

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

April 15

2018

"RESPONSIBILITY TO THE UNFAITHFUL"

Much is said in the New Testament about membership in the body of Christ and the wonderful blessings to be enjoyed as members of that body. It is in the body of Christ that we are reconciled unto God (Ephesians 2:16). However, as we read of the many blessings to be enjoyed as members of the body of Christ we find that these blessings can only be enjoyed by those who are willing to faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of membership (See 1 Corinthians 12:20-31).

Even though Paul writes much about members of the body of Christ and the blessings they enjoy as such we must also note that much of his writing is directed to brethren who were not faithful members, or to churches telling them what action should be taken toward those who were not faithful in their service to the Lord. By reading Paul's teaching as he was guided by the Holy Spirit we can learn of the things we must do to please God and we can also learn what our conduct should be toward unfaithful members of the body.

The church at Belleville is no different, in this respect, from other churches of Christ. We have those who have left their "first love" (Revelation 2:4). We have those who have been "over taken in a fault" (Galatians 6:1). Paul tells us that *"ye which are spiritual,*

restore such an one" (Galatians 6:1). From this admonition we learn that we have a serious responsibility toward the unfaithful member.

We must put forth every effort to encourage the unfaithful members to repent; to return unto their first love. James says, *"Brethren, in any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"* (James 5:19,20).

Even though we may put forth efforts to restore the unfaithful there are some who will give no heed to such efforts and will persist in their unfaithfulness. What then? What is our responsibility to those who will not repent of their unfaithfulness. Paul says, *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us"* (2 Thessalonians 3:6). This command is just as important as any other command of the Lord, but it is one that is ignored by many churches. No church can be pleasing in the sight of God and refuse to obey the Lord's commandments.

To unfaithful members we say, *"be zealous therefore, and repent"* (Revelation 3:9). We want to encourage you in every way possible to repent and pray to God for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 8:22). We want to see you faithfully serving the Lord so that you may have the hope of that eternal home in heaven. However, if you refuse to repent of your sins; if you refuse to return to faithful service; if you continue to ignore the efforts made to restore you; please realize that the church **MUST** obey the command of God in withdrawing from you. This will be done out of love and concern for your soul and with the desire to obey Him in all things. This will be done that you *"may be ashamed"* (2 Thessalonians 3:14) of your sinful condition and be led to repent of such. We desire to see all members faithfully serving the Lord, but if they do not we must maintain the purity of the body of Christ (See 1 Corinthians 5:5-8).

✍ James Hahn

The Same But Different

Sydney Harris, in a column of the Times-Union and Journal, Jacksonville, Fla., says, "A city inevitably changes its character and composition when it allows or encourages gambling casinos... The community doubtless has a right to decide what kind of a place it wants to be — but it cannot be several different kinds of places at the same time, nor can it remain the same under changed conditions."

That last line stuck with me. Neither city, person, nor church can change their life styles, conducts, and goals — and remain the same as before. We are what we are! The sweet innocent girl who tries "pot," takes on the disco routine, and dates the self-styled Fonz who goes "all the way," does not remain "that sweet innocent girl." It is her choice. Maybe she thinks the temporary popularity is payment enough; but she should not be surprised if her new image labels her "cheap" or a modern equivalent.

And by what stretch of terminology can one speak of a church as "a blood-bought, soul-saving, spiritual institution" when the smell of coffee, the sound of juke-box and ping-pong games, and boasts of its basketball team are its predominant characteristics. How can language mean anything when the sign says, CHURCH OF CHRIST, but the bus, fun-and-frolic, dress, and conduct say FAMILY SOCIAL CENTER?

Nor is the picture changed by ignoring or getting angry at this writer. Smashing the clock does not alter the time of day; for the clock does not make time, any more than some article is the standard of truth. If you are aware that the church of which you are a member is drifting away from a solid mooring on divine truth and authorized spiritual principles, that church is NOT the "same church I joined thirty years ago." It may meet in the same building, and wear the same name; but like the city that "sells out" its principles for more tax revenue — "it cannot be several different kinds of places at the same time, nor can it remain the same under changed conditions."

That church must correct its ways, or you, remaining there, must face the fact that you have changed also.

✍ Robert F. Turner



Weak Diets Do Not Make Strong Churches

A bulletin before me as I write contains these noteworthy items: "*PINK AND BLUE SHOWER: Ladies, you are invited to attend a ... shower for ... in the church basement*" . . . *Fellowship meeting held last Monday night*" . . . and "*Cake Day was last Thursday.*"

If these brethren suppose that they can convert sinners and build a strong church on such a flimsy diet they will do well to consider their own record. In the same bulletin it is stated that their Bible study attendance has not grown, and their contributions are down.

Brethren, the gospel alone will build a strong church and it needs no props under it to hold it up. Sectarian churches must bolster their doctrines with feasts, fairs, fun and foolishness, but the church of the Lord has something that will stand alone – the gospel. Churches that seek crowds by offering entertainment and suppers are admitting that they do not think that the gospel is enough.

✍ L. L. Geiger

Belleville church of Christ

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www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 745-1507