



The Reflector

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" • Acts 4:20

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"Keep Yourself Pure"

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The Apostle Paul, an old soldier of the cross, instructs young Timothy to "keep yourself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22 NKJV). This included his behavior as a **preacher** and as a **person**: "Take heed to yourself and to the **doctrine**. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (1 Tim. 4:16)

Timothy needed to carefully maintain both doctrinal and personal purity. Besides the danger to his soul, either kind of impurity would harm the Cause of Christ. If he lacked either, he could not be very effective as a Christian, to say nothing as a preacher.

I know a few people who seem to consider one's personal life to be incidental to his work as a teacher/preacher. To these, doctrinal purity is *the* thing, personal purity is a good, even important, but non-essential, supplement. On the other hand, I know a few who seem to consider personal purity to be *the* thing with doctrinal purity being incidental. Christians must maintain *both*.

We are concerned about the personal purity among those who we believe to be doctrinally pure. All need to maintain personal purity "so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed." (1 Tim. 6:1).

All too frequently, we learn, to our sorrow, of "affairs" among those professing to be Christians. Only the Lord knows how much goes on that we never learn about. It is not limited to the "rank and file" among us. Teachers, preachers, deacons, and elders are among those we hear about. What bothers me nearly as much as hearing

about such things is that many treat it as though it were no big deal. We must say, lest anyone get the wrong impression, we believe that 99-plus percent of brethren who are doctrinally pure are also personally pure. Still, that minute number whose personal life is impure does irreparable damage to the Lord's church — especially when it involves those who can be particularly influential toward others.

Let us, with Paul, appeal to all Christians, mainly those in the same position as was Timothy — young and/or public teachers — to "keep yourself pure".

Paul especially admonishes Timothy about his conduct toward women. "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, *younger women* as sisters, with **all purity** (or chastity — EOB)." (1 Tim. 5:1,2).

Timothy is admonished to "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). The Corinthians were admonished to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18). "Flee" is from PHEUGO (φεύγω): "*apparently a primary verb; to run away (literally or figuratively); by implication, to shun; by analogy, to vanish.*" (Strong's)

Brother or sister, do not test the limits of your resistance to temptation. Do not flirt with sexual immorality or other youthful lusts. Flee (run away) from it as fast as you can. One has never had "an affair" who did not either put himself into a position or allowed himself to be maneuvered into a position where it could happen. Don't be a fool. Don't think that you are so strong

that you could not become involved. ("Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" — 1 Cor. 10:12). Take extra steps to prevent getting into a position where something improper either might happen or could reasonably be thought by others to have happened. Preachers, principally young preachers, need to do this. About thirty five years ago, an older preacher gave this young preacher a piece of advice that would help guard his purity and reputation as a Christian and a preacher. I think it is worth repeating. As I remember, this is about what he said: "When you go visiting and find only a woman at home, do not enter the house but excuse yourself and return later when others will be present. If you must go visit some sister who you know may be alone carry your wife or some other good responsible person with you." It is still good advice. It may inconvenience you and those you ask to go with you at times, but it will protect you from vicious gossipers and from weaknesses that you may not even know you have — and don't need to find out.

If one yields to temptation and

See Pure on page 4

Schedule Of Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes 9:45 a.m.

Worship 10:45 a.m.

Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays:

Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Bible Classes 7:30 p.m.

Premature Marriages

Bobby Witherington

On this day a young mother, not yet 20, came to my office. Her eyes were red, her face was lined, her voice was broken. Clearly, she had a problem. Many girls her age are comparatively carefree, busily engaged with college activities, or maybe full of hope and recently married.

But not this lady. Recently married? No, she married at 15, or was it 14? In college? No, she didn't finish high school. Carefree? No, not with a deserter husband, 2 small children, no job, no food, and an inadequate education!

No, their future is not hopeless. Notwithstanding her folly in quitting school and jumping hastily into a marriage that neither were prepared for, she showed that old fashioned grit and determination capable only of being manifested by a burdened, loving mother, who will go to the "ends of the earth" before letting her children starve or be taken from her. But isn't it pathetic that her horizon must be darkened so, that her burdens must be multiplied almost beyond one's physical, mental, and emotional capacities will permit-and at such a young age? Isn't it tragic that two small, innocent children must grow up amid the uncertainties, and emotional complexities that will be their lot? And pity even the renegade husband whose spiritual condition is described as being "worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8), and who will most likely reach the point of having no respect for himself nor receive any of others.

