

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

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Beware**

## **FALSE TEACHERS – WHO ARE THEY?**

**Tom Larkin**

The above question suggests that it is possible to give the names of those who are false teachers. While this is a possibility, some adamantly oppose charging an individual by name as a false teacher. Not only are we allowed to identify false teachers, we are commanded to do so. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). The word “mark” indicates a “warning against those who cause divisions” (Vines, p. 725). While it is not the only thing that causes division, teaching false doctrine obviously does so. Paul named Hymenaeus and Philetus who were propagating false doctrine concerning the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:16-18).

A common belief is that what makes a false teacher is not so much his teaching, but his character. It is true that often a false teacher has serious character flaws. The various scandals that arise among “televangelists” show that many of these are not people of pristine character. Truly, they personify Paul’s statement that some are “destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). One verse

earlier, Paul wrote that one who teaches contrary to sound doctrine is “proud” (v. 4). This may explain why one would continue to hold to his falsehood when confronted with its error. By contrast, when Aquila and Priscilla helped Apollos see his error, he immediately corrected his teaching (Acts 18:24-28).

The Bible reveals some of the flawed motives of false teachers. Paul spoke of those who “teach things they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11). Peter compared false teachers with Balaam, “who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15). Jude spoke of those who “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities” (Jude 8). Peter tied this attitude together with presumption and self-will (2 Peter 2:10). But, the danger of a false teacher is not the quality of his character; it is the content of his message. We may not be able to determine whether a teacher’s heart is right, but still we can be deceived by his message. Even if he is sincere in his proclamation of error, that error is still harmful. Paul mentioned some who preach the truth with wrong motives – envy and strife – and without condoning the attitudes, he rejoiced that truth was preached

(cf. Philippians 1:15-18). Let it be clearly understood that what makes a person a false teacher is that he teaches false doctrine.

False teachers – who are they? They are those who have “erred from the truth.” Paul asserted that Hymenaeus and Philetus were teachers “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Timothy 2:18). The word “erred” means to deviate from anything, to miss the mark (Thayer, p. 82). The word does not reveal whether this deviation is intentional. The example of Apollos illustrates that one can do so unintentionally. While it is true that one is of questionable character that intentionally teaches falsehood, as far as the effect on others is concerned, the teacher’s motive does not matter. Whether Hymenaeus and Philetus knew that their teaching was in error did not change the fact that it overturned the faith of some.

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## Editorial

### BEWARE

#### Acts 20:28-32

Paul warned the elders from Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:28-32).

Warnings are important. They can keep us out of harms way. Yet, there are some who would make "sounding warnings" un-Christian! When did tolerance become the greatest Christian virtue? When did ignoring and in some cases, accepting sin, become the "Christian" thing to do? Christ knew of no such thinking. Seven times He called the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites (cf. Matthew 23 :13,14,15,23,25,27,29). John was quick to point out "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them..." (3 John 9). Paul apparently had no problem in naming sins and condemning those who would participate in them (Galatians 5:19-21). It is true that we must love the sinner (Luke 19:10; Mark 16:15,16), but it is not true that we are to tolerate the sin. We must oppose and hate sin (cf. Psalms 101:3; 119: 104, 113; Proverbs 8:13).

The warning, which Paul gives to the Ephesians' elders, was for their protection and for the protection of the church (Acts 20:28). One responsibility of elders is to protect

the congregation. There are those who will disguise themselves as faithful teachers. Christ warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). What is an eldership to do about these false teachers? Paul told Titus, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:9-11). One-way elders can "stop the mouths of those who subvert the gospel" is to warn others. When will we realize the importance of this?

