

CAN WE WITHDRAW FROM THE WITHDRAWN?

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2nd Thessalonians 3:6).

A brother or sister “quits the church,” or more correctly quits the Lord. Is there anything the church can do beyond urging them to return? Usually when we suggest that maybe the church should consider withdrawing from such a one, we are faced with: “You can’t withdraw from those who have withdrawn themselves.” We do not believe that those who raise this objection are willfully trying to avoid responsibility for discipline. I have heard it from some of the finest and more conscientious brethren that I know. But, I do believe that they have a misconception of the withdrawing process.

There is more to “*withdrawing yourselves*” than making a formal announcement at church and then no longer “using them” in a public way. Many seem to think that since the quitter no longer attends and participates in congregational activities that this constitutes his having withdrawn himself so we cannot “withdraw our fellowship” since the quitter has already withdrawn himself. But this solution to the problem will not do.

We suspect that part of the problem is that of referring to discipline as “withdrawing fellowship.” The scriptures refer to “*withdrawing yourselves*.” There is a difference. When one withdraws himself, it is true that his spiritual fellowship is withdrawn, but it goes beyond that. One withdraws his person, his company, or his social association from the offending party. Surely one can do this even though the brother or sister no longer attends the meetings of the church. Such withdrawal or isolation is designed to make the offender ashamed of his conduct and produce repentance. If Christians refuse to have any social association with such a one and let him know why he can have none then we believe many would feel the pressure and be restored that probably would otherwise be lost. Of course, this severing of company does not preclude contacts for the purpose of admonishing (2nd Thessalonians 3:15) and/or fulfilling other obligations one may have toward the person.

I have known many who have “withdrawn themselves” who continue

– Continued on page 3 –

BUILDING MY CASE BY COMPARING TO THE LEAST

Greg Gwin

Self-justification is a highly developed skill in most individuals. In school, on the job, in our marriages, and in almost every other activity and relationship we will quickly revert to self-justification if some criticism is leveled in our direction. When it comes to our spiritual service to God we also rush to defend ourselves if it is suggested that we are negligent and need to improve in one area or another.

The example of King Saul stands out among those who made excuses for their failures. When confronted by Samuel upon his return from fighting the Amalekites, Saul tried to blame “*the people*” for taking forbidden spoil, and rationalized that it was acceptable because the things taken would be used for sacrifices (1st Samuel 15:20-21). Samuel, of course, did not agree (22-23).

One of the classic methods frequently employed in the art of self-justification is to compare oneself to someone who is viewed as “worse.” “I may not attend as regularly as I should, but I’m present more often than brother So-and-so.” Or, “I may have a bad temper and I often display it, but I recently heard one of the other members burst out in rage, and he even used curse words.” Or, “I may not give much to the church, but I’ve watched what some of the people around me put in the plate, and I’m giving more than they are.” And the examples could be multiplied.

The inspired apostle Paul destroyed forever the work of these self-justifiers when he said: “*We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*” (2nd Corinthians 10:12). Learn the lesson. A right standing with God is not determined by finding someone ‘worse’ than you are. Anybody can do that! Think!

– Continued from page 2 –

to enjoy day-to-day association with Christians. That association has not been severed at all. It is precisely the company (“mixing up with” — Vine’s Dictionary) that must be withdrawn (1st Corinthians 5:9-13; 2nd Thessalonians 3:14). Such a person can still be “*marked*” or “*noted*” by the church and then each member can withdraw his company (association) that the one might be ashamed.

– Continued on page 4 –

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's/Women's Studies

@ 6:30 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belen, New Mexico

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

– Continued from page 3 –

We can mark and refuse to company with a brother who walks disorderly whether or not he attends services. In fact, the very refusal to attend faithfully is walking disorderly and is grounds for marking and withdrawing ourselves.

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 9

MARCH 5TH, 2023

"BY NAME"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

According to Jesus, the Good Shepherd *"calls his own sheep by name"* (John 10:3). The apostle John concluded his epistle to Gaius, saying, *"Greet the friends by name"* (3rd John 14). Hearing one's name said aloud is encouraging. Speaking of loved ones who are absent by name touches the heart.

Because familiarity and affection are expressed in the utterance of a name, it is important to keep the names of brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as other dear souls, on our tongues when praying.

Effort has been put forth to gather prayer requests, including who is ailing and what the ailment may be, who is traveling, where they are going, and for how long, who is in need and how members can help, who is straying spiritually and what the trouble is, as well as who has been blessed and what they are thankful for. These prayer requests have been announced to the congregation in various ways, so all can be informed. Even so, few of these very specific concerns are publicly prayed for *"by name."*

God invites the Christian to be *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"* (1st Peter 5:7). Yet, **all** cares are not transferred to the Lord when prayers mention only the categories of sick, traveling, needy, wayward, and thankful without mentioning who is sick, who is traveling, who is needy, who is wayward, and who is thankful.

RIO GRANDE VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

505-864-0282

rgvcoc@gmail.com

Box 989, Belen, NM 87002

www.RGVChurchOfChrist.org

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Facebook.com/RGVChurchOfChrist