

# **BY WHAT AUTHORITY?**

**Leadership and discipline in the house of God**

**by**

**W.S. PENFOLD**

**JULY 1989**

**Published by**

**W. S. PENFOLD**

**Orchard House, Wendlebury**

**Bicester, Oxon. OX6 8PN**

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Chapter 1. Shepherds or Lords—which?</b> .....       | 7  |
| The warnings of the apostles .....                      | 8  |
| Qualification by character .....                        | 9  |
| Qualification by doctrine .....                         | 11 |
| Qualification by work .....                             | 11 |
| The believer's attitude towards elders .....            | 16 |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>Chapter 2. Building up or weakening—which?</b> ....  | 21 |
| Assembly reception and commendation .....               | 21 |
| Improper reception .....                                | 23 |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>Chapter 3. Putting away or casting out—which?</b> .. | 27 |
| True authority .....                                    | 27 |
| False authority .....                                   | 29 |
| Essential pre-excommunication considerations .....      | 31 |
| Understanding the nature of excommunication .....       | 36 |
| Cases requiring excommunication .....                   | 37 |
| Scriptural teaching concerning railing .....            | 38 |
| Casting out—III John .....                              | 42 |
| Cases not requiring excommunication .....               | 44 |
| Titus 3 .....   | 45 |
| Matthew 18 .....  | 47 |
| I Thess. 5, II Thess. 3 .....                           | 48 |
| Titus 1 .....   | 48 |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>Chapter 4. Prevention or cure—which?</b> .....       | 51 |
| What should happen .....                                | 51 |
| What might happen .....                                 | 53 |
| Repentance needed .....                                 | 55 |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Judgment—God's strange work .....                     | 57        |
| Withdrawing from fellowship .....                     | 58        |
| <b>Chapter 5 Confidence or cowardice—which? .....</b> | <b>65</b> |
| “Watch thou in all things” .....                      | 68        |
| <b>Index of Scripture References .....</b>            | <b>71</b> |

## Preface

The many and varied problems presently associated with New Testament assemblies stem from, (1) neglect, (2) non-contextual private interpretation, (3) disobedience of, and (4) rebellion against the Word of God. This was prophesied by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 4:3-4. It is ironic that many assemblies of God's people should have turned such a full circle of error in doctrine and practice, since claim is simultaneously made to the presence of the Lord in their midst. This paradox is explained by the Lord's words to the church at Laodicea, "and knowest not" (Rev. 3:17).

Just as the assembly at Laodicea was counselled to anoint its eyes with eyesalve, "that thou mayest see", so we trust that the gracious Holy Spirit may be pleased, through the reading of these pages, to open many understandings to see the need amongst us, for repentance and restoration to scriptural principles through a return to the Word of God (Rev. 3:19).

This book has been written in the school of experience (2 Cor. 11:29) and is inspired by a desire to maintain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ among the churches of the saints. It would be loss indeed, if tribulation did not work patience, and patience experience which may result in others being benefited (Phil. 1:12).

# Chapter 1

## SHEPHERDS OR LORDS—WHICH?

Faithful assembly elders are of vital importance to God in the maintenance of His testimony. This cannot be overstressed. If the main burden of teaching, tending, guiding, leading, watching, defending, protecting and setting an example, rests on the shoulders of elders, they are bound to be the single greatest influence upon any assembly. Just as the character and destiny of the nation of Israel was decided by its leaders; so will the character and destiny of each assembly be determined by its elders.

In the New Testament an elder (Greek—*Presbuteros* Titus 1:5), is the same person as a bishop or overseer (Greek—*Episkopos* 1 Tim. 3:2; Acts 20:28). He is described as a shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), who is to follow the pattern of the true shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament there was always more than one elder for each assembly (1 Pet. 5:1), who along with the deacons were *with* the saints (Phil. 1:1). The qualifications required for elders are fully dealt with in the following passages:— 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Pet. 5:1-5. Deacons (Greek—*Diakonos*) were recognised in and amongst assemblies, as those who 'served' and 'ministered' to the saints, both in material things (Acts 6:2) and spiritual things (1 Tim. 4:6; Eph. 4:12). Deacons are essential for the proper functioning of an assembly, but it is not our purpose to discuss them at any great length in this book.

### **The warnings of the apostles.**

Trouble in relation to assembly leadership is not a new phenomenon. A lack of true qualification and ability in

assembly overseers has always resulted in sorrow and heartache. Hence the continual stress in the New Testament on the *example* elders must be to the assembly (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). At one and the same time as qualified leaders amongst God's people are genuinely being undermined by false accusers, others who are not fit to be elders, are themselves causing "hurt and much damage" to the testimony. This problem concerns the elder's *character*.

As early as Acts 20:30 the apostle Paul was warning that from *among the elders* men would arise, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This amongst other things, will involve division in the leadership and confusion among the flock. Here, the trouble is the elder's *doctrine*.

Peter warns elders not to act as "lords over God's heritage". All the signs of clerisy and a committee type "oversight" were already causing difficulties in his day (1 Pet. 5:3). Sadly the manner in which many elders still conduct themselves only serves to confirm the unscriptural image of a governing board of directors who control the assembly. To overcome this difficulty, Peter and Paul both emphasised the *work* of an overseer, not his 'position' (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2).

### **Qualification by character.**

As to an elder's character, in 1 Thess. 5:12, we are exhorted to "know" the elders of the assembly, but how are they to be recognised? *The* characteristic that must mark an elder's life, is blamelessness (Titus 1:7—irreproachability). This must be distinguished from the faultlessness of the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. An elder must also be the husband of one wife, have faithful children, rule his own house well, be vigilant, sober, of good behaviour and patient. All these

things must be clear to the eye of the observer, including the eyes of those "which are without" (1 Tim. 3:7).

The word "not" represents a bar to recognising a brother as an elder. *Under-qualified men may gain qualifications; but a disqualified man must be refused.* Examples of disqualifications are:— not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, and not a novice. Two prohibitions occur only in Titus—"not self-willed", and "not soon angry". This was no doubt because of the particular nature of the Cretians. They were characteristically slow bellies (self-indulgent) and were like "wild" beasts (soon angry). This proneness to anger, or irascibility (Greek—*Orgilos*), is to be carefully distinguished from righteous anger. The distinction is seen by its fruit; a man that is righteously angry (Mark 3:5) will not 'lose his temper' or act irrationally; but "he that is soon angry dealeth foolishly" (Prov. 14:17). Titus was not to appoint any that still manifested such carnal traits. If a brother manifests any of the negative features highlighted by the Spirit of God, this makes him an example to the sheep only of what an elder should *not* be. An elder who does not display the scriptural qualifications will lose the assembly's respect and, although he might hold on to what he regards as his 'office', he will evidence weakness and unfitness to lead, guide, tend and feed. Remember, Samuel was debarred from supporting a leader whom God had rejected (1 Sam. 16:1).

To have a standing before the assembly and to be recognised, an elder must have already stood before his family as a priest with the holy Scriptures, and as their loved and revered husband and father. The word "ruleth" in 1 Tim. 3:4 (Greek—*Proistemi*) means "to stand before" the family in leadership. Having gained the confidence of his wife and family he will then be able, with a practical working knowledge of the Word of God, to stand similarly before the assembly. This is shown in 1

Tim. 5:17 and 1 Thess. 5:12, where the same Greek word for rule is used in connection with the assembly. A different word is used in Hebrews 13:7,17 & 24 where "rule" (Greek—*Hegeomai*) means "to guide" by leadership, soundly based on the commandments of God (Matt. 28:20).

A flock without a shepherd is an anachronism (John 10:12); but this is the situation in which many believers find themselves. The calling home to heaven of those who once cared for them through the use of the Scriptures has left a vacuum. Someone must fill it. In such circumstances, some suggest the 'next in line' be recognised as an elder, despite the fact that he may not necessarily be qualified, or worse, may actually be disqualified. The outcome of this reasoning is bound to be disastrous, especially in times of crisis (Prov. 25:19). Since we are encouraged to strive for the best gifts, all who desire shepherd work, with its many rigours (Gen. 31:40), should seek to excel in the things that will best serve their unthanked labours. At Corinth they came behind in no gift (1 Cor. 1:7), but forward with no grace (1 Cor. 14:26), evidenced by a lack of true elders (1 Cor. 4:14-18; 2 Cor. 11:20). Every encouragement should therefore be given to a brother who desires the "good work", since the Adversary will actively hinder him. In an ongoing testimony recognizable qualities will continually be surfacing, since deacons will be proving themselves as holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9). When the assembly realises it is being fed and tended, it may begin to recognize not only a servant (deacon) in its company, but also a shepherd. Such brethren purchase to themselves a good degree and may, in time, prove themselves worthy of respect (1 Tim. 3:13; Prov. 16:20-21).

**Qualification by doctrine.**

As to doctrinal qualification the Scripture states that an elder must be "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught" (Titus 1:9). This will bar any man who, for instance, believes that Christ, as a man, could have sinned (aside from the separate issue of assembly fellowship). If an elder is not sound in his doctrine, he will not be able to counteract error, and silence gainsayers with the Word of God (Titus 1:6-11). He will also be powerless to deal with the grievous wolves (Acts 20:29), by using the Scriptures against them as a cudgel i.e. the shepherd's rod (Psa. 23:4). David the shepherd said of the lion and the bear, "I went out after him and smote him." He was *fearless*, and was not afraid to take on any opposition that presumed to attack the flock (1 Sam. 17:35). The fearful hireling, on the other hand, will run away when he seeth the wolf coming (John 10:12). Elders who do not 'know their bibles' or, even worse, themselves hold wrong doctrine, will prove fearful, unreliable and helpless in the face of error. In these last days (1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3) when false doctrine is increasing and abounding, it is imperative that men who lead assemblies are unashamed workmen who can rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Otherwise, the assembly will be a prey to doctrines of devils and the commandments of men (1 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14). This subject will be developed later under the qualification, "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).

**Qualification by work.**

As to work, the Scripture knows nothing of elders who are 'sleeping partners'. Shepherding and overseeing involves hard work. No shepherding work—no shepherd. The believers in an assembly will know who the elders are, by observing who does the work. What man with a shepherd heart will, for instance, spend more time

looking after everyone else's sheep, at the expense of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer?

An overseer's good work (1 Tim. 3:1) is primarily concerned with the spiritual well-being of the assembly. Viewing the work of an elder simply as that of administration in practical things, is misunderstanding the "good work". The two main works mentioned in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 are, (1) being given to, and being a lover of hospitality, and (2) being apt to teach. As to the former, the door of his home will always be 'open', his wife being in absolute oneness of accord with her husband's work in this area. If elders do not show this grace, they may well become isolated and estranged from the saints, which will in turn lead to believers having difficulty approaching them. The latter shows that an elder must be able to meet the spiritual needs of the individual sheep, as well as the needs of the flock as a whole, by lighting on relevant Scriptures and expounding them. The spiritual shepherd knows that the green pastures lie within the pages of holy Scripture, and it is to these pastures that he will ever seek to lead the flock. Elders are to "labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). W.E. Vine points out concerning this—

"Anything of a merely mechanical or routine nature, or the handling of Scripture as mere theology, is utterly incompatible with the 'labour' here mentioned, and renders such ministry fruitless" (*Collected Writings, Vol. 3, Page 85-86*).

Ability to teach should be seen where the assembly meets, as well as, of course, in the home (1 Cor. 16:15-16). By saying this, however, we are not advocating 'house meetings' separate from the assembly. Such

meetings have been a source of trouble ("In secret have I said nothing", John 18:20).

A very searching question needs to be asked here; if it is God's desire, as expressed by Peter (1 Pet. 5:2) and Paul (Acts 20:28), that the church of God be *fed* (taught) by its *elders*, what are assemblies to do whose 'elders' are not apt to teach? One must remember that in New Testament days there were no cars, buses, trains or aeroplanes. That meant that unless an evangelist or shepherd/teacher (Eph. 4:11) was visiting, all the ministry in the assembly had to be provided by local brethren, with elders and deacons bearing the burden of this work. It is all too easy these days, to let the "apt to teach" qualification go 'by the board', since filling the 'assembly platform' often involves little more than a telephone call. But both Peter and Paul exhorted the *elders* to "feed" the flock; not to arrange for *someone else* to feed it. We are not saying that it is wrong to seek out those who have an exercise to teach the saints and give them opportunity to do so (Acts 11:25), or that shepherd/teachers should not be free to come amongst the saints as they feel the need (Eph. 4:11; Acts 15:36); but we *are* stressing that an elder, as the steward of God (Titus 1:7), is personally responsible before God to feed the flock. Organising assembly meetings by constantly bringing in outside gift, will result in the assembly being constantly ministered to by brethren *who have no local shepherd responsibility for the saints*. This will lead, time and time again, to ministry being given which has very little relevance to the assembly's needs. It also fosters an affliction with favourite sermons bereft of Holy Spirit unction, leaving large areas of God's holy Word untouched. How far have we strayed from the Holy Spirit's controlling guidance in the building up of the saints?

