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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

WHAT ABOUT ELDERS AND PREACHERS WHO FAIL TO DEAL WITH SIN IN THE CONGREGATION?

Danny Douglas

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). Implied in this statement is the fact that God demands that elders watch for the souls over which they rule and that they will give account to God for their watch/care! Obviously, those who fail to correct sin among the membership are failing to heed God’s commands in restoring the erring back to life (cf. Jam. 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1-2; Jude 22-23).

God has charged elders with feeding and overseeing the church of God in any geographic location: **“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28). In this verse, the inspired apostle Paul emphasizes the gravity of the work of elders by referring to the church of God, as being, **“purchased with His own blood.”** Indeed, the flock of God is precious to Christ (Eph. 5:25), and as **“God’s heritage,”** it belongs to Him. Thus, elders are to be examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). The church does not belong to the elders, preachers, or any other church member! Elders who are complacent about sin and negligent in correcting error in which the members are involved could hardly be the right example before the souls that belong to Christ! By such neglect, they would be committing a sin of omission by failing to do what God commanded them to do in tending and overseeing the flock of God

(cf. 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; Jam. 4:17).

What about preachers who fail to deal with sin in the congregation? Oh, they may preach many scriptural things, but they ignore the **“sin in the camp”!** In fact, they might even **“bear down”** on certain subjects and appear to be **“sound in the faith,”** while failing to deal with the sins of certain members. For a gospel preacher to know of error being practiced, but fail to preach and teach about the same, is a shameful thing! Concerning the work of a gospel preacher, Paul declared:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Indeed, preachers must take heed unto their own conduct and the doctrine they teach that they may save themselves, as well as those who hear them (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16)!

Preachers and elders who fail to declare and uphold the whole counsel of God, including the condemnation of all sin among the members, stand guilty before God for their failure to do so. Paul was **“pure from the blood of all men,”** because he had not shunned to declare **“all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:26-27).

Remember, that preachers, teachers, and elders in the church are like the watchman in Ezekiel, whom God commanded to warn the **“wicked from his wicked way, to save his life,”** but if he failed to do so, God said, **“his blood will I require at thine hand”** (Eze. 3:18). Also, if we fail to warn the wicked of their sins, they will die in their sins, but God will require their blood at our hand! Brethren, let us strive to save others, but if they will not listen to God’s warning, let us at least save ourselves!

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001

Editorial...

CHURCH BENEVOLENCE INCLUDES PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE

Specifically, the work of the Lord's church is to save souls from sin. Being saved from sin, one is saved from the guilt and consequences of the same—the ultimate, final, and eternal consequence being eternal damnation in hell (Mat. 7:21-23; John 14:6; 8:24; 1 The. 1:7-10). The church saves souls by preaching the gospel to alien sinners, edifying (spiritually building up) the saints, and practicing benevolence (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38, 41, 42, 47; Rom. 1:16; 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3; Rom. 14:19; 1 The. 5:11; Jude 20). Thus, the Lord's church (Christ's spiritual body, Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23) is fundamentally a teaching institution wherein Christians (as that term is defined and used in the New Testament) are faithful to Christ—they put into practice what Christ teaches concerning living the Christian life (Acts 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 John 8-11; Rev. 2:10). Thus, practicing the benevolence authorized by the New Testament is one way Christians exemplify God's love, concern, compassion, and mercy for the family of God, and any one else in need, as the New Testament defines that need (Acts 28:8, 9; Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27).

WHAT THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT

This article falls under the general heading of church benevolence. More specifically, it is the church helping the sick and afflicted. To be more precise, it is concerned with the church helping those who are ill with communicable diseases. Refining it further, the article pertains to benevolence regarding the prevention of communicable diseases among the brethren and others.

This study does not necessarily concern itself with the laws of civil governments, especially laws that are contrary to and against God's Will. Although situations have arisen where the church has been at odds with civil government (Acts 5:29) and certainly the same again could transpire, this study does not necessarily require a consideration of the same. Again, it concerns itself with the church acting benevolently as defined previously.

