

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

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What (or Who) Have They Left

I encourage all to read carefully the following article by brother Turner. So many times I hear members state, concerning those who have fallen away, "they have left the church." It may be that this statement is really true. The only thing that attracted them was the people who were members of the body of Christ. The people were friendly, they showed them attention or supplied other needs. All these things are good and Christians need to demonstrate these qualities, however we must never lose sight of man's real need; salvation from sin. When people are only attracted to what others do for them they are selfish and when the people providing these things fail to do so then the person attracted by these things leaves. What people need to do is be converted to the Lord. He never fails us. When people are unfaithful they are rejecting the Lord. Let us state the real problem. They have "left the Lord."

✍ James Hahn



Faithful To – What?

I believe Christians may "depart from the faith," "fall away from grace," even "deny the Lord that bought them" (1 Timothy 4:1; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:1) for the scriptures clearly teach this. Our

Baptist friends err when they apply 1 John 2:19a to "all" (note 19b) who fully backslide.

But "we" err in thinking that all who are baptized, and are "faithful" in their home-town, are truly converted to Christ.

It is a common cry in California, Arizona – and I suspect in the northeastern industrial areas – that many "faithful Christians" from Tennessee, Oklahoma or Texas, come there to work, and "never darken the church doors." Friends write that they were "faithful to the church" back home.

And that is it – exactly. They were indeed "faithful to the church" (apparently) but were not faithful to the Lord. Many "grew up in the church" without really knowing, in a direct and personal way, the truth. They may have been drilled in "the right answers" concerning baptism, the Lord's Supper, instrumental music, etc., yet never have committed themselves to honest Bible study – never have given themselves whole-heartedly to Christ.

"Back home" their parents – and later, their friends – expected them to "be faithful" (meaning, attend the "services") and they did so. But away from home, separated from home-town pressures to conform, their lack of genuine ties to Christ is apparent. It was not "worldly California" that drew them away – although I offer no rose to materialism in California or Tennessee. They simply were not bound by the love of God in the first place. Much of our lament about the young people who "quit the church" is equally misdirected. "Area-wide" socials, "church skating parties" and other "fellowship hall" activities do not bind the youth to Christ. They actually increase the rate of apostasy when these young people leave home and are thrown into an environment that calls for spiritual strength. We have fed hungry souls with hamburgers. We have deprived them of training for the church-world, light-darkness battles they must meet in an adult life.

Is "churchanity" responsible for much of the weak spiritual fiber

seen in those who go astray? I believe it is – and have, for twenty years or more, been preaching the evils of "party line" religion. But God forbid that I should deny the existence of the divinely authorized local church, or the organized functions of its members. Sectarianism arises among God's people – whether they call themselves "church" or "group" – when they regard themselves as the standard for "soundness." "No church" may be as much a party line as any "church-of-Christ" ever preached.

The church doesn't need another saviour; we (the church distributively) simply need to be faithful to the Saviour we have. By this example, and by objective, non-sectarian appraisal of our practices in the light of the word of God, we may be able to teach the next generation to turn to the Lord, and cleave to Him. (Acts 11:20f)

✍ Robert F. Turner



“If The Lord Wills”

A Christian farmer, standing in his yard, observed a man of the world passing by, driving a herd of swine. “Where are you going with those hogs?” he asked politely. “Why, I’m going to the market to sell them,” was the reply. “Then, I’m going to use the money to purchase those things which I’ve always wanted.” “You mean, if the Lord be willing,” said the Christian farmer. “That’s not what I mean at all,” replied the man of the world, “I intend to do just what I said, and that’s that.”

Sometime later the Christian farmer was surprised to see the same man staggering back up the road, bruised, tattered, and minus his hogs. “What happened to you?” asked the Christian farmer with concern in his voice. “I was waylaid by robbers down the road who stole my hogs, and then beat me up,” was the man’s sorrowful answer. “What do you intend to do now?” asked the compassionate Christian farmer. “I’m going back home, if the Lord be willing,” replied the man.

Now, I share this story because, I often here people make statements such as, “No matter what, I’m going to retire in five more years.” Or “Next year, I am definitely going to Florida on vacation.” However, when it comes to making future plans, we all need to keep these words of James in mind, “*Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that*” (James 4:13-15).

You see, my friends, as James said, we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Therefore, let’s be careful about boasting about what we plan to do tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1), next year, or in the next few years. For, the fact of the matter is, tomorrow or next year may never come. So, instead of boasting so confidently about what we plan to do tomorrow, next year, or in the next few years, we need to remember, “*If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that*” (James 4:15).

✍ Brad Phillips

Belleville church of Christ

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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) 443-1938