In the realm of feeding and tending (John 21:15-17), only men of experience will be able to deal with the many

troubles experienced by sheep, using the instruments of a shepherd such as the rod, the staff and the bottle of oil (Psa. 23). Shepherds also carry a knife suitable for removing maggots from the head of the sheep, and for tending to the split hoof. The instruments of the foolish shepherd in Zech. 11:15 are not described; but derision, sarcasm and vindictiveness would be some of their carnal counterparts. Since sheep are prone to be wayward, they need turning back into the good way as guided with the staff (Heb. 12:13; Gal. 6:1). The compassion of the shepherd towards the *one* lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6) contrasts with the hireling attitude displayed by some elders i.e.—“individual sheep are not important, the assembly as a whole must come first.” The shepherd’s rod brings comfort (Psa. 23:4), as the sheep know it will be used for their protection. It is a lethal instrument, like a club with nails in its head, for dealing with lions and wolves. Realising this, it is not possible to introduce the idea that the rod is to be used *on the sheep* for discipline. How would it then bring comfort to the sheep? While on the subject of sheep and feeding it is also worth noting that lambs and sheep feed *together*, showing that meetings arranged for different age groups within the assembly, are foreign to the purposes of God, as are meetings which segregate men and women (1 Cor. 14:23).

When elders are not doing the work, how can they be recognised by the assembly as elders? Instead of gaining respect by their work, “lords” of an assembly will expect to be respected simply by their “office”. As grounds for this unreasonable demand, some may quote 1 Tim. 3:1; “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” However, careful examination of the Scriptures will reveal that the words “office” and “oversight”, do not bear the meaning often given to them. Since elders are among the flock and the flock is among the elders (1 Pet. 5:1-2); and since we are to be subject one to another

(1 Pet. 5:5); and since elders are not to be lords over God's heritage (1 Pet. 5:3); how could such a clergy and laity idea be allowed in New Testament assemblies? To avoid the incorrect idea of an "office", continual accent is required upon the word "work". Beware therefore of those who continually accent words like "position" or "authority". The phrase "the office of a bishop" (1 Tim. 3:1), is one word in Greek (Greek—*Episkope*), and literally translated means "overship".

But, here again, careless talk has produced misunderstanding. The term, "he is on the oversight", creates an unscriptural impression, since it obscures the fact that work and personal character are the tokens of an overseer, not any supposed committee type position or office. A brother may be announced as an elder 'overnight', by being 'accepted' onto the 'oversight', but if he was not doing the work of an overseer previously, as well as manifesting the necessary qualities, no new position in the eyes of men will make him a true elder. It is the Holy Spirit that makes men overseers (Acts 20:28), not the 'votes' of his fellows elders or even of the assembly. This does not make overseers 'infallible'. Elders who fail to meet the scriptural qualifications have a very dubious claim to having been raised up of the Holy Spirit. The phrase "taking the oversight" in 1 Pet. 5:2 is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as "looking diligently" (Heb. 12:15). Overseeing involves continually looking over the flock, and watching for trouble from within and without. Taking the oversight does not mean assuming an office of higher position or authority than other saints, but rather means discharging the duty of caring for the flock. Being 'on the oversight' is no evidence that the brother concerned is a shepherd. Shepherds care for sheep, and express this in the way that they lead them, feed them, tend them and defend them (Ezek. 34:2-8).

**The believer's attitude towards elders.**

Having established the qualifications needed in the leaders of assemblies, as to character, doctrine and work we can now look at their relationship to the flock. Meeting the above qualifications will make elders what the Scriptures call "ensamples" (1 Pet. 5:3). The Lord Jesus told the people to do what the Pharisees said, but not what they did, because "they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:3). As all of us would "rather see a sermon than hear one any day", elders will gain great respect and inspire others to desire the work of overseership by their own *example*. If they are doing the work, they deserve to be esteemed "highly in love for *their work's sake*" (1 Thess. 5:13).

Those that stand before the assembly well, especially those that *labour* in the word and doctrine, are to be counted worthy of double honour (1 Tim. 5:17). Paul states that the labourer is worthy of his reward, teaching that elders who devote much or all of their time to the assembly, should not only be respected, but, should be given material support as well. Believers are to protect elders by not accepting charges laid against them, unless the accusations are backed up by two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). Although the elder mentioned in 1 Tim. 5:1 refers to an older man, this would hold true for most shepherds of assemblies, who, since they are not to be novices (1 Tim. 3:6), will usually be *from amongst* older experienced brethren in the assembly. Paul tells Timothy not to rebuke such men but to entreat them as fathers (1 Tim. 5:1). The word rebuke (Greek—*Epiplesso*), which occurs only here in the New Testament, means "to chastise or strike with words". Paul in return expects the older men to treat the younger as brethren; not with superior condescension (Job 15:9-10). Believers are to "salute" elders (Heb. 13:24), indicating a need to greet them and encourage them; but not in a different way to

other believers, since the verse enjoins this saluting be done to *all* the saints. Remembering the teaching and lives of elders will enable believers to follow their faith—"whose faith follow" (Heb. 13:7).

The most misunderstood aspect of the elder/assembly relationship is that of obedience and submission. The main verse used in connection with this subject is, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Heb. 13:17). Much damage is being done by those who teach from this verse, that elders are of higher rank than the rest of the saints, and as such must be given blind obedience; that whether elders are right or wrong they must, nevertheless, without question be obeyed; that elders are only responsible to God and have only to answer to Him for their actions.

The Scriptures plainly teach otherwise however; elders are *not* only responsible to God; they are also responsible to men (1 Tim. 5:19). This is shown by the fact that an accusation can be brought against them (different from "railing accusation" 2 Pet. 2:11; Jude 9), provided it is in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Should the charge be proved, the elder (as applies to all the saints), should be rebuked before all, that others also may fear (1 Tim. 5:19-20). As to accountability to God, overseers unlike other believers, will have to give account of their stewardship of the assembly (Heb. 13:17), and as such may gain a crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4).

But what of unquestioning obedience? The assembly is to follow the lead given by its guides, but what if it happens to be the blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14)? *Blind obedience of elders is never commanded in Scripture.* It was Pope Innocent III who commanded that, "Every cleric must obey the Pope, even if he commands what is evil; for no one may judge the Pope." Continually pointing the saints to Heb. 13:17, as authority for a, "whether you like it or not", "whether you agree or not" type of

obedience, will only alienate them. A shepherd should not strive with sheep who question the grounds of guidance given, but with patience should show what God requires, in the particular situation, through His Word. It is not spiritual for elders to display a "dost thou teach us" attitude to believers who wish to discuss the Scriptures with them. Rarely opening the Bible when counselling the saints is equally unspiritual. Not using the Scriptures as their foundation, speaks volumes for the guidance elders are seeking to give. W.E. Vine says in his commentary on Heb. 13:17 ("Obey them that have the rule over you")—

"The obedience and submission enjoined are *not* blind subjection to authority. True guides teach the Word of God, to which believers are to bring everything to the test" (*Collected Writings, Vol. 3, Page 489*).

The word obey (Greek—*Peitho*) in Heb. 13:17, is in the middle voice, and means "be persuaded" or "be won over". It occurs immediately again in v.18, where it is translated "we trust". It is, in fact, closely related in its origin to the word "trust" (Greek—*Pisteuo*). The difference in meaning is that the obedience is produced by the trust (see *Vine's Dictionary*, page 806). No elder can expect the saints to follow his guidance, if he does not have their respect or confidence. Forcing obedience out of saints, whose trust an elder has never won, or has lost, will only make matters worse. To trust an elder, the assembly must have confidence in his character, doctrine and work. They must also know (by experience) that he loves them; where this knowledge prevails, scriptural guidance, admonition, rebuke and teaching, will all be acceptable and accepted.

The Greek word submit (Greek—*Hupeiko*), which only

occurs in Heb. 13:17, means "to yield under". Yield under who? Under those who are giving scriptural guidance to the assembly. The other word generally used in the New Testament to denote subjection (Greek—*Hupotasso*), is different, and means "to arrange under" or "to subordinate" (1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:5). In the middle voice *Hupotasso* means "to subject oneself" or "to submit to someone's admonition or advice." Paul uses the word in this way when he urges the Corinthians to submit themselves to such as the household of Stephanas, who had addicted themselves to the ministry (service) of the saints (1 Cor. 16:16). Consider such, with their obvious love for the sheep, known for their constant hospitality and ability in the Scriptures. *They simply command respect.* No true believer would wish to miss out on being at the receiving end of such spiritual attentions, let alone desire to overthrow that work.

Paul uses the word several times in Eph. 5; "*Submitting yourselves one to another*", v.21; "*Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands*", v.22; "*The church is subject unto Christ*," v.24. Peter also uses the word in a very interesting way. He says, "*Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility*" (1 Pet. 5:5). This follows the apostle's exhortation to the elders to be *examples*, not '*lords over God's heritage*'. By not understanding what the Scriptures have to say concerning an assembly's relationship to its elders, believers themselves may foster a '*lording*' situation. To avoid this, the apostle exhorts all the saints to be subject one to another, which can only be done as "*each esteem other better than themselves*" (Phil. 2:3). Therefore a "*holier than thou*" attitude (Isa. 65:5), and expressions such as, "*we are in a different position from you*", are at variance with the Scriptures. We quote William Hoste in this regard:

"Elders are not a caste separated off from the rest of the flock; they are not on a pedestal; they have no right to special seats in the assembly; they are not distinguished by the title of 'elder'. They are only under-shepherds distinguished by their godliness, grace and work" (*Bishops, Priests and Deacons*, page 53).

Elders will gain respect by their knowledge of and obedience to the Word of God, by their loyalty to the assembly and by their love of the sheep. In a day of false doctrine, Gal. 2:9 reminds us that James, Cephas and John were like pillars; brethren who stood for something. Men like this will be recognised and respected by even the youngest in fellowship. It was, after all, but a lad who guided Samson to the pillars (Judg. 16:26).

## Chapter 2

### BUILDING UP OR WEAKENING —WHICH?

We now turn our attention to the subject of reception into an assembly. There are several types of fellowship and reception in the word of God. Reception into local church fellowship is different to the calling into the body of Christ by baptism in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This body, the church, includes all believers from Pentecost to the rapture (Eph. 1:23). Neither is the fellowship mentioned in 1 John 1:3 a direct reference to local church fellowship. The fellowship that we have "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," is something into which we are received at conversion and is the portion of every believer who is walking in the light (1 John 1:6). Neither is the reception of Romans 15:17, "wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us, to the glory of God," reception into the assembly. Chapters 13, 14, 15 & 16 of Romans highlight many problems which were causing divisions in the assemblies in Rome, which contained both Jews and Gentiles. Friction was being caused through the ongoing practice of Old Testament precepts by some of the Jews, who had not appreciated their new position under grace, wherein love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). As the saints were not getting on well with one another, Paul was exhorting them to receive one another to the glory of God. That is, meeting and greeting each other warmly and gladly without reserve or cold formality.

#### **Assembly reception and commendation.**

'Assembly reception' is another matter altogether. It

involves personal exercise on the part of the one to be received, and is an act of their will through the knowledge they have gained of the word of God, having submitted themselves to its precepts (Matt. 28:20).

It is vital for all believers to understand that it is the *assembly that receives believers into its fellowship; not simply the elders*. Examples of this truth are not hard to find. Take for example Phoebe's move from the assembly in Cenchrea to an assembly in Rome (Rom. 16:1-2). That the "you" of Rom. 16:1 referred to the assemblies in Rome is clear from Romans 16:5-15. There are references in these verses to possibly five assemblies gathering in various houses. For instance, in v.5, "the church that is in their house (Priscilla and Aquilla)"; and then v.10, "salute them which are of Aristobulus' household"; v.11, "greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord"; v.14, salute five named brethren and, "the brethren which are with them"; and then in v.15 salute five brethren and sisters and "all the saints which are with them."

Another case of recommendation for fellowship is in Philippians 2:29, where Paul exhorts the believers there to receive Epaphroditus, "in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation."

Another example is provided in the case of the apostle Paul. Having been with the disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19), he came to Jerusalem, where "he assayed to join himself (Lit.—glue himself) to the disciples" (Acts 9:26). Although he was initially refused because of his pre-conversion activity, on Barnabas' commendation and through Paul's own exercise, he was eventually received by the assembly there. This is a scriptural example of a baptised believer being personally exercised about joining himself in fellowship with a company of believers. There is a beautiful expression in Acts 9:28 as to the loyalty of the apostle in these words; "And he was

with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." In 1 Chron. 27:1 there is a similar expression; "that served the king in any matter, came in and went out, month by month throughout all the months of the year." For Paul, the coming in was to give the Lord His portion, and the going out was to give the world the gospel. Oh, for a return to these principles in seeking to extend the work of the Lord through deep exercise and Holy Spirit guidance!