You say this couldn't happen to YOU? Maybe not, but a few years ago she would likely have said it

couldn't happen to her. But it DID happen, and it is happening over and over every day to young people just like YOU.

In this day of bright lights, lax restrictions, spending money, and the "keys to Dad's car", the craze to "go steady" often results in hasty ill-prepared for marriages, entered into by those who are neither scholastically, physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually ready to take such a serious and far-reaching

lazy, husband will not adequately provide for "his own" (1 Tim. 5:8), nor will a beautiful wife who eateth the "bread of idleness" look "well to the ways of her household" (Prov. 31:27). Become a Christian yourself and determine to marry only a Christian. Mixed marriages, religious discord, and disagreement in things spiritual make for confusion, unhappiness, bitterness, and sometimes divorce. Confide in Mom and Dad, and respect their judgment!

They may seem "old fashioned", but they know by experience that these things are vital, and they have YOUR interest in mind. Be cautious concerning the crowd you "run with." "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).

No, I'm not against marriage. "Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). I know by experience that a happy marriage is the greatest source of joy this side of heaven. But on the other hand, an unhappy marriage can be the greatest source of

misery this side of hell! So, young people, be careful, be wise, beware, be sensible, and be SURE, so that YOUR marriage will be happy, and so that it will last "till death do you part." You owe this much to YOURSELF!

Via PAUSE · PONDER · PROFIT

Moving?

If you move, Please send us a change of address notice. Each returned paper costs the church 30¢. Please include both your old and new addresses.



step. Young people, YOU are a part of this generation. You are affected by it. Some of your friends will make the same mistake this girl made. Make sure YOU don't!

How can you avoid what happened to her? Don't get married until you are ready to settle down and be a wife or a husband. Maintain your purity and self respect (1 Tim. 4:12). Skip the petting! Such arouses passions it cannot satisfy. Can one take fire into his bosom and not be burned (cf. Prov. 6:27)? Learn to work! A handsome, but

Elder Shortage

J. F. Dancer, Jr.

I read a lot today about a great "preacher" shortage among churches. There may be such. But there is another "shortage" that in my mind brings more danger to men's souls and that hinders the growth of the Lord's people even more. This is a shortage of men qualified to do the work of elders!

Many congregations are existing (and have existed upwards to 50 years) without men qualified to serve as elders. The Bible teaches there should be a plurality of elders in each congregation. Now, I know that a congregation CAN exist scripturally for a time WITHOUT elders. I also know that when it does it is working under a handicap and is not as God wants it to be.

What is being done to alleviate this "shortage"? Some congregations are disregarding the Bible and installing men who do not even come close to qualifications given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:5-9. Men have been appointed without any children and with children who are not believers. Men are in the "eldership" who could not teach a person the first principles much less convince the gainsayer. Others are designated as elders who are barely 25 years of age and only a very short time as children of God. This is no way to properly solve this shortage.

Brethren, to disregard God's qualifications and appoint the "best we have" or "those who do the work anyhow" is sinful. To appoint novices, adulterers, quarrelsome men, impatient men and/or men who cannot control their families

and who failed to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord to oversee the church and to watch for the souls of saints does not solve the problem. It only creates another problem to add to those already present.

We need to concentrate on teaching and training more young men to develop the qualities Paul presented as necessary to do the work. We could not think of casting aside any part of the "plan of salvation" yet we disregard (thus cast aside) this part of God's instructions to his people. We need more men with faithful families

who have learned self-control and who love God enough to accept the responsibility of becoming and then being set into the work of overseeing the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-4). This may take another

generation to "grow up" in both years and spiritual maturity but IT MUST BE DONE! Let's work to the end that there will be enough elders to OVERSEE the flock and insist they are men who fit the pattern set forth by God.

This will relieve the "shortage" in a way pleasing to God. It will allow God's people to function in a way pleasing to him as we follow the Bible. It provides proper oversight for God's people.

Via PAUSE · PONDER · PROFIT

Come
Study with Us
Soon

"Being dead ...

