

We Should Have Learned By Now!

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Paul, in reminding the Corinthians of the tragic mistakes of the Israelites, wrote: "NOW THESE THINGS HAPPENED UNTO THEM BY WAY OF EXAMPLE; AND THEY WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, UPON WHOM THE ENDS OF THE AGES ARE COME" (**1 Corinthians 10:11**). Brethren, apostasy ravages congregations by the dozens throughout the brotherhood. Indifference and apathy are found in almost every congregation, and you do not need a magnifying glass to spot them just compare the Sunday morning worship attendance with that of Sunday evening or Wednesday night. Pick up a church directory and you will find some who are members but avoid the work and worship of the church like it was the plague.

Three factors are contributors to these problems: (1) Bible ignorance, (2) lack of church discipline, and (3) weak preaching. Consider these areas carefully:

1. Bible ignorance exacts a dear price! How many members of the Lord's church can explain the Bible way of salvation? How many understand the Scriptural teaching regarding the one church? What percentage even know all the books of the Bible? The prophet **Hosea** lamented: "MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE" (**4:6**). His words haunt us today! How many congregations are composed of great numbers of spiritually infantile Christians who are "TOSSED TO AND FRO AND CARRIED ABOUT WITH EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE" (**Ephesians 4:14**) and are still in need of basic fundamental teaching (**Hebrews 5:12-14**)? We should have learned by now that ignorance leads to error! It leads to sin! It leads to damnation! Let Bible instruction be a priority in every home professing to follow Christ. Let our Bible classes return to sound doctrinal instruction. Give us Christians who are truly students of the Book.
2. We should have learned that discipline is essential to the health of the church. Paul's words still ring true: "A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENETH THE WHOLE LUMP" (**Galatians 5:9**). If false teachings spread like gangrene and overthrew the faith of some in the early church (**2 Timothy 2:16-17**), shall we stick our heads in the sand and ignore such today? God forbid! The clear command of **Romans 16:17** to "MARK THEM THAT ARE CAUSING THE DIVISIONS AND OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING" stands forth as needed medicine today.

When immoral and disorderly members openly drink, fornicate, dress immodestly, forsake the assembly, and trade spouses as if they were cars, it is high time we preach and practice **2 Thessalonians 3:6**: "WITHDRAW YOURSELVES FROM EVERY BROTHER THAT WALKETH DISORDERLY." Paul commanded: "PUT AWAY THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES" (**1 Corinthians 5:13**).

The rebuke and threat to the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira (**Revelation 2:14-16; 2:20-23**) clearly teach the lesson that we err in allowing sin to go unchecked within the body.

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3. Preaching that is popular with men is usually not popular with God. In foolish efforts to draw numbers, we are hearing a compromised message from many pulpits. Sermon themes such as “You Can Be Beautiful” echo across the land while the sterling charge to “PREACH THE WORD, REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT” (**2 Timothy 4:2**) lies in mothballs. Preachers deliver “All love- All grace-no law-no judgment” sermons that produce false feelings of security amongst a multitude in moral and doctrinal error, and the people “LOVE TO HAVE IT SO” (**Jeremiah 5:31**). Seemingly, a great number cry, “Make us feel good in our sins” as they plow a path to eternal torment, and sadly, there are preachers among us who will oblige. “SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE” should be our guide as we seek to please God, and not men (**Acts 4:19; 5:29**).

Let us learn from, and turn from, mistakes past and present, so when Jesus comes, we shall be found “IN PEACE, WITHOUT SPOT AND BLAMELESS IN HIS SIGHT” (**2 Peter 3:14**).