

Defamation and Persecution From the Regenerate

By Sean Morris

“I understand persecution from the lost, but from the church? Why is the regenerate church persecuting and rejecting you? This is clear evidence that you are in sin.”

This is a response to the offense above, to those who wrongfully condemn us and say, “I understand persecution, but this should not come from those who are regenerate (commonly known as “the godly”) in this nation, and in your case it is. This is sure evidence you are doing something wrong. The godlier you are, the more you should have favor and respect from those who are regenerate.”

The Point of my argument I appeal for the reader to consider –

Overwhelmingly, we, the regenerate church, have *an inability to discern the ways of Christ, we are inexperienced in the works of Christ, and our alienated understanding causes us to be offended when we see the works of Christ walked out in our apostate generation, because we are deeply rooted in a self-conceited confidence that we surely do know the ways of Christ.*

Oh our horrid conceit! How vainly do we sing and uplift the feigned request to God, “Pass me not O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry, while on others Thou art calling do not pass me by!”

My Defense

Circling about our ministry are the fierce winds of contention, and thus, all those who do not have a biblical understanding of Christ’s ways in contradistinction to the carnal ways of modern, professing Christianity, do judge that a Christian witness which results in intense personal suffering is a mark of ungodly infamy instead of divine verity. Divisions, masses left in confusion, and a society’s tranquility turned into upheaval because of contentions or violent danger - these do not sound like the scenery of God’s handiwork (I speak foolishly), but let a careful student of scripture remember the *old paths* of Christ exemplified in the gospel accounts, let him also remember the Acts of the apostles who exemplified a perfect manifestation of His resurrected stature for the earth to behold the same old path – “ways which be in Christ” (1 Cor. 4:17). Thus and thus you will be astonished to conclude that in the scenery formerly described, *therein* God calls forth His elect to a vertical peace in the midst of horizontal disaster; tranquility for the naked soul standing before Almighty God.

The greatest of miracles is the salvation of the soul! Oh the soul! It has been judged in wrath because of God’s righteous justice. The Lord “is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” and “higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26); He is alienated from sin thus sinners are alienated from Him. Therefore, unbreakable chains of depravity hold men captive to the Devil’s obeisance. The world is a prison house of souls born into the Devil’s hateful, dark presence, thus men are born hating God and dead in sin. Can there be salvation for such men?!

It would require a binding of the *strong man* that binds men to hell, a freeing of captives by a translation into heaven’s law of life, a regeneration into an allegiance higher than all earthly

affections and ties, and a salvation that is breaking and bursting family and culture, even shifting unmovable laws of life and death through the heavenly descent of God's incarnation. He became **The Human**, and humanity shouts Hosanna! The angels shout Hallelujah! And behold, He drank the whole cup of the wrath of God and tasted death for every man!

An atomic bomb explodes and waves of destruction lay bare life and land, but this **Man**, like a "Great Light," He did walk among "the people which sat in darkness" and in "the region and shadow of death" (Matt. 4:16). A crack of light brighter than the dawn, sweeping the land and outrunning the night, turning the world into creation's song, so Christ incarnate was in a world fallen headlong! Virtue, like a life-giving atomic bomb, exploded from His person as He walked in the humble tent of time and flesh, and everywhere He went as He walked on earth, the powers of sin and death were reversed before the eyes of the public. This King – "**The Resurrection**" – He created chaos in a world whose peace is a spiritual holocaust (Jn. 11:25). Demons were brought before Him like weeping children bound in chains until a word was given from His mouth. *To make sinners saints, to free them from justice's heavy weights, a world of iniquity God must shake and break. Behold, He came, He did RUN, He raced and WON, and behind the mighty stride of the Savior who raced through the tent of time, energized by His prize burning in His fervent, divine eyes, to make the souls of the world healthy and whole, this Savior raced by and turned the world upside down, and every generation by and by. Christ came and created Christians, then ascended up from the earth, leaving them here that they might bear His resurrection and Name, to testify of the new birth.* While they dwell in this disturbed world, it is aggravated at their holy, God-given repute, but Christians are comforted by the Comforter, their Friend, and He is worth the war.