### **Improper reception.**

Now, the problems that are encountered in the practice of scriptural assembly reception, are many and varied. Improper reception of believers is a source of trouble, weakness and heartache, that constantly afflicts assemblies. *The* big mistake is to receive believers into fellowship who have neither been taught, nor understand New Testament principles of gathering to the Lord's name. Those newly saved, mainly come from two sources. They are either children of believers already in fellowship, or they have been saved having had no 'assembly background'. Children of believers, once they are saved, because they have regularly attended the assembly gatherings, may have accumulated some knowledge of the Scriptures, which gives them a head start on a person saved out of the world. Nevertheless, we are convinced that special care and attention should be paid to *all* new converts, the elders ensuring that they are taught the true principles of gathering (Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:42). Here, of course, the whole structure of the testimony is at stake should the elders not be "apt to teach".

The best opportunity to teach them is immediately after they are saved, since their spiritual minds are, by the Holy Spirit, just like blotting paper is to ink. They are

usually able to absorb in the first year (Exod. 40:16), as was an Israelite of old, all the details necessary for the building of the tabernacle, the presence of the Lord in the midst and the gathering together unto Him alone (Psa. 50:5). Some will grasp this truth in a matter of days, others will take longer, before the happy day arrives when they are able to be received into fellowship. This will be through their knowledge of God's will for them through His Word, their exercise of heart concerning the responsibilities attached, (Eph. 4:3-7) and the privileges to be enjoyed (Eph. 4:11-16). Such reception will be reciprocal. That is, not only will the assembly have received the believer, but likewise the believer will have received the assembly, acknowledging it to be the "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Reception of temporary visitors (as opposed to receiving believers permanently into the assembly), is another matter that demands great care and vigilance. Letters of commendation are both scriptural and essential in the matter of receiving visitors. This is clear from 2 Cor. 3:1 where Paul says that some going to Corinth, (not himself, the planter of the assembly 1 Cor. 3:6), would need such letters. Without letters of commendation from other assemblies, unknown persons may be received into the assembly, allowing for unknown things to happen, to the embarrassment of well taught saints. Elders' 'example' in receiving all or anyone to the breaking of bread, rather than into complete fellowship "in the Lord" (Rom. 16:2), which is always based on doctrine (Acts 2:42), will not inspire confidence in the hearts of those in the assembly who understand scriptural assembly reception. Actions such as these are probably motivated, either from fear of offending, or from sheer ignorance of the Scriptures. There may be a sadder reason still; elders may have the

desire, "that we also may be like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:20). Since an assembly of God (Greek—*ekklesia*) is a "called out" company of believers, which meets "according to the pattern" and is separate from all that is "man made" and contrary to the word of God, "open table" reception of any believer (whether baptised or not) represents a dangerous compromise (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Sadly, in days of much marital breakdown, even amongst believers, a letter of commendation may be presented by one who is not actually fit for assembly fellowship. That is, one who has been divorced and remarried (either before or after conversion), and is therefore living in adultery (Matt. 5:32). While the blood of Christ cleanses the sin of adultery (1 Cor. 6:11), conversion does not annul an adulterous union; nor does adultery break previous marriage bonds (Rom. 7:3; Mark 6:18).

As reception is *always* from an assembly as a whole, so commendation is *always* to an assembly as a whole, and not simply, as we have stated, to the breaking of bread (Acts 15:4). It also needs emphasising that those who sign letters of commendation only do so on *behalf of the whole assembly*. Once received, believers have the right to exercise their scriptural privileges such as breaking bread, gathering together for prayer, and for the preaching and teaching of the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:29-33; 2 Tim. 4:1-2). There is no such thing in the Word of God, as "occasional fellowship"; i.e. a kind of "half-fellowship" that allows a believer to "break bread", without actually being fully received as from another assembly. Such confusion actually represents a compromise with that which is not of God, since it allows believers who neither believe nor practise what the Scriptures teach, to enjoy assembly privileges without any doctrinal responsibility. If the Scriptures of truth are the authority for letters of commendation why do we

not word them and use them in accordance with those same Scriptures? What better than Philippians 2:29-30 and Romans 16:1-2?

## Chapter 3

### PUTTING AWAY OR CASTING OUT —WHICH?

With these observations in mind, and having given guidance to the end that new members of an assembly should understand why they are where they are, we must now turn to the other side of the issue. The chapter to note in relation to putting away from fellowship is 1 Cor. 5, where the "you", v.11, represents the *assembly* at Corinth. As with reception, so with excommunication. Elders alone cannot administer discipline for God. It is the *assembly that puts away*; "When ye are come together" (v.4); "therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (v.13). It is most significant that there is not one single mention of elders in 1 and 2 Corinthians, epistles that give the most teaching on the subject of excommunication in the New Testament.

#### **True authority.**

The subject of authority is, in the author's judgment, *the number one problem* connected with excommunication. For, even if the whole assembly is agreed that excommunication of a believer must take place, with what authority can they act? "By what authority doest thou these things and who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21:32), are questions that need answering in relation to assembly discipline.

We must first establish who the authority is in the assembly. It may come as somewhat of a surprise to some that the word 'authority' is never connected, in the New Testament, with the elders of an assembly. Phrases such as, "the divinely constituted authority of the elders", and

"bowing to the authority of the elders", not only do not appear in the Word of God, but are misleading as to the truth of the Word of God.

Is the assembly then a lawless group of people, in which everyone is free to do that which is right in their own eyes? God forbid! The truth of authority in the assembly is expounded by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15. The head covering of the woman is the outward sign of this authority: "For this cause ought the woman to have power (Authority—Greek, *Exousia*) on her head" (1 Cor. 11:10). Now, whose authority is this? The authority of the elders? The authority of the assembly? No, it is the Lord's authority over *His* assembly. The women in the assembly, by covering their heads, express the submission of the whole assembly to the authority of Christ.

Creatorially, the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (1 Cor. 11:3). The divine relationship here, is given as the great pattern of authority and subjection. Although in no way inferior to the Father, Christ is subordinate to God as His Head. The creatorial pattern of subjection should not only be seen in the assembly, but also in the world, by the man being subject to Christ, and the woman being subject to the man. Thus in 1 Tim. 2:12, the Spirit of God through Paul states, "I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man." The verb "to usurp authority" (Greek—*Authenteo*), means "to domineer over" and "exercise authority on one's own account."

While God may exercise His sovereign authority over the assembly in chastening and judgment, apart from human instrumentation (1 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 11:30-32), in cases of moral and doctrinal evil He nevertheless expects the assembly to purge out the leaven (1 Cor 5:7). The authority with which they are to act is; "In the name of

our Lord Jesus Christ," and "with the power (Greek—*Dunamis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Cor. 5:4). This refers to the inherent power of Christ. In other words, neither elders, nor an assembly, have *inherent power of their own*. God, in His wisdom, has given no man or group of men authority over *His* assembly, since absolute power in human hands often leads to absolute corruption. The only authority for excommunication is the authority of Christ. To quote W.E. Vine again;

"An act of church discipline is not simply the act of the assembly; when *rightly* used it is the exercise the authority of Christ, carried out in His Name and power" (*Collected Writings, Vol. 5, page 174*).

Hence, improper decisions are *not* ratified by or recognised in Heaven (Matt. 18:18-19).

Titus was told by Paul to, "speak, exhort and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). This authority (Greek—*Epitagee*), denotes a "commandment" of the Lord, and is translated as such everywhere else in the New Testament. We would mention in passing that apostolic authority is a separate subject also taught in the New Testament (e.g. Mark 6:7; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10), which ceased to operate with the passing on of the apostles (Eph. 2:20).

### **False authority.**

We have gone into this subject at some length, to make crystal clear that *elders have no authority of their own*. All believers must therefore discern, when authority is being mentioned, whether it is true or false authority; real or abstract authority; inherent or invented authority. Andrew Stenhouse says—

"The farther we drift from truth, the more necessary is the human authority. All heterodox (heretical) bodies necessarily recognize two authorities. All would claim to recognize, and in some sense, follow, the Bible; but all recognize another authority as well, *which always proves to be the decisive one*" (*The Sin of Sectarianism* Page 103).

If elders suggest a course of action, for which there is no justification in Scripture, their words carry no authority and need not be acted upon. In the words of Peter and John, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

Arranging for and convening gatherings not allowed for in Scripture provides an example of false authority. A meeting called to discuss assembly problems, (possibly with some of the assembly absent), conducted on a modern democratic basis, with leanings toward majority opinion, is foreign to the Word of God. Just as dividing a literal body (mutilation) may result in death, so no less a tragedy will occur by dividing an assembly of God's people (Mark 3:25; 1 Cor. 12:14-22). All the necessary gatherings of an assembly are outlined in Scripture, and we have no authority for convening others (of a different kind). 1 Cor. 11:17,18,20,33,34 & 14:23 all mention the words "come together". The scriptural meetings connected with a New Testament assembly are; the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-34), the prayer meeting (Acts 2:42; Acts 12:5-12), the teaching meeting either by ministry or conversational Bible reading (Acts 6:4; 1 Cor. 14:26), the discipline meeting (1 Cor. 5:4), the report meeting (Acts 14:26-28) and the elders meeting (Acts 15:6; Acts 20:17-38).

**Essential pre-excommunication considerations.**

Having established the doctrine of authority in the assembly, we now come to the solemn matter of excommunication. Most books that deal with excommunication do not touch upon the possibility of a wrong excommunication, taking place either wittingly or unwittingly. This may be because it is felt that a book dealing with such a subject would possibly produce unacceptable levels of cynicism, or even scorn of New Testament principles in relation to the assembly. This is a healthy fear, but it is burying one's head in the sand to paint every facet of assembly life, in its practical outworking, in pretty colours, when the New Testament is full of problems that faced, and still face, assemblies of God's people. In dealing with a case of sin which may necessitate excommunication, certain questions should be posed, the answers to which will ensure that righteousness and equity prevail.

As in the matter of reception, where it is the burden of a shepherd to take great care in bringing sheep into the flock so, with excommunication, very great care must be taken. Putting a sheep away from the flock, is the last, the very last thing a shepherd will do, or will want to do; "I will *increase* them with men like a flock. As the holy flock" (Ezek. 36:37-38). A shepherd will only part, even with a wilfully straying sheep, with great reluctance and a broken heart. As this subject is, by its nature very serious, it warrants very careful consideration. In Luke 14:28 deep consideration was required by the tower builder *who sat down first and counted the cost*. Sitting down to test everything would be a strong and determining influence on all the saints in an assembly when it comes to excommunication. Carnal undue haste must not be allowed. *No assembly should allow its elders to rush the saints into a decision without full and proper consideration of all relevant facts*, since there may be cases where elders are personally

involved, and may wish to rid *themselves* of a problem as quickly as possible. Since each individual member of an assembly is not to keep company with, or eat with a brother who is a fornicator, a covetous person, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard or an extortioner, each case of sin must be proved beyond all reasonable doubt. This will enable the whole assembly to come to a prayerfully considered conclusion, based on evidence given by two or three witnesses in the presence of a God of righteousness (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16).

Witnesses will only usually be needed when the one involved does not voluntarily confess to his sin. Should witnesses be needed the Scripture puts no restriction upon who they are. If they are from another assembly, their witness may not be refused on the grounds that it is an interference in the autonomy of the assembly. Once two or three witnesses (Num. 35:30) have testified to the same thing in respect of gross moral or doctrinal evil, the matter is, in the sight of God, beyond doubt. An agreeing testimony cannot be interpreted or otherwise overthrown by those who are not witnesses.

One essential consideration is; should the matter in question concern the whole assembly, or is it purely personal in nature? An example of a personal problem being dealt with is that of the "overtaken" brother (Gal. 6:1). The believer there was tripped up, as it were by a trespass and needed to be restored. This 'mending' was to be done by spiritual believers who knew their own weaknesses and were able to help. The exact nature of the offence was not stated, but by not recommending 'assembly action', Paul indicated that it was a personal matter that remained private to the brother concerned, and to those who sought to restore him. There is a great need today for approachable elders to whom the saints can come, and in whom they can confide concerning personal problems, having confidence that matters

discussed will go no further. Such confidence is not built up overnight but, sadly, may be lost overnight.

Another question must be answered; is the case a clear matter of evil, either moral or doctrinal? Excommunication should not be judged as to whether the 'case' against a believer is 'weak' or 'strong', or even as to whether there is a 'majority' in favour of disciplinary action or not. Even in Corinth, with such an obvious case of dishonouring sinful behaviour, so detrimental to the testimony of the assembly and to the Lord Jesus Christ, it appears that not everyone in the assembly was prepared to discipline the brother. Paul states, "which was inflicted of (or by) many", not all (2 Cor. 2:6). No matter how clear the case of sin is, there will often be those, especially relatives of the guilty person, who will feel excommunication is too severe a step; but if it is a case of moral or doctrinal leaven it *must* be purged out. However, if it is neither of these, wise handling of God's Word may avoid the matter having to be raised for the assembly's consideration at all; or at worst, it may be a sin that can be dealt with through a public rebuke, "that others may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20).

