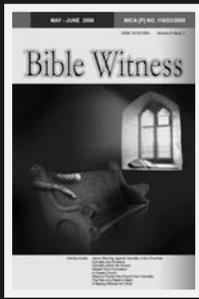


Bible Witness



Articles Inside: Jesus' Warning Against Carnality in the Churches
Carnality and Divisions
Carnality within the Church
Abstain from Fornication
A Chaste Church
Steps to Prevent Carnality in the Church
The Pain of a Pastor's Heart
A Blazing Witness for Christ



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Jesus' Warning Against Carnality in the Churches

Quek Suan Yew

Out of the seven churches in Revelation, there were only two churches that received commendations without any condemnation. They were the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia. The other five churches had condemnations which are quite reflective of many of the churches today. All these five churches appear to be large and wealthy. They are seen as self-sufficient and materially more successful than the other two churches. Nonetheless, the five were warned and challenged to repentance.

The Lord's words to those five churches provide many lessons for modern churches which esteem material or physical blessings more than spiritual integrity. The focus on material blessings has caused many professing Christians to believe that the lack of a large congregation and much wealth are signs of God's curse. The mentality of many pastors and leaders of modern churches is to look for rich and influential men to turn their churches into mega churches. They also employ secular management gurus as advisors to help their struggling churches to increase their attendance and bank account. Then all sorts of gimmicks, instead of sound, biblical preaching, are introduced into their churches, even those which were once fundamental churches. This all-consuming desire to have large and rich churches has led many into sins. Churches today are in a

state of sin without realizing it. Like the churches in the book of Revelation, what is required immediately is sincere and genuine repentance from the heart. The following is a brief study of those five churches that we may learn from their mistakes.

A Church that Left Its First Love for the Lord

— **Rev. 2:1-7**

The church of Ephesus was a church with a very rich spiritual history. They earnestly contended for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. But the LORD noticed that they were losing one great essential in their spiritual life. He said, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

What is the first love? In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These words describe to us the kind of love that He expects in the lives of His people. Only such love ensures that the glory of God comes first in every area of believers' life. Those, who love the Lord wholeheartedly, would be willing to sacrifice anything for His glory. An illustration of this first love

can be seen in Abraham's offering of Isaac, his only son, to be a burnt offering to God in Genesis 22. Similar passionate love for God is expected of churches everywhere. So He cautioned the Ephesian church, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Remember what it was like to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Those were the blessed days of service and life as a Christian. Communion with God was genuine and true. There was no hypocrisy. There was only unfeigned faith. Life was blissful with Christ, and service, a great delight. Nothing was able to rob us of that great joy and diminish the fire of fervent service unto the LORD! Do you remember that first love? Whatever is affecting your passion for Christ must be cast off right away, and let your love for Him flow once again, uninterrupted.

A Church that Compromised Its Faith and Purity

— Rev. 2:12-17

The church in Pergamos was a fearless church. They stood firm on the Word of God even unto death. But the Lord said to the church that He had "a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2:14).

Not all of the members of the church in Pergamos were faithful and courageous. There were, in the midst of the church

of Pergamos, some who held fast to the doctrine of Balaam. They were holding fast to God's Word and the testimony of Christ, but at the same time they held fast to the doctrine of Balaam. This syncretistic form of devotion and worship is common today too! It is like a kind of spiritual schizophrenia, holding on to the notion that if I please God in some areas, I can indulge in sin in others. We serve faithfully with our right hand and sin frequently with our left!

While rebuking its sin, Jesus referred to the sin of Balaam (Numbers 22-25), which resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites (Numbers 25:9), including many of the leaders of Israel (Numbers 25:4-5). Balaam told Balak to send "loose" Moabite women into the camp of Israel and get them to sin. In the course of their sexual immorality, Israel was called by the daughters of Moab to sacrifice to their gods, which the Israelites did. They ate food offered to idols and bowed themselves to these idols. The sins committed then were that of idolatry and immorality (Numbers 25). From sexual immorality to eating food offered to idols and to the worship of idols.

The Apostle Peter stresses another aspect of Balaam's sin in 2 Peter 2:15-16, "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." He identifies love of money as the cause of Balaam's unrighteousness.

It appears that in the church of Pergamos, where the sins of Balaam existed, they thought that it was all right to do so. What made it worse was that these

people were tolerated in the church. They were strongly against others who were not one of their own in doctrine. But when one of their own church members or leaders compromised, they were lax and did not take the necessary steps to “clean” their house. Separation based upon respect of persons is a mockery in the sight of God. When Christians handle sin, sin must be handled the way that God would handle sin. Remember how the Lord dealt with Moses, David, Saul, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Balaam, Peter, etc. when they sinned? God is no respecter of persons when it comes to judging sin.

A Church that Condoned Sin — Rev. 2:18-29

The church in Thyatira condoned sin. They showed love, service and faith and did good works and had patience in the face of difficult circumstances. But Jesus says that “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

Who was Jezebel? Undoubtedly, it was not the woman’s real name. It was a nickname given to her because her actions and character resemble that of the Old Testament character, Jezebel. Notice that she called herself a prophetess and the leaders allowed her to call herself that. She was a domineering woman. They were probably afraid of her.

Jezebel of the Old Testament was the infamous wife of King Ahab who brought great calamity to Israel (1 Kings 16:30-33; 21:25-26). Jezebel was also a prophet killer (1 Kings 18:4; 19:1-2; 2 Kings 9:7). Jezebel controlled her husband, the king (1 Kings

21:5-7, 11). Jezebel’s other sins included whoredom and witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22).

The teaching ministry in the church is the noblest task that God has given to His people. The teachers ought to be faithful to the Word, both in their conduct and teaching. But the leaders in Thyatira allowed Jezebel to teach God’s Word even though they knew of her wickedness and immoral conduct. This led to a widespread of sin within the church as she led the church members into fornication and eating food offered to idols, which would include the worship of idols. Condoning the sin of others sometimes produces much worse effects than committing that sin.

A Church that was Dying — Rev. 3:1-6

The church in Sardis was busy and seemed to be full of activities which make it a lively church. But the LORD warned, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Sometimes, believers think that what they have done in the past is all that is needed. They may even think that their past actions will keep on burning bright and therefore no present service is necessary to keep the church alive! Both thoughts are wrong. Whatever good and spiritual that remain in the church in Sardis must be fanned into a brightly lit flame. It is not dead yet but is about to die if they do nothing immediately!

