

## **The Adulterous Preacher**

### **Scenario:**

It is the first day of the week. Everything seems normal. The preacher that works with the congregation comes to the front of the room. He asks everyone for their attention. He says that he has an announcement to make. He has the attention of everyone. His wife goes out the back door. Things all of a sudden do not seem so normal. He begins to cry. He then confesses that he has committed adultery. He asks the congregation to forgive him of this trespass. He says it was something he did once and that it was recent. Several of the women immediately seek out his wife. One of the men asks him to leave while the brethren discuss this situation. The preacher then exits the room.

### **Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:**

One of the men that is known to be knowledgeable and strong in the faith says this: "A preacher is held to a higher standard according to James 3:1. This man needs to go. He cannot work with us any more. I cannot be in the same room as him."

### **A Later Statement Is Made:**

Another brother says: "I don't agree. He has sinned and needs to repent of that. He needs to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. However, he does not need to leave the congregation. We would not ask anyone else in his situation to leave. We also need to be mindful of his wife. They both need us to be brethren now and help them."

### **For Discussion:** What do you see in those statements?

- Let me say that I am going to deal with this just on the surface. There are so many variables that could change this scenario in various ways. For example, what if the evangelist committed adultery with a sister in the congregation? What if it was a homosexual encounter? What if it was some twisted affair the wife was complicit in (a "threesome")? How many lies or other sins are involved? Is the wife partially to blame (i.e. **I Corinthians 7:1-5**). Taking these turns could greatly change the discussion. There are many other factors that could be added in too. So, again, I am just going to deal with the surface issues as stated above. At the end of this study I will give my thoughts if I were the evangelists in this scenario.
- Christians assemble together (**Hebrews 10:23-25**) on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7** and **I Corinthians 16:1-4**).
- It is lawful for a congregation to come together for certain purposes other than to worship or study the Scriptures (**Matthew 18:15-17** and **Acts 14:25-27**).
- The setting as described in this scenario is certainly unsettling. When conflict begins to arise - that is not good (**James 4:1**).
- Public confession of sin comes with a certain responsibility for those that have heard that confession (**James 5:16**). So, where does the request for this man to leave come from? Does **James 5:16** say if one confesses fault tell them to leave?

## *An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)*

Who did this man sin against? Isn't the primary one affected by this his wife? What's the goal here? Is it to save a soul and help a sister greatly affected by sin? Is the goal going to be to determine if he should preach or not? What should be the primary goal here (**Galatians 6:1-2** and **James 5:19-20**)?

- Even if this sin was against you, what does the Bible say about one saying they are repenting (**Luke 17:1-4**)?
- It is good that some of the sisters in the congregation seek out the wife that has been sinned against (**I Thessalonians 5:11-14**).
- The whole church should be involved in this discussion and it should be a study of God's will (**Acts 15:1-22**).
- I am assuming the saints in this congregation have made sure the evangelist was faithful in his life and teaching (**I Timothy 4:11-16**). If this is the case, one should know the man has already thought through this and has some Scriptural conclusions. One who has taken on the task of teaching the Gospel of Christ will judge himself (**I Corinthians 4:1-3**). There should be no allowance of him be exalted above the standard of the Scriptures (**I Corinthians 4:4-6**).
- We are supposed to have authority for all that we say and do (**Matthew 28:18-20**, **Colossians 3:17**, **I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, **I Peter 4:11**, etc.). What Scripture authorizes a brother to expel a person who has confessed sin from the assembly?

### Regarding the Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- First, before I comment on this section of the scenario, we should all consider how that our sins affect others. If ANY Christian errs, he or she greatly impacts God (**Genesis 6:5-6**, **II Samuel 12:1-14**, **Psalms 95:9-10**, **Isaiah 63:7-10**, **Luke 19:41-44**, **Romans 2:23**, **Hebrews 6:4-6**, and **Hebrews 10:26-29**) and faithful brethren (**Psalms 119:136** and **Romans 9:1-3**).
- Secondly, a broken relationship among brethren prevents worship from being able to occur (**Matthew 5:23-24**).
- Thirdly, if an evangelist errs he can cause a whirlwind of issues to arise. Questions will arise such as, can the congregation continue to financially support him seeing such is fellowship [communicated] (**Philippians 4:11-16**)? What about the financial impact that will have on his family [if he has a family] if the congregation ceases to support him? If the congregation ceases to support him, as he repents, what if he gives up and is overtaken in much sorrow (**II Corinthians 2:5-11**)? Would the congregation be blameless in that (**Romans 14:13**)? Has he lost all trust? That is important (**II Corinthians 4:2**). If so, what will it take to have that truth regained? Will brethren be fair in such assessments? If the congregation acts severely, is that an error concerning being in respect of persons (**James 2:9**)?
- **James 3:1** is not authority for Christians to judge those teaching the Gospel with greater judgment. It is a Scripture that teaches that God will do so. Brethren ought to be very cautious when it comes to condemning someone (**Matthew 7:2** and **James 4:11-12**).
- Remember, those that teach the Gospel of Christ are men of "like passions" (**Acts 14:15**). Preachers are not some kind of hybrid humans. All Christians are expected to live without sinning (**Romans 6:1-2**, **II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, **II**

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**Timothy 2:19, I Peter 4:1-2, II Peter 3:9-14, I John 2:1-6, and I John 3:1-10).** So, why is it that preachers are looked at differently in situations such as these?