In the days of Christ's earthly pilgrimage, and as soon as He was engaged in public ministry, He was scarcely at rest. He was a threat to the bulwarks of the Devil which were standing to defend religious hypocrisies; thus He was threatened and sought after by the bloodthirsty kingdom of false Christianity. Jesus Christ's life lasted three short years after the initiation of His public ministry. Christ was so hard-pressed by death and rioting from the threatening of violent men conspiring; for him to last three years is the protecting providence of God. Had God left men to their lusts, they would have slain Him long before *the time*.

Jesus Christ was there to divide and save! Hosanna did defy their spiritual delusions, divide their strength in unity, and cause them to betray their covenant with hell. The Church must understand that God saves, and He will save, but only if His people forget their own tactics, methods, and ideologies on how to draw the lost to God. No matter how foolish, offensive, or controversial it is, it is God's goal to lead you by a moral compass whose destination will thereby give you the reputation of Christ, even the "offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Cor. 4:13). Wasn't this the image of Christ? Even if the whole city does seek our blood, should that offend us (Heb. 12:4)? Or what if His image then is His image now, and the predestinated end of our Christian course is as it was said, "we are **killed** all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the **slaughter**" (Rom. 8:36)? When a man purchases a vacation, his soul is longing in hopeful expectation and eager unrest until he arrives to behold the scenery just beyond the rigors of travel thereto. Christian, what is your final destination? Have you assessed your calling, labor, and end, the image of your conformity and Christianity in biblical normality? How will you know when you have arrived? Thereto we *must* arrive, even to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4)! And I am eager, expectant, and longing to arrive – ARE YOU? Mind you, the destination is "slaughter;" Christians in Christ – "KILLED" (Rom. 8:36). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

It was Leonard Ravenhill that rightly resolved to this single burden – “save the church and then you will save the world.” Yet it seems that everyone desires to accept the state of the church, as it is, to unify despite our disunity, to agree to disagree at the expense of charity and truth, and thus, of necessity “we must overlook discrepancies of doctrine or deed for the sake of gospel affairs advancing upon the heathen world,” and sadly, the inevitable result is converts like unto ourselves. The body of Christ is crippled by carnality - dismembered and disjointed - and it is a light thing that we trample the pearls of “unity” and forfeit the glory of God in “a perfect man” (Eph. 4:13). God’s word is cast aside and thus we can’t “grow up!” We are disjointed when we are *called* to be “fitly joined” (Eph. 4:15-16). Now, for most of us, this is our condemnation. Duncan Campbell knew otherwise and pursued the salvation of sinners God’s way. He said, "We shall not get Revival by filling our churches with men, but by getting the men who already come to our churches filled with God" ("Heroes of the Holy Life" by Wesley L. Duewel).

It is easy for us to be calloused in heart or accepting of blasphemy in the day we live in because it is the Last Days. I think of that fearful saying of Jesus, “when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8)? I think of another saying, “and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. 24:12). This day is so full of false conversions and saturated with false Christianity that it is difficult to be among those who “are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Note: that is not an “age” that is carnal, but spiritual, not dependent on years but upon biblical accuracy, maturity, and spirituality. It is difficult to discern what is good and evil if iniquity is so abounding, if most hearts are utterly cold, when the situation is so lonely. In the Last Days it is prophesied to be worse than the former days. It is prophesied to be worse in the days nearing the antichrist than those days of the first century. If those that were alive then were alive now, those men whose hearts burned in righteousness, what would their relationship be with false Christianity today? Do we have the same relationship to false Christianity as Jesus did to false Judaism? If not, what sin is keeping us back? The Word of God can discern it; for it is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Are we afraid of going against the grain or being called a sect (a cult)?

"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:" (Acts 24:5)

"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." (Acts 28:22)

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." (Proverbs 29:25)

Do we have the same reputation as Jesus or the apostles did to them? Our desire (in the flesh) is to become more likeable to false Christianity so that they will not be so offended and be unable to hear the gospel. Jesus’ mind, method, and ways were not that way and neither were the apostles’ ways. It is easy to fight against what everyone else is fighting against. Consider this passage -

"When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to

do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." (Acts 5:33-41)

They spoke the truth in love, and because of the truth they had many enemies (Gal. 4:16). They knew that Ishmael could not dwell with Isaac and God did not ordain peace with false Judaism (Gal. 4:28-30). We, therefore, must not seek peace with false Christianity or its doctrines/persons. We must understand that the truth brings enmity.