In the context of communicable diseases, there are some diseases more contagious and dangerous than others. *Especially is this the case with a new virus, about which little is known, for which there is no known cure, no vaccination to provide immunity for the populace, is highly contagious, deadly, particularly to the elderly, and is spread, not only by those presenting with symptoms, but also through asymptomatic people who are unaware of their infection.* Asymptomatic people are those who carry a disease, manifesting no symptoms, and unknowingly are highly contagious to others. Thus, for obvious reasons, asymptomatic people pose a greater threat to the public. Thereby, certain infectious dis-

eases can rapidly develop into epidemic or pandemic proportions throughout the world.

AFFIRMATIONS

In view of the foregoing, it is herein affirmed that: *The scriptures teach that Christian compassion for those in need is a component part of the benevolent character of Christians.* A second affirmation that is a corollary to the first is: *The scriptures teach that Christian compassion is manifested in part by brethren caring for the sick and afflicted.* A third corollary affirmative is: *The scriptures teach that Christian benevolent conduct may include the practice of preventive health care involving quarantining the church.*

It is absurd to affirm that all communicable diseases are equal in endangering people. Although there are characteristics shared by communicable diseases, some said diseases are far more dangerous to people than are others. In many cases, the extent to which a communicable disease impacts the health of people depends upon the state of one's health when infected. Thus, some contagions pose a far greater threat to some people than they do to others. Some factors determining their danger would be whether or not there are treatments for them, or vaccinations against them, and the danger of death to some more than others. Not to recognize the foregoing and other differences in contagions as to their impact on people is to remain willingly ignorant of the obvious.

The church assembles from time to time for worship, Bible study, and various kinds of social gatherings. All of the foregoing involve close association to one extent or another with the participants according to the nature of the assemblies. In the case of a pandemic caused by a deadly disease, about which little is known, that is highly contagious, for which there is no immunization, and is spread by asymptomatic people, prudent elders and the churches they oversee will be concerned about the prevention of the same. Especially is this the case regarding protecting the church against asymptomatic infectious carriers of said disease. Why is that the case? Answer: Because Christians love one another and are a benevolent people who care for others, especially their own brethren in the Lord (Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:18).

“TYPHOID MARY”

An example of how dangerous asymptomatic infected people are is seen in the account of Mary Mallon, alias “Typhoid Mary” (September 23, 1869 – November 11, 1938). She was an Irish immigrant cook in the northeastern U. S. Mary infected 51 people in different families at different times with typhoid fever, three of whom died. Actually, no one knows for sure how many people she infected, but she was the first person to be designated as an asymptomatic carrier of the disease in the United States.¹ Her complete story is lengthy and sordid, the details of which are unnecessary for the purpose of this study. Suffice it to say, she was unco-

operative with authorities, used several aliases in her efforts not to be apprehended, and broke her promise not to work as a cook if she was taken out of her first quarantine (1907-1910). She never believed she carried the Typhoid bacteria, although the autopsy of her body proved she did. Because she refused to cease working as a cook she infected others with the disease. Twice she was forcibly quarantined by authorities. She died after nearly three decades in isolation.² ³ Further, in the early 20th Century others were documented as asymptomatic carriers of the Typhoid bacteria. They, too, infected numerous people. Today, the phrase “Typhoid Mary” is a colloquial term for anyone who, knowingly or not, spreads disease or some other undesirable thing.⁴

SPANISH FLU PANDEMIC

A prime example of a highly communicable and deadly disease is the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of a century ago. The Spanish flu, also known as the 1918 flu pandemic, was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic caused by the H1N1 influenza A virus. It lasted for more than 12 months—from the spring of 1918 through the spring or early summer of 1919. It infected 500 million people—about a third of the world's population at the time.⁵ The death toll is estimated to have been anywhere from 17 million to 50 million, and possibly as high as 100 million, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history. When the pandemic was over, the Spanish flu killed an estimated 675,000 Americans. The population of the U. S. at the time of the Spanish flu pandemic was around one hundred million. Today, the population of the U. S. is around 330 million. The impact of this flu pandemic was so great on the U. S. populace that U. S. children skipped rope to the following tune.⁶

I had a little bird,
It's name was Enza,
I opened up the window,
and in-flu-enza.⁷

At the time medical science knew little about viruses. Research throughout the 1920s accumulated more knowledge of viruses, but a virus would not be seen until the invention in 1931 of the electron microscope. It is also important to understand that there were no antibiotics to treat patients with secondary bacterial infections resulting from having the Spanish flu.