Continue to be awake and remain constantly awake! There is no time for indifference or lethargy in the things of God. Be alert like a good Christian soldier on duty where many lives depend on your vigilance! Shake off the spiritual drowsiness and any ritualistic emphasis of Christianity! The word “strengthen” means “to turn resolutely in a determined direction”. It is a command; and the emphasis is on the action of turning resolutely. The church in Sardis must stop the downward slide and resolutely turn back towards the straight and narrow path of truth and righteousness according to God’s Holy and perfect Word. The word for “things” is in the neuter, so it does not refer to people but to spiritual realities. Probably it refers to the spiritual graces in the church which were like dying embers that were about to be snuffed out. They must start fanning the flames to keep them alive.

God’s comment was that the works of the church in Sardis were not perfect in His eyes. What it means is that every Christian must keep on doing God’s work until he dies! There must be no let up. Every generation must do their part in remaining “gregarious”, i.e., watchful at all times! Keep on serving the LORD.

**A Church that was Lukewarm
— Rev. 3:14-22**

The church of Laodicea was the worst of all the five bad churches. There was not one word of commendation from the LORD when He examined this church. Jesus

said about the church that it was neither cold nor hot. This metaphorical language is drawn from a familiar geographical feature of Laodicea. Its water supply ran several miles through an underground aqueduct before reaching the city. The water would be foul and dirty, and lukewarm by the time it arrived in the city. It was neither hot enough to restore, nor cold and refreshing. The imagery was very striking, for it was a common knowledge among the Laodiceans that their water was lukewarm and utterly useless.

The church was also lukewarm. They were utterly useless to Christ. Christ has thoroughly rejected them. Their external show of piety by coming to church, uttering prayers, and doing works of religiosity were considered by Christ as useless. Their religiosity had no spiritual worth or value. They merely “played” church. It was all form without substance.

Another appropriate word to describe them would be “hypocrites”. Their obnoxious hypocrisy nauseates Christ! They have the appearance of godliness but they do not have the power even though they pretended and said that they had the power! These are like the ones who would heap upon themselves teachers who will scratch their itching ears. They flock to teachers who would teach them what their wicked hearts want to hear. Such kind of pastors and teachers are many in these days. The Bible calls them hirelings. The consequence of being such a church is



that He will (definitely) spew them out of His mouth, as what the Laodiceans did with their lukewarm water. It depicts His utter contempt of them.

They were rich in goods and claimed that they had need of nothing. Wealth has a way of deceiving us. They were gloating about their money and riches and persuasive power in the Laodicean society. They probably also assumed that they were assured of a place in heaven by the way they lived their lives, focusing on wealth all the time. Their attitude seemed to be, "Material wealth mirrors spiritual wealth. The more money I have, the more spiritual I am! Therefore I must get more money." Because of this mentality, only the rich were allowed in positions of leadership, for they were the spiritual ones!

These wealthy Laodiceans had lulled themselves into a false sense of heavenly and spiritual security that was absolutely non-existent in the eyes of God. They were so full of pride and wealth that they sincerely believed they were near perfect and lacked nothing. In all probability, they were also unteachable. The LORD's judgment was that the church was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. "Wretched" describes one who is under intense affliction. "Miserable" describes one who is worthy of pity. The resulting conclusion was that they were really very poor like a beggar who crunches up in a dark corner being too ashamed to show his face, and all he can do was to beg for food with his head down.

They were also blind even though they believed that they could see. This is spiritual blindness of the worst kind. They truly believed that they

would go to heaven and would receive commendations for their works. Such people deceive themselves and are also beyond redemption if their pride is not dealt with immediately. The Lord also said that they were naked. This depicts their absolute bankruptcy of anything of value in God's eyes. The church might have bricks and mortars, but it was spiritually bankrupt. If all that a Christian has are his cars, houses, bank accounts, stocks and shares without any spiritual wealth, then he is naked!

Conclusion

In the case of the church in Ephesus, they were commanded to restore their first love for the LORD. Even though God's people are zealous defenders of God's Word, if they function without whole-hearted love for God, they displease God and face His swift judgment. The churches in Pergamos and Thyatira were called to repent and deal with doctrinal errors and the sinners who perpetuated the errors and sins. They were told to deal with all alike, for the judgments they make is God's. The church in Sardis had to remain steadfast and keep on serving and not be lulled into a false sense of complacency that results in spiritual death. They were exhorted to persevere to the very end. The church in Laodicea was ordered by the Lord to flee from all worldly pursuits and their carnal sense of self-sufficiency and replace their sins with repentance and obedience. Repentance means to turn away from sin and return to God in the way prescribed in Scriptures. They need to humble themselves and turn to God and His holy and perfect Word. The seriousness of the state of sin within the churches was such that swift judgment will soon follow without delay if there was no repentance. ■

Carnality and Divisions

Jeffrey Khoo

In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul tells the Christian not to remain a baby in the faith but to mature into spiritual adulthood. He must not just keep drinking the milk of God's Word but must progress to feed on the meat of God's Word (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Spiritual retardation will lead to carnal behaviour. A spiritual retardate will bring trouble not only to himself but also to the church.

The spiritually retarded believers in the Corinthian church displayed carnal behaviour. Paul rebuked them for their babyish faith. Three years had passed since they were converted. By then, they should already have matured sufficiently. But no, they remained spiritually retarded. They were still infants in their knowledge of Christ (cf. Hebrews 5:11-6:2).

When spiritual vitality and growth is lacking in believers, they become susceptible to sinful temptations and worldly seductions. Instead of keeping to the simplicity of Christ and His Word, they begin to prize the power and

prestige of Satan and his world. They backslide, becoming worldly and carnal (sarkikos) in their thinking and actions. Adopting the ways of the world, they become trouble makers in the church.

This was what happened in the Corinthian church. The carnality in the Corinthian church resulted in factions within the church. These unbiblical divisions in the church were due to a wrong understanding of the Christian ministry (1 Corinthians 3:5-4:5). By hinging their faith on certain leaders in the church, these carnal believers reveal a faulty perspective of Christian leadership and ministry. Paul had to instruct them concerning the place of Christian leaders in the spiritual life and growth of the church. Christian or church leaders were mere servants of God. The Apostle used the illustrations of farming and building to explain this truth (1 Corinthians 3:5-17).

Paul and Apollos were but farmers in the Lord's vineyard (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). They simply planted the seed and watered it. They had nothing to do with its growth. God was the one who caused the growth. Paul preached the Gospel, Apollos taught the Word, but it was God who gave life. Christ is the Saviour, not any man.