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." (Galatians 4:28-30)

"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16)

When "worldly wisdom" changes or broadens our morality (making it a little more acceptable to the world), then we become comfortable, and we suffer less. But if our morality is defined by God's wisdom, then it will follow the footsteps and exemplification of the apostles. And, when worldly wisdom invades regenerate people's lives, then they too will be offended at God's wisdom and ways. This is why the "carnal" (yet regenerate) Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 3:1-3) was offended at Paul - so much that he had to defend His ministry, and, shockingly, his reputation among them was that he was a "reprobate" (2 Cor. 13:9). The first two chapters of 1 Corinthians address the antagonistic relationship between God's wisdom and worldly wisdom, the 2nd and 3rd chapters address the propensity of the Corinthian Church to be overcome by carnal or worldly wisdom, and the 4th chapter addresses the contradictory relationship between the ways of the carnal Corinthians and that of the apostle Paul. Finally, he appeals to them to forsake their way and follow his ways (which be in Christ). Please observe below:

The carnal Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-3),

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto **babes in Christ**. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet **carnal**: for whereas there is among you **envying**, and **strife**, and **divisions**, are ye not **carnal**, and **walk as men**? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not **carnal**?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

The morality and "Christian" ways of the worldly Corinthians were opposite to that of the spiritual, heavenly apostles, and Paul appeals to them to repent. The **BLUE** is *worldly-wise*, carnal Christianity, the **RED** is *spiritually wise* Christianity.

"**Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us:** and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. **For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a**

spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me.** For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of **my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."** (1 Corinthians 4:8-17, KJV)

Do we not cry out for Revival today? It is an understatement that we NEED a Revival, but from what? In conservative Churches across the nation, there is the need! The battle against lukewarmness, carnality, passivity, and worldliness rages on! If this is the state of our Churches, then could it be possible that there is enough worldly wisdom that would make the ways of the apostles or Jesus to be so offensive that they would think them or call them reprobates if they were alive today? One of the main arguments used to verify Paul's ministry proving that it was "of God" was that his life/ministry was marked by *suffering*. False and carnal Christianity avoid suffering. By adhering to worldly wisdom, they have been inhibited from seeing the way of Christ, and the greatest evidence is that their morality does not lead them to the same (or similar) suffering as the apostles and Christ. Therefore, it is worldly-wise, carnal morality.

1 Corinthians 4:8-17 ---*Suffering*

2 Corinthians 4:8-18 --- *Suffering*

2 Corinthians 6:3-10 ---*Suffering*

2 Corinthians 11:23-33 ---*Suffering*

We need a renewal of mind in this area, or we will be conformed to this world instead of the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:2). If we seek suffering, then we err. If we are absent of suffering, then we err. If we have true love with God's wisdom, then we will suffer righteously. But all this is to say that offenses and controversy (even with the regenerate who are beset in worldly wisdom or carnality) must come, and we should be examining ourselves if we don't have it. Many people define love to be absent from persecution.

Some would define a person to be loveless or in error because of what they say. Others stumble at how it is said. Please consider the ways of Christ in how He says what He says. Also, consider what He says. We must examine the method of witnessing and winning the lost alongside the message itself.

How He Says It

- ✦ He interrupts a Feast, is uninvited and unwanted: John 7:37-53 - the “fruit” of this interruption (sword) was controversy and division.
- ✦ Jesus' love toward the house of God and to men who are engaged in hypocrisy is demonstrated in that He interrupts it (without apology): Mark 11:12-21.
- ✦ Jesus' love in a house: He was invited to a house to eat; He reproves the man that invited Him and all the guests with him: Luke 14 (the whole chapter).
- ✦ He spoke things that only those whom God gave ears to hear would follow; therefore the offenses abounded, the people were in controversy, and few continued to follow Christ: John 6 (the whole chapter), see John 6:44, 60-71.
- ✦ See the offensiveness of the message of Jesus; nevertheless, those that are offended were usually a false planting of the devil: Matt 15:12-14. (I am not accusing you to be a false planting of the devil, but rather, deceived by worldly wisdom/carnality.)