This warning came with a prediction (Acts 20:29,30). Paul predicted this impending danger would come from within and without. Paul warned that we needed to recognize these "...enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18). Guarding from forces from without is natural. We can see the enemy and prepare. We know that their purpose is to destroy the body of Christ. Therefore, we have a tendency to keep our guard up. Often it is the enemy from within that can do the greatest damage. "Why", you might ask. It is because we don't expect it. This is why you can't warn some brethren about a one time faithful preacher, who is now doing much damage in the brotherhood. Just because someone was faithful, it doesn't mean that he will always be faithful. It is interesting to note that Paul said these false teachers would "...speak perverse things to draw away disciples..." (Acts 20:30). How can we determine if someone is faithful or false? It is by what they say! This can be checked with the word of God.

We must continue to sound the warnings for them to be useful. Paul said, "...by the space of thee years I ceased not to warn everyone night and

day with tears" (Acts 20:31). It is not good enough to sound the warning once and then let the danger take over. It is our responsibility to sound the warning when danger appears. Ezekiel told us it is the watchman's responsibility to sound the alarm at the sign of danger. "If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people" (Ezekiel 33:3). The watchman will be held accountable if he fails to warn. "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

There is a way for these warnings to prevail (Acts 20:32). Unless there is a standard there would be no way to determine what is right or wrong. Paul tells us what the standard is, "...the word of his grace..." (Acts 20:32). This is why Paul can recognize grievous wolves and those who would draw away disciples. He can compare what they say to the word and if it isn't what the word of God says, then we can warn others of false teachers. John warned, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

There is no need for us to spend all of our time "sounding warnings." There are many things we need to do in the kingdom. Neither do we need to abandon "sounding warnings" because some don't like them. It is God who has given us our orders and we are to abide in the truth. Sometimes that means we have to warn!

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SPEAK PERVERSE THINGS?

Jerry L. Martin

In Acts 20:17-35 there is a stark contrast between the attitude that the Apostle Paul had toward the preaching and teaching of the gospel and the attitude that he warned would arise in the church at Ephesus after his departure. His warning predicted outside dangers, "grievous wolves," that would infiltrate the flock's safe-haven with purposeful intent to cause harm (Acts 20:29). Paul also warned of a more subtle danger that would come from within the fold of safety, yes, even from the very ones who were charged with the protection of the flock. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The greatest enemies of truth are those who know it and yet willingly, consciously, and purposefully corrupt it. These people would secretly and purposely design a plan to "draw away disciples after them." In order to accomplish his purpose the self-elevated leader would choose to do so when he would "speak perverse things." "Perverse" means to "turn aside" from or to "corrupt" that which is true.

To speak perverse things means someone is willing to author a perverted message. In the text under consideration Paul had declared "the whole counsel of God" unto the elders of the church at Ephesus, yet he warned that some of their own number would "arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." These men would be those who had been taught and entrusted with the truth yet they would be willing to corrupt the truth in order to promote themselves. In writing to the Christians at Galatia, Paul identified the devious and divisive intent of the authors of a false gospel, "...but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6, 7).

To speak perverse things means someone is willing to accept the

perverted message. Jesus revealed how one could know the truth when he said to those Jews who believed on Him "...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The only way for false teachers to be successful is for them to have an audience that is either ignorant of the truth or who is willing to "turn aside" from the truth. Paul marveled that some of those to whom he had taught the gospel were so easily removed from it (Galatians 1:9). On another occasion, after charging Timothy to preach the Word, he warned him of those who would willingly seek out teachers of perversion. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:4).

To speak perverse things means someone is willing to be accursed for authoring or accepting a perverted message. Paul spoke frankly about the cause and the consequences of perverting of the saving message of the gospel. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9). When some of the Christians of Galatia were led away from the teachings of Christ by a perverted gospel they forfeited the grace of Christ. Those who were architects and promoters of a

counterfeit gospel will be recipients of anathema from heaven.

Those who speak perverse things have the devilish intent of polluting the truth, deceiving the minds, and imprisoning the souls of mankind. Those who are bewitched by their contaminated doctrine will share their eternal destiny. Thus, may we determine to heed the following inspired directive: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:9-11).

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## ARE YOU AVERAGE?

