

WHEN IS ONE BACKSLIDING?

When the sermon is too long or too strong
When you murmur if called upon to give a little more
When everyone is wrong but you
When things have to go your way or you won't cooperate
When you won't admit wrong—when you are
When the headache you take to work keeps you from attending worship
When visitors keep you from attending worship
When you grow weary of sound doctrine.

—Author unknown

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monthly Men's Meeting is today...

Let us pray for...

Rick & Sheila Beauchamp—his job hunt, mother, her ears
Waynette Davis, Karla Dobbs, Sharon Harp—health problems
Lavonne McClish—macular degeneration treatments
Janice Parks—her health and family burdens
Rick Heimberger, Darrell Conley—health problems

Records you helped make...

Bible Class	12
Sunday AM Worship	12
Sunday PM Worship	12
Wednesday PM Bible Class/Worship	10
Contribution	\$390.00
Contribution average (2009)	\$336.13

Sermon broadcasts...

Both sermons each Sunday are broadcast via Internet, available at our Website, www.northpointcoc.com. The Sunday morning sermon begins at approximately 10:47 a.m., and Sunday afternoon at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Bible class teacher for October

Rick Beauchamp

Chairman of Men's Meetings (October–December)

Darrell Broking

Preacher, *The Lighthouse* editor

Dub McClish

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Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 1:00 PM

Wednesday

B.C./Worship 7:00 PM



The Northpoint Lighthouse

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A PLEA FOR DOCTRINAL PURITY

Emphasis upon adherence to Biblical doctrine is unheard of in both Catholic and Protestant religious bodies. It is of little more importance to a host of those who still claim to be members of the church of Christ. In spite of these realities, there was never a more devilish doctrine than the one that discounts doctrine. No one can read the New Testament with an unbiased eye and keep from seeing its constant, frequent, unvarying emphasis on doctrinal purity. It begins with such representative statements from the Christ as, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31) and does not end until the final words of the Sacred volume (Rev. 22:18–19). **No New Testament author neglects this emphasis.**

The motive behind this strong and consistent theme is the fact that the Word of God, given through His Son, is God's spiritual "seed" (Luke 8:11). If the seed is faithfully preserved and planted, it can produce nought but the plant imprinted by God on its spiritual DNA (Gal. 6:7). Moreover, when the seed germinates, the plant it produces is the church Jesus promised to build (Mat. 16:18). Further, the church can remain pure, healthy, and strong only so long as it abides in the Gospel of Christ.

Apostasy cannot be defined apart from doctrinal corruption. When 1 or 100 saints move away from Christ, they do so because they have embraced a different, perverted "gospel" (Gal. 1:6–7). The reason why hundreds of congregations today are different from what they were in faithfulness even one generation ago is that they ceased to abide in the inspired doctrine.

The two—the doctrine and the church—are inseparably linked. When the doctrine is changed, a vicious cycle, almost incapable of being interrupted, is set in motion. Change of doctrine creates changes in the work and worship of the congregation. The more the church changes, the more true doctrine is despised, causing yet further digressions from the Truth. Eventually, the only evidence remaining that such congregations were once churches of Christ is the sign on the building, which has become nothing more than a disguise, masking what is inside from the unwary.

Is it any wonder that the inspired men were so boldly militant in pressing the priority of the preservation of Divine Truth? The very survival of the church in every generation depends upon doing so. As they were, so must we be "set for the defense of the Gospel," "ready always to give answer" for our hope, and

determined to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered” (Phi. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). This is precisely why Paul made his powerful appeal on this theme to the saints at Rome: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17).

No better illustration can be found of the consequences of ignoring this appeal than the total apostasy of the church to which Paul addressed the foregoing charge. The Roman congregation remained a church of Christ indeed only so long as she faithfully preached and practiced apostolic doctrine. When tolerance of false doctrine and its teachers began to prevail, the loss of her Scriptural identity was sealed; the seed was corrupted. Over a span of the next few centuries it developed into the monstrosity known as the Roman Catholic Church. **Will we learn the lessons of history?**

—Dub McClish
Denton, TX



ON CHARACTER AND REPUTATION

Reputation isn't everything. Character is much more important. A reputation that is gained without character is hypocrisy. A reputation that grows out of a good character is simply giving honor to whom honor is due. Character is within your power. Reputation is a thing over which you have little control. Character cannot be taken away from you by any man. Reputation can be stolen from you by liars.