There were four waves of the Spanish flu. The first from late winter/early spring 1918 till around June. The second began in the late summer of 1918 and was far more deadly than the first because the virus had mutated. October had the highest mortality rate of the whole pandemic. The third wave began in January 1919 and continued through June of that year. It was less severe than the second wave, but still much more deadly than the initial first wave. The fourth wave began in the spring of 1920 and was minor in its impact than were the first three waves. It appeared in isolated areas including New York City⁸, the United Kingdom, Aus-

tria, Scandinavia, and some South American islands. Mortality rates in the fourth wave were very low.⁹

THE NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORIZES CHRISTIANS TO HELP THE SICK

All other matters being scripturally equal, and assuming there is a treatment(s) available, I know of no Christian who attempts on Biblical grounds to oppose the use of medicines, medical procedures, etc., to relieve the suffering and/or cure persons, if possible, regardless of the disease or injury.

Part of the authority from God for the church to help the sick comes from the Christian obligation to practice the “Golden Rule” (Mat. 7:12). Also, the example of Jesus and His desire to help the sick ought to be a part of every Christian’s character. Indeed, who is and how to be a good neighbor is made clear in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 13:30-37). Clearly, it is a part of practicing “**pure and undefiled religion**” (Jam. 1:27). Of our Lord’s benevolence, the divine volume tells us that “**Jesus went about all Galilee... healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people**” (Mat. 4:23). Further it reveals that, “**Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick**” (Mat. 14:14).

Assuredly the miracles of Jesus were first and foremost to prove His deity (John 20:30, 31). However, they were also acts of benevolence whereby he showed His compassion to those in need. Thereby, they are examples to Christians of the Godly character trait of compassion, expressing itself in doing good as the New Testament defines “good” to others. In these cases, it was helping the sick. As has been pointed out earlier, one way a Christian’s Godly compassion and care for those in need may be realized is through the benevolent activities of the church collectively and in the personal conduct of each Christian (1 Tim. 6:18). Indeed, the apostle Peter in speaking of Jesus’ suffering for mankind said Christians should follow in his steps. However, this passage along with other scriptures not only teach Christians to follow Christ’s example in suffering as a Christian, but also directs Christians to cultivate our Lord’s attitude of compassion and mercy expressed in benevolent acts (See Luke 18:35-43; 1 Pet. 2:21; Acts 10:38; Gal. 6:10).

Consider what else the New Testament of Christ teaches about children of God developing and expressing their compassion for the sick through their benevolent actions. The New Testament teaches that a child of God is to apply the truth taught by Paul in Galatians 6:10. The application of the same would include caring for the sick. Furthermore, during the first Century when brethren possessed miraculous gifts, James wrote to the brethren, saying “**Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up**” (Jam. 5:14, 15; Also see

1 Cor. 12:9). Obviously, during the miraculous age (a time that was temporary and provisional) sick church members were directed to call the elders to them so the elders could use their miraculous gifts to heal them. Further, from the preceding scripture we know elders knew it was part of their duty in shepherding the flock to use their miraculous gifts to heal the sick. Did the elders’ compassion and care for the physical well-being of their brethren end with the cessation of miraculous gifts? Indeed not.

Also, consider that Paul instructed the church in Corinth to “**Let all things be done decently and in order**” (1 Cor. 14:40). The apostle’s instruction was given in the context of the proper use of miraculous gifts. Paul’s teaching regarding the same was necessary because the Corinthian brethren were abusing and misusing them. Because said truth was given to the Corinthian brethren in a miraculous context—to correct them in their misuse of miracles—did the principle of doing all things “**decently and in order**” cease with the close of the miraculous age? Answer: It no more ceased to be a Christian obligation than did the benevolent concerns of elders for the sick expressed in James 5:14, 15—minus the exercise of the miraculous gifts. Mercy, compassion, care, and demonstrating the same through benevolent acts are as much a permanent component part of Christianity as is doing “**all things...decently and in order.**”

The temporary and provisional miraculous powers that occasioned the revelation of the truths found in 1 Corinthians 14:40 and James 5:14, 15 ceased long ago, but the obligations taught to the church in each passage are permanently binding on Christians—especially elders who care for God’s family (Acts 20:28; Col. 3:17). Determining the foregoing is a part of understanding how our Lord in the words of the New Testament authorizes anyone to do anything, emphasizing the importance of how to ascertain that authority. Without this knowledge, people may bind on others what God never obligated them to do and loose them from what He obligates them to do. In either case mere men would be legislating for God and God has always strongly opposed such action on man’s part.

