

Why Withdrawal?

"Put away the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13). There are many reasons why sometimes withdrawal is necessary for a congregation to do.

First and foremost the action is commanded to save the sinful one: "... for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

"Flesh" in this instance stands for the sinful, carnal desires of the flesh. In his Roman letter Paul contrasted the "*mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit.*" The apostle showed that "*the mind of the flesh*" brings death (Rom. 8:6); enmity against God (Rom. 8:7); that which neither is nor can be subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:7). The Ephesians were reminded that the Jews "*had lived in the lusts of the flesh, they did the desires of the flesh and the mind*" (Eph. 2:3). Hopefully, by the withdrawal of all social contact and fellowship with the sinful one, godly sorrow may bring repentance to him (2 Cor. 7:10).

Second, withdrawal is to be done to protect the church. The question, "*Know ye not that a little leaven leaveth the whole lump,*" succinctly sets forth the truth (1 Cor. 5:6). The Lord desires that His church be pure; He died that such might be done. His death, an act of love, was that the church might be sanctified, cleansed by the washing of water with the word, that "*he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be without holy and without blemish*" (Eph. 5:26f). In John's letter to the seven Asian churches, the leaven of wickedness was present in the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira, jeopardizing the salvation of those involved, posing a danger of condemnation to all the rest (Rev. 2:14-16; 2 Tim. 2:20-22). The leaven of wickedness can slowly but surely bring spiritual death to the whole congregation. The glorying, the pride of the Corinthians in the brother living with his father's wife was not good. They were to "*purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump*" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Finally, withdrawal is necessary that the church might be an effectual instrument in reaching lost of the world. What appeal does a divided, bickering church have to those who are troubled in mind, seeking peace and solace to the lost? What appeal does a worldly, compromised church have to a lost world? The church is to be seen as "*lights in the world, holding forth the word of life*" (Phil. 2:16). Why should an immoral, worldly person become part of a church which in character is no different than himself? The

gospel is designed to bring about a new creature, one who has laid aside the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). It is true that some folks wish a cloak for their sin -- an air of respectability. Were this not so, there would be no churches openly embracing the homosexual community, nor any reason why such a one should desire membership in a church, supposedly a church of God. But, to those who know that the "*unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:5); the tolerant, embracing of unrepentant sinners, or condoning by their stilled voice of protests, the foregoing church has no appeal to them.

Never forget that it is not just the self satisfied, proud, such as Laodicea, which makes the Lord "sick at his stomach;" the church filled with practicing fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, covetous, and liars are an abomination to God as well. God's people, to protect their own salvation, to have an appeal to them lost in sin; must not only "*come out from among them and be separate*" themselves; they must by patient, but decisive action, "*put away the wicked man from among yourselves.*" Such may cause a loss in numbers, but enlarge their stand in sight of good and thoughtful men.

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