If, however, it is a case that demands excommunication, the particular evil, either moral and/or doctrinal must be specified. Although a person may be guilty of more than one excommunicable offence, they must be proven *guilty* of at least one. It is wrong to act either on mere suspicion, or where any element of doubt exists. *Guilt is never proven by accusation.* When Pilate asked the rulers, "What accusation bring ye against this man?", they deliberately implied that Christ was guilty, by answering, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him unto thee" (John 18:29-30); despite the fact that the Lord Jesus had done nothing amiss. The charge that is made for excommunication must not consist of mere generalities but must be specific. The

offender must be clearly told what the grounds are for their excommunication, and most obvious of all, must be told that they are going to be excommunicated. It almost seems incredible that such simple facts need to be mentioned but cases have occurred where the garbled presentation has been such, that some have come away after their "excommunication meeting" (1 Cor. 5:4) without knowing on what the excommunication charge against them was based.

This leads to another very serious consideration; does each individual member of the assembly, from the oldest to the youngest, know why, for what reason and under what Scriptures the believer is being disciplined? To be part of an assembly that is administering judgment on God's behalf (Matt. 18:18) requires that each believer take a personal interest in the whole matter. This is not to say that all the details of each sin must be known to all in fellowship, but the facts of each case must be clearly understood by all. For instance, to excommunicate a brother for railing, without stating witnessed instances, or worse, without knowing exactly what "railing" is, shows extreme callousness, not to speak of spiritual apathy. Excommunication must not be done or appear to have been done in a corner. All cases requiring excommunication must be brought before the assembly for its consideration and judgment; otherwise scriptural excommunication cannot take place (1 Cor. 5:4-5; 2 Cor. 13:7).

The issue of partiality and prejudice must also be addressed. How can an assembly carry out proper discipline with either of these two attitudes marking it? What if an elder is himself involved in sin (1 Tim. 5:19-24)? Paul says, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21). Fellow elders

are not to condone or cloak failure in one of their number. Remember Deut. 13:14, "Then thou shalt enquire and make search and ask diligently, and behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such an abomination is wrought among you thou shalt surely smite". The seriousness of these matters cannot be overstressed. A judge in the United Kingdom must make an oath on taking office, wherein he is obliged to say, "I will dispense justice, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will". "Not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest... for we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor. 13:7-8). Where action is taken which is not based on truth, it will be clear that *love is absent*, since "love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6).

Unless the case is one of moral or doctrinal evil, proved in the mouth of witnesses ('the hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death,') before the assembly ('and afterward the hands of all the people, So thou shalt put the evil away from among you', Deut. 17:7), everyone in the assembly should be awake to the near certain possibility that *hidden considerations may underlie the proposed excommunication*. They should be alert to ensure a very careful handling of the Scriptures, witnesses, incidents and motives. Although we are not able to judge motives (Matt. 7:1), if excommunication is being threatened or carried out in order, (1) to shock a person into apologising, (2) to teach them a lesson, (3) to humble them, (4) or to discredit them, no credence should be given to such action (Prov. 17:15). In this way tragedies may be avoided and things that are the *real* cause of the difficulty may be brought to light.

### **Understanding the nature of excommunication.**

Excommunication, in the New Testament, is the

action that has been made necessary by the sin of a believer. It is leaven that *must* be purged out (1 Cor. 5:7). Hence, even if the guilty one ceases to come to the gatherings of the assembly, before excommunication has actually taken place, this does not absolve the assembly from having to take the necessary disciplinary action. Excommunication has its parallel in the leper of Old Testament times. To preserve the health and welfare of the nation of Israel the diseased person had to be put out of the camp (Num. 5:1-4). Ultimatums from elders such as; "if you do not obey us you will be put out of fellowship", expose their total misunderstanding of the nature of excommunication. It is *not* a weapon that may be used as a threat; rather a sad, yet necessary, consequence of sin. God never intended excommunication to be a short cut to solving situations of any and every type, about which elders cannot give advice or otherwise deal; nor did He ever intend it to be used as a threat to bully people 'into line' or teach them a lesson. It is not an escape route to be used by elders who will not face up to issues of great importance in which they are themselves involved. Excommunication is the God-given means to be carried out in the God-given way, to "put away evil from among you" (Deut. 17:7) and to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13).

No Christ-centred discipline will be the result of feelings, bitterness, envying, strife, partiality (1 Tim. 5:21) or malicious intent (Prov. 18:6; 1 Cor. 5:8). Discipline should rather result from a desire to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:8). It should produce mourning and godly sorrow both in the hearts of those in the assembly (1 Cor. 5:2,7; 2 Cor. 7:10-11), and in the heart of the brother or sister who has been disciplined (2 Cor. 2:7). Sadly this has not always been the case, since excommunication has often

been used as a means to get rid of an 'awkward brother' with whom the elders and/or the assembly cannot see eye to eye. Instead of mourning and sorrow there is relief, lightness and even glee (Prov. 17:5b; 24:17) which indicates the presence of leaven (1 Cor. 5:6 & 2 Cor. 1:17). "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work" (Jas. 3:14-16).

### **Cases requiring excommunication.**

So far we have shown (1) the authority for excommunication, (2) essential pre-excommunication considerations, (3) what excommunication actually is, and (4) why it must take place. Now we come to what sins actually make excommunication a necessity. Biblical excommunication is limited to (a) gross moral sin and (b) fundamentally erroneous doctrine. It is vital to grasp this truth. If a believer is to be put out of fellowship they must be proven guilty of sin from one or both of these categories. We give three proofs for this;

(1) The moral sins of 1 Cor. 5:7, and the doctrinal error of justification by the law in Gal. 5:9, are both called leaven.

(2) The phrase, "whom I have delivered unto Satan", or "to deliver such an one unto Satan"; only occurs twice in the New Testament. Once referring to excommunication for moral evil (1 Cor. 5:5), and thereafter in reference to doctrinal evil (1 Tim. 1:20). Examples of such doctrinal evil are; (a) Jude v.4 where it was fundamental error concerning the faith once delivered to the saints; (b) 2 Peter 2:1 & 21 where it was denial of the finished work of Christ; (c) 1 Tim. 1:19-20 where it was blasphemy concerning the faith of the gospel (this is where the phrase is used); (d) 2 John v.7 where they were denying

that Christ had come in the flesh; and (e) 2 Tim. 2:17-19 and 1 Cor. 15:12, where it involved a denial of the resurrection.

(3) As in the case of moral evil (1 Cor. 5:11), no social fellowship is to be had with the offender, so with the unsound teacher (2 John v.9-10), no hospitality is to be shown or shared.

### Scriptural teaching concerning railing.

The moral sins mentioned in 1 Cor. 5 that need to be purged out are as follows; fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness and extortion. The most misunderstood of these is railing, because the same word appears in another context in our English Bibles in Jude and 2 Pet. 2. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation in this matter has been the cause of chaos and havoc in assemblies, both through ignorance and mishandling of the Word of God. Making the Word of God mean something contrary to its plain meaning, will be a source of untold difficulty and division. Handling the word of God deceitfully is something believers must have renounced (2 Cor. 4:2). We must also be on our guard against any who "corrupt" (Greek—*Kapeleuo*, adulterate) the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17).

So, what exactly is a railer? The word for railer in 1 Cor. 5:11 (Greek—*Loidoria*), occurs nine times in the New Testament (in its various forms), and to discover its true meaning we need to look at its various occurrences;

#### Chapter & verse with quote.

1. John 9:28 — "Then they *reviled* Him"
2. Acts 23:4 — "*Revilest* thou God's High Priest?"
3. 1 Cor. 4:12— "being *reviled* we bless"
4. 1 Cor. 5:11— "or a *railer*, or a drunkard"
5. 1 Cor. 6:10— "nor *revilers*, nor extortioners"

6. 1 Tim. 5:14—“Give none occasion to the adversary to speak *reproachfully*”
7. 1 Pet. 2:23—“who when He was *reviled*, reviled not again”
8. 1 Pet. 3:9 —“not rendering . . . *railing* for *railing*”

Looking at these verses in their context it will be clear that the meaning of railing is; *speaking abusively, often with false accusation*. As “no Scripture is of private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20), no Scripture can be interpreted apart from its context or separated from the rest of Scripture. Although railing undoubtedly stems from a wrong attitude of heart, these verses show that *railing is not simply an attitude*. Railing always involves speech. Hence, when a person is being excommunicated for railing, what they have actually said, as well as the way they said it, is very important. Who they actually railed on carries no special significance. These verses show that it is possible to rail on the Lord Jesus Christ, an evangelist, on *all* believers and on an unbelieving High Priest. They also show that the unconverted can rail, as can Satan and *all* believers, which must therefore include elders.

The confusion on this subject is caused by those who equate Jude and Peter’s “railing” (Greek—*Blaspheemo*, Jude v.9; 2 Pet. 2:11) with the railing we have just discussed (Greek—*Loidoria*, 1 Cor. 5:11), thus creating a dangerously false link between these unrelated passages. Jude and 2 Peter are both speaking about ungodly men who deny the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude v.4; 2 Pet. 2:1), who are like brute beasts (Jude v.10; 2 Pet. 2:12) and who are headed for the eternal judgment of God (Jude v.13; 2 Pet. 2:9). Taken in their context it is impossible, under any circumstances, to apply these passages to believers. This principle of contextual interpretation has proved to be an essential factor in understanding this aspect of excom-

munication, so we would stress it again. Under no circumstances is it possible to use the two above mentioned passages in relation to believers.

Through ignorance, wilful or otherwise, fearfully erroneous usage has been made of certain phrases in Jude and 2 Peter for the purposes of excommunication. The first concerns the word "government". Only once in the New Testament is this word government mentioned in relation to the assembly—1 Cor. 12:28. There we are told about certain things that God has set in the assembly; one of these is "governments" (Greek—*Kubernesis*), a word which denotes "steering" or "pilotage". The word is used metaphorically of those who act as *guides* in the assembly. Now we are back to the word "rule" of chapter 1—standing before the assembly for leadership and guidance.

The ungodly false teachers of Jude and 2 Peter are said to "despise government/dominion" (Jude v.10; 2 Pet. 2:8); but this is a different government altogether. The word for government here (Greek—*Kuriotes*) denotes lordship, power and supremacy. This type of government is not connected with assembly elders anywhere in the New Testament, except in condemnation; "neither as being lords over God's heritage" (1 Pet. 5:3). Such government would be foreign to God's purposes for His flock. God hates Nicolaitanism (Greek—*Nikio*, to conquer/*Laos*, people), Rev. 2:6. Therefore, when elders find that a believer disagrees with them, even if what they are doing is 100% scriptural, it is wresting the Scriptures to say that the believer involved is "despising government". Firstly because the phrase they have used refers in its context to ungodly men and, secondly, because elders are simply not the government of the assembly (1 Pet. 5:3). A clear understanding of this will be a great help to anyone who is standing for the truth against false shepherds (Acts 20:30), domineering elders

(3 John v.9) and lords in an assembly (1 Pet. 5:3), who may desire at all costs to maintain their power over the flock. Should they consider that their 'authority' is being threatened or is likely to be overridden, their conclusions may be expressed in such high sounding tones as, "defying, and seeking to overthrow the divinely constituted government of the assembly". Such phraseology not only shows their terrible lack of understanding in scriptural truth, but also their ineptitude in handling their own brethren with loving entreaty "as brethren" (1 Tim. 5:1), and in subjection (1 Pet. 5:5).

This error is further compounded when elders begin, not only to imagine that they are the 'government' mentioned by Jude and Peter, but that they are also the "dignities" (Jude v.8; 2 Pet. 2:10). The word "dignities" (Greek—*Doxa*) is translated "glory" or "glorious" 155 times out of a total of 168 in the New Testament. In Jude and 2 Peter it is a reference to angelic powers who, even though fallen, must not be blasphemed. Michael the archangel has set us a good example in this matter by not blaspheming the devil over the matter of Moses' body (Jude v.9). In this light, to infer that the dignities of Jude and 2 Peter are assembly elders, is seen to be the height of folly.