Striving for character is strength. Aiming solely at reputation is weakness. Character endures difficulty. Reputation seekers are confused when difficulty arises. Character seeks to do what is right. Reputation seekers seek to do what is acceptable to the most mortals. Integrity, honesty, clarity, and honor are valued by men and women of character. Vagueness, indistinct communication, and craftiness are hallmarks of reputation seekers.

The man with character can stand alone when duty calls upon him to do so. The reputation seeker will not stand alone under any circumstances. The man with character tries to speak the truth clearly and honestly and openly invites others to examine it. The reputation seeker aims at acceptance and therefore makes vague statements that can be interpreted in ways acceptable to the hearer. The man of character speaks the truth as clearly and kindly as he is able at all times and under all circumstances. The reputation seeker speaks the truth with boldness only when he is assured that those who are significant to him will applaud.

The man of character is often out in front, regardless of who is following. The reputation seeker cannot lead the way because he cannot move in any direction until he is assured that the army is already headed that way.

The reputation seeker is confused by the man of character. He tends to assume that all men are motivated as he is, and he attempts to manipulate others by dangling before them the golden carrot of approval and by goading them on with the spear of disapproval. His arguments are often shallow, and when he cannot convince others with reasonable discussion, he attempts to intimidate

with threats of harming the reputation of the man of character. He is shocked, perturbed, and disgusted when his petty attempts at coercion are ignored by the one who is examining his own heart and his own Bible rather than opinion polls.

The godly man of character has a genuine light that shines for all the world to see. When right-thinking men see it, they glorify God (Mat. 5:16). The reputation seeker has no real light, but he works very hard at giving the impression that he does. His artificial light changes color as it radiates in different directions. It is adjusted so that men who see it will glorify him.

Sometimes men of character deservedly own a fine reputation among men. This is desirable above great physical wealth (Pro. 22:1). But a fine reputation is not to be desired above character. False teachers have always enjoyed fine reputations among some segment of the people (Luke 6:26). They, along with other hypocrites of their stripe, have traded character for reputation and have received the only reward they will ever see (Mat. 6:1–21).

Only a man of character can “rejoice and be exceedingly glad” when he is wrongly persecuted and when men say all kinds of evil against him falsely because of his practice of Christianity (Mat. 5:10–12). The reputation seeker will fall apart at such times. Only the man of character can truly teach and practice the Truth without partiality (1 Tim. 5:21; Jam. 3:17). He is not moved by the potential influence of his hearers upon the opinions of others. He does not challenge the sins of those without influence while ignoring those of opinion leaders. All are treated equally by him. The reputation seeker “pets the big dogs” and kicks the helpless ones if doing so will please the “big dogs.”

Reputation seekers tend to, sometimes subtly, point at their degrees and awards hanging on the walls and suggest that you ought to respect their opinions because they have been respected by influential men in high places. Men of character point at the Bible and suggest that God's word alone is worthy of your trust and that all opinions ought to be weighed upon God's scales.

Men of character are able to say, “I was mistaken” when they are able to discover errors in themselves. They clearly defend what they have said or done when they are accused of errors that they themselves cannot detect. Reputation seekers, on the other hand, are quick to say that they have been “taken out of context,” even when their words clearly mean what they appear to mean when placed in their context. Their “clarifications” are often very imprecise and unclear. Since many approved of them for what they did say, they cannot retreat from it. Since some disapprove of what they said, they cannot directly own it. Their fence-straddling seldom wins for them the approval of both sides, and it often backfires and causes them to earn the displeasure of both. Honesty and consistency go out the window when reputation is the goal. They are obvious and apparent when character is the objective.

Work to become a man or woman of character. Begin on the inside. The outside will follow. Those who love truth and right, though they be few, will love you. God will love and reward you. When you look in the mirror, you will be able to approve of what you see. The transient applause of men cannot match the authentic approval of Heaven or that of your own conscience.

—Tim Nichols
Burlington, WV