Concerning our responsibility to be careful about our spiritual state, Paul warned, “**Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them**” (Eph. 5:7). A few verses later the apostle added, “**See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, for the days are evil**” (Eph. 5:15, 16). Such warnings find application concerning the benevolent work of the church and the individual Christian’s benevolent acts in dealing with the sick or in seeking to prevent people from becoming ill. This is especially the case when a contagion is a dangerous infectious disease of which little is known as heretofore described in this article. Thus, in faithfully discharging our obligations

to the Lord in practicing benevolence, we have as much responsibility not to be led astray by false doctrine regarding the same as we do in any other New Testament authorized obligatory matter pertaining to saving souls (Col. 3:17). If a church member opposed helping the physically ill, in view of the work of elders, preachers, deacons, and faithful church members, the faithful members are obligated to God to oppose that kind of unchristian conduct and the teaching that would advocate the same regardless of who espoused it, or when, or where it was done.

ARE CHRISTIANS ACTING IN CONCERT WITH THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCERNING BENEVOLENCE WHEN THEY ARE PRACTICING PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE?

The following quotation defines what is meant by preventive health care.

Preventive health care, or prophylaxis, consists of measures taken for disease prevention.¹⁰ Disease and disability are affected by environmental factors, genetic predisposition, disease agents, and lifestyle choices and are dynamic processes which begin before individuals realize they are affected. Disease prevention relies on anticipatory actions that can be categorized as primal, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.^{11, 12}

In the light of the foregoing definition, the following question is put to the reader. *With all other things being scripturally equal, will anyone oppose Christians (collectively or individually) practicing preventive health care because such conduct is sinful? Further, do certain brethren believe and teach that practicing preventive health care is scriptural unless it involves quarantining the church? In other words, there is no New Testament authority to care for those with communicable diseases and/or protect brethren who are subject to being infected by them by quarantining the local church. It, therefore, is sinful to do so.* Thus, with all things being scripturally equal, the New Testament authorizes elders (where there are no elders it would be the men of the congregation) to direct the church to practice preventive health care concerning hindering the spread of a contagion through the use of face masks, social distancing, disinfectants, and hand sanitizers, but not to do so by quarantining the local church. So, the question is: *Are there those brethren who are ready to affirm that the scriptures teach that it is a sin for the church to take preventive health care measures to the point of quarantining the church?*

Should we not ask ourselves by what Biblical authority does God direct those who are sick to absent themselves from worship assemblies without sinning? *Are those brethren who do not assemble for worship on the first day of the week because they do not desire to infect their own brethren with a communicable disease or infect their families sinning in so doing? Do brethren reveal their love, mercy, compassion, concern, care, and benevolence for the family of God*

when they ignore a highly infectious disease such as the Spanish flu of 1918 et al., in assembling for worship no matter who they may infect in so doing?

Quarantine is a type of preventive health care that restricts the movement and association of people. Besides isolating the sick from the healthy, it is often used to prevent the movement of those people who may have been exposed to a communicable disease, but do not have a confirmed medical diagnosis—as mentions asymptomatic people who can infect others. This article is not saying that practicing quarantine is a perfect preventative or that problems do not arrive in implementing it, but it is saying that it is an effective means to curtail the spread of infectious diseases such as has been defined in this article, especially by those who are asymptomatic. *Does the New Testament authorize elders to implement measures, including a quarantine, to protect those under their oversight from asymptomatic people in the worship assemblies who can infect them with a dangerous highly communicable and deadly disease about which little is known?*