Further erroneous usage of Jude and 2 Peter concerns the word railing. The "railing" mentioned by Jude and Peter as well as the "speak evil" (Jude v.8 & 10; 2 Peter 2:10 & 12) is translated into English as "blasphemy" (Greek—*Blasphemeo*) 70% of the time (in its various forms) in the New Testament. It signifies defamatory, blasphemous and contemptuous speech. Believers are warned not to blaspheme in Titus 3:1, and while it is perfectly scriptural to excommunicate (deliver to Satan) a person for blasphemy (1 Tim. 1:20), it is quite another thing altogether to say that the railer of 1 Cor. 5:11 is guilty of the railing accusation such as Michael the

archangel would not bring against the devil. Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; *the railings in 2 Pet. 2:11 and Jude v.9 are not illustrations or interpretations of the railing in 1 Cor. 5:11*. They are two different words, which describe the speech of two different groups of people. To suit their own purposes (Matt. 15:6b), elders may deliberately ignore the distinction between these words, and advise an assembly from Jude and 2 Peter that the believer concerned has, "said things against us (Speak evil of dignities), and has undermined the authority of the elders (despise government), which according to 'the Word of God' is railing (railing accusation), and as such warrants excommunication—1 Cor. 5:11". This allows them also to declare that anyone in fellowship who 'sides' with the disciplined party is also a railer because 'defiance of elders is railing'. As we shall see later, such teaching is actually heresy and any group of believers taking up a position based on such teaching constitute a sect. The mind reels at the schismatic effects such teaching will have and has had on many testimonies. It is contrary to the truth and must be rejected as error. Those who misuse *God's holy infallible Word* in the above mentioned way, while claiming Holy Spirit guidance, will reap a bitter harvest (Gal. 6:7-8).

### **Casting out—3 John**

Were the above reasoning true, the apostle John would have been a railer for 'going against' Diotrephes (3 John v.9). His type of excommunication was most aptly described by John as a "casting out" (Greek—*Ekballo*). It stands in stark contrast to another most significant occurrence of the word; the Lord Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Christ himself was an outcast (John 8:59) and delighted to have fellowship with others who had been cast out (John 9:34-38). Scriptural excommunication is a "taking

away", a "delivery unto Satan", a "putting away", even a "purging out" (1 Cor. 5:2,5,7,13) but never a "casting out". Most of the occurrences of the word "cast out" in the New Testament (Greek—*Ekballo*) involve physical action. Although the assembly is not a building out of which one may be cast, the very use of the word by John would suggest that a man like Diotrephes may have stooped to the use of force in carrying out his "evil deeds". Hence the warning given—"Follow not that which is evil but that which is good" (3 John v.11).

While a Diotrephes in an assembly will fully understand what *he* is doing, he may be part of an 'oversight' which is deceived as to his real nature and is supporting him through ignorance. He may also have taken it upon himself to bring others onto the 'oversight', in order to boost his confidence and gain a following. In return for this elevation to 'power', such men will be obligated to keep quiet concerning any of his wrong-doings, should they even know of them. These politics represent the arm of the flesh which cannot save, and far from providing a solution, must only entrench and complicate the real issue (1 Tim. 5:22-24). The results of this unholy alliance will mean serious trouble for the assembly (see 3 John). A 'Diotrephes' will usually have been working carefully, for some considerable time, behind the scenes, in order to turn the assembly against the one or ones he wants to cast out. He will time his action to when he feels he has most of the assembly behind him, even to the point where he may sit back and let them carry out his designs (1 Sam. 22:8,17). This shows that an assembly may be just as much to blame for the existence of a 'lording' situation, as the 'lords' themselves. However, having accomplished this, a Diotrephes will be able to gain great credibility in the eyes of brethren in other assemblies who do not know the true history of his actions, and cannot see how he could possibly be wrong

as he may have the backing of the whole assembly.

The late William Kelly's comments on this subject are revealing as they were written for his generation 150 years ago:

"We have another evil designated very clearly here (3 John). Diotrephes is the scriptural example of the clerical tribe, as contradistinguished from the ministry of Christ. There is no service because there is no love. He is the representative of that spirit which opposes the free action of the Holy Spirit, setting itself even against apostolic authority, in order to gain or maintain his own individual preeminence. Self-importance, jealousy of those over us, impatience of others equally called to serve, scorn of the assembly, yet sometimes humouring the least worthy for his own ends—such are the characteristics of clericalism. I do not mean in clergymen only; for there are men of God incomparably better than their position tends to make them; as on the other hand this evil thing is nowhere more offensive as where the truth that is owned, wholly condemns it."

#### **Cases not requiring excommunication.**

Each discipline passage in the New Testament demands our careful attention. When one considers the various groups of people who were causing problems and divisions in the assembly at Corinth, for whom Paul did *not* recommend excommunication (i.e. those "going to law" with their brethren in ch.6; those not acknowledging headship in ch.11; and those misusing gift in ch.14), it becomes clear that much discernment and wisdom will be needed as to the scriptural course of action to be taken concerning widely differing assembly

problems that may arise. In the words of Andrew Stenhouse:

“If any need of discipline arises, we shall limit ourselves strictly to doing that which Scripture commands. We shall not recognize any authority whatsoever outside the Word of God, nor take any action that Scripture does not authorize. (*The Sin of Sectarianism*, Page 112).

### Titus 3.

Excommunication is not recommended for the heretic of Titus 3:10 (Greek—*Hairetikos*, from *Haireomai*—to choose). The heretic here is not a man who holds to the kind of fundamentally erroneous doctrine we have outlined previously, i.e. “damnable heresies”, brought in by men who deny even the Lord that bought them. Peter states that these false teachers “bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1-3). Such men, should they have crept into an assembly, must be excommunicated (See 2. page 37).

The heretic of Titus 3 is, rather, a man who causes division by holding to and teaching self-willed (chosen) opinions and ideas. He obviously has to *speak and teach* his wrong opinions—how else would they become known? In a biblical context these opinions and interpretations are at variance with the Scriptures themselves, not simply with elders or even with the assembly. It is open to dangerous misinterpretation to describe this heretic as one who “holds to a course that is not commonly acceptable to the assembly of which he forms part.” If the assembly becomes the plumbline by which heresy is to be measured, the assembly assumes authority over the Word of God. Assemblies change, but the Word of God changes not. Mr Henry Hitchman has written a very helpful paragraph to this end:

"A person is a division-maker when he forces views contrary to the doctrines laid down in the word of God, and by so doing, divides the saints. A believer may be absolutely opposed to things which are carried on, and unscriptural principles which are supported in the assembly, and yet *not* be a division-maker. Divine unity does not consist in agreement of things practised, even in the assembly; but in oneness of mind according to Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5). Believers are under no obligation to endorse or support, in any way, principles contrary to biblical teaching, even if through their protest they are accused of being division-makers" (*Some Scriptural Principles of the Christian Assembly*, page 121).

Heresy therefore is teaching that causes *unscriptural* division. A heretic propagates sectarian teaching; his adherents form a sect based on those teachings (heresies). It is most important to grasp the fact that the word for sect in the New Testament i.e. Acts 5:17; 26:5; and the word for heresy i.e. Acts 24:14; Gal. 5:20, are the same (Greek—*Hairesis*). It needs to be understood that heresies and divisions are not one and the same thing, as 1 Cor. 11:18-19 makes clear; "I hear there be divisions . . . there must be also heresies." Divisions (seditions) are also mentioned *separately* to heresies by Paul when listing the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). The difference lies in the fact that heresies cause division. *All division is not caused by heresy, but all heresy may cause division and lead to the formation of sects.*

The course of action recommended in scripture to deal with a heretic is firstly, to administer an "admonition" (Titus 3:10). This is not simply a 'ticking off'. The word admonition (Greek—*Nouthesia*) means a "putting in mind", which is to be done through the presentation of

the truth of the Word of God to the heretic, (publicly before the assembly if possible—2 Tim. 2:25-26), in order to put a stop to his divisive teaching. Dealing with heresies will show “those who are approved” in an assembly (1 Cor. 11:19). Who are the approved? Those who are discerning enough to recognize the ones causing division “*contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned,*” and who do what the rest of this verse commands—“avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). If all the saints adhered to this Scripture, no division could possibly be caused by a heretic. Should the heretic persist in his self-willed and divisive teaching he must be given a second admonition. If this does not bring him to see his *sin* (Titus 3:11) he must be rejected as a teacher amongst the flock, his divisive teaching having been exposed (Titus 3:10).

### **Matthew 18.**

In the personal case of Matthew 18:17 where a brother or sister will not “hear” his or her fault repeated by the person offended, subsequently repeated in front of witnesses by the person offended, and repeated again by the person offended before the assembly, the neglecting to hear is deliberate and is not to be interpreted as if he just hears and passes on. The agreeing testimony of witnesses, if rejected, is a rejection of God and His Word. Witness and testimony are of paramount importance to the very warp and woof of the Word of God, as shown in John 5 concerning the deity of Christ. There the fifth witness is the Old Testament Scriptures. Such a willful and deliberate act of defiance against the testimony of a believer and his witnesses results in the offended being advised; “let him be unto *thee* as a heathen man.” “*Thee*” being singular does not refer to the assembly. The offender is to be treated by the wronged one as an outsider. Some may consider that the existence of such a situation within an assembly would create confusion,

but God is not the author of confusion. The church will have heard the whole matter, will know of the stubbornness of the offender, and will itself be a reminder to him every time he comes to the gatherings that he should, before taking any further part in the gatherings, seek reconciliation with his brother.

### **1 Thessalonians 5 & 2 Thessalonians 3.**

Another example of 'personal disassociation' within an assembly, as opposed to excommunication from an assembly, is that of brethren who are walking "disorderly" (Greek—*Ataktos*). In the assembly at Thessalonica there were some who were deliberately not doing a job of work under the pretext of expecting the Lord's return, and had become busybodies. Paul spoke of them as "out of step," and recommended them to follow his own example of working to provide for himself (2 Thess. 3:7-9). Paul tells the assembly to withdraw from these brethren (2 Thess. 3:6). He then, as an apostle, commands and exhorts them to work (v.12), after which, if they do not obey his apostolic injunction, the assembly is to note them and have no company with them (in their disorderliness), that they might be ashamed (1 Thess. 5:14). Paul adds to this; "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (v.15). This is action toward one who is in fellowship, not to one who had been excommunicated.

### **Titus 1.**

The matter of 'silencing' also needs critical examination in the light of holy Scripture. By taking words out of their context in Titus 1:10-11, and by omitting other words so that the text is made to read, "there are many unruly whose mouths must be stopped," some elders have given an air of authority to a wholly unscriptural form of discipline. 'Silencing,' as a form of discipline by which a believer is simply commanded by elders (even

should they have the complete backing of the assembly), that his voice may not be heard in the gatherings of the assembly, although he may remain in fellowship, is not in accordance with the Word of God for at least four reasons;

1. Since a dumb priest was not allowed to serve in the tabernacle of the congregation, the type would be spoilt (Lev. 21:21). Never, apart from excommunication, are we told to stop a member of the assembly giving God His portion in praise, thanksgiving and worship. Such action would grieve the heart of God, who is glorified by the offering of praise (Psa. 50:23).
2. This type of 'silencing' can only operate in respect of males, since women are already enjoined by Scripture to be in silence (1 Cor. 14:34).
3. Such a method of 'silencing' would manifestly not have worked in Crete (Titus 1:10 being the Scripture most used in this matter "whose mouths must be stopped"), since it was in the *homes* of the believers where the wrong teaching was being spread (Titus 1:11).
4. Since assembly fellowship is oneness in what we *believe*, as well as oneness in what we *practise* (Acts 2:42), allowing a brother to continue in fellowship while forbidding him to speak, is carnal inconsistency.

A careful reading of Titus 1:10-11 in its context will indicate that the "stopping of mouths" needed in Crete was to be accomplished by the *application of the Word of God* to the gainsayers of the day; not simply invoking

ensorship by issuing a command. The scribes and chief priests could not 'handle' the Lord Jesus, but instead of either proving that He was teaching error or admitting that they were wrong, they sought to destroy Him and therefore silence Him (Mark 11:18) as they did to the apostles (Acts 4:18-19). One of the most powerful reasons why an elder or a deacon must be of very high calibre (1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1), is so that they will be able to put a stop to false teaching and false teachers through the Scriptures, rather than simply telling them to close their mouths in the gatherings.

But what if the saints are afflicted by foolish and unlearned questions or vain ministry, since opportunity for ministry must not be allowed to be exploited by the ignorant or the unlearned? If a brother is trying to use a gift that he does not possess, such as teaching the Word, he should be helped to see what gift God has given him, instead of trying to do what God never intended him to do. While 'one man ministry' is unscriptural (all the gifts needed for an assembly not residing in one man), 'every man ministry' is equally unscriptural.

## Chapter 4

### PREVENTION OR CURE—WHICH?

Scriptural teaching, warning and exhortation are only effective if they are listened to and heard (Rev. 2:29). Although an assembly which 'goes by the book' will suffer persecution and trouble from the world, the flesh and the devil, it will neither be deceived by every "soft wind" of doctrine (Acts 27:13; Eph. 4:14), nor will it find itself in a position where neither sun nor stars have appeared in many days, and all hope that it should be saved seems to have been taken away; despite all its efforts to secure, undergird and lighten the ship (Acts 27:15-20).