The difference between average and top people can be explained in three words: *and then some*. The top people do what is expected of them, and then some. They are thoughtful of others, they are considerate and kind, *and then some*. They meet their responsibilities and obligations fairly and squarely *and then some*. They are good friends to their friends and can be counted on in an emergency, *and then some*.

Selected

**FAIR-WEATHER CHRISTIAN?**  
"Can I be a fair-weather Christian?" A good friend once told me, "If you're not a Christian everywhere, you're not a Christian anywhere. And if you're not a Christian all the time, you're not a Christian anytime!"

Selected

# WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS?

Ashley Kizer

Souls will be lost as a result of “perverse things” which are spoken (Acts 20:30). Though it is a terrible tragedy, it is also an inescapable truth. “Therefore watch, and remember,” said Paul to a group of elders who had come to him from the church in Ephesus (v. 31). It is a gem of inspired advice that all of us should keep in memory. For this group of men, however, there was also a prophecy to be heard: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (vv. 29, 30). Not only would the truth be attacked from without, but it would also be facing dangers from within the Ephesian eldership. Thus all elders and members alike should “[t]ake heed therefore unto yourselves...” and “[e]xamine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...” (Acts 20:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Most likely, Paul uttered these words with a heavy heart, looking at each of his brethren with memories of the past and hopes for the future. He wrote to the Corinthians sometime during this missionary journey that he suffered daily from “the care of all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28). His concern for the church in Ephesus is obvious as we see him warning these men of a dangerous form of false doctrine that was to spring up from their midst. Paul knew these men well, having spent three years admonishing them on a daily basis even to the point of tears (Acts 20:31). Certainly this was a somber moment, considering they would never see one another again (vv. 25, 38). Yet Paul left them on a positive note, commending them “to God, and to the word of his grace...” (v. 32). It must have been the case on that day that the men who needed the message most did not take it to heart. Only a

few decades later, Christ told the revelator that though the church in Ephesus had committed many righteous deeds, they had left their first love (cf. Revelation 2:2-4). So we must all “take heed” therefore unto ourselves as we see through a study of the scriptures some effects of speaking perverse things.

When men turn aside from the truth, distorting it or twisting it to their advantage, they will “draw away disciples after them,” taking them away from the Lord (Acts 20:30). Jesus said of the devil, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...” (John 10:10). Paul has shown us one way in which Satan uses men to steal sheep from the flock. You will not have to look far to discern for yourselves whether or not this is taking place in the Lord’s church today. We have a great surplus of eloquent speakers and clever writers who use their talents not for the Lord’s sake, but to mislead Christians away from the Shepherd and to themselves. Every man has a reason to preach the gospel. Paul said, “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will...” (Philippians 1:15). Yet the man who is speaking perverse things is really not preaching the gospel at all, for he is not speaking according to scripture. Paul said, “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:9). Thus many will be taken from the Lord due to the speaking of perverse things.

Notice also that many will be tossed to and fro because they are not equipped to discern what is sound doctrine and the tickling of ears (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3). Paul wrote to these same Ephesians during his first Roman imprisonment, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness,

whereby they lie in wait to deceive...” (Ephesians 4:14). There is a great deal of confusion in the world today concerning religious matters, and the devil would have it so. What can we do to stop the raging storm of misinformation that distracts well-meaning individuals from adhering to sound doctrine? We must give them a good foundation through an education of God’s inspired Word! Jesus said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock...” (Matthew 7:24). It is not enough to merely teach our children how to sing the song about the wise man. We must teach each child to be the wise man. Have you spoken to a young person lately about spiritual matters? You may be quite surprised to find him or her incredibly bewildered if not completely frustrated with the status of his or her own biblical knowledge. Our young people are the targets of every form of doctrine these days. Too often, these confused young people grow up to be confused adults, and the cycle continues. This type of person will consequently receive nothing from the Lord (cf. James 1:6-7).

Let us fight to reverse the effects of perverse speaking. Souls that have been taken can return to the Father (cf. Luke 15).