Quarantine (separating the healthy from the sick) is one of the oldest forms of preventive health care in protecting the populace from communicable diseases. From the Old Testament, we learn that God cared for the physical health of fleshly Israel, protecting the healthy from infection by quarantine (Lev. 13:4, 5, 11, 21, 26, 31, 33, 50, 54; 14:38). Moreover, throughout history, quarantine (self-isolation) has been used to stop the spread of all kinds of communicable diseases. *Again, are there any brethren prepared to affirm that the scriptures teach that it is a sin for local churches to engage in quarantining themselves to help prevent a communicative illness infecting the members thereof? Or, will they affirm that the scriptures teach that any preventive health care that requires brethren not to assemble is sinful?*

Consider Paul's teaching regarding the home, **"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"** (1 Tim. 5:8). *Would this obligation include taking care of sick family members as well as seeing that one's family engages in preventive health care to the point of quarantining one's own family?* Further, one qualification that a husband/father must meet in order to serve as an elder is this: **"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God)"** (1 Tim. 3:4, 5)? *Would a man knowing how "to rule his own house" involve what Paul taught in 1 Timothy 5:8?* We have previously proved that a part of practicing benevolence involves being concerned about and, if possible, caring for those who are ill. Also, the New Testament authorizes a father to lead his family in practicing preventive health care. *That being the case, who is going to deny that the scriptures teach that elders, acting*

in their capacity over God's family, commit sin by leading the church in practicing preventive health care when said practice involves the use of quarantine? If in caring for his own children, an elder would put his family into quarantine (self-isolation) to prevent them from being infected by a communicable disease, or, if they are ill to keep them from infecting others, then why would an eldership oppose doing the same for God's children? Yes, in view of 1 Timothy 5:8 and 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, "how shall he take care of the church of God" while refusing to lead the church in practicing preventive health care—loving, merciful, compassionate, and benevolent care? Does anyone desire to attempt to prove that the foregoing instructions from Paul to Timothy in the previous scriptures, exclude a husband/father's care for his family's physical health, even an elder's family?

Do some members of the church, especially elders, think it is a sin for a Christian husband/father to quarantine (self-isolate) himself and his family, thereby absenting themselves from the first day of the week worship assembly? Certain elders may respond to the previous question with, "We will leave that up to the judgment of the head of each house as to whether or not they will practice self-quarantine. As elders we are not going to require the church to practice preventive medicine if it involves the whole church being quarantined, and thus, unable to assemble." **But, such elders must have forgotten the fact that if the New Testament authorizes one husband/father to absent himself and his family from said assembly for the reasons herein given, then it authorizes all members to do so for the same reason.** Indeed, it authorizes any one elder to do the same for his own family even when the eldership has decided that the church will not practice church quarantine. The teaching of Hebrews 10:25 does not exclude the practice of what the Bible teaches regarding benevolence in caring for the sick or protecting the brethren from getting sick from infectious diseases as we have clearly defined the same in this article.

Again for emphasis sake, when brethren are sick with a communicable disease such as the Spanish flu, or they are asymptomatic with a dangerous highly communicable disease about which little is known, decide to self-isolate (quarantine) themselves, they are not transgressing the teaching of Hebrews 10:25. The fact of the matter is this: certain elders, as well as other church members, are demonstrating little to no care for the physical well-being of God's children when they forbid the church to practice quarantine as a part of practicing preventive health care. Brethren certainly do not mean to do so, but in forbidding the quarantine of the church as a preventive health care measure, they are failing to exercise brotherly love, compassion, necessary care, mercy, and, therefore, Christian benevolence toward healthy brethren in dealing with a such a contagion as noted. They are not considering those who could be infected because an asymptomatic person assembled with the brethren. They are not considering those brethren who are at a higher risk be-

cause of weak immune systems, other ailments, or age. So, such brethren are forced into the unenviable position of declaring that the New Testament obligates Christians to help those who are sick according to their several abilities and opportunities to do so, but, on the other hand, the same New Testament does not authorize Christians to engage in all preventive health care to keep them from being infected or infecting others with a communicable disease if it involves the quarantine of the local church.