What He Says

- ✦ He comes against minor doctrines that are breaking the commandments of God, and comes against them openly: Matthew 15:1-20, 23:23-24.
- ✦ He preaches a sermon of love. By and through love, it was a sermon of woes and condemnation to the Pharisees without any appeal of mercy or forgiveness (and this is perfect love with perfect wisdom). Why? Jesus knew that if He did not fiercely condemn this practice and people, then others would be hypnotized by their hypocrisy and so be subverted from seeing the truth: Matthew 23 (the whole chapter). A similar message is in Matthew 7.
- ✦ He preaches against sin: John 3:19-21. Jesus was hated, because of this “wise,” true love wherein He did expose and reprove sin as it was. He was hated because His preaching, witness, and light did uncompromisingly expose sin.

Why He Says It

- ✦ He says it to save men: John 3:16-17.
- ✦ He knows that men get saved by falling under conviction, by being confronted by the truth, and by being reprovved for their sin – NOT BY PEACE...Call for the sword: Matthew 10:32-40.
- ✦ Jesus' ministry of love as a sword: Luke 2:34-35.
- ✦ God's desire is that lost men get lost instead of comfortable. After one is lost, then he/she can get saved: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.

Our Calling

- ✦ He is calling us to the same love, witness, and light: Ephesians 5:1-33, see Eph. 5:8-10 especially.
- ✦ He is calling us to the same walk as Christ: 1 John 2:6
- ✦ He is calling us to the same steps as Christ suffered: 1 Peter 4:1
- ✦ We should be like Him: Luke 6:40.
- ✦ We should be hated like Him: John 15:18-25
- ✦ If we truly follow the foolish ways of Christ, then we will be like Him: 1 Cor. 15:29-34.

There are many who will say that it is not God's will to judge or deal severely concerning sin and righteousness. But, where in the Bible does it teach that you cannot judge those who are in the Church, and by judge, I mean share with them God's word, hold them to it, warn them of it, and save them by it? Please consider the context of Matthew 7:1-5 and John 7:24, and please compare those passages with 1 Corinthians chapter 5 (the whole chapter) alongside Matthew 18:15-17.

We must obey the teaching that is clearly taught in those passages. The word and ways of a thrice holy God are intense, sharp, judgmental, true, loving, and saving. Please consider the word of the Holy Ghost: "And when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). This is the work of the loving Holy Spirit of God. There are many manners in which this reproof may come.

I wonder when true Christians will arise from their affinity with false Christianity, speak and appeal with interruptive urgency, and so walk in true love that is so culturally, economically, and spiritually invading that it is an unhidden city on a hill (Matt. 5:14). Oh, that men would not stay in their houses and vocalize the truth *as much as* would maintain a neighborhood "respect." Wake up, American "Christianity"! Jesus Christ did not command neighborhood peace but housetop proclamation (Matt. 10:27). Oh that men would not seek to be civilized but set their hearts to be crucified (if God willed it) (see Heb. 13:13-14).