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## SMILE

The Sunday school teacher was explaining to her class how Lot’s wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. Said one, “My mother looked back once while she was driving the car, and turned into a telephone pole.”

## PAUL “CEASED NOT TO WARN,” SHOULD WE? (ACTS 20:31)

James E. Rogers

To the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:17), Paul issued a solemn warning (20:28-31). Grievous wolves (false teachers) would enter in and try to devour the church. Some of these wolves would be in the eldership and would destroy the church from that position. This warning was a part of Paul’s declaring everything that was profitable to them (20:18-21,26-31). As we examine Acts 20:31, let us learn some lessons that will be helpful to us as we warn the church of the Lord today.

Paul warned as a result of correct reasoning. He drew a conclusion from his previous declaration to these elders. Since “grievous wolves” would come, there was something these elders needed to do about it. The “wherefore” alerts us to this conclusion. If false teaching is to be stopped, we must reason correctly concerning it.

Paul warned correctly. He told the elders to do something each of them was already charged to do (Titus 1:9-11). He was simply calling on them to fulfill their responsibility as elders to the congregation (Heb. 13:17). This responsibility consisted of two things. First, he told the elders to “watch.” “Watch” is from *gregoreo*, and is used here “of spiritual alertness” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1966), Volume 4, p. 201). While this was addressed to the Ephesian elders, all Christians are to maintain this alertness (1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:6). Second, he told the elders to “remember.” These elders were to call to mind what they already knew. This would indicate a diligence to retain knowledge that had been imparted to them. Elders must be diligent students of the Bible and they must retain what they learn. This

allows them to apply their knowledge to their work of overseeing, superintending and shepherding the church. Paul’s warning was exactly what was needed to solve the problems that would come. When elders “watch” and “remember,” wolves will not be allowed to enter in among the flock and devour it.

Paul warned consistently and constantly. Paul did not “cease” to warn. “Cease” is from *pauo*, which, used in the Middle Voice, means to willingly take one’s rest (Vine, Volume 1, p. 176). These warnings were given over a period “of three years” and were given “night and day.” This was not a hit and miss effort. This was consistent and constant. Our warning against error today must follow this pattern. While some may decry preaching which points out error and false teachers, it must be done if the church is to survive. Let all preachers and teachers become aware of the error that confronts us today and battle it constantly. Remember, we are only one generation from apostasy!

Paul warned carefully. His warning was given to “every one.” He did not just warn the strong, but he warned the weak as well. One may count on the strong to help in the defense against error and that is good. One must also work to strengthen the weak and bring them to a point of strength. The weak are usually more susceptible to falling prey to the “grievous wolves” and their false doctrine. While some may not want the warning, it must be given. Let us not allow the devil to have a single person whom we have failed to warn.

Paul warned compassionately. His warning was accompanied with “tears.” Tears would be an indication of Paul’s energy and effort in preaching. His was so fervent in his warnings that such a warning brought

him to tears. Tears would also be an indication of Paul’s awareness of the power of error. When one is aware of what can and will be done by that against which he is warning, he is more fervent in his warnings. Often his hearers do not understand why he may be so passionate in his preaching. The reason is he knows what can happen if they do not listen and follow. Tears would also be an indication of Paul’s love for the church and the truth. Paul was willing to give his life for the cause of the Christ (Acts 20:22-24). When one loves the church this much, he will give his all to protect it against attack.

The elders at Ephesus and in all congregations were/are to be watchmen and warn brethren of dangers that were/are coming. God’s charge to Ezekiel, as a watchman, presents principles that will help elders and others know what they are to do in this regard. God said the watchman was to watch for the sword (danger) and, when he saw it, he was to “warn the people” (Ezekiel 33:1-3). Once the warning was given, the responsibility for heeding the warning was on the people who heard the warning (33:4,5). If the watchman failed to warn, the responsibility for what happened was on the head of the watchman (33:6). Paul may have had this in mind when he declared to the Ephesian elders that he was “pure from the blood of all men” (Acts 20:26).