It is nothing but sophistry on the part of those attempting to prove that the church is forbidden to practice quarantining the members when they say that every year we have some kind(s) of communicable disease(s) that infects the members, but we do not quarantine the members on those occasions. Or, to reason that since people die from communicable diseases every day why take precautions to protect our selves from any disease? Indeed, why take medicines of any kind? Why do people take vitamins, or take tetanus shots, or, for people in the U. S. who are my age, have small pox immunizations (I had a booster small pox vaccination years ago when traveling to preach in a certain place overseas), or polio vaccinations, or typhoid shots, and on and on we could go listing matters pertaining to preventive medicine. In third world countries, people continue to fall victim to maladies that for the most part are not, or as much of, a problem to people in the U. S. at present, or at least as they once were. So, let such people save such warped logic for themselves and their families. But, the fact is this: they are only concerned with such thinking when it comes to looking for some way not to quarantine the church to protect it from a dangerous and highly communicable disease about which little is known. Even the public schools will tell parents not to send their children to school if they have a fever and they will send children home if they have 100.4 degrees of fever. Members have been and should be told that brethren sick with infectious diseases ought not to assemble, but self-quarantine until they are well. And, if a local church in the practice of preventive health care employs the quarantine, it has done no more or less that when a father does the same for his own family as he seeks to provide for his own.

Paul wrote to the Romans declaring, "**Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you**" (Rom. 16:16). Are there no exceptions? In our culture, we do the same thing when we shake hands, but there continue to be cultures today wherein they greet one another with a kiss. Incidentally, Paul did not command Christians to greet one another with a holy "smooch." The Greek word carries with it the idea of "touch." But, whether a holy kiss (touch) or a handshake, do not expect me to abide by Romans 16:16 when a deadly dangerous communicable disease that spreads very easily is moving among the people. It is also the case regarding a local church's opposition to quarantining the brethren and thereby not assembling as a beneficial tool in practicing preventive health care. *Brethren who*

are ill and unable to assemble on the first day of the week to worship God according to the New Testament pattern do not violate the teaching of Hebrews 10:25. The same is the case for brethren who are taking care of the sick, or they do not assemble because their presence could infect their brethren or themselves with a highly contagious and deadly disease. If it is scriptural (and it is) for one family to quarantine itself, it is scriptural for all the families to do the same.

WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY

Assembling with the saints for worship on the first day of the week is vitally important, but Jesus had something to say about a proper view of gauging weightier and less weighty matters of God's law. Jesus taught,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Mat. 23:23).

In living the Christian life, is there nothing found in the foregoing verses that finds application in the lives of church members as they strive to be obedient to the truth? Was it right to **"tithes of mint and anise and cummin?"** Indeed it was. However, the Pharisees were negligent in what Jesus declared to be weightier matters than the tithing of herbs, namely they are **"judgment, mercy, and faith."** One can assemble with the saints every time the Bible teaches, but neglect scriptural **"judgment, mercy, and faith."** Christian benevolence involves the exercise of **"judgment, mercy, and faith"** and the totality of the teaching of the New Testament pertaining to Christian benevolence demands the practice of all three. Discharging one obligation does not substitute for neglecting other obligations, especially when certain obligations are weightier than others. These Pharisees certainly did not have their priorities in the proper order of importance. Christians, if not very careful, can fall victim to the same spiritual virus that infected the Pharisees. And, **"judgment, mercy, and faith"** along with loving the brethren are among the weightiest matters of God's perfect law of liberty (Jam. 1:25).

Christians are to **"Provide things honest in the sight of all men"** (Rom. 12:17b). They are also obligated to practice Galatians 6:10 and Matthew 7:12 in dealing with others, especially the church. According to some, if a father leads his family to engage in quarantining itself in the process of practicing preventive health care, thereby they absent themselves from assembling with the saints, that family violates Hebrews 10:25 and thereby commits sin. **Therefore, according to some brethren said family must undergo corrective church discipline to the point that if they will not repent of engaging in the sin of quarantine, the church must withdraw fellowship from them. And, we already know how that will go over regarding families withdrawing fellow-**

ship from other members of their own family—with some it will not happen no matter the sin committed.

Some have written that they are going to assemble with the saints no matter what happens. Thus, their attitude proves that they do not care about being asymptomatic infectious disease carriers who expose others, especially those with weak immune systems, to infections. Like "Typhoid Mary" they demonstrate no concern, or mercy, or benevolence for others, especially their own brethren. Further, as previously pointed out, such thinking means they are also willing to expose themselves and their own families to the same highly communicable and deadly disease.