Paul likened himself to an architect (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). Christ, the Chief Architect (who Himself is the Key Foundation or the Cornerstone), had given him the blueprint for building the church. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he had laid the foundation. In other words, he had given to the church the inspired Word of God

which is supremely authoritative and all-sufficient for faith and practice (cf. Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

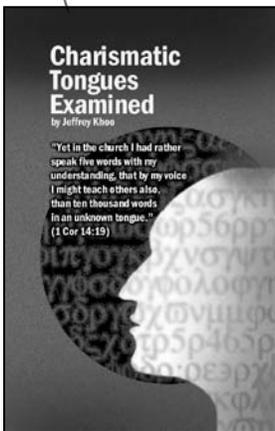
The contractors who build upon that foundation must be careful how they do it (1 Corinthians 3:12-17). There are two sets of building materials: one is good, and the other is bad. The first set—gold, silver and precious stones—are expensive, beautiful, and durable. The second set—wood, hay and stubble—are cheap, ordinary, and easily destroyed.

One day, all believers will be judged by Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). This judgment is a judgment of service, not salvation (3:15). Every work for Christ will be tested. Some will be rewarded, others will be shamed (Matthew 6:1-6; 25:1-40). It all depends on the quality of work we have done for the Lord. Is our work for the Lord Christ-centred or self-motivated; Christ-driven or strife-driven?

Paul issued a couple of warnings. First, he warns believers against worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:18-23). To be wise in the world is to be a fool in God's sight. If anyone wants to be wise before God, he must become a fool to the world. To support his point, Paul cites two Old Testament passages: Job 5:13, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and Psalm 94:11, "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

Believers should only and always follow their infallible Lord and His Word and never the philosophies and methods of fallible human beings no matter how big a name they have or how powerful a position they hold (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:5). Everyone and everything belongs to God. Only He deserves all the glory. What is the Christian's main purpose in life? It is only this: "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

What is the key to Christian spirituality and unity? It is (1) to be founded on our perfect Lord who is the same yesterday, today and forever, and (2) to be grounded in His perfect Word which is forever infallible and inerrant. Amen!



Dr. Jeffrey Khoo has written a very helpful tract that explains the errors of charismatic tongues. It is thoroughly biblical and easy to understand.

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Carnality within the Church: *A Sign of Lack of Sound Preaching*

Carnality is a swelling tide in churches everywhere, pushing godliness out of the ministries and lives of their leaders and members. Churches are crowded with carnal and materialistic people. Any form of emphasis on modesty, purity and godliness is considered weak and useless, while tolerance of carnality and worldliness is cherished as profitable virtues.

The appearance, mannerism and pursuits of members of modern churches speak volumes about the tragic level of accommodation of worldliness that exists within the churches today. It is all too obvious that preachers who have been entrusted to “preach the word... reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” have drastically failed in their duty. Many preachers, even those who claim to be biblical preachers, shy away from rebuking carnality within their congregations. In fact, preaching has become much worse than that. Licentious preaching is heard everywhere. Many preachers have deteriorated to the point that they even make fun of preachers who warn relentlessly against the worldly mentality of the churchgoers. The “acceptable preaching” of our times requires refrain from rebuke of carnality, but ready reassurances and blessings to all churchgoers, even to those who indulge in carnal living.

Reasons for Preachers’ Tolerance of Carnality

The Bible clearly speaks about the reasons for the tolerance of carnality by

Prabhudas Koshy

preachers. Three of those reasons are discussed below:

Fame: The insatiable desire for popularity is often the cause for preachers’ tolerance of sin within their congregation. They would rather maintain a comfortable relationship with their carnal members than having to deal with their ire when rebuked for their carnal living. Tolerance of sin is a very different issue from being patient with a man who is repentant and submissive to the rebuke of the Word. Tolerance is to permit members to continue in their unchaste behaviour without being rebuked or warned. A preacher, who wants to be in the good books of all men, hardly dares to expose or confront his members’ sins.

A pastor who rebukes carnality of the people is often called “a negative preacher”. He receives comments such as “O, his preaching is too negative”, “he is a narrow-minded and intolerant preacher” or “he has this ‘holier than thou’ attitude.” The crime of such a pastor is that he calls their sins, “sins”.

How can God’s people read and apply the Ten Commandments that God has given through Moses? Eight of them are negative! Jeremiah’s preaching ministry is summarised as “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:10). Four negatives and two positives!

So was the preaching of every other faithful servant of the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus preached fearlessly against the sins of His hearers. He did not mince His words against the sins of His “religious” hearers so that He might become more popular among them (cf. John 8:44; Matthew 23).

Would modern churchgoers who dislike preachers who strongly warn them against their carnal living, ever have God’s prophets like Moses, Jeremiah, Malachi, John the Baptist, etc. to preach to them in their churches? Would they have Christ and the apostles to preach to them?

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). In the context of this instruction to preachers, Paul warned, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:3-5). Irrespective of people’s opinion, faithful preachers must preach against sins of their hearers.

Greed: Another reason for the present lack of rebuke of sin by preachers is their greed. Today, many who fill the role of pastors are men of “corrupt minds” whose philosophy is “gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). The prophet Isaiah mentioned greed as the reason why false prophets of his time stirred up the wayward nation of Israel, instead of rebuking it sharply. Read carefully Isaiah’s words that rebuked the prophets who failed to warn against the sins of the people – “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping,

lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant” (Isaiah 56:10-12).

Many pastors are wary of offending prominent and rich members of the church who are carnal men. The covetous hearts of these pastors will rather speak words that please the wealthy and the prominent ones than offend them. They gather people by means of pleasing music and other entertainments, and then send them away in ‘high spirits’ to continue in their sins. It is no more uncommon to see skimpily dressed singers and dancers on the church stage during worship services. Undiscerning men and women gather around these performers with loud applause and screams. Sunday services are increasingly becoming religious entertainment for a carnally thirsty crowd. Why would Christian preachers promote such activities? One reason, according to the Bible, is that it provides them with much gain. In turn, they also teach their congregations that “gain is godliness”. Peter describes them as “beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” (2 Peter 2:14b). Likewise, Jude warns, “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core” (v. 11).

Lust: Another biblical reason for preachers’ tolerance of carnality within the church is that they themselves are carnal men. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with

their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:13-14). They will not rebuke, but quietly approve the carnal mannerisms of the congregation, because they themselves are men with "eyes full of adultery". It is impossible that a righteous man can tolerate carnal behaviour and activities within his congregation. Preachers ought to be "preachers of righteousness".

Church leaders, who know of the existence of carnality in their congregations, and yet do not reprove it, may well be living in the lust of the flesh. Outwardly, such men may look religious and pious, but the Lord who knows all hearts, says that these are men full of lust. 2 Timothy 3:5-7 says of such men in the churches, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Rebuke by Preachers is the Best Remedy for Carnality within the Church

The Scripture clearly teaches us that the remedy for the onslaught of carnality is preaching that confronts sin with burning words and bold rebuke. Consider the preaching of the prophet Isaiah. In the very first chapter itself, Isaiah delivered a startling rebuke of sin. Isaiah denounced the Israelites' sacrifices as hypocritical. He boldly declared that God despised their oblations, the incense, their holy days and feasts. Then in no uncertain terms, he told them that God would not hear their prayers because their hands were full of blood. Again in that chapter, he denounced them for oppression of the

poor, for their rebellion against God, for their spiritual harlotry. He was unflinching when he remarked that their princes ran with thieves, everyone looked for bribes, and leaders did not give honest protection to widows and orphans. And that is only one example from many in the preaching of Isaiah. He preached gallantly against sins.