#### **What should happen.**

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not . . . to have gained this harm and loss" (Acts 27:21). The harm and loss suffered by believing "the master of the ship" rather than Paul, will be widespread. This is clear when we consider that in respect of the assembly in Corinth, other assemblies were instructed about its problems; not simply through hearsay, but from the pen of the apostle. Paul's letter to Corinth, was addressed not only to the Corinthians, but also to "all the saints which are in Achaia" (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). Apart from that fact, since 1 & 2 Corinthians are inspired Scripture, it was not long before all believers were to learn of the troubles in the assembly at Corinth. This indicates that autonomy is not isolation. Although each assembly is responsible to God alone and must be independent of outside control, when *scriptural* excommunication takes place all assemblies have a res-

possibility to recognise the correctness of the action taken concerning the leaven (1 Cor. 5:7), especially by not receiving those that have been put away. To do so would be to act against the word and will of God, and would be not endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit (Eph. 4:3). The injunction not to eat with a brother who is a fornicator etc., applies to all believers (1 Cor. 5:11).

Tolerating evil in an assembly (1 Cor. 5:2; Rev. 2:14-15) displeases God, quenches the Holy Spirit and makes the assembly ineffective for God. God held all Israel responsible for Achan's sin (Josh. 7:10,13). In time, a "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). When moral or doctrinal evil surfaces, an assembly ought to mourn that the sin was not prevented by prayer, teaching and watchfulness in the first place. It ought thereafter also to mourn that the testimony has been marred, the holiness of the house (Psa. 93:5) has been defiled and that one member of the body must needs be removed. At Corinth there had been no prevention, but on hearing the truth from the apostle Paul they sorrowed to repentance (2 Cor. 7:9), and put matters right in the assembly. This brought about the cure. What a contrast to Diotrephes' reaction to the apostle John's letter (3 John v.9). Paul wrote again to the Corinthians, asking them to confirm their love towards the brother that had been disciplined, since he had repented of his sin and been restored to the Lord (2 Cor. 2:8). Lest he should be swallowed up with over much sorrow, despairing of not being forgiven by and restored to the assembly, the Corinthian assembly was to forgive him and comfort him and receive him back. We pointed out that this brother is the New Testament parallel of the leper being put out of the camp of Israel. Now that he has repented, examination by the priest reveals that, "he is clean" (Lev. 13:13). Failure to receive such a one back into the assembly is giving an advantage to Satan (2 Cor. 2:11).

**What might happen.**

We have shown what *should* happen in a case of scriptural excommunication, so that if sin cannot be prevented in the first place, its spread will be prevented by the cure of discipline. This has in view a cure both for the assembly and the offender. But—what is the cure in the case of wrong excommunication? What can be done when an assembly has not hearkened to God and has acted against His Word?

A victim of wrong discipline has nothing of which to repent, and may say as did Nehemiah to his accusers, "There are no such things done; but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (Neh. 6:8). He cannot therefore meet the demands of his brethren for restoration. Conversely, an assembly or its elders, once they have taken such serious and public action, even despite warnings to the contrary, human nature being what it is (Rom. 7:18), they will not wish to go back on their decision. Rather they may try to justify their action by pointing to the post-excommunication reactions of the wrongly disciplined party. Since a "brother offended (transgressed against) is harder to be won than a strong city" (Prov. 18:19), this is indeed a serious God dishonouring state of affairs, which will result in much hurt and damage coming upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the testimony (Rom. 2:24).

In such a case, it is not the one who has been 'disciplined' that needs to be restored, but rather the assembly itself, or the party within it, who have perpetrated the injustice. The scriptural injunction not to eat with one under discipline could not apply in such a case, as we are not to eat with one who *is* a fornicator etc., not one who *is said to be* a fornicator etc. (1 Cor. 5:11) This is clear from the case given in 3 John. In Corinth they had not administered discipline which they ought to have (1 Cor. 5:4), but in 3 John v.10 they had administered

discipline which they ought not to have. That is why the apostle John was free to continue having fellowship with those cast out of the assembly. His very letter to Gaius expressed this fellowship. Since Gaius had received the brethren (3 John v.5,8), and Diotrephes cast out any who so dared (3 John v.10), Gaius appears either to have been cast out the assembly at the time of John's letter, or was soon to be cast out. The fact that he was told by John about a letter that he had written to the church seems to confirm this, as also does the fact that John says to Gaius that Diotrephes "loveth to have the preeminence among *them*," not among *you*. In other words John was saying to Gaius, you are walking in the truth, I am with you, not with the followers of Diotrephes. John's advice to Gaius concerning Diotrephes was, "Follow not that which is evil, but that which is good" (3 John v.11).

The apostle John judged Diotrephes' 'discipline' to have been unscriptural. He knew that to have fellowship with an assembly that had administered discipline rightly or wrongly, was to have fellowship with that discipline and as an apostle he was not neutral. It would be in wisdom's interests (Jas. 3:17) if assemblies, ministering brethren and evangelists followed the apostle John's example, and had no fellowship with those that have carried out any form of injustice, until matters are righteously settled (Prov. 26:17). If John *did* pay a visit to the assembly, he would bring Diotrephes' deeds to remembrance before the assembly (3 John v.10), again showing that 'autonomy' is not isolation. A letter written in August of 1871 by J.N. Darby to certain brethren is very interesting in this regard. We quote selected parts:

"But when excommunication is in question, then the rule is, 'Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.' Now you are aware that a

great number of the gathering protested against this excommunication when it was declared, which, with other facts to which I have already alluded, clearly shewed that it was not the act of the assembly . . . If you take my advice you will withdraw the excommunication, as it cannot be scripturally maintained. Do not be afraid of the consequences. If we do right, God will take care of them." (*Letters of J.N.D., Vol.2, Page 133*).

Assemblies, upon hearing about a case of excommunication, need to decide what attitude they are going to take to the one put out. They therefore need to ascertain on what ground the believer concerned has been disciplined and why. Assemblies who refuse to answer legitimate enquiries from other assemblies who wish to know what the situation is, not only will not inspire confidence but will also give the impression that they have something to hide. If moral or doctrinal evil has been proven, it will simply be a matter of stating what the sin is and what disciplinary Scripture was involved.

### **Repentance needed.**

But what of a cure when injustice has taken place? Firstly, we must remember that God is longsuffering and will give a period of grace for assemblies to repent. Assembly repentance is not a new 'idea'. Five out of the seven assemblies of Revelation chs.2 and 3 were exhorted to repent.

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). *This is the best cure possible.*

God is watching and listening for repentance on the part of those who have departed from Him; "Now, mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place" (2 Chron. 7:15). All that happened to Israel "happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:11-12). When Israel departed from God He sent drought, locusts and pestilence with a view to them humbling themselves, praying, seeking His face and repenting.

Until those involved in casting believers out of an assembly put wrongs right publicly, showing repentance and restoration, they will not and cannot expect to have the blessing of God upon their disobedience. If God blesses His word amongst them it will be in spite of their disobedience, for "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). Drought in an assembly will mean sorrow (not godly sorrow) and tears instead of joy, duty instead of liberty, bitterness instead of love, and most depressing of all, the task of trying to accomplish a spiritual work in the flesh. Surer than night follows day, whatsoever an assembly sows, that shall it also reap (Gal. 6:7).

Can we not hear the words of James; "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:10). If we know to do good and we do it not, to us it is sin (Jas. 3:17). If a wrong discipline has taken place, undo the damage as soon as possible. Publicly confess the wrong practices and doctrines and bring innocent ones back into the assembly. Adjust the leadership in the assembly so that it is according to the pattern, and ensure that the source of the neglect, non-contextual private interpretation, disobedience of, and rebellion against God and His word, is also corrected.

**Judgment, God's strange work.**

However, should an assembly not repent in the period of grace, the length of which only God knows, that same grace will give way to judgment as God has promised; "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:17). Consider the warnings God gave to the churches of Revelation:

Ephesus—"Repent . . . or else . . . I will come quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:5).

Pergamos—"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16).

Thyatira—"Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . I gave her space to *repent* . . . and she repented not . . . and them with her . . . except they *repent* of their deeds . . . I will kill her children with death; and *all the churches* shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts" (Rev. 2:20-23).

Sardis—"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*" (Rev. 3:3).

Laodicea—"I will spue thee out of My mouth . . . be zealous therefore and *repent*" (Rev. 3:16,19).

These verses make solemn reading. May these warnings from God's word have the same effect as did the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira; "great fear came upon all the church (at Jerusalem), and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11). God is not 'threatening' His people. He is simply stating the inevitable consequences of disobedience to His call for repentance. In each of the above assemblies God gave all the details of His plans, except the time of their execution. If brethren, continue in assemblies having

acted unrighteously and not in accordance with God's Word, just as God did in Corinth, so He may do today; "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). To avoid God's hand upon the saints Paul exhorted them to practice self-judgment in order not to "be judged" by God (1 Cor. 11:31). Alternatively God may simply disperse the believers (remove the candlestick), or disown them as to His presence in their midst (spue thee out of my mouth), although they may remain ignorant of the fact that the Lord has left them (Rev. 3:17; Judg. 16:20).

### **Withdrawing from fellowship.**

It is clear that when a believer decides to forsake an assembly of God (Heb. 10:25), this will be done without Holy Spirit guidance. Such a move will not have the word of God as its basis. On the contrary, the scriptures point out the absurdity of such action. "If the foot shall say because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?", the inferiority complex (1 Cor. 12:15)—or, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee", the superiority complex (v.21). Every member is essential to the proper functioning of the assembly, whether they appreciate it or are themselves appreciated. "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor. 12:18). "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (1 Cor. 12:22). Those who forsake an assembly of God, especially in a time of trouble, are most likely to meet more of the same at their destination (Ruth 1:1,21).

Recommending therefore, even as an 'honourable course', that a brother or sister should 'withdraw from fellowship' has no scriptural authority. Since neither the apostle Paul nor any of the apostles, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the whole of the New

Testament, recommended this action, such advice bespeaks an authority *superior to the Scriptures*. It is terminology which is both disturbing and revealing. Excommunication (1 Cor. 5:4,5 & 13); commendation to another assembly (Rom. 16:1); and falling asleep (1 Thess. 4:14), are the only ways indicated in the New Testament in which believers leave a true assembly of God. This is not a mere legality. Withdrawing from or leaving an assembly is far too serious a matter to be on an elder's list of recommendations (Heb. 10:25).

Having said this we need to make clear that a believer is not tied to an 'assembly of people' that has long since ceased to be an 'assembly of God'. This did not happen at Corinth where, in spite of all its problems and sins (1 Cor. 1:2 & 3:16), the assembly listened to and obeyed the teaching given to them by the apostle Paul. Would to God that there were more assemblies like Corinth, who when sin is pointed out, are prepared to repent (2 Cor. 2:9; 7:8-12). What however would Paul have done had the assembly refused to listen, and divided up into the sects that were, at the time of Paul's writing, still *within the assembly* (1 Cor. 1:11-13)? To ask this question is to answer it. Each sect could not have claimed to be a temple of God, a church of the living God. God does not recognize sectarianism—neither therefore should we.

To separate oneself from an assembly of God would be an act of schism and as we have said, has no scriptural warrant. If the Lord is present in the assembly, to forsake the assembly is to forsake His presence—a solemn thought indeed. But it needs to be understood that if an assembly refuses to judge moral or doctrinal evil it becomes completely leavened (1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:9). Also, if an assembly imbibes a heresy to the point where its constitution rests on that heresy, it has become a sect as we have already shown. Additionally, when an assembly wittingly harbours error, or refuses to deal

with error when it comes to light, it can no longer claim to be continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), nor to be church of living God, pillar and ground of truth, which is the description given of a house of God in 1 Tim. 3:15.

This sad condition may exist in a more subtle form than is at first thought. An 'assembly' which appoints a paid pastor, allows women to teach in the church, refuses to acknowledge headship by the covered head of the woman, promotes charismatic phenomena and joins in with the ecumenical movement would not be recognized as an assembly of the living God by any believer who knows *anything* about New Testament principles. However, a group of believers may have all the outward forms of assembly order and practice, and yet be as much on 'sectarian ground' as the sects themselves. Consider for example the many 'exclusive assemblies' who 'look the part' but who hold to a 'central oversight', a 'circle of assemblies' and in many instances even deny the eternal sonship of Christ. Making a claim to the presence of the Lord in the midst, means nothing; all the denominations do this (Micah 3:11b). In the words of Andrew Stenhouse:

"Too often, assemblies which began well have so degenerated as to become in many respects similar to the denominations around them. The practices of denominational bodies have been imitated to such an extent that the distinctive testimony of the assemblies has been weakened, *if not annulled*" (*The Sin of Sectarianism*, Page 115).

Assemblies who become like the sects are, in actuality, worse than the sects, in that they once had the light. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (Luke 11:35); "But now ye say, We see,

therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41).