To see such men in our day following "our ways," their charge is often to wake up. Or perhaps, dear reader, your charge to me is to "**wake up**." When Paul commanded the sleeping, worldly-wise, carnal Christians to "**wake up**", it was a call to suffer offense, persecution, and even a "baptism of death" (1 Corinthians 15:34), but the offenses and persecutions of our lives is what has persuaded you that I am not awake. This is what has persuaded you that our work is a work of demons. Please look at how clearly Paul defines the charge "wake up." Paul said, "**Awake** to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." The Corinthians were not doing righteousness like Paul; they were deceived by "evil communications" in worldly wisdom. The "good manners" that they once had were corrupted to a peaceable lifestyle with the world or worldliness (1 Cor. 15:33). That is why the former verse before 1 Cor. 15:34 is, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." What does it look like, according to Paul, to be awake - awake in righteousness? Paul said it is like a baptism of death (1 Cor. 15:29), it is "jeopardy every hour" (1 Cor. 15:30), it is a dying daily (1 Cor. 15:31), and it is a fighting with beasts (1 Cor. 15:32). Paul knew well the unavoidable struggle and grief of contention (1 Thess. 2:2) - the inevitable result of unrelenting love through boldness. Paul said that true Christianity was exemplified in his ways (1 Cor. 4:16-17). These experiences were manifestations of being awake in righteousness, thereby teaching that the absence of righteousness produces an absence of *these experiences*. The world should understand that "if in this life only we [*Christians*] have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). Few then and few now will be willing to be baptized with the baptism that Jesus was baptized with (Matt. 20:22, 1 Cor. 15:29), and most are unaware or in denial that the way of Christ is a baptism of death.

"But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able." (Matthew 20:22)

I wonder when our cultural Christianity will ever look like our Master's Image, or when we will stop justifying ourselves for looking and walking a course that is so unlike our Master's Image. The end of our Christianity is to be in His Image, right? It is written: For whom he did

foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). Consider the whole passage:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the **charge** of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that **condemneth**? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, **For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:29-39, KJV).

Well, there be many who bring **charges** against us, there be many who **condemn** us, there be many who say we are separated from the love of Christ, but why? Because of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? Nay, none of these separate us from the love of God! God has justified us, is interceding for us, and the evidence of this great love is that we are privileged to be conformed to "the Image of His Son"...and this is for God's sake and purpose. What is His Image? "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." It is God's will "that no man should be moved by these afflictions," because we should know that we are "appointed thereunto" (1 Thess. 3:3). The New Testament Christians were undergoing so much tribulation, distress, and persecution that they were accused, charged, and condemned to be separated from the love of Christ, but, on the contrary, those very experiences are the predestinated purpose of God that we would be conformed to the Image of His Son, "as a sheep to the slaughter." Don't you see? That is your charge to me. You are condemning me because of offenses, persecutions, and tribulations, but you are offended at the Image of Jesus Christ, not at me, if the doctrine and deeds which I am standing for are rightly interpreted and applied. You are convinced that this work is of the devil because of offenses, controversy, and persecutions; you are charging me that I am in darkness, danger, and (by fruits) separated from the love of Christ...but it was these very things that Paul said was the Image of God's Son. He said that this is done for "Thy sake"- meaning God's sake. It is God's will that we are persecuted even as a sheep to the slaughter! If I am right, you are saying that the Image of God's Son (the controversy & suffering) is the proof that our life and work is not of God's Son.

Is it possible that "evil communications" of false prophets and carnal men have so inoculated this generation that we cannot discern good from evil and do not walk in the sufferings that the Book of God deems normal? Though our consciences scream that we need Revival, we are incoherent and proud enough to think that we can still judge our own state rightly, divide the word of God wisely, and know His will truly: yet how can we? If we need Revival (or are carnal), how can we know judgment, wisdom, and righteousness? If we are carnal, then it is predominately hidden from us (John 16:12, 1 Cor. 3:1-2, Hebrews 5:11-14) and must be *taught* or *exemplified* to us, and if we are not fearfully careful, then we will persecute the wisdom of

God because it is foolish, be offended at the righteousness of God because of its weakness, and misdefine the awakenings of God as the darkness of the Devil. Jesus said: “And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matt. 11:6, Luke 7:23).

In this place of rejection, Paul stood and appealed to his own congregation. In love, brokenness, prayer, and hope, he fought against their rejection of him, saying...

“Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.” (2Corinthians 13:7)

Do you believe this? The regenerate Church (the godly), *even they* are rejecting Paul, considering him to be reprobate. Please, as we face the same circumstances, let me plead with you all to hold us to the biblical format of trial! It echoes the same saying, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth" (John 7:51)? There is a biblical format of examining an elder, church, person, or work that claims to be of God in the midst of a country-wide slanderous hurricane.

The disturbing work of lies - are you judging by internet gossip?