What about elders who believe and act in the same manner toward the family of God? One cannot help but wonder at their lack of Biblical wisdom, discernment (judgment), mercy, and faith regarding their own love for, care, and exercise of compassionate benevolence in their skewed understanding and application of Hebrews 10:25. Especially is this the case in dealing with a dangerous disease about which little is known, that asymptomatic people spread, and for which there is no vaccine available to immunize the people.

END NOTES

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⁹ "Here are Exact Facts About the Influenza and Its Toll in City, State, Nation, world". *Los Angeles Times*. 9 February 1919. Retrieved May 10, 2020.

¹⁰ Hugh R. Leavell and E. Gurney Clark as "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting physical and mental health and efficiency. Leavell, H. R., & Clark, E. G. (1979). *Preventive Medicine for the Doctor in his Community* (3rd ed.). Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company. Retrieved May 10, 2020.

¹¹ "New parents" secure a lifelong well-being for their offspring by refusing to be victims of societal stress during its primal period". *Primal Prevention*. Retrieved May 10, 2020

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—David P. Brown, Editor

“BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED”

What did Paul mean when he wrote, “**Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honour preferring one another**” (Rom. 12:10)?

“*Be*” is supplied by the translators because it is implied by the message of the verse. Paul is teaching the way a Christian ought to conduct one’s self toward the brethren in the Lord. He is speaking of a state of being with regards to one’s brethren in Christ.

“**Kindly affectioned**” translates the compound Greek word *philostorgos*. *Philos*, means “friend”, and *storge*, means “love of kindred, especially parents for children and children for parents.” “**Honour preferring**” translates the compound Greek word *progeomai*. The preposition *pro* means “before, in front of, in advance.” *Egeomai* means “to lead the way: to take the lead” (*Bagster’s lexicon*).

In the previous verse, Paul is saying each Christian should genuinely and constantly strive to lead the way in exercising friendliness one toward another; a friendliness best described as love of parents for their children and children for their parents. The apostle John wrote: **He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even til now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him** (1 John 2:9, 10).

However, John also wrote: “**For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous** (1 John 5:3). *To abide in the light is to obey God.*

It is obvious that a Christian’s love, tenderness, and kindness toward one’s brethren does not grant one license to allow these marvelous principles to degenerate into permissiveness. Such may be the concept of the world regarding what these Truths entail, but it is not the Lord’s concept of them.

When Paul withstood Peter to the face because of his sin (Gal. 2:11), he did not violate his own inspired writing in so doing (Rom. 12:10). Paul loved God, the Gospel, the church, and Peter’s soul. Thus, he could not in the name of love, etc., stand idly by while Peter and others acted con-

trary to the doctrine of Christ (Gal. 1:14). *Brethren are not displaying love for one another or kindness toward each other when they permit false doctrine to be taught and sin to be practiced in the church without any effort on the part of the faithful to correct the erring.* For fear of appearing rude, uncouth, intolerant, undignified, etc., we dare not let sin go unchecked, whether in our brethren’s lives or in the doctrine they teach.

Remember this one guiding truth—the *love principle never sets aside nor rises higher than the authority principle*. This is clearly seen in Jesus’ comment to His apostles when He told them, “**If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments**” (John 14:15, *ASV*, 1901). This is in complete harmony with the teaching of the Old Testament, “**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man**” (Ecc. 12:1). In writing part of the New Testament, the apostle John expressed the same sentiments as that of the writer of Ecclesiastes regarding how Christians express correct love for God and the necessity of bringing it to maturity. The apostle of love penned: “**But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him**” (1 John 1:6). When we follow the teaching of the Bible we will love God, our brethren, and our fellow man as we ought. Thus, we know we are acceptable to God. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise!

—Editor

IT IS SAD TO SEE THE WICKED
BEHAVIOR OF SO MANY ABOUT US: BUT
IT IS EVEN MORE DISHEARTENING TO
SEE THEM UNASHAMED.



EYES WILL NOT SEE WHEN THE HEART
WISHES THEM TO BE BLIND—DESIRE
CONCEALS TRUTH, AS DARKNESS DOES
THE EARTH.—SENECA