Paul did not cease to admonish the brethren to whom he preached and we must not cease to warn the brethren to whom we preach. “Let us not be weary in well-doing” and let us “faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

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# WHAT SHOULD WE USE TO COMBAT THE GRIEVOUS WOLVES?

Randy Medlin

When will we get it straight that being students of the Word isn't just a beneficial spiritual exercise but it is necessary for our spiritual survival?

Paul's warnings to the Ephesian elders in verses 28-31 of Acts 20 would be worthless without an effective spiritual remedy. Thankfully, that remedy is provided in verse 32.

Also note: The "grievous/savage wolves" of the first century may not be the same as the "wolves" of the twenty-first century, but they will always be around in some form. The first century church was plagued by the heresies of the Nicolaitans and the Gnostics. Tom Larkin in another article in this journal has rightly identified who the wolves are. But what is to be done about them?

Paul states in verse 31 that he did not stop warning the brethren in Ephesus about false teachers in the three years he spent with them. Surely such warnings are needed today. However, warnings are useless if they are not grounded upon the bedrock of God's eternal truth. Otherwise one man's opinion is just as valid as another's.

Do not fail to appreciate that Paul's warnings and instructions were issued to the elders of the church. Little wonder that one of the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is that he must be "able to teach." That is, he must be a man of the Book!

Christians today may fall for the erroneous doctrines and attacks of spiritual wolves if they are unfamiliar with what God's word actually says. Elders, in particular, must be dedicated Bible students in order to identify, warn, and stop destructive influences within the congregation which they lead. Two other qualifications of God's shepherds are: (1) "holding fast the faithful word as

he has been taught," and (2) the ability to stop the mouths of those "who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not" (Titus 1:9, 11).

So, with these realities in mind, Paul closes his warnings to the Ephesians on a wonderful note. It is important to know the problems, but equally important to know the solutions. He states: "So, now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (v.32).

In his absence, Paul was entrusting the elders to God's protection. The NCV renders it as "I am putting you in the care of God." This is accomplished only to the degree that believers rely upon His revealed will. Thus, being an elder is about knowing God's Word. When Paul and other inspired men left, how were they to know what to do? He pointed them to the Word. Not only would it equip them to be victorious in the face of the "wolves," but it would also build them up and insure their eternal inheritance among the saints of all ages.

This further verifies Peter's assurance that God has "given us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Be assured that all we need to live a life of spiritual confidence is provided in the divine "owner's manual." Christians today need to know what is going on in the world and in the brotherhood so that we will recognize a "wolf" when we see one. We also need to be deeply familiar with the Bible so we will know how to address and respond to the various issues that confront us.

I have many wonderful and helpful books in my library. Some address the need for a proper mindset or attitude. Others deal with the great

doctrines of the Bible. Some are educational in regards to means and methods of church growth. Never be mistaken, however, that the most valuable book in anyone's library is the book of Books! We should never be so interested in what men have to say about the Bible that we fail to determine what the Bible actually says.

The Bible is ageless and perpetually relevant. Many modern innovations and digressions are addressed in principle in its pages. Every elder and every Christian would do well to heed Paul's inspired commendation to be guided by the Book our mother read, the Bible.

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## ENCOURAGEMENT

I thoroughly enjoy your *Vigil* and look forward to each paper. I read all the articles and mark everything I want to stress if I pass it on to someone else---but it's hard to give up a copy! Thank you for the wonderful writers of the articles and for those who stay in the straight path of God's Word.

Reader in El Paso, TX

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading of that fine material. I appreciate all the hard work brethren do, especially on the printed page. It truly does live on. It is a way of "going" into the world. Thanks for "going".

Reader from Memphis, TN

Thank you so much for the *Vigil*. We look forward to reading each publication and enjoy the information contained therein. Keep up the good work, stand strong for the truth and never give in to this ole wicked world.