Most of you hear from someone who has heard or experienced this or that from someone, and then you look on internet websites for confirmation. If you seek enemies and echoes of internet slanders you will find them all over this country, still zealously raging to fight off a good conscience. These things are written by men who cannot help it, who cannot cease to take their anger out on us. You have heard from a pastor, who heard from a congregant, whose congregant heard from close friends, and then you heard from internet sources? My dear friend, if I were in your position and I was looking for the proof that we are legitimate “pastors” or leaders of a true congregation, and in so doing I chose to examine the internet sources available that have recently arisen against us and our ministry/church, I would be “very disturbed” as well. We are greatly disturbed by these things ourselves. We are often overcome with astonishment at the lies which are propagated online, and the hand in hand multitude which do fiercely press forward.

We have to remind ourselves of the suffering that the New Testament Churches underwent, as well as that which those honorable men of extra-biblical Church history underwent. I think of Paul where he, as the foremost proof that his ministry is of Christ, testified that he suffered aggressive persecutions in every form – he was, as he put it, “troubled on every side” (2 Cor. 4:8) and “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10). To “approve” himself and those with him “as the ministers of God,” he did give an account of and show all of his sufferings (2 Cor. 6:3-10, 11:23-33, 4:8-18, 1 Cor. 4:8-17), speaking of these things that they legitimize rather than disannul his validity. If I looked on the internet without this in my mind, I would cave into unrighteous depression. Have you looked online without keeping this and other principles in mind?

Think of the Lord Jesus. He experienced the hatred and slanders of men, so much so that he was called a drunkard, devil, blasphemer, and sinner. Yet, He declared that this was a blessing if His servants followed in His footsteps, and He promised that they would (Lk. 6:40, John 15:18-22, 1 John 3:1). Jesus was accused of being nothing more than a cult (Acts 5:33-41), and likewise the apostles bore the same reproach and accusation (Acts 24:5, 28:22). Jesus said that

the righteous would undergo the specific suffering of false slanders and evil reports. He said that the overwhelming public would respond to Christ in Christians by “reviling,” “persecuting,” and saying “all manner of evil against [them] falsely for My sake” (Matt. 5:11). Surely, the internet is full of persons who are saying all manner of evil against us falsely, but we praise God that it is false.

Reader, what have you read and heard? What cult-like practices are you talking about? Who is the son in our congregation and what are the parent’s complaints? Please don’t excommunicate us based upon the reports of men and women on the internet that you don’t know, whose lives and fruits you don’t know, therefore whose testimonies you ought not to believe. Surely, two or three witnesses ought to be a trustworthy report (1 Tim. 5:19, 2 Cor. 13:1), and there is more than that gathered together on the internet, but if those witnesses be unsaved men and women they cannot be trusted. There were two or three witnesses against Christ when he went before the Sanhedrin, yet their witness was false. You/we must find witnesses which can be trusted, verified to be honest, from well saved men (who also are not deceived), lest Satan get an advantage of God’s children and we end up casting out our own brethren, and therein is the terrifying warning - “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matt. 25:40). As Jesus said to Saul, “Why persecutest thou Me” (Acts 9:4)? As for the parents of this young man who is in our congregation, should this young man’s behavior be the litmus test of the whole church? Should the discernment of the parents be trusted even if we (you or I) do not know them personally and have not thoroughly examined all things? We must use carefulness whenever a report of sin or a possibility of excommunication does arise in Israel, especially in the day we live in, this crooked generation where goats and false converts have surrounded most all of the remnant that is left. Unsaved men in this manner do craftily create confusion to suffocate the truth.

Let the reader know - We do read scripture and love it. We do desire to and carefully study the warnings written therein. We do fear pride and constantly seek to humble ourselves in all ways we know we ought. We love extra-biblical Church history and constantly solace ourselves with peace because of their testimony, lives, preaching, and writing. For many years we have found true, godly, and spiritual fellowship in the pages of it extra-biblical Church history, and we find courage to fight in our day seeing clearly the same battles in their day.

