which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). If Jesus were the head of hundreds of different bodies or churches, what kind of monstrosity would that be? Can you picture that?

Jesus only promised to built His church

(Matthew 16:18). The church of Christ was built on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem in AD 30 when Peter preached the first gospel sermon telling those people what they must do in order to be saved (Acts 2:37-41; 47).

In contrast to the church of Christ, each denomination was founded by a different man (or woman), at a different time in history and at a different place, (other than Jerusalem). Each denomination wears a different name. Each one teaches a different doctrine. Therefore, how can they all be the ONE true church of Christ?

Whose side are you on? Do you desire to be on the Lord’s side (Exodus 32:26) and be united with Christ, or do you prefer to be in a man-made church and be divided or separated from Christ? There are new denominations springing up all the time and folks will think that is a good thing. I heard a preacher, in a prayer a few years ago, thank God for all the many different churches in the world today. He was actually encouraging religious division. This is absolutely shameful!

Jesus said every plant which God did not plant “shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15: 9-14). That means destroyed. Friends, He was talking about false religions, not weeds. ■

A great wish ...

In John’s letter to his beloved Gaius, he expressed the following wish:

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 1:2 KJV).

In this season of sending well wishes, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could rightly send this same wish to all our friends? It would mean that they are in such apparent great spiritual condition that we could conscientiously wish (or pray) for them the same degree of material prosperity and health. And what about ourselves? Are we spiritually healthy enough for others to send us the same greeting?

Sadly, in most cases, the wish needs to be turned around – wishing that the souls of folks would be as prosperous as their fiscal and physical health. ■