Consider Nathan, the prophet who rebuked David. He is a fine example of a God-honouring preacher, who preaches succinctly against sin. Even King David's royal pomp was no hindrance to his preaching against sin. So Nathan boldly preached a sermon, using a parable to show the wickedness of David's sin. Then when the anger of David was aroused against the hypothetical rich man who had taken his neighbour's little ewe lamb, Nathan with crushing and powerful effect pointed his finger in the face of King David and said, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). Nathan showed David his horrible sin of murdering Uriah in order to take his wife, Bathsheba. Nathan did not fear the royalty of David. Therefore, he stood up for God and openly denounced David's sin.

Consider John the Baptist. He sharply rebuked sin. He did not try to be tactful and mild in his rebuke. He firmly said to the Jews, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7, 8). He made no exception for the Jewish leaders either. He told them they would be hewn down like fruitless trees to be cast into the fire of Hell. He was just as bold when he faced Herod the king and told him plainly that he had no right to take his brother's wife (Matthew 14:3, 4).

Consider the preaching of Stephen. Acts, chapter 7, tells the story of his rebuke of

the sins of the Jews. He loudly declared to them, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (7:51-53).

Though many more of God's servants can be mentioned, let us look at just one more preacher, the Apostle Paul, for our consideration. On his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas came to Paphos. When Elymas the sorcerer withstood them and tried to keep Sergius Paulus, the deputy ruler of the country, from being saved, Paul faced him, filled with the Holy Ghost, and said, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10).

Preachers who refuse to preach against sin, for fear of being negative, certainly do not follow the pattern of these great men of God. However, those who do preach against sin, hurt the feelings of their carnal hearers and make some of them angry, causing frustrations in the crowd. But they are faithful to God and to the Bible.

As much as preachers are called to preach about God's love, they are also called to preach against sin. The Lord Jesus loved men, loved sinners enough to die for them, but how He hated sin! Remember

how He made a whip to drive the traders from the temple, overturned the tables of the moneychangers, scattered the money on the stone floor! Preaching ought to be like that sometimes. With holy boldness, preachers ought to hate sin and expose it.

Jesus preached against sin! He preached against covetousness; He preached against unbelief; He preached against adultery or even looking on a woman to lust after her. He preached against grudges and said that if men did not forgive, neither would the Father in Heaven forgive them. He said to the Pharisees and scribes, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). Men hated Jesus because He preached against sin. May God forgive us preachers, who do not preach like Jesus, because we fear the anger of men.



Today, we need preachers who refuse to be influenced by the sophistry of the popular preachers who do not preach against sin. It is true that preachers ought not to be cowards. They must be courageous to rebuke from the pulpit as well as privately if need be. The preacher who never has a word to say against immodest apparel, drunkenness, adultery, lewdness, covetousness, and blasphemy is a dumb dog who cannot bark. He is a Balaam preaching for profit. He has fallen into the snare of the fear of man. We need preaching against sin, against particular sins. May God give us many youthful, vibrant and fearless preachers everywhere who will speak for God against the carnality that invades churches of our time. ■

Abstain from Fornication

Tan Kian Sing

Paul the Apostle writes, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). He called for abstinence from fornication, while he was urging Christians "to walk and to please God" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Pleasing God must be the business of every believer. Christians ought to walk or conduct their lives so that they will keep pleasing God. In the following verse, the Apostle says that it is God's commandment that believers should walk to please God – "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:2). The Greek word "paraggelia" for commandment here signifies instruction passed on from one to another, in this case, from the Lord Himself to believers. It is a military term in which a command is passed down from superior officers to a line of soldiers. The commandments that the Lord gives here through Paul are therefore authoritative commands which must be obeyed in order to please God.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Paul instructs believers as to how they "ought to walk and to please God". It is in this context of our duty to live a pleasing life to God that the Apostle commanded, "abstain from fornication" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The Greek word for fornication is *porneia* from which we get the English word "pornography". The word of God here commands that all believers should abstain from fornication (any kind of illicit sexual behaviour).

What is to "abstain"? To abstain is to keep a distance, to keep free from, or to avoid. Elsewhere, another more forceful command is given by the Apostle – "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18a). The word "flee" is in the present imperative, that is, it is a command to keep on running away, keep on avoiding, keep on shunning fornication or sexual immorality.

It follows that believers will be facing sexual temptation always. It is a common temptation for all, young and old, male and female, since the Fall of our first parents. Soon after the Fall, a descendant of rebellious Cain, Lamech, was the first to corrupt the holy estate of matrimony between one man and one woman by taking two wives (Genesis 4:19). Since then, sexual immorality has been rampant among mankind. In Genesis 6:5, the Word of God tells us, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It was so out of control that God had to judge the ungodly world which was so deep in sin by destroying all flesh with the great flood. But much water did not wash away the sinfulness of mankind. After the global flood, man continued to sin, and to commit sexual sins. Throughout history until today, the sin of fornication has become so widespread and uncontrolled. Just look at today's world of the internet, media, advertising, entertainment, trendy fashion, liberal



way of life, etc. Are they not centred on the promotion and propagation of sexual immorality?

But this does not give Christians any excuse to lose control and to yield to sexual temptation. Christians are in the world, but they are not of the world. They can overcome the world of darkness and sin as they have the light of Christ in them.

Paul says that everyone "should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (1 Thessalonians 4:4). This means that every child of God is to keep on exercising self-control over his body ("vessel"), that is, to keep the body holy and honourable. Christians are not only to have the righteousness of spirit and purity of mind but also to keep the body from committing filthy sins of the flesh. The Bible tells us that sexual sin is a sin against the body, besides corrupting the mind and grieving the spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Paul wrote, "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body,

and in your spirit, which are God's." He also wrote, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid" (1 Corinthians 6:15).

As children of God, we are to walk in holiness and honour and not to indulge "in the lust of concupiscence" (1 Thessalonians 4:5), that is, not to indulge in lustful desire, passion, and covetousness. And these include indulging in pornography, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, and any kind of forbidden and illicit sexual fantasies and deeds.

Dear readers, let us be very certain about this. The thrice-holy God created mankind and brought together a man and a woman (not a man and a man nor a woman and a woman, but a man and a woman), and instituted holy matrimony saying, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). We are therefore reminded in Hebrews 13:4 that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Sex is sacred and pure only within the institution of marriage between a man and a woman.