I think of John Bunyan when, as he said, Satan did use men to “load me with slanders and reproaches.” He said that these slanders were “whirled up and down the country against me.” It was said that John “was a witch, a Jesuit, a highwayman, and the like.” Also, John wrote, “that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was, that I had a misses, my whores, my bastards, yes, two wives at once, and the like. Now these slanders (with the other) I glory in, because but slanders, foolish, or knavish lies, and falsehoods cast upon me by the devil and his seed; and should I not be dealt with thus wickedly by the world, I should want one sign of a saint, and child of God.” (Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners)

I think of C.H. Spurgeon when he was lonely and maligned during the downgrade controversy. I think of the words that he wrote while commenting on Psalm 7:1-2 in the Treasury of David, “the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured. Slander leaves a slur, even if it be wholly disproved. Common fame, although notoriously a common liar, has very many believers. Once let an ill word get into men’s mouths, and it is not easy to get it fully out again. The Italians say that good repute is like the cypress, once cut, it never puts forth leaf again; this is not true if our character be cut by a stranger’s hand, but even then it will not soon regain its former verdure. Oh, ’tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes

no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all.” And again at another time, Spurgeon said, “When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.”

I think of James Renwick and Alexander Peden, two of the faithful and beloved Scottish Covenanters. Alexander, called “the prophet of the Covenant” was a dear man of God; however, he eventually forsook James Renwick, called “The Last Scottish Martyr.” Yet, before Peden’s death he was reconciled to Renwick. Why was James forsaken? The lies were so numerous and reputed, Peden was beguiled to believe their report. Here is the event of their reconciliation just before Peden died:

“He said to James Wilson, that from the time he drank in these false reports, and followed these unhappy advices, it had not been with him as formerly; and when he was a-dying, he sent for Mr Renwick, who hasted to him and found him lying in very low circumstances, overgrown with hair, and few to take care of him, as he never took much care of his body, and seldom unclothed himself, or went to bed. When Mr James came in, he raised himself upon his bed, leaning upon his elbow with his head upon his hand, and said, “Sir, are ye the Mr James Renwick that there is so much noise about?” He answered, “Father, my name is James Renwick; but I have given the world no ground to make any noise about me; for I have espoused no new principle or practice, but what our Reformers and Covenanters maintained.” “Well, sir,” said Mr. Peden, “turn about your back,” which he did in his condescending temper. Mr. Peden said, “I think your legs too small, and your shoulders too narrow, to take on the whole Church of Scotland on your back; sit down, sir, and give me an account of your conversion, and of your call to the ministry, of your principles, and the grounds of your taking such singular courses, in withdrawing from all other ministers;” which Mr. Renwick did in a distinct manner; of the Lord’s way of dealing with him from his infancy, and of there mornings successive in some retired place in the King’s Park, where he used to frequent before he went abroad, where he got very signal manifestations and confirmations of his call to the ministry, and got the same renewed in Holland a little before he came off; with a distinct short account of his grounds upon which he contended against tyranny and defections, and kept up an active testimony against all the evils of the day. When ended, Mr. Peden said, “ye have answered me to my soul’s satisfaction, and I am very sorry that I have believed any such ill reports of you, which have not only quenched my love to you, and marred my sympathy with you, but made me express myself too bitterly against you, for which I have sadly smarted. But, sir, ere you go you must pray for me, for I am old, and going to leave the world;” which he did with more than ordinary enlargement; when ended, he took him by the hand, and drew hi to him, and kissed him and said, “Sir, I find you a faithful servant to your Master; go on in a single dependence upon the Lord, and ye will win honestly through and cleanly off the stage, when many others that hold their head high will fall and lie in the mire, and make foul hands and garments”; then prayed, that the Lord might spirit, strengthen, support and comfort him in all duties and difficulties. James Wilson was witness to this, and James Nisbet, who then lived in that countryside, could have asserted the truth of this.” (Fair Sunshine)

And now I think of (from biblical history) the apostle Paul, who, was so aggressively surrounded by slanders and persecutions that even the regenerated Church in Jerusalem would not receive him as a brother, only James (the apostle) with all the elders did receive him. As for all the youngers, those thousands of converts, they all were ready to reject their brother, and

not only a brother but the apostle Paul himself. And why? Paul was so slandered that they did not, and could not, believe he was a brother, and this was in an age when there was not internet, when things passed by word of mouth and report given by honest and dishonest men. These reports spread to the beguiling of men like someone you respect – second, third, fourth witness. In Jerusalem, like it was elsewhere, there were so many deceived concerning Paul that the whole multitude that believed (or were regenerate) were deceived to think Paul was a false prophet, and worthy of rejection – and their folly was that they “answered a matter before” they heard it, which is a shame (Prov. 18:13).