- Does the man need to go? Peter erred multiple times even being rebuked publicly (**Matthew 14:22-33, Matthew 16:21-23, Matthew 26:30-75, Acts 10:1-48, and Galatians 2:11-17**), but did not cease to do the work of an Apostle and preacher of the Gospel (see the first and second epistles of Peter). Apollos erred, but continued to do the work of preaching (**Acts 18:24-28** and **I Corinthians 16:12**).
- The sinner in this scenario is the brother who cannot be in the same room with the penitent adulterer (**Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:25, Ephesians 4:32**, etc.).
- Think about the discord being sown, etc. by this person (**Proverbs 6:16-19**).
- What about the principles taught by Jesus in **Luke 6:31; 6:36-37**?

### Regarding the Later Statement That Is Made From Our Scenario:

- This second statement is correct regarding bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. If a saint sins he or she is required to confess, repent, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance (**Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 3:8, Acts 28:18-20, and I John 1:9**).
- Regarding fruit that confirms repentance, I have seen some people greatly err in how they apply such. Some think that this means a person has not repented until they convince men of such. That is false. In fact, it is impossible to a degree. Some people are so critical that they'd never be convinced a person has changed. Let me remind of two points that were mentioned above. First, once a person says they are repenting our response needs to be forgiveness (**Luke 17:1-4**). Second, the judgment we use on others will be used on us (**Matthew 7:2**). Be careful therefore how you measure others (**Luke 6:38**). Trust is another subject matter. We have to be fruit inspectors in such cases to ensure a wolf is not set free among the sheep (**Matthew 7:15-20**). In this particular case, there is a teacher who has erred sexually. His wife, the brethren, etc. may take some time before they'd trust him not to do so again.
- What about being respecter of persons in judgment here (**Deuteronomy 1:17, Proverbs 24:23, and James 2:1-13**)? Would a man who is not an evangelist be expelled from the assembly? How can you withdraw from someone who is in the process of repentance? Who would be left if that was the process of a congregation?
- This brother who is trying to stand in this gap reminds of Paul standing up for Onesimus (**Philemon 1:1-25**).
- This brother is right. Now is the time the congregation needs to be there to support and aid this couple to work through this to save their marriage and to protect the souls of both parties (**Jude 1:21-23**).
- There should also be a great concern that the wife of this man may choose to use her lawful liberty to put him away for the cause of fornication (**Matthew 19:3-12**). We know that would be her choice, but it certainly would not be the Lord's desire (**Malachi 2:10-16** and **I Corinthians 7:10-11**). Furthermore, if she put him away that would also make it much more difficult for him to remain faithful or return to teaching seeing as how he would no longer have the lawful means by which to

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handle his sexual desires (**Hebrews 13:4**). So, how much temptation would be in his future (**James 1:13-16**)?

- Brothers and sisters in Christ would have to work with our sister who has been sinned against in helping her to get to the lawful forgiveness she needs to be able to extend to her husband (**Colossians 3:13**).
- A big problem that is underlying in this scenario is that preachers are often elevated among congregations. Not only held to a higher standard among men, which is wrong; but elevated above others in general. Evangelists are said to be part of the congregation. However, the truth is, evangelists are often on an island. They are treated differently. For further studies on that, see: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol12/wotbulletin12182011.html> and [https://www.wordsoftruth.net/dontlooktoomuchatmessenger\\_2020.html](https://www.wordsoftruth.net/dontlooktoomuchatmessenger_2020.html)

### If I Were The Evangelist That Did This...

- I speak the following as my own personal conscience as an evangelist (cf. **Romans 9:1**) and not as though this is a commandment from God. I hold myself to a higher standard than others can/should. When I study passages such as **II Corinthians 6:1-3** I realize the impact my decisions can have on the souls of others. If it were me in this specific scenario (not all scenarios) my conscience would forbid me to keep teaching among the local saints at least for a period of time (I don't know that time). I cannot see how I could do so because of contexts such as **Matthew 7:1-5** and **Romans 2:1-29**. Again, that is my reflection and conscience. I would help others prepare lessons. In fact, I would contact a brother ahead of my confession and equip him with material on adultery and forgiveness.
- Again, I am speaking from my own conscience on this next statement. I know this could cause division and I would do anything lawful to keep such from occurring with my brethren (**Romans 14:19** and **Matthew 5:9**). Most division is sinful (**I Corinthians 1:10**). I would need time to focus on repairing my relationship with my wife (cf. **Matthew 5:23-24**) and correcting whatever caused me to err against her. My level of self-loathing would be great (**Job 42:6**).
- We saw in the study above that Peter erred and yet continued in the work he was doing (**Matthew 14:22-33**, **Matthew 16:21-23**, **Matthew 26:30-75**, **Acts 10:1-48**, and **Galatians 2:11-17**). I cannot imagine ceasing to teach the Gospel for the rest of my life. Like Paul, I feel greatly indebted to Christ and the need to do so (**Romans 1:14-16** and **I Corinthians 9:16**). At some point I'd want and even need to teach publicly again. I would hope my brethren would help me to do so. I would hope my wife would help me to do so.
- On another note, I would be deeply hurt by those who would have any other intentions than to help my wife and I be saved. Sadly, teachers of the Gospel are sometimes mistreated by brethren (**II Corinthians 12:15**). I have been in many situations wherein I have put everything into trying to help people get to Heaven and have had those same people turn and do great hurt to me and by extension to my family. That is a sad reality, but has been the case concerning those who teach the word of God for thousands of years.