Any form of sexual activity outside a God-approved and God-



honoured marriage is to be avoided by believers. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

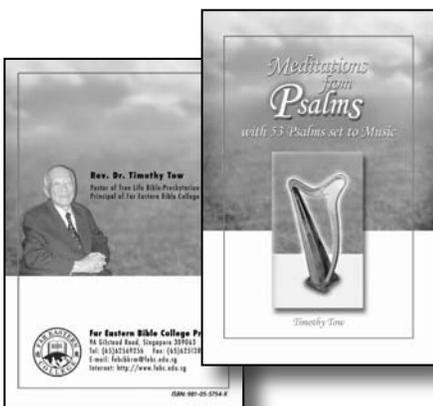
In Colossians 3:5, Paul exhorts believers to "mortify (put to death) therefore your members (bodily parts) which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness." Besides abstaining and fleeing from fornication, Paul now says we are to mortify our members, that is, to put to death the lustful attraction to fornication and other sexual sins. Believers are to kill the lusts of the old flesh, namely the five sins of the flesh. Paul says that those without God are practising such sexual immorality, and Christians are to be different.

The Apostle further instructs that in this matter of sexual immorality, "no man go beyond and defraud his brother" (1 Thessalonians 4:6). That means no one is to sin against or take advantage of another brother (or sister) concerning this matter of sexual immorality. Paul explicitly writes in 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Man, touch not a woman. It is good to keep your hands off a woman, unless she is your wife, says the Apostle. This is to avoid fornication. It is a simple and clear command here.

Dear brethren, do we regard the matter of sexual immorality lightly, as something which does not matter greatly? If we do so, we are treating God as one who can be disregarded. The Apostle Paul cautions us that he that despises these commands despises not man but God, for all the prohibitions that we have considered are of divine and not human origin. "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

Believers are called of God not unto uncleanness (impurity, immorality, filthiness) but unto holiness, so let us walk, even as we ought to, in holiness and honour that we may please the thrice-holy God. ■



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A Chaste Church

Richard M. Tiu

"...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25b-27).

The Scripture presents a profound picture of the church's relationship to Christ. She is the bride, Christ is the Bridegroom (John 3:29). Their eternal union will be consummated when the Bridegroom comes for His bride. Just as it is the biblical design for marriage that the bride ought to be presented to the groom as a chaste virgin on their wedding day, it is also the divine concern that the Church will be ready as a chaste bride for Christ. This was the Apostle Paul's concern for the church when he wrote, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The church ought to rid herself of all moral and doctrinal impurity. Christians, as members of the church, must lead pure and undefiled lives that they may be made

ready for the marriage as chaste virgins arrayed in clean, fine and white linen of righteousness (Revelation 19:7-8). Christ desires that when that time comes, the bride will have adorned herself properly in character and appearance. Three compelling reasons are given by Paul in Ephesians 5 as to why churches ought to take heed to this call to be chaste.

The first reason is found in the words, "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (v. 25b). There is no greater demonstration of love than that which gives up everything, including one's own life (John 15:13). This is the love that Christ has manifested towards the church. It was His love for the church that nailed Him to the cross of Calvary, and the blood that flowed from His body redeems and cleanses sinners from all the filth and guilt of sin. By His grace and love manifested on the cross, the condemnation of hell is removed that all who believe in Him shall have everlasting life (John 3:16). Thus, to be spiritually chaste and pure, one must begin by putting his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving Him as Lord and Saviour. A chaste church, as the virgin bride of Christ, cannot possibly

remain in sin and defilement. Unrepentant, unredeemed sinners cannot be her members. Justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the starting point of spiritual chastity; and only such can be the true members of His church.

The second reason is expressed as "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (v. 26). The great objective of Christ's redemption was to save and purify the church. Until Christ joins the church to Himself, He never ceases to wipe her uncleanness away and clothe her with the white robes of His righteousness. Sanctification means "to make holy", and in order to accomplish this, there must be a cleansing "with the washing of water by the word". In olden times, virgin brides espoused to monarchs had to undergo various methods of purifying and cleansing before the actual marriage took place. As such, a virgin was purified and prepared for her husband by washing. In the same way, the church is to be prepared for Christ. She is to be made pure and holy. The washing of water is a symbol of cleansing that has to be done by means of the word of God. It is by the truth of God's Word that believers

are sanctified (John 17:17). By the same truth, our hope of meeting the Bridegroom someday is revealed, giving us another reason to be chaste and pure. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Individually, each member must strive to put away all forms of sin from his life. Earlier in this passage, Paul wrote, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Ephesians 5:3-4). We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27) and to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). We are to follow peace and holiness in order to claim the promise of seeing the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Corporately, the church as the bride of Christ must follow pure biblical doctrines and "be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). Thus, faithful teaching and preaching of the Word in the

pulpit is crucial for the flock's growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). Sanctification demands purity both in doctrine and in practice.



The third reason for the chastity of the church is articulated as "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (v. 27). The future glorification of the church speaks of what the church is yet to be. This will be that period in her history when there shall not be any imperfection; when there shall be neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such

thing. In heaven, all will be utterly pure. All impurities will have been purged as the church enters her eternal abode in heaven. On earth, we are being prepared for that world of purity through much purging which comes through trials and testing. It cannot be denied that there is much imperfection and impurity in the present-day church. But in that future world, when the church, clothed in the robes of salvation, is presented to Christ, there shall not be one unholy member, deceiver, or hypocrite. And of all the multitudes that shall be gathered there out of every land, people, tongue, and age, there shall be no envy, malice, backbiting, pride, vanity, worldliness. Neither shall there be annoying and vexing conflict in the heart with evil passions, "or any such thing." How different it is from the present church, and how we should long for that day when the glorious church will emerge, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband.

A chaste church is the Lord's delight. Solomon wrote, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Solomon 4:7). The same words will be true of the church on that grand wedding day in heaven when Christ will finally take her up in all her pure and chaste splendour. ■

Steps to Prevent Carnality in the Church

Reggor B. Galarpe

One of the pressing problems that the church is facing today is carnality. It has gained a firm foothold in many churches, across denominations and is affecting even the fundamental, conservative, and Bible-believing churches. In recent years, carnality has proven to be effective in troubling many pastors and church leaders; sowing discord and strife; and causing spiritual decline among church members.

Through the ages, the church has been trying to influence the world by telling it to admit its sins, repent, and believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today (yes, in these last days!), it seems that the world is making a great impact on the church. Thus, when it is supposed to be the church that should turn the world upside down, we see the reverse happening; the world is turning the church upside down. And it is clearly evidenced by the increasing carnality in the church. Yes, the inclination to satisfy the flesh, to act on self-will, to conform to the world, to be pragmatic and compromising, etc. have become too visible to go unnoticed.