When slander so grievously surrounds a true convert, a fellow elder, a ministry, or a work of God wrought amongst a people, it was then that the New Testament gave personal audience to those or that individual who was slandered that they might be sure to know if it is of God or not. You can see this when Paul was given personal audience by James and the elders at Jerusalem. In this audience, Paul “declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord” (Acts 21:19-20). Though all the brethren were falsely “informed” by the multitudes which did slander, the elders and James gave a personal audience to Paul as he declared what God really did, and they, perceiving the grace of God and the assurance of the Holy Ghost with Paul and his testimony, declared him righteous and received him. Reader, this is all we ask with you. We ask for a personal audience before you reject us, excommunicate us, considering that, like Paul’s day, even the regenerate can be deceived so as to reject a true brother or ministry by lying and slander.

This same principle can be seen again in Acts 15:12 in the midst of impending division. It was then that the whole multitude of elders and apostles gave audience to Paul and Barnabas. In this way, by personal audience, they would know for certain if these things were of God or not. God used the personal testimony of them that stood accused, so that those who stood to judge might properly try and find the truth (1 John 4:1). This is written in Acts 15:12: “Then all the multitude [of elders & apostles] kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” It was in this same way, doubtlessly, before this event in Acts 15:12 had happened, that the apostles first perceived the grace of God with Paul and gave him the right hands of fellowship. As it was written in Galatians 2:9, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9). It was by this careful diligence that “they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me,” Paul said (Gal. 2:7). Paul “went up to Jerusalem to see Peter” face to face in personal audience, “and abode with him fifteen days,” and so Peter heard him, tried him, and received him as a brother (Gal. 1:18).

Has this diligence and biblical format been practiced in our situation concerning the reception or rejection of us (this poor and rejected candlestick in Texas)?

Surely, a matter of fellowship, reception and rejection, is typified in the executions done in the OT when there was a report of sin in the camp. They used very careful means and searches lest they did err in judgment and condemn the innocent, and rightly so, for “he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15). It was written in Deut. 13:14, “then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you,” then an execution was made which is like unto NT excommunication. But has this

inquiry, search, and diligence been done like the NT format in our case, like as it was done with Paul when they gave him personal audience?

Likewise again in Deuteronomy 17:2-13, something has been told to you and you have heard of it, but you have not enquired of us in personal audience to see if the thing be certain. And if we have sinned, (God being gracious to grant us repentance) we will repent, but we ask that the enquiry, diligence, and certainty of things would follow the pattern of the NT so as to avoid the slanderous disaster that the heathen have created, lest in our day, like in the case of the apostle Paul, true Christians do follow these slanderous reports so as to reject their regenerate brethren.

I beg and entreat you, readers lost and saved, that you would hear us in this way, following the proper biblical precautions set forth by the word of God. I am persuaded that an “outside perspective” only is not sufficient on this matter (as many have undertaken in our examination), and it does break our hearts in pieces to hear of all this news and all the harm that our internet persecutors are pursuing and have achieved to their cause around this country. My soul, wait thou only upon God.

Lord Jesus, please have mercy upon us all and expose any sin that be in us (Sean, Jake, and Ryan, or the Church of Wells), or any that be in them (true, saved brethren), on this matter or others. Please Lord, in the mercy and love You have promised toward us as your people, please! Help us. Help us fulfill your word as it is written in Php. 1:27, that our affairs may be that we stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

In the scripture I find that we should not lay hands suddenly as to receive or ordain an elder, but also, that we should do nothing suddenly, rashly, or anti-biblical in rejecting an elder, ministry, person, or work (1 Tim. 5:22).