

Dangers Facing The Church

By
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One of the dangers that the Lord's church faces in many places is that of having those within her membership who became such, or of those who are becoming members because of their desire for personal gain. In many communities the Lord's church may be the largest church in town, or there may be more local churches in a given town than there are those of the denominational bodies.

In such instances, it may be popular to be a member of the church of Christ. Where this is the condition, there are those who are entering into or already have done so, not because of any convictions on their part that the church is God's plan, but to be identified with faithful Christians affords many contacts for personal gain. In such instances, men in business see good potentials in making a success at their jobs because they can call upon the members of the church to sell them their products. Were some denomination the largest body in town, they would just as soon be a member of that denomination. These people look upon the Lord's people as a way to further their cause. A person remarked to me one time that it was the thing to do to be a member of the Lord's church in Nashville, Tennessee. This person was speaking from the standpoint of making contacts and being well known because of being a member of the church. But if it is the thing to do to be a member of the Lord's people in Nashville, it is the thing to do to be among the people of God regardless of where one lives, whether it is popular or unpopular, whether the church has 10 members in town or 10,000 members in town.

These individuals who are members of the church because of personal gain pose a problem to the church because they measure everything

from the viewpoint of the dollar. If the ungodly are to be disciplined, they want no part of it and will usually let it be known that they do not approve, because they know that if it is learned that they stood behind the truth in the practice of discipline some of their contacts would do business with someone else. When any other problem comes up these gain seeking people can always decide on the solution to the problem by looking as how it will affect them. I am convinced, as well as other preachers, that one reason many brethren have chosen the path of institutionalism and the social gospel of modernism in the church today is because they can see that it is on that side where the money is. And if they had been able to see where they could have made more money, then they would have taken their stand with truth.

The faithful child of God should not let these personal gain seeking people affect his stand for truth because these kind of men also lived in the days of Christ and the apostles. Jesus Christ while here on earth was constantly followed by people who were not interested in what he had to say but in what they' could get out of him from a material standpoint. So it is today with many in the church. We might not be able to know each of these, but we need not forget that the Lord knows (II Tim. 2:19). Christ can look into the hearts of men and know exactly for what reason they follow him. After many days in his preaching the multitudes continued to follow him, Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). These were not interested in following Him because they knew by His miracles that he was the Christ, (John 3:2; 20:30-31), but because they had their bellies filled by his miracles. And when they ceased to profit by following him, they stopped and went away (John 6:60-66). Just so today, when these in the church cease to profit by being in the Lord's church they turn to the" denominations of men.

Men who follow the Lord for personal gain need to have pointed out to them that they are perishing, that they are lost in that condition. In Acts 8, there is the record of a man who attempted to profit with the Lord's way and he was told in no uncertain terms that his soul stood in danger. Peter said unto him, "Thy money perish with thee,... thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23).

Men should follow Jesus regardless of the number knowing that there never will be many in comparison to the number in the world, (Mat. 7:13-14), that will follow Jesus. We should follow Him when we are in the majority or the minority. We should always follow Jesus. My friend, why do you follow the Christ? For personal gain? Or because you are convinced from the testimony from the New Testament that he is the Christ of God? May it never be said of us that we ceased to follow Jesus when we ceased to gain material wealth by so doing.

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