

A Sound Mind and a Sound Body

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* (2 Timothy 1:7).

John expressed his desire for Gaius to enjoy both good spiritual and physical health: *"The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers"* (3 John 1-2). We are concerned about the physical health of our brethren and often pray that they maintain or regain a sound body. Paul's letter to Timothy acknowledges that there is value in physical health: *"For bodily exercise profits a little..."* (1 Timothy 4:8). Furthermore, God expects us to be good stewards of our physical bodies: *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

While physical fitness is beneficial, it is not life's highest priority. Paul continued, *"For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"* (1 Timothy 4:8). God is especially concerned with the spiritual health of His people because it is eternal. We need a sound mind governed by God's truth. The world encourages people to follow their feelings, but God's Word teaches us to renew our minds according to His will (Romans 12:2). A sound mind is disciplined, focused, and guided by biblical principles. It rejects sinful thinking and seeks those things that are pure, honest, just, and lovely (Philippians 4:8).

The world is afflicted with the disease of sin, but the words delivered to us in Scripture provide the cure and restore us to spiritual health. Paul wrote, *"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed"* (1 Timothy 4:6). He further instructed Timothy, *"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 1:13).

We should also be perceptive concerning the soundness of the congregation with which we identify ourselves. We are accustomed to testing things for quality. When I buy a watermelon from the grocery store, I look for a creamy yellow field spot and give it a tap to listen for a hollow sound. In the same way, it is proper to put people, and churches, to the test. John wrote, *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). Let us strive to be spiritually sound people, maintain our health, and faithfully labor within a sound local congregation, the body of Christ.

- by Josh McCord

Fellowshipping False Teachers

One of the most troubling trends among some brethren today is the growing willingness to openly welcome and fellowship those who teach serious doctrinal error. Men who advocate false positions on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, who deny the reality of an eternal hell, or who reject Bible authority regarding the organization and work of the church are increasingly being given places of honor, opportunities to teach, and full acceptance among congregations that once stood firmly for truth. This should alarm every faithful Christian.

The Bible is not silent on this matter. Paul instructed, *"Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17). John warned that if we knowingly receive or encourage a false teacher, we become *"partaker of his evil deeds"* (2 John 9-11). Rather than extending fellowship to those who spread error, we are commanded to expose and rebuke them (Ephesians 5:11; Titus 1:13).

It is therefore completely wrong for a local church to welcome false teachers into its fellowship. To do so sends the message that their teachings are acceptable and that doctrinal differences of this magnitude are insignificant. Such a course not only endangers the congregation itself but also encourages others to compromise their commitment to the truth.

Faithful Christians must never allow themselves to become comfortable with such compromise. If a congregation knowingly and persistently extends fellowship to those who teach error and refuses to correct them, serious decisions may have to be made. Our first effort should

always be to teach, warn, and plead for a return to sound doctrine. However, if a church remains determined to embrace false teachers, we cannot participate in that fellowship without sharing responsibility for the error being tolerated.

Christians must seek association with a sound congregation that respects Bible authority and is committed to teaching the truth without compromise. The New Testament repeatedly stresses the importance of preserving doctrinal purity (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:2-4; Titus 2:1).

The Lord's church is to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). May we never surrender that responsibility by extending fellowship where God has forbidden it. Let us stand firmly for the truth, love the souls of those in error enough to rebuke them, and refuse to compromise with false doctrine in any form.

- by Greg Gwin