
Words of Truth

Conveniently Faithful

By: Brian A. Yeager

We have several brethren that are part of the congregation here in El Paso because they moved here just for that reason. However, most of the time, when someone moves here to El Paso it is not because they want to be part of a faithful congregation. Someone could move here to El Paso because his or her job moved them here. Someone could move here to be close to a family member that lives here. Someone could move here to El Paso because he or she wanted to retire somewhere with a warm, dry climate. Someone could even move to El Paso because it is his or her hometown and they want to return to their roots. Most of the reasons people move here to El Paso have nothing to do with being part of a faithful congregation.

Sometimes we have people that move here that have been members of a congregation somewhere else. After moving here, that person would almost certainly begin learning that what he or she had previously been taught and practiced isn't right according to the Scriptures. What if this person decides to pretend like he or she knew it all along? What if this person decides that now being among faithful brethren, that what he or she did in the past is of no importance? We know this situation will come to light sooner or later here, because that person's previous fellowship will be questioned and examined. We will deal with it. Yet, what if this person's attitude never changes? What if what got them in error to begin with never changes. A new congregation doesn't, on its own, create a new relationship with God.

New Places And Faces Doesn't Equal To Repentance

Having been part of an erring congregation, in fellowship with those in sin, is certainly sinful (Ephesians 5:6-11 and Revelation 2:14-16). Whether knowingly or not, having fellowship with false brethren makes you a partaker in their evil deeds (II John 1:9-11). The word of God teaches that repentance is turning from sin to God (Acts 26:18-20). This means a person must depart from iniquity (II Timothy 2:19). If a person does not repent of his or her sin(s) that person will perish (Luke 13:1-5). Does moving to a new place and finding a new congregation by dumb luck really constitute repentance?

What does it take for a person who has been in fellowship with error to confess and repent? What fruit must be seen (Matthew 3:8)? Now that a person has moved to a new location, is his or her repentance just out of convenience or is it sincere? This person was

content to be in fellowship with the erring in the past, is he or she therefore just comfortable with whatever congregation they are in? The truth is, only time and fruit will tell. A change of scenery doesn't make a changed person. What led this person to be in fellowship with the erring is what is really going to have to change.

Considering The Changes That Need To Take Place

When a Christian errs he or she has to be converted back to Christ (James 5:19-20). In the scenario we are considering in this article, we have a person who happens upon the truth and learns his or her fellowship in the past has been sinful. Being able to properly repent of sin requires learning the truth (Luke 24:47). The person in the scenario we are studying has erred in the past because he or she did not properly examine the doctrine, practices, and people he or she was in fellowship with.

Fruit is going to be seen in this person if he or she starts showing due diligence in assuring what is being taught is true (Acts 17:10-11 and II Timothy 2:14-18). If this person just continues to blindly accept whatever is taught and practiced, this person is showing no changes. Furthermore, you will be able to see fruit in future decisions this person makes. Do they travel on Sunday's and worship with untested congregations? What if a future choice in moving somewhere else comes up? It will take time to see the real changes in this person. On top of that, some scenarios might complicate these things.

When Seeing Fruit Becomes Complicated

What if the person who has moved here has moved here because a family member is part of this congregation? I have a hard time seeing this happen, because none of us should allow people we know to worship in error without saying something about it (Ezekiel 3:18 and Galatians 6:1). Still, the question must be posed. How is repentance seen in this scenario? Is this person going to stay here for the truth or for his or her family member? Will this person acknowledge past errors because it is convenient or because he or she is really repenting? Let's not allow this scenario to present itself here. You can see how it would just pose potentially life-long questions.

Conclusion

If a person humbly confesses his or her errors and repents of those sins that person can be forgiven by God and faithful saints (Proverbs 28:13, Ephesians 4:32, and I John 1:9). We want to help people repent and be converted to Christ whether they be erring brethren or people of the world. In that process though, we must make sure we are not just presenting people with spiritual banana peels (so to speak) so that they slip into a faithful situation without properly being taught and making their lives right with God. Biblically speaking, there is no such thing as being conveniently, accidentally, faithful to God.
