

The Better Way

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

IS IT SINFUL FOR THE CHURCH TO FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE?

R. C. Oliver

Some insist that it is sinful for the church to include in her program of benevolence both the Christian and the non-Christian. It is contended that the church is to help only the poor saints. However, this view presents many problems to the concerned heart. For instance, Jesus said:

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mat. 5:43-48).

In the above reading, it is evident that God blesses or helps both the just and the unjust, by sending both His sunshine and His rain upon each. And Jesus instructs us to be perfect in this same way, by blessing both our enemies and our friends. However, someone says that this is being said to the individual only, and not to the church as such. Must it then be concluded that while it is right for the individual Christian to be like God in this sense, it would be sinful for the church to be like God in the same sense: Indeed, is it sinful for the church to follow God's example? If the church cannot love her enemies, is this not equal to saying that in order for the church to be right she must hate her enemies? Does not "common sense" teach that this is an improper interpretation of the Lord's word? Surely, both the church and the individual members are to love their enemies and do good to them that persecute them, if they hope to remain the true children of God.

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

Again, is it sinful for the church to practice pure and undefiled religion? Pure and undefiled religion is identified by James in the following manner: **"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"** (Jam. 1:27).

Upon hearing this, someone objects by saying that this does not pertain to the church, but only to the individual, as can be seen in the pronoun "oneself" near the end of the quotation. If this is true, must it not then be concluded that it would be sinful for the church to practice pure and undefiled religion? And if the church is forbidden to "visit the widows and orphans," then, in order to be right, the church must do the

very opposite of this, which is not to visit them. However, would not the very opposite of what one is told to do in James 1:27, be the practice of impure and defiled religion? Must it be concluded that in order for the church to be right, the church must practice a religion that is impure and defiled—ado nothing religion! Is this not an inescapable conclusion? And can even “common sense,” one of the basic tools of interpretation, endorse an interpretation so forced and unnatural? Truly, both the church and the individual are required to practice pure and undefiled religion before God. If not, how can the church be justified for having taken care of the widows in the Jerusalem church? (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:16).

DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN

Further, in Galatians 6:10, it is written: **“So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.”** However, here again it is insisted that the apostle is here dealing with the individual and not the church; therefore, it is not the church that is to do this. Is this “common sense” reasoning? If so, would it not equally be applicable to other matters in this same context? For instance, if the church must not do that which the individual is told to do, in order to be right, then would it not equally be true that the church must do whatever the individual is told not to do, in order to be right? If not, why not? For instance, if the church must not do good unto all men, because the individual is told to do that, then must the church practice witchcraft, because the individual is told not to do that? (See Galatians 5).

To illustrate further, suppose a congregation were found practicing witchcraft and one were to say: “You cannot do this, for the Lord forbids

this, in Galatians 5.” Now, suppose the church were to respond:

You are wrong, for in Galatians 5, the Lord is writing to the individual, “to every man,” and not to the church as such; therefore, it is all right for the church to do what the Lord told only the individual not to do.

What kind of response would “common sense” make here? No wonder the Lord said: **“If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.”**

The truth of the matter is this: Paul includes both the individuals and the churches, in his letter to the Galatians, which can be seen in his use of the pronouns “we” and “us” in Galatians 6:10, the verse of controversy, for included in these pronouns are Paul and “all brethren” who were with him, as well as the churches of Galatia, as can be seen in Galatians 1. Does any grammarian want to dispute this? Surely not. So the inevitable conclusion is this: both the individuals and the churches are to **“do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”** Truly, the church as well as the individual is required to follow God’s example, is to practice pure and undefiled religion, and is to **“do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”**

CONCLUSION

It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: Jet us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light (Rom. 13:11-12).

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).~

Deceased

EXTREMISM OR FALSE DOCTRINE?

Adron Doran

Various and sundry names are applied to those brethren who deviate from their norm in their interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Some of them are called liberals and others are called conservatives. Some are thought to walk in the old paths while others have blazed new trails. Some are classified as extremists who are either to the left or right while some are identified simply as false teachers. Writers have gone to the point of listing some congregations of

churches of Christ as instrumental and others as non-instrumental.

By and large, the different designations applied to individuals and congregations are defined by those who look at others from their own vantage point. We raise the questions for consideration, how liberal is liberal? How conservative is conservative, and how extreme is extreme? When does an extremist find himself becoming a false teacher?

The word *extreme* comes into comparison with the word *opposite*. One extreme implies a polar position from the opposite extreme. The comparison implies extreme divergence with no basis for agreement, such as to take a contrary view of a situation. The comparison further implies that if one opposite is true, then the other extreme must be false or if one is false, then the other must be true. However, it could well be that neither position is true and both may be false.

It is altogether possible for an extreme position regarding religious faith and practice to lead one into false doctrine. While on the other hand it is possible for one to take an extreme position on a religious practice where the matter of sound doctrine is not involved.