Still speaks."

The Sin Of Murmuring

Earl Fly

The word "murmur" is defined as "low, muttered complaints; grumbling." (Webster). It is condemned by God as being sinful. We are commended to "do all things **without murmuring** and disputings." (Phil. 2:16). The apostle Paul warned Christians against this sin in his letter to the Corinthians: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:10). The sinfulness of murmuring is vividly illustrated by God's severity of punishment toward the guilty Jews, as shown in the following account.

Korah, Dathan, Ahiram, fifty princes of the congregation and others rebelled and murmured against God's servants Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1-11). "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. . . they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation." (Verses 32-33). "And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. (Verse 35). When the Jews murmured that Moses and Aaron were responsible for the deaths. God killed **fourteen thousand, seven hundred** of them by a plague (Verses 41-49). This is written for our admonition and should cause all murmurers in the church to repent and reform, lest they suffer a "sorer punishment." (Heb.10:28-29).

A murmurer can do great harm and irreparable damage in a congregation by creating discontent discouragement and apathy among members, by sowing discord among the brethren (which God hates--Prov. 6:19), by undermining the work of the preacher, teachers, deacons, and the rule of elders. This many times creates a general attitude of dissatisfaction and loss of interest, enthusiasm and zeal, resulting in decreased attendance,

Scheduled for 1990 Gospel Meetings

Granville Tyler
May 6-11

Donnie Rader
December 2-7

contribution and impairment of all work in general. The murmurer may then be the first to criticize the lack growth, and may use the preacher or someone else as the scapegoat to bear the blame, not realizing or ignoring the fact that his own sin is responsible.

The murmurer does not truly love God and is not really interested in the welfare and growth of the church, but in his own selfish desires and opinions. He is either woefully ignorant of or wilfully disregards God's word regarding his sin, and is a dangerous threat to the cause of Christ. He can and does destroy or greatly lessen the

influence and work of those who happen to be the object of his disgruntled attack. It is difficult to deal with such a situation because oftentimes the murmurer does not have the courage or character to honorably discuss his complaints with the proper ones, but whispers them in secret to others. Christians should not lend receptive ears nor endorsement to murmuring, but exhort the guilty one to cease his sin. Remember, if one will murmur TO you, he may murmur ABOUT

you, because many times he is a pharisaical faultfinder, a chronic complainer with a hypercritical attitude who is usually never satisfied very long with any arrangement.

We earnestly exhort all murmurers everywhere in the name of Christ to repent of this sin, to cease and desist in tearing down the work of God, and to get busy in the kingdom to build it up. Those who truly love God and his church have no desire to be hypercritical faultfinders, wandering about murmuring to all who will listen. If anyone should persist in this sin after proper warnings and efforts to restore, then scriptural discipline should be brought about to protect the flock of God and its work. The work of our Lord is too important to allow murmurers to run and ruin the church.

☛ **Pure**

from page 1

become guilty of impurity, he can quickly repair the damage to his soul, by repenting and asking God for forgiveness. God is faithful and just to forgive. Brethren should

follow the Lord's in forgiveness. But, the damage done to his reputation and to the cause of Christ is not as easily and quickly repaired. Sometimes this damage can never be repaired. While one forgiven of God will not have to live with the guilt of his sin, nor face it in the judgment, he may very well have to live with temporal consequences of it for the rest of his life. What a price to pay for something that could, with proper precautions, have been prevented in the first place.

A Christian truly needs to be careful so that he can "be an example to the believers . . . in purity". (1 Tim. 4:12).

Searching the Scriptures Feb., 1964

Receipe for a Home

Half a cup of friendship
 And a cup of thoughtfulness,
 Creamed together with a pinch
 Of powdered Tenderness.

Very lightly beaten
 In a bowl of loyalty,
 With a cup of faith, and one of hope,
 And one of charity.

Be sure to add a spoonful each
 Of gaiety-that-sings.
 And also the ability
 To-laugh-at-little-things.

Moisten with the sudden tears
 Of heartfelt sympathy;
 Bake in a good-natured pan
 And serve repeatedly.

Christian Home

The Reflector is published monthly by the **Fultondale Church of Christ** meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale Alabama 35068.

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The Reflector

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