Manifestation of Carnality:

1. Carnality in the Ministry - In their desire for rapid church growth, many churches have abandoned the biblical approach to ministry in favour of the modern, secular methodologies and marketing strategies

that promise good and impressive results. For example, when the church needs to raise funds for the ministry, they would not think twice to organize funfairs, garage sales, raffle draws and other gimmicks just to achieve their goal. The same goes for evangelism: reaching out to people is done through parties and other social gatherings instead of organizing Gospel rallies and evangelistic meetings.

2. Carnality in Worship – The solemn and orderly form of worship is diminishing, paving the way for the entertainment style of worship. There is a drastic change in the focus of worship: when it is supposed to be aimed at glorifying God, it is now aimed at pleasing men – in amusing and entertaining them, making them comfortable and keeping them in church. So we see people coming to church for the wrong reasons! The faithful preaching of God's Word is replaced by music, skits or videos. The reverential singing of biblically sound hymns has been replaced by upbeat contemporary music that is shallow and irreverent. Very often, in today's worship, one could see people jumping and dancing to the beat of the music coupled with shouting and clapping. It is as if you were in a disco or a variety show.

3. Carnality in the Fellowship – One can observe carnality in the things being discussed or talked about during fellowship meetings, the activities that people engage in during fellowship meetings, the behaviour and the conduct of the people, etc. Instead of gearing up for the edification of the brethren through the study of God's Word and prayer, we see fellowship groups meeting together to learn rappelling and rock climbing. Then, there are those who would organize computer games contest; while some others meet together for cooking lessons. Indeed, there's a very thin line (or no line at all!) between the church and the world.

There is also another problem in fellowship

meetings. Fellowship meetings often turn into gossip sessions (and we know the destructive effects of it!). It is amazing how fast people could spread rumours that makes one wonder if they could also be that quick in sharing the Gospel.

4. Carnality in Our Way of Life – Christians would say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” but it appears that the Gospel of Christ is ashamed of us, for there is just too much carnality in our lives – in our priorities, in our perspective, in our way of life, in our speech, in our behaviour, in the way we dress, etc. In these days, Christians’ character and conduct simply do not tally with their claim. We proclaim one thing but do another. As we often hear, “our walk does not match our talk.”

Now can the church be indifferent? Carnality is a serious threat to church purity and sanctity; to its unity and harmony; and to its testimony and witness. It has to be dealt with! The church as a whole must take a united stand to fight carnality. From the pastor to the elders and deacons, from the various ministries and fellowship groups to the general congregation and every single individual, everyone must take necessary steps to prevent carnality in the church.

Prevention of Carnality:

1. Walk in the Light of God’s Word - 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Everyone must live his life in submission to the whole counsel of

God, not to part of it nor to some of it, but to the whole counsel! Problems begin when one starts to be selective: which counsel he would subject himself to and which counsel he would ignore.

On carnality, the Bible tells us in Romans 8:5-8, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

2. Work out Your Sanctification - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Every Christian must grow and mature in the faith, working out his personal sanctification through the study of God’s Word, which

is accompanied by faith and obedience. Every member of the church is expected to grow. Otherwise, it would be a tragedy if they would remain babes in the faith. They are to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Paul tells us how we ought to work out our personal



sanctification – “work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). There has to be a diligent, purposeful and an earnest pursuit of it for the Lord is a consuming fire!

3. Walk in the Spirit - Galatians 5:16: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Live your life according to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. When we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we will be able to overcome our sinful and fleshly desires. But if we continue to neglect and ignore the Spirit’s prompting, we will be overtaken by our corrupt passions and sensual desires, thus forcing us to give in to carnality.

Paul mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” We can easily yield to any of these if we will not walk in the Spirit.

4. Watch Your Affections and Your Way of Life - 1 John 2:15-16: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Many Christians are caught up in this dilemma, struggling to get the best of both worlds but eventually ending up enslaved to the world and estranged from the Lord. We cannot underestimate the influence of the world in our life, so we need to be watchful and be constantly warned not to love the world and the things that are in it. Be reminded of what James said, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity

with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Whose friend are you?

When one is attached to the world, he is also attracted to its way of life. It is evidenced in one’s priorities, pursuits and pleasures in life. What are your priorities? What is it that occupies your mind most of the time? Paul admonishes us in Colossians 3:2, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Be careful of your pursuit of leisure. What are the things you enjoy doing? What is your favourite pastime? Where do you go for leisure?

5. Withdraw from Every Worldly Influence - 2 Corinthians 6:14: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

One effective measure against carnality is the practice of biblical separation. The church and every individual in the church should and must draw the line to protect themselves from the influence of the world – be it personalities, principles or practices of the world.

This is where many churches are struggling – failing to draw the line between what is spiritual (of the church) and what is secular (of the world). They have it all mixed up! On the personal level, the world has a very strong influence on many Christians, even in the way they dress. Regardless of what the latest fashion is, Christians should be responsible to dress modestly. Be not conformed to the world’s standards (Romans 12:2).

6. Warn Others of Carnality - 2 Timothy 3:1-4, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,

highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Like Paul, we have the ministry of warning. As it is often said, "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." Unlike other threats such as false teachings, wrong doctrines and heresies that can easily be detected, carnality often enters the church unnoticed. It can make its way into the church with little or no resistance at all. We need to be constantly reminded of the evil consequences of carnality. As I have said, it has to be a united effort of the church from the pastor at the pulpit to the people in the pews. As we are now in the last days, all the more we need to be mindful of it. It must be everybody's concern!

Conclusion

Dear readers, consider the biblical advice given above. May we all be burdened to keep the church and ourselves from the infectious influence of carnality. In so doing, we shall continue to bear good witness and testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. Ponder on the Lord's prayer for His disciples; "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16). May God find us faithful! ■

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THE PAIN OF A PASTOR'S HEART

Prabhudas Koshy

- ✎ It is not preaching and teaching ten times a week, though it is full of perspiration.
- ✎ It is not developing teaching materials week in and week out, though it requires much perseverance.
- ✎ It is neither watching against the subtle errors of doctrine nor exposing them to protect the church, though it requires pedantry of a purist.
- ✎ It is not writing for weekly bulletin and bimonthly magazine, though I feel petrified when the deadline is soon approaching.
- ✎ It is not counselling over and over those who need advice and encouragement, though it requires much patience.
- ✎ It is not visiting the sick and needy, though I have to pitch into the many labours I already have to perform.
- ✎ It is not praying often for everyone in the church, though it demands a lot of preparedness.
- ✎ It is neither planning nor supervising various ministries of the church, though much perspicacity ought to be exercised.
- ✎ It is not the financial needs of the church, missions or family which arise frequently, though I have to endure the pressure to provide.
- ✎ It is not being hospitable to people, though I have to peer into my purse and personal time to practise it.