What scriptural course is open to believers who wish to practice the truth when such conditions prevail? We must first make clear that the existence of evil in an assembly is not, as such, a reason for leaving, but rather for acting with the Word of God to *put it away* from the assembly. If error is being taught, even should it be by 'elders', every effort must be made to silence the error and clear the assembly of the bad influence (2 Tim. 4:2). But if error and evil are persisted in and overtly condoned, and after every effort both by prayer, teaching and rebuke the assembly continues to wilfully defy the Word of God, a believer would have to avoid the 'assembly' (Rom. 16:17); not follow evil as in the case of Diotrephes (3 John v.11); and go outside where the Lord Himself already is (Rev. 3:20). God was going to spue out the assembly at Laodicea. What was this going to mean in practical terms—physical punishment? We hardly think so. The expression conveys God's disgust at their behaviour and His disowning of them in their spiritual state. But, before God would do this He called on them to repent. If an assembly will not repent is a believer therefore to remain where God has disowned His people? As J.N. Darby said in this respect:

"Is the Spirit of God with those who continue in the evil, or with him who will not? . . . I cannot stay in evil to preserve unity. I do not want unity in evil, but separation from it. God's unity is always founded on separation since sin came into the world . . . If the unity of the church is to be the sanction of evil, we are landed in Rome at once" (*Letters of J.N.D. Vol. 1, Pages 87 & 90*).

There are those amongst us today who would have us to believe that God recognizes all the denominations as

assemblies; each one being at a different stage of expression and appreciation of New Testament truth. To validate this teaching such brethren point to assemblies which have degenerated into perhaps a worse condition than many 'better' denominations, so to speak. We however draw a very different conclusion from this departure. Assemblies that have departed from the Word of God, and have done so deliberately despite teaching and warning to the contrary, do not serve to justify the denominations but rather make it impossible for believers to recognize *them* any longer as assemblies of God, let alone the denominations around. The call of the Scriptures to believers to come 'outside the camp' of mens' systems and sects must now be made in respect of those 'assemblies' that have been spued out by God, are leavened by unjudged evil and sin, and who refuse to repent.

We are not advocating what is commonly known as 'cutting off' assemblies. Such assemblies actually cut themselves off; from the truth and from all who would seek to hold to the truth. They make it impossible for others to recognize them as assemblies of God. Remaining in association with deliberate error and evil, for the sake of supposed unity or loyalty, is a compromise. We must separate from evil. To quote Andrew Stenhouse again:

"If there did not exist a single scripturally-gathered assembly on the face of the earth, it would still be the privilege of believers to begin meeting according to the divine plan revealed in Scripture" (*The Sin of Sectarianism*, Page 91).

Assemblies are normally formed by preaching the Word, baptising the converts and gathering them together unto the Lord's name for continuation in the

apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking bread and in the prayers (Acts 2:42; 11:19-26). However, as all fellowship is based on doctrine, when, as we have seen above, it is impossible for a believer to continue meeting with a professed 'assembly' (he may have of course been cast out long before he actually feels he must leave the saints altogether; 3 John) he may have to separate from evil and seek to bear fresh testimony to the Lord elsewhere (perhaps with other believers of like mind). This ought only to be done when *all remedy has been rejected* by those with whom he once met regarding moral or doctrinal evil or heresy.

Now, it is evident that if an assembly is formed by such a separation (and not through evangelism or expansion), God cannot recognise both the companies involved. If certain separate in the flesh, simply to form another party (even to defend a certain line of truth), the Lord may well neither recognise the original company with His presence which remains leavened with evil, nor the company that has separated with a sectarian attitude. One thing is clear however, God cannot sanction both; therefore no believers should begin to meet separately from an 'assembly', until it is clear by their state and doctrine that they are no longer the pillar and ground of the truth, having rejected the apostles' doctrine. Though believers, holding to the truth of the Word of God, may cease to recognize a particular assembly of people as an assembly of God, they should nevertheless not cease to pray for their recovery (1 Sam. 12:23).

It needs to be re-emphasised that *every effort* must first have been made by those who have recognised moral or doctrinal evil or heresy in an assembly, to expose the wrong publicly, through preaching sound doctrine and letting no man despise them (1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:15). That is, God is not bound to 'step in' miraculously when He has told us what to do in such situations through His

Word. To withdraw hastily, rashly or without having first proved the existence of moral or doctrinal leaven or heresy; without having waited on God in prayer that the breach might be healed; without having pleaded with the saints to repent and be restored to the Word of God through the help of the Holy Spirit; shows not only self-will, but a lack of real care for God's people, and a lack of true appreciation of how "thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Oh for a return to the New Testament principles which our fathers in the faith practised. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." The remarkable response to that clear direction, which had the prosperity of the Lord's people in mind was, "we will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). Although Jeremiah had a shepherd's heart, the nation clamoured for his death; "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death . . . thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them . . . for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people but the hurt" (Jer. 38:4). The days of Jeremiah have returned wherein the godly advice of true shepherds is disregarded (2 Tim. 4:3). If despising the advice of the old experienced men in 1 Kings 12 led to the nation of Israel being divided, what division will follow from scriptural instruction being despised in an assembly?

## Chapter 5

### CONFIDENCE OR COWARDICE —WHICH?

For those of our readers who recognise some of their history in the preceding pages and are suffering wrongfully (1 Pet. 2:20), we commend the following Scripture study.

Biblical history has proven Solomon right time and again; "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy" (Prov. 27:4). Once a man or woman becomes the subject of another's envy (a desire to deprive) and jealousy (a desire to have) it will not matter who he is (Psa. 106:16), how wisely he acts (1 Sam. 18:5), or how much he really loves his pursuer (2 Cor. 12:15), serious trouble and grief will lie ahead (Prov. 14:30). The New Testament is full of warnings against the problem of envy; 1 Tim. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:1; Gal. 5:26; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Jas. 3:14, 16 & 4:2, all warn about envy. Diotrephes who "loved to have the preeminence" (Greek—*Philoprotuo*), literally "loved to be first". This is another description of envy. Envy causes "wars and fightings", "strife", "confusion and every evil work", not to mention the terrible "root of bitterness" (Heb. 12:15). *It is the surest sign of the absence of love*, since love envieth not (1 Cor. 13:4). In the cases of Abel (Gen. 4:5), Naboth (1 Kings 21:13) and Stephen (Acts 7:58) the fruit of envy was murder and death, but with Joseph, David and Daniel, the end was altogether different.

All three men were similarly 'cast out' and 'cut off' from their fellows through envy and jealousy. One to a pit, one to a cave, and one to a den of lions. They each suffered a combination of ill-tempered speech, anger,

hatred and lies; their pursuers stopping at nothing in the accomplishment of their aims (Gen. 37:4,33; 1 Sam. 18:8-9; Dan. 6:4 respectively). The conspirators who accomplished these "excommunications", *knew all along and admitted that their victims were all the time innocent* (Gen. 42:21; 1 Sam. 18:12; Dan. 6:5). In each case, without the victim 'taking the law into his own hands,' God vindicated him and raised him up again (Gen. 41:43; 2 Sam. 5:3; Dan. 6:2,3,28).

The difference however lies in the fate of those who *made themselves their enemies* (1 Sam. 18:29). Joseph's brothers repented and were spared; Saul was rejected by God and died on the battlefield; and Daniel's fellow princes suffered the very fate they had designed for him. God often foils the plots of men (Acts 23:16-22) by catching them in the very trap that they have laid for another's feet (Psa. 35:7-8). Remember Haman, who was hanged on his own gallows (Esth. 7:10).

The supreme example of one who suffered the consequences of envy is the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:18). Former enemies were made friends as they united against Him (Luke 23:12). He was cast outside of the city, and what He suffered at the hands of men we shall never fully understand. He left us an example, that we should follow His steps; "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). Now He is highly exalted, having despised the shame, "and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Wherefore, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath" (Rom. 12:19). "Blessed are ye when men... shall separate you from their company" (Luke 6:23). "Fret not thyself because of evildoers... Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring

forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday ... Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psa. 37:1,5,6,8). Your "strength is to sit still" (Isa. 30:7). The Lord Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

This might be described as the 'passive side' of a believer's attitude in the face of wrong (1 Cor. 6:7). We must however acknowledge that in matters of truth and its defence, there is a need for positive action. Heb. 10:35 tells us; "Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward." The word confidence (Greek—*Parrhesia*) primarily denotes the absence of fear in speaking boldly, frankly and publicly. Depending on the context in which it is used it may also signify assurance, courage and boldness. The exhortation was timely advice to those besieged Hebrew believers, who had become a public gazing stock by reproaches and afflictions (Heb. 10:33). It gave their faith a stability and freshness which enabled them to continue on for God, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, in spite of overwhelming odds (Heb. 10:25). *We need to ever remember that although circumstances may change, God's principles remain unalterably the same.* Nothing should upset our understanding of God's truth as regards His assembly, let alone shake our basic confidence in God and His revealed Word. No amount of hypocrisy or unrighteousness should leave us cynical as to the truth of God. Contending earnestly for the faith has *always* involved a hard battle, and with apostasy so evident (2 Tim. 3:5-13), believers who stand firm and cast not away their confidence and refuse to compromise the truth of God's Word, may expect persecution from *their own brethren.* Their stand will be interpreted as stubbornness, arrogance and even bigotry, and much that is discreditable will be attributed to what is, actually, faithfulness to the Word of God (1 Cor. 16:13).

**Watch thou in all things.**

For those who have not suffered the trials mentioned above and mercifully know little or nothing of the troubles and problems covered in this book, the Word of God says, "Watch thou in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5). When it looks as though Paul's words are not going to be hearkened to, than stand fast in the faith (body of doctrine), quit you like men, and be strong (1 Cor. 16:13). Reward depends upon faithfulness (Rev. 2:10), and failure to speak up when the call is made for a voice of affirmation will adversely affect one's personal power and testimony (Lev. 5:1). Amidst the general weakness and powerlessness all around, bold uncompromising voices need to be heard, "sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:8). "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). Where are those who will teach the people with Christ's authority and not as the scribes (Mark 1:22)? Paul said to Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

C.H. Mackintosh remarked in 1853; "If error has slain its thousands, perverted truth has slain its ten thousands." Correcting and overcoming the 'perverted truth' exposed in this book, will require much wisdom, courage and boldness. God, in lamenting His prophets said, "They have not discovered (uncovered) thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity" (Lam. 2:14). Sadly, believers generally tend not to read their Bibles in a manner which would give them ability to differentiate between right and wrong in the practice of truth. They will therefore smart from the implementation of human ideas and methods, being taken unawares because no scriptural guidance is given. They may also discover too late, that they are

unable to do anything about an already serious situation. If the holy Scriptures are to be our guide in all matters, including all that takes place in, and in connection with, assemblies of God's people, it is absolutely essential for all believers to have a thorough grasp of the teaching of holy Scripture with regards to the assembly, its elders and its authority, especially in matters of discipline. Learn the truths expounded in this book; "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

For further reading we recommend the following books:

*Spiritual Balance* W. Bunting

*Some Scriptural Principles of the NT Assembly* H. Hitchman

*New Testament Church Principles* A.G. Clarke

*Bishops, Priests and Deacons* W. Hoste

*The Sin of Sectarianism* A. Stenhouse

# Index of Scripture References

|                    |       |                     |    |
|--------------------|-------|---------------------|----|
| <b>GENESIS</b>     |       | <b>1 SAMUEL</b>     |    |
| 4:5 .....          | 65    | 8:20 .....          | 24 |
| 31:40 .....        | 10    | 12:23 .....         | 63 |
| 37:4,33 .....      | 66    | 16:1 .....          | 9  |
| 41:43 .....        | 66    | 17:35 .....         | 11 |
| 42:21 .....        | 66    | 18:5 .....          | 65 |
| <b>EXODUS</b>      |       | 18:8-9 .....        | 66 |
| 40:16 .....        | 23    | 18:12 .....         | 66 |
| <b>LEVITICUS</b>   |       | 18:29 .....         | 66 |
| 5:1 .....          | 68    | 22:8,17 .....       | 43 |
| 13:13 .....        | 52    | <b>2 SAMUEL</b>     |    |
| 21:21 .....        | 49    | 5:3 .....           | 66 |
| <b>NUMBERS</b>     |       | <b>1 KINGS</b>      |    |
| 5:1-4 .....        | 36    | 12 .....            | 64 |
| 35:30 .....        | 31    | 21:13 .....         | 65 |
| <b>DEUTERONOMY</b> |       | <b>1 CHRONICLES</b> |    |
| 13:14 .....        | 35    | 27:1 .....          | 23 |
| 17:6 .....         | 32    | <b>2 CHRONICLES</b> |    |
| 17:7 .....         | 35,36 | 7:14 .....          | 55 |
| <b>JOSHUA</b>      |       | 7:15 .....          | 56 |
| 7:10-13 .....      | 52    | <b>NEHEMIAH</b>     |    |
| <b>JUDGES</b>      |       | 6:8 .....           | 53 |
| 16:20 .....        | 58    | <b>ESTHER</b>       |    |
| 16:26 .....        | 19    | 7:10 .....          | 66 |
| <b>RUTH</b>        |       | <b>JOB</b>          |    |
| 1:1,21 .....       | 58    | 15:9,10 .....       | 16 |