When I began to preach in 1928, there were extremists among the preachers of the churches of Christ. Some claimed that every member of a congregation must kneel to pray (usually on both knees). I thought then that these preachers were extremists. I never believed that the posture of a worshiper had anything to do with whether or not God hears and answers his prayer. There were those who required that members of a congregation pass up to the front of the assembly and lay their contributions on a table. I thought then that these were extremists. I never believed that it made any difference what procedure was followed in "taking up the contribution." There were those who contended that all of the members of a congregation must drink from the same container (cup) when the Lord's supper was being served. I thought then that these were extremists. I never believed that it made any difference how many containers were used in delivering the contents of "the cup" to the communicants. Many other extreme positions have been held by some brethren where the matter of doctrine was not involved.

There are a number of preachers today who are teaching false doctrine but are passed off in some circles as mere extremists. Furthermore, there are a number of preachers who publicly oppose false teachers who are frowned on as extremists. The Bible as the word of God is the only criterion by which a sound judgment can be made.

We who oppose false doctrine and renounce false teachers do not claim to have been charged by God as arbiters between soundness and unsoundness, to interfere with the authority of elders in their autonomous rule or to determine who should or should not be fellow-

shipped. These things are the prerogative of God which He exercises through His word.

While on the other hand, I am obligated to preach the truth wherever I go and to all of those with whom I come in contact. The apostle Paul wrote: "**I am set for the defense of the gospel**" (Phi. 1:17). He also wrote to the Galatians and said, "**There are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ**" (Gal. 1:7). One does not become an extremist by earnestly contending for the faith delivered unto the saints (cf., Jude 3).

We must be able to determine the difference between extremists and false teachers. We must not dismiss a false teacher as a mere extremist and at the same time take to task those who oppose false doctrine.

The apostle indicated to Titus that he must be concerned with false teachers when he wrote: "**For there are many unruly and vain teachers and deceivers ... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not ...**" (Tit. 1:10-11). Paul prefaced this admonition to Titus by charging him to ordain an elder who would hold "**fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers**" (cf., vs. 9).

Barton Warren Stone was not an extremist when he repudiated irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints as taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. L. L. Pinkerton was a false teacher not an extremist when he introduced a melodeon into the worship of the Midway (KY) church in 1859. One is not an extremist but teaches false doctrine when he advocates salvation by grace and says that works have not one whit to do with it. One who supports the proposition of "unity in diversity" is a false teacher not an extremist. One takes a false position when he teaches that women should have an active role in public worship and be permitted to occupy the pulpit, serve at the Lord's table, and lead in prayer during worship.

Brethren, we are blinded to the truth when we are unable to see the difference in extremism and false doctrine. We would do well to heed the concern of the apostle John when he wrote: "**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**" (2 John 9).

Deceased

A Study In
THE MAJOR PROPHETS

Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Isaiah

Sunday Morning Bible Class
David P. Brown

A Study Of
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

WEDNESDAY NIGHT
BIBLE CLASS VIA ZOOM

Teacher:
David P. Brown

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.churchesofchrist.com

- Live broadcast
- Sermon videos
- Articles
- Lectureship videos
- Debates
- Bible Study Course
- Bible Reading Schedule
- Links to Faithful works

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Sunday, April 28th:** Monthly meal
- **Tuesday, April 30th:** Ladies' Bible Class
- **Saturday, May 11th:** Graduation Banquet
- **Saturday, May 25th:** Fish Hatchery Rd Lectureship (Part #2)
- **Mon-Wed, July 15th-17th:** VBS at Spring
- **Saturday, September 28th:** Fall Fellowship

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2024

Announcements	Eric Paluka
Scripture Reading	Bret Bailey <i>Rev. 13:1-10</i>
Song Leader	Jonathan West
Prayer	Zack Nero/Steven Johnson (AM) Steven Johnson/Andrew Paluka (PM)
Speaker	David Brown
Lord's Table (AM) (Mat. 27:20-26)	
Steven Johnson	Gary Blasingame
Andrew Paluka	Ken Cohn
Lord's Table (PM)	
Joshua West	Ben Gunter
Audio/Video Monitor	Joshua West
Camera/Door Monitor	Bret Bailey
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024 (via Zoom Meetings)	
Announcements	Bret Bailey
Speaker	Jonathan West
Bible Class Teacher	David Brown
FOR APRIL	
Prepare Communion	Bailey
Lock Buildings	Nero
Prepare Bulletin Board	TBA

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Debbie Brannon, Lynne Humphrey, Noah Hackworth, Daughter of Dr. Kathryn Ziegler, Josie Contreras, Maddie & Cohen Young, Edith Young, Bob Terry, Glenda Hackworth, Zack Nero, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Bernice Hastings, Charles & Ann Nero, Nathaniel Rimmer, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orlinda Chumbley, Carmen Hardy, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

In what city was Paul let down in a basket?

Answer to last week's question:
Foolish virgins; Matthew 25:8