Now you might have realized it is something in the ministry that hurts even deeper and is difficult to bear. Now, what is it?

It is the blatant pursuit of sin by some members of the church. It brings a terrible sense of desperation and sense of loss to my heart. It is very frustrating and provokes me to think that I have failed in my pastoral work.

Every one of us, including me, has sin. But when we pursue sin unrepentantly,

it becomes a very great pain in the heart of all those who are around us. It can be sin of lust, greed, materialism, self, pride, gossip, lies, teaching falsehood, bitterness, unforgiveness, betrayal, quarrelling, etc. Our refusal to repent not only causes hurt, but also makes us a bad example. As a result, it brings additional burden for me - to comfort and to instruct those who are affected or influenced by the unrepentant person.

As a pastor, I am also thrown into a terrible dilemma by those who linger in sin. If I preach

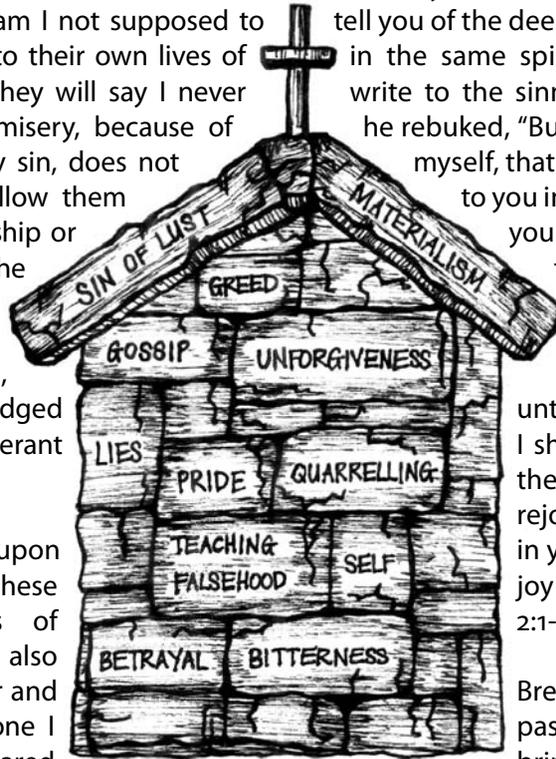
against a sin, those who unrepentantly engage in such a sin accuse me of publicly harassing them, even though I do not mention their names. Even some of those who are close to them, friends and relatives, feel that I should not preach against such a sin, at least for the time being! When I show my loving concern for their spiritual welfare, they accuse me of trying to track them and pressurise them. Their attitude and comments about my enquiry, correction or advice make me look like a busybody. But am I not supposed to care? If I leave them to their own lives of sin and backsliding, they will say I never cared for them. My misery, because of those who stubbornly sin, does not end here. I cannot allow them to continue in leadership or responsible roles of the various ministries of the church. It is, finally, a task I have to perform, for which I will be judged by some as too intolerant and high-handed.

Even when I take upon myself to bear all these very painful duties of dealing with sin, I also have to tackle my fear and pain of losing someone I so dearly loved, and cared for and someone whose friendship and presence that I cherished so greatly. In such times, a sense of loneliness overshadows my heart, even though I am surrounded by a loving family and many loving believers. It is indeed a very painful experience to lose even a single member of the church to sin and the world. I want to make it clear to all my fellow Gethsemaneans that there is not a single individual whom the Lord has put under my pastoral care that I have chosen not to love. But when people of the church chose to keep away from me for their own worldly friendships and ungodly pursuits, I am helpless and often incapable of expressing

my pastoral care as much as I wish. By this, I am not claiming that I have met every need of every member, who walks uprightly. But to the best of my ability, I have tried to show God's love to each of you; and I desperately pray that God will help me to do the same. Otherwise, I will be unfaithful in the pastoral work He has bestowed upon me.

I have written this article with great hesitancy. However, I feel that I need to tell you of the deep pain that I experience, in the same spirit that moved Paul to write to the sinning Corinthians whom he rebuked, "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all" (2 Corinthians 2:1-3).

Brethren, to every caring pastor, nothing can bring greater joy than members of the church who walk in truth and holiness. Many times, the Apostle Paul urged the believers to fulfil his joy, and he generously commented those who made him rejoice with their holy and zealous lives (cf. Philippians 2:2, 17, 18; 4:1; Colossians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 3:9; Philemon 7, 20). The Apostle John did the same (3 John 4). Finally, take heed to the exhortation of Hebrews 13:17 - "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." ■



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 20 & 21

Sarah Yong

READ THE BIBLICAL RECORD AS FOUND IN GENESIS CHAPTERS 20 AND 21. CHOOSE ONE WORD FROM THE BRACKET TO COMPLETE EACH SENTENCE AND CIRCLE IT.

- 1) Abraham journeyed towards the (north, south, east, west) country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur.
- 2) He told Abimelech, King of Gerar, that Sarah was his (niece, cousin, sister, wife).
- 3) The Lord came to Abimelech in a dream by night and told him to restore Sarah to Abraham who was a (prophet, priest, king, farmer), and he would pray for him.
- 4) Abimelech did as the Lord commanded, and he also gave Abraham sheep, oxen, servants, and a thousand pieces of (gold, iron, steel, silver).
- 5) As the Lord had promised, Sarah conceived and bore a son when Abraham was (70, 80, 90, 100) years old.
- 6) Isaac was circumcised when he was eight (days, weeks, months, years) old as God had commanded.
- 7) Sarah was displeased with Hagar and her son, so Abraham gave them a bottle of water and some (biscuits, bread, cakes, manna), then sent them away.
- 8) God was with Hagar in the wilderness of Beersheba and He heard her prayer, and provided her with a (cup, jug, well, river) of water and promised to make her son a great nation.
- 9) Ishmael dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, became an archer, and his mother took him a wife out of the land of (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Israel).
- 10) Abraham and (Isaac, Phichol, Hagar, Abimelech) made a covenant before the Lord, and Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

Answer to Vol. 6, Issue 2 - Genesis 19

Pg. 25 – (1) F; (2) T; (3) T; (4) F; (5) F; (6) T; (7) F; (8) F; (9) F; (10) F; (11) T; (12) T.

“Christ died for our sins . . . he was buried . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”
(First Corinthians 15:3, 4).

A Blazing Witness for Christ

A real experience of young Jonathan GoForth which taught him that even in extreme adversities, he can find opportunities to glorify his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

With great excitement, Jonathan GoForth packed his bag to go to Toronto, to study in the Knox College.



On his very first day in Toronto, Jonathan GoForth walked down through the slum-ward, south of the college.



praying that God would open the way for him to enter those needy homes with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first Sunday morning was spent in visiting the Don jail, a practice he kept up throughout his whole college course.