## PSALMS

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| 23:4       | 11,13,14 |
| 35:7-8     | 66       |
| 37:1,5,6,8 | 67       |
| 50:5       | 24       |
| 50:23      | 49       |
| 66:18      | 56       |
| 93:5       | 52       |
| 106:16     | 65       |

## PROVERBS

|          |       |
|----------|-------|
| 14:17    | 9     |
| 14:30    | 65    |
| 16:20,21 | 10,37 |
| 17:5b    | 37    |
| 17:15    | 35    |
| 18:6     | 36    |
| 18:19    | 53    |
| 24:17    | 37    |
| 25:19    | 10    |
| 26:17    | 54    |
| 27:4     | 65    |

## ISAIAH

|      |    |
|------|----|
| 30:7 | 67 |
| 65:5 | 19 |

## JEREMIAH

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| 6:16     | 64 |
| 36:37,38 | 64 |
| 38:4     | 64 |

## LAMENTATIONS

|      |    |
|------|----|
| 2:14 | 68 |
|------|----|

## EZEKIEL

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| 34:2-8   | 15 |
| 36:37-38 | 31 |

## DANIEL

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| 6:4      | 66 |
| 6:5      | 66 |
| 6:2,3,28 | 66 |

## MICAH

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| 3:11b | 60 |
|-------|----|

## ZECHARIAH

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| 11:15 | 14 |
|-------|----|

## MATTHEW

|          |       |
|----------|-------|
| 5:32     | 25    |
| 7:1      | 35    |
| 15:6b    | 42    |
| 15:14    | 17    |
| 18:16    | 32    |
| 18:17    | 47    |
| 18:18-19 | 29,36 |
| 18:20    | 23    |
| 21:32    | 27    |
| 23:3     | 16    |
| 27:18    | 66    |
| 28:20    | 10,22 |

## MARK

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| 1:22  | 68 |
| 3:5   | 9  |
| 3:25  | 30 |
| 6:7   | 29 |
| 6:18  | 25 |
| 11:18 | 50 |

## LUKE

|        |    |
|--------|----|
| 6:23   | 61 |
| 11:35  | 60 |
| 14:28  | 31 |
| 15:4-6 | 14 |
| 23:12  | 66 |

## JOHN

|          |       |
|----------|-------|
| 9:28     | 38    |
| 9:41     | 60    |
| 10:12    | 10,11 |
| 13:7     | 67    |
| 18:20    | 12    |
| 21:15,17 | 13    |
| 18:29-30 | 33    |

## ACTS

|                    |                   |                    |                      |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2:42 . . . . .     | 23,24,30,49,60,63 | 3:6 . . . . .      | 24                   |
| 4:18-19 . . . . .  | 30,50             | 3:16 . . . . .     | 59                   |
| 5:11 . . . . .     | 57                | 3:17 . . . . .     | 28,57                |
| 5:17 . . . . .     | 46                | 4:12 . . . . .     | 38                   |
| 6:2 . . . . .      | 7                 | 4:14-18 . . . . .  | 10                   |
| 6:4 . . . . .      | 30                | 5:2 . . . . .      | 36,52                |
| 7:58 . . . . .     | 65                | 5:4 . . . . .      | 27,29,30,34,53,59    |
| 9:19 . . . . .     | 22                | 5:5 . . . . .      | 34,37,59             |
| 9:26 . . . . .     | 22                | 5:6 . . . . .      | 37                   |
| 9:28 . . . . .     | 22                | 5:7 . . . . .      | 28,36,37,52,59       |
| 11:19-26 . . . . . | 63                | 5:8 . . . . .      | 36                   |
| 11:25 . . . . .    | 13                | 5:11 . . . . .     | 27,38,39,41,42,52,53 |
| 12:5-12 . . . . .  | 30                | 5:13 . . . . .     | 27,36,59             |
| 14:26,28 . . . . . | 30                | 6:7 . . . . .      | 67                   |
| 15:4 . . . . .     | 25                | 6:10 . . . . .     | 38                   |
| 15:6 . . . . .     | 30                | 6:11 . . . . .     | 25                   |
| 15:36 . . . . .    | 13                | 10:11-12 . . . . . | 56                   |
| 20:7 . . . . .     | 30                | 11:2-16 . . . . .  | 28                   |
| 20:17-38 . . . . . | 30                | 11:3 . . . . .     | 28                   |
| 20:28 . . . . .    | 7,13,15           | 11:10 . . . . .    | 28                   |
| 20:29 . . . . .    | 11                | 11:17 . . . . .    | 30                   |
| 20:30 . . . . .    | 8,40              | 11:18 . . . . .    | 30,46                |
| 23:4 . . . . .     | 38                | 11:19 . . . . .    | 46,47                |
| 23:16-22 . . . . . | 66                | 11:20-34 . . . . . | 30                   |
| 24:14 . . . . .    | 46                | 11:30,32 . . . . . | 28,58                |
| 26:5 . . . . .     | 46                | 11:31 . . . . .    | 58                   |
| 27:13 . . . . .    | 51                | 11:33 . . . . .    | 30                   |
| 27:15,20 . . . . . | 51                | 11:34 . . . . .    | 30                   |
| 27:21 . . . . .    | 51                | 12:13 . . . . .    | 21                   |
|                    |                   | 12:15 . . . . .    | 30,58                |
|                    |                   | 12:18 . . . . .    | 30,58                |
|                    |                   | 12:21 . . . . .    | 30,58                |
|                    |                   | 12:22 . . . . .    | 30,58                |
|                    |                   | 12:28 . . . . .    | 40                   |
|                    |                   | 13:4 . . . . .     | 65                   |
|                    |                   | 13:6 . . . . .     | 35                   |
|                    |                   | 14:23 . . . . .    | 14,39                |
|                    |                   | 14:26 . . . . .    | 10,30                |
|                    |                   | 14:29-33 . . . . . | 25                   |
|                    |                   | 14:34 . . . . .    | 49                   |
|                    |                   | 15:12 . . . . .    | 38                   |
|                    |                   | 15:27 . . . . .    | 19                   |
|                    |                   | 16:13 . . . . .    | 67,68                |
|                    |                   | 16:15,16 . . . . . | 12,19                |

## ROMANS

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 2:24 . . . . .    | 53          |
| 7:3 . . . . .     | 25          |
| 7:18 . . . . .    | 53          |
| 12:19 . . . . .   | 66          |
| 13:10 . . . . .   | 21          |
| 13:13 . . . . .   | 65          |
| 15:17 . . . . .   | 21          |
| 16:1,2 . . . . .  | 22,24,26,59 |
| 16:5-15 . . . . . | 22          |
| 16:17 . . . . .   | 47,61       |

## 1 CORINTHIANS

|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| 1:2 . . . . .     | 51,59 |
| 1:11-13 . . . . . | 59    |
| 3:3 . . . . .     | 65    |

## 2 CORINTHIANS

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| 1:1 . . . . .  | 51 |
| 1:17 . . . . . | 37 |
| 2:6 . . . . .  | 33 |

|         |       |
|---------|-------|
| 2:8     | 52    |
| 2:9     | 59    |
| 2:11    | 52    |
| 2:17    | 38    |
| 3:1     | 24    |
| 4:2     | 38    |
| 6:14,18 | 25    |
| 7:9     | 52    |
| 7:8-12  | 59    |
| 10:8    | 29    |
| 11:20   | 10    |
| 11:29   | 5     |
| 12:15   | 65    |
| 13:7-8  | 34,35 |
| 13:10   | 29    |

## GALATIANS

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 2:9   | 19    |
| 5:9   | 37,59 |
| 5:20  | 46    |
| 5:26  | 65    |
| 6:1   | 14,32 |
| 6:7,8 | 42,56 |

## EPHESIANS

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| 1:23    | 21 |
| 2:20    | 29 |
| 4:3     | 52 |
| 4:3-7   | 24 |
| 4:11    | 13 |
| 4:11-16 | 24 |
| 4:12    | 7  |
| 4:14    | 51 |
| 5:21    | 19 |
| 5:22    | 19 |
| 5:24    | 19 |

## PHILIPPIANS

|      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1:1  | 7     |
| 1:12 | 5     |
| 2:3  | 19    |
| 2:5  | 46    |
| 2:29 | 22,26 |

## COLOSSIANS

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| 4:6 | 68 |
|-----|----|

## 1 THESSALONIANS

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| 4:14,18 | 59   |
| 5:12    | 8,10 |
| 5:13    | 16   |
| 5:14    | 48   |
| 5:15    | 48   |

## 2 THESSALONIANS

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| 3:6   | 48 |
| 3:7,9 | 48 |
| 3:12  | 48 |

## 1 TIMOTHY

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| 1:20       | 37,41      |
| 1:19,20    | 37         |
| 2:11,12,15 | 28         |
| 3:1        | 8,12,14,15 |
| 3:1,7      | 7,9        |
| 3:2        | 7,11       |
| 3:4        | 9          |
| 3:6        | 16         |
| 3:9        | 10         |
| 3:13       | 10         |
| 3:15       | 24,60,64   |
| 4:4        | 11         |
| 4:5        | 68         |
| 4:6        | 7          |
| 4:12       | 63         |
| 5:1        | 16,41      |
| 5:14       | 39         |
| 5:17       | 10,12,16   |
| 5:19-24    | 16,17,34   |
| 5:20       | 33         |
| 5:21       | 36         |
| 5:22-24    | 43         |
| 6:4        | 65         |

## 2 TIMOTHY

|         |       |
|---------|-------|
| 1:7     | 68    |
| 2:15    | 11    |
| 2:17,19 | 38    |
| 2:25,26 | 47    |
| 3:5,13  | 67    |
| 3:10    | 46    |
| 4:1,2   | 25,61 |
| 4:2,7   | 61    |
| 4:3,4   | 4,64  |
| 4:5     | 68    |

## TITUS

|        |       |
|--------|-------|
| 1:6,9  | 7     |
| 1:6,11 | 11    |
| 1:7    | 8,13  |
| 1:9    | 11    |
| 1:10   | 48,49 |
| 1:11   | 48,49 |
| 1:14   | 11    |
| 2:8    | 68    |
| 2:15   | 29,63 |
| 3:1    | 41    |
| 3:10   | 45,49 |
| 3:11   | 47    |

## HEBREWS

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| 2:5   | 19          |
| 10:25 | 58,59,67    |
| 10:35 | 67          |
| 12:2  | 66          |
| 12:13 | 14          |
| 12:15 | 15,65       |
| 13:7  | 10,17       |
| 13:17 | 10,17,18,19 |
| 13:24 | 10,16       |

## JAMES

|         |       |
|---------|-------|
| 3:10    | 56    |
| 3:14,16 | 37,65 |
| 3:17    | 50    |
| 4:2     | 65    |

## 1 PETER

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 2:1       | 65            |
| 2:20      | 39,65         |
| 2:21      | 66            |
| 2:23      | 39            |
| 3:9       | 39            |
| 5:1       | 7,14          |
| 5:1,5     | 7             |
| 5:3       | 8,14,16,40,41 |
| 5:4       | 17            |
| 5:1,4     | 7             |
| 5:2       | 8,13,15       |
| 5:4       | 7             |
| 5:5,14,19 | 41            |
| 5:8       | 69            |

## 2 PETER

|      |          |
|------|----------|
| 2:1  | 37,45    |
| 2:8  | 40       |
| 2:9  | 39       |
| 2:10 | 41       |
| 2:11 | 12,39,42 |
| 2:12 | 39,41    |
| 2:21 | 37       |

## 1 JOHN

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| 1:3 | 21 |
| 1:6 | 21 |

## 2 JOHN

|        |       |
|--------|-------|
| v.7    | 38    |
| v.9,10 | 38,52 |

## 3 JOHN

|      |       |
|------|-------|
| v.5  | 54    |
| v.8  | 54    |
| v.10 | 53,54 |
| v.11 | 54,61 |

## JUDE

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| v.4  | 37,39       |
| v.8  | 41          |
| v.9  | 17,39,41,42 |
| v.10 | 40,41,53    |
| v.13 | 39          |

## REVELATION

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 2:5     | 57      |
| 2:6     | 40      |
| 2:10    | 68      |
| 2:14,15 | 52      |
| 2:16    | 57      |
| 2:20,23 | 57      |
| 2:29    | 51      |
| 3:3     | 57      |
| 3:16-19 | 57      |
| 3:17    | 4,57,58 |
| 3:19    | 5       |
| 3:20    | 61      |