

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

FELLOWSHIP GOD DOES NOT WANT

By Donald Townsley

God has plainly revealed in His word who His faithful people are **NOT** to fellowship. He does not want His people to have fellowship with those who are **IMMORAL**. The man at Corinth who had his father's wife was to be delivered *“unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh”* (1 Cor. 5:5). To keep the fornicator in their fellowship would have leavened the *“whole lump”* (the congregation—1 Cor. 5:6). They were commanded to put him out of their fellowship (1 Cor. 5:5, 7). Paul told them that they could not *“keep the feast”* (live a righteous, godly life) with Christ so long as they had the *“old leaven”* (the fornicator) in their midst (1 Cor. 5:8). He then charged them not to company with any man that is called a brother who was a fornicator, covetous, an idolator, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner (1 Cor. 5:11).

God does not want His people to have fellowship with **FALSE TEACHERS** and **FALSE DOCTRINE**. Fellowship with false teachers and false doctrine is popular and pleasing among men, but is NOT pleasing to God. John said, *“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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 9-11). Paul said, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”* (Rom. 16:17).

God does not want His people to have fellowship with those **IN COMPROMISE WITH ERROR**. Paul sought no compromise with the Judaizing element in the church: he said, *“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”* (Gal. 2:5). Neither did he compromise with Hymenaeus and Philetus over their error concerning the resurrection (2 Tim. 2:16-18). There are many areas today where men compromise the standard—the word of God. Let us look at some of them:

- Divorce and remarriage for any reason when the word of God teaches that there is only one reason that gives a person the right to divorce his/her mate and marry again, and that reason is fornication (Matt. 19:9). The innocent party has a right to divorce the guilty party and marry again (Matt. 19:9).
- Social drinking is tolerated in many congregations, when the word of God says that *“drinking parties”* are wrong (1 Pet. 4:3 NKJV).
- Cursing is overlooked and condoned (Eph. 4:29).
- Lying is tolerated (Eph. 4:25) when Revelation 21:8 says that *“all liars”* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.
- Immodest dress is not dealt with in many congregations, and as a result many Christians (so-called) dress like the world (1 Tim. 2:9).
- Fornication is rampant, even among some who claim to be Christians, when Paul said in Ephesians 5:3 *“Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints”* and *“flee fornication”* (1 Cor. 6:18).

Local churches of Christ must demand conformity to God's standard and refuse to tolerate compromise. The church is to be the *“pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:15).

God does not want fellowship of His people **based upon “subjective” grounds**. What is “subjectivism”? It is the doctrine that says that the way a person feels is his/her standard of what is right! The subjectivist rejects strong stands on what the word of God teaches; he exalts his personal feelings and experiences and allows them to determine his course of action. He practices “unity-in-diversity”; he says it does not matter what one believes on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, institutionalism, instrumental music in worship (or any other false doctrine), there should still be fellowship.

The subjectivist also makes a distinction between “*gospel*” and “*doctrine*” that the New Testament does not make. In the New Testament the will of God is called “*the truth*” (John 8:32), “*the faith*” (Acts 6:7), “*the gospel*” (Mark 16:15-16), “*the word*” (2 Tim. 4:2), “*the way of truth*” (2 Pet. 2:2) and “*the doctrine*” (1 Tim. 4:16).

The basis for fellowship of God's people is the Word of God (2 John 9-11). Men who have fellowship upon any other basis come under the condemnation of God (Gal. 1:6-9). ■

Dissatisfied with God’s Word

By Joe R. Price

Not everyone is content to let God have the final word. Some believe God continues to reveal Himself to them through visions, dreams, feelings, experiences, voices, church councils, and the like. He does not (Heb. 1:1-2). Others claim they believe in the completeness of the word of God but then deny it by adding to or taking away from its teachings. Many are dissatisfied with the completed word of God (Jude 3). Their dissatisfaction is evident when we observe the worldwide epidemic of religious division.

Here are some ways in which dissatisfaction with the complete and final revelation of God’s word is shown. Let us examine ourselves lest these characterize us.

(1) *Foolish and ignorant disputes* (2 Tim. 2:23). This person is unsatisfied with the Bible’s explanation. He is convinced that being spiritual is defined by seeking the unknown and the unknowable. He does not know this shows a lack of faith in what God has revealed (Deut. 29:29). Refuse such questions, “***knowing they generate strife.***”

(2) *Fables* (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:16). A fable is a fiction, an invented story. People have believed countless fables in the name of religion. The New Testament exposes every spiritual invention of men for what they are – mere fables (Gal. 1:8-9).

(3) *The commandments of men* (Titus 1:4). Authority for spiritual things must come from the word of God for it to be approved by heaven (Matt. 21:25). When men establish and impose religious commands on others, it is a clear sign they are dissatisfied with the commands of God (Matt. 15:1-9; Col. 2:20-23).

(4) *Selfishness and pride* (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). Some preach the gospel with hidden agendas and evil motives (Phil. 1:15-17). These are not satisfied to let love for truth and love for men’s souls motivate them. Instead, the truth only satisfies this person when he can use it for a personal advantage.

(5) *Spiritual immaturity* (2 Pet. 3:15-18). This person may be convinced his doctrine is correct (though unsupported by Scripture) because he lacks proper grounding in Bible knowledge. We must “***grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord,***” or we can become headstrong and dissatisfied with what God’s word teaches.

(6) *Satan’s deceptions* (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Be assured Satan wants you to be disgruntled with what God has spoken to you in His word. God’s completed word will thoroughly equip you to fight Satan and be victorious over sin and death in the Son (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 2:11). Trust His word and live by it to defeat Satan.

God warns us not to be deceived by sin and error. He speaks to us by His Son. The Bible is His complete word and is how God speaks to us today. “***He who has ears to hear, let him hear!***” (Luke 8:8).

Are you listening? – *The Spirit’s Sword*, June 16, 2024 ■

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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