



Lakeland Hills Leader

LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST

2510 Lakeland Hills Boulevard Lakeland Florida 33805

ELDERS

Bob Marschall
Leon Miller
Larry Wisdom

EVANGELIST:

Chuck Kozens

SERVICES

Sunday
Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
Evening Services 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

DEACONS:

Bucky Day
Sherman Johnson
Michael Sadler
David Williams

MARKING THE OFFENDERS

By H.E. Phillips

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom.16:17). Sometimes tasks in preaching the gospel and living as a Christian can be very unpleasant, but they are necessary in obeying the word of God. Obeying the verse above is one of those unpleasant duties necessary to keep the church pure in doctrine and practice. Since the days of the apostles' men and women have not been content to remain in "the faith once delivered" by the apostles and have created "*ways and means*" of religious endeavor "*contrary to the doctrine*" of the Lord. Unfortunately, many whom we love are following the course of Judaizing teachers to teach "*things which they ought not*" (Tit.1:11). Furthermore, they find eager ears in those who "*will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*" (2 Tim 4:3-4).

The question of concern to every sincere Christian is: How shall I deal with these people? Shall I close my ears and eyes and for the sake of "*peace*" just go along with them as if no difference existed? Shall I oppose them as "*false brethren*" and bring down the forces of these false teachers and their followers, as well as the "*neutrals*," upon myself? This question is answered for me in the word of God. I have no choice if I am to obey God.

MARK THEM:

Rom. 16:17 instructs us to mark certain ones to be avoided. This word in the original means

"to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to, anyone." The word by itself does not give the reason why this action is to be taken. In Phil. 3:17 Paul says to "mark" (*to give attention to*) those who walk in such a way as to be imitating Paul. In Rom. 16:17 the "fixing attention upon" is for an entirely different purpose. It here refers to those who "cause divisions and offences" contrary to the doctrine. It does not permit the dealing in vague generalities; it demands direct "marking" of those who are guilty. Of course, this is to be done by the doctrine of Christ. We are not to shut our eyes to what they are doing, nor to make excuses for them.

WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS AND OFFENCES:

The cause of any break of fellowship is the teaching of unauthorized practices. When one teaches what he cannot prove by the New Testament, either by command, necessary conclusion, or approved example, this separates him from those who teach only what is New Testament doctrine. Certainly, division results, but the cause rests with those who teach and practice that which is not of the "faith once delivered" (Jude 3). Whatever is less than or beyond the "doctrine which ye learned" is contrary to it. This includes the use of the instrument of music in worship, the operation of societies supported by the church, the doctrine of Premillennialism, etc. Those who teach such are going beyond the doctrine of Christ and do not have either the Father or the Son (2 John 9,10). The one who bids such teachers "God speed" is a partaker of their evil deeds.

The word cause is from a Greek term which means "to make." In Matt. 5:32 the man who puts away his wife except for the cause of fornication, "causes" her to commit adultery.

False teachers "make" divisions and offences by the very fact that they teach "another gospel." The professed Christians (*Judaizing teachers*) of Paul's day who insisted upon the observance of the law of Moses (*in the light of their tradition*) were the real troublemakers in the church. Had they kept the doctrine delivered to them by the apostles, there would have been no divisions and offences.

Divisions is from a word which means "dissension — divisions." It implies factions and parties in the church, created by that which was contrary to the doctrine of Christ. The gospel will produce division when one man accepts it and another tries to change it. Christ said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). The next verses explain that even among relatives in the flesh, division would come from the word of God. This is because it separates the obedient from the disobedient, the righteous from the unrighteous; one will obey it, the other will not. Usually when one does not obey the truth, someone who teaches another gospel is responsible. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth" (Gal. 3:1). We stand (*or should stand*) openly opposed to every denominational doctrine and church on the face of the earth. Not

to be unkind or bitter, but because these doctrines are responsible for all the division in the religious world today. Someone taught a doctrine "contrary" to that delivered in the N. T.

Offences is from a Greek term which means "to cast a stumbling block before one — to cause persons to be drawn away from the true doctrine into error and sin." Jesus said: "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!" (Luke 17:1). The devil always has someone around to cause a Christian to stumble if he is unstable in the word of truth. Infant baptism is a practice unauthorized in the doctrine of Christ. The man who teaches and practices it "causes" division because he insists upon something that the one abiding in the doctrine of Christ cannot accept. They stand apart on this matter and can never be reconciled until the false position is given up. He not only causes "divisions" by the doctrine, but also "offences" because he leads people into error and sin by preaching "another gospel" (Gal. 1:8,9).

CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE:

The "doctrine" here is the teaching of Christ as delivered by the apostles. It is called the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42); "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9); "sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3); "doctrine of God" (Tit. 2:10); "the gospel" (Rom. 1:16); "the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22); and "the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). There is no other gospel that will save but this one delivered by the apostles (Gal. 1:8,9). Anything and everything contrary to it is condemned. We cannot go beyond that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9-10).

AVOID THEM:

This is strong language and required action that is not always easy, especially when some involved in the false doctrines are our loved ones and friends. But do we have a choice if we are to walk by the doctrine of Christ? The answer is evident!

The word "avoid" is from a Greek term which means: "To turn away from, keep aloof from, one's society; to shun one." It simply means to have no fellowship with those who teach and follow doctrines not taught in the New Testament. We must actively oppose false teachers and all works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Paul not only told us not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, but he also said, "but rather reprove them." He practiced that very thing in Galatia: he said of "false brethren unawares brought in," "to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). That is exactly what we are to do in dealing with false brethren today. If we are found guilty of approving, encouraging, aiding, condoning, or in any way giving sanction to those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ, we become partaker of their evil works (2 John 9-10). Former friends will become bitter enemies overnight, and for no reason other than that of opposing their unscriptural doctrines and practices. "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

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