Until the warden came to know him, he was allowed only into the assembly hall. Then, when he had won the official's confidence, he was given liberty to go into the corridors.

One Sunday morning, as he was standing in the centre of the corridor, about to begin his address,



a man burst out in a bombastic manner: "I don't believe there is a God."



There was tense silence for a moment.

Then Jonathan walked over to the man's cell, and said in a very friendly way, "Why, my good friend, this Book I have here speaks about you." The man laughed incredulously. What could any book have to say about him?

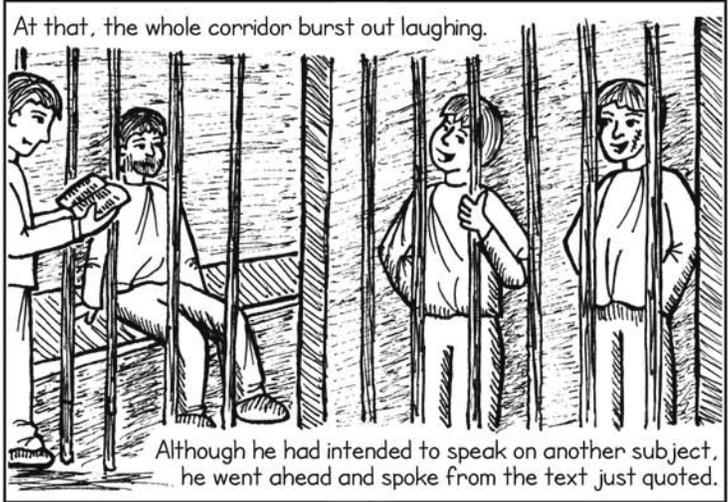


Goforth turned to Psalm 14, and read the first verse:



"The fool hath said
in his heart,
There is no God."

At that, the whole corridor burst out laughing.

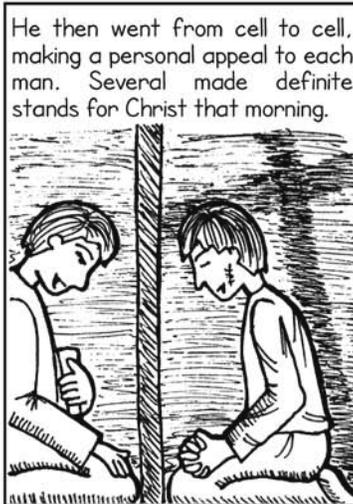


Although he had intended to speak on another subject, he went ahead and spoke from the text just quoted.

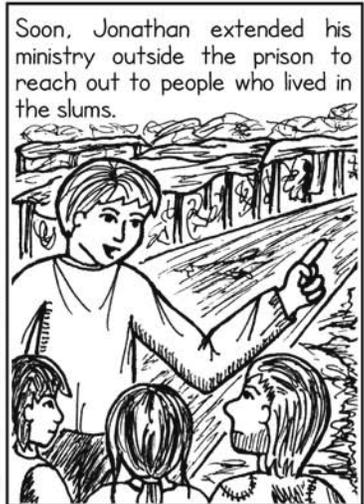
The men paid close attention, and when he was through, some were in tears.



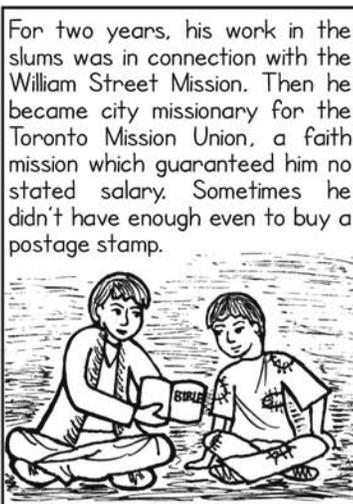
He then went from cell to cell, making a personal appeal to each man. Several made definite stands for Christ that morning.



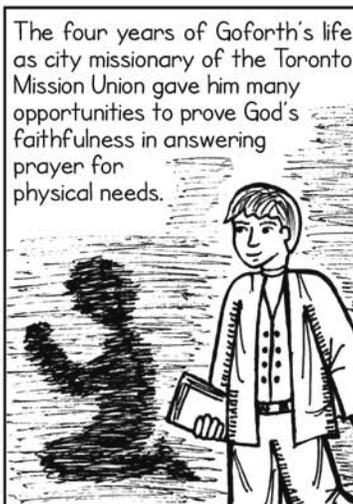
Soon, Jonathan extended his ministry outside the prison to reach out to people who lived in the slums.



For two years, his work in the slums was in connection with the William Street Mission. Then he became city missionary for the Toronto Mission Union, a faith mission which guaranteed him no stated salary. Sometimes he didn't have enough even to buy a postage stamp.

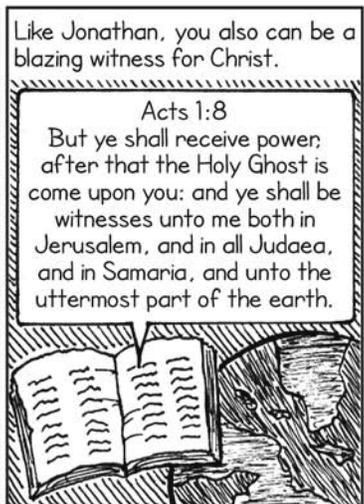


The four years of Goforth's life as city missionary of the Toronto Mission Union gave him many opportunities to prove God's faithfulness in answering prayer for physical needs.



Like Jonathan, you also can be a blazing witness for Christ.

Acts 1:8
But ye shall receive power; after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.



Bibliography: "GoForth of China" by Rosalind GoForth.
The stories are written by Rev. Dr. Prabhudas Koshy. Illustrations are done by Sis. Sharon Ng.

Inauguration of Gethsemane B-P Church of Ethiopia

28th May 2006

The Mission Team from Singapore with the Ethiopian brethren

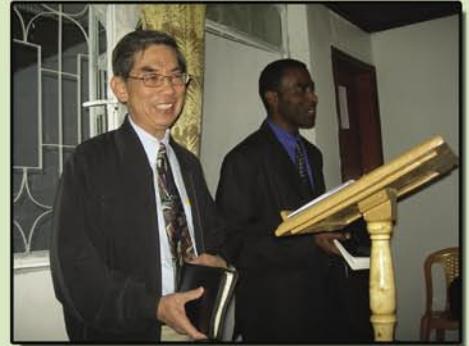


First Converts & Co-labourers



Pastor Koshy preaching in the inauguration service

Introductory Address by Elder Mah



The worship during the inauguration service



A view of the city of Addis Ababa

Ephrem, Gete & Daniel, the missionary family