Reader in Diana, Texas

## “SPECIAL MUSIC”

Hugo McCord

The phrase “special music” is used to describe choirs, quartets, trios, duets, and solos in worship services. Webster says that the opposite of “special” is “ordinary.” However, it was a divine order that started what is ordinary, congregational singing. And we find no divine order modifying or supplementing congregational singing.

According to the divine order, all of the singers are also the listeners (“yourselves,” “one another”), which fact eliminates special music:

speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and plucking the strings of your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19)...teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God (Colossians 3:16).

The divine order is stated again in the book of Hebrews, but it does not say: “By him therefore let a choir or a quartet or a trio or a duet or a soloist offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips, confessing his name,” but the divine order is an exhortation to a whole congregation, or to individual Christians everywhere, omitting not one, “us”:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of the

lips, confessing his name (Hebrews 13:15).

Special music changes worshipers into two classes, performers and spectators. Special music changes the auditorium into a theater. According to a professor of music in Westmont College, Dr. Gerald Bouma, special music is three things:

1. A congregation of worshipers is changed into an audience.
2. The music is reduced to entertainment offered to the congregation, not by it, and the singers become performers, and the audience is moved to clap their hands.
3. When the pressure to have such music is from people, not from God (apud. Charles Hodge, KEYNOTER< 9-1-1994, p.3).

Special music introduces a very real danger. In a small Pennsylvania town handbills were distributed inviting people to a protracted meeting at the Church of Christ. A lady telephoned the local preacher, saying she was a soloist at the Lutheran church, and that she would be glad to sing for the “revival” at the Church of Christ. The preacher told her that only congregational singing was practiced, but that she would be welcome to be part of the audience. She never attended. Did she want to worship or to show off her beautiful voice?

From one standpoint, the divine order makes the entire congregation of worshipers a choir, a choir that includes the spiritual presence of Jesus’ singing both to his fellow choir members (“I will proclaim your name to by brothers”) and to God (“I will sing hymns of praise to you in the midst of the congregation”) (Hebrews 2:12).

Jesus, spiritually present in every worship service, singing both to his brothers (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:12) and to the Father (Hebrews 2:12), conforms to the divine order given to all Christians to “speak to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” and to sing “to the Lord... plucking the strings of your heart” (Ephesians 5:19), and “teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).

Thrilling is the thought that when Christians teach “one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” that Jesus is spiritually present doing the same thing, and when Christians sing “with grace in their hearts to God,” Jesus is spiritually present doing the same thing!

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**FALSE TEACHERS-WHO ARE THEY? By Tom Larkin ----- Continued from page 1**

False teachers – who are they? They are those who have twisted the scriptures. Peter said of Paul, “As in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). The verb “wrest” comes from the noun that refers to the rack, an instrument of torture (Thayer, p. 590). The idea is that the language is tortured or twisted to make them appear to teach something that the Biblical writers never intended. Unlike the word “err” in 2 Timothy 2:18, this word implies that some are dishonest with the scriptures. Rather than allowing the scriptures to speak for themselves, they will twist them

into compliance with their self-chosen opinions. Note further that even though these individuals are “unlearned and unstable,” God still holds them responsible for their actions. Whereas in 2 Timothy 2:18 it is the faith of the hearer that is overthrown, here it is the demise of the false teacher that is considered in the phrase “unto their own destruction.”

False teachers – who are they? They are those who teach “damnable heresies.” Peter compared them with the false prophets of old. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift

destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Their methods are deceitful and their message is damnable. This passage illustrates that the problem is not just with the character of the teacher. The teaching itself is “damnable.” False teaching brings swift destruction on both the teacher and the hearer.

How can we know whether a person is a false teacher? No false teacher identifies himself as such. To make the correct identification we must know the scriptures. We must try the spirits (teachers – cf. 1 John 4:1) and we must compare what is taught with what is written (Acts 17:11).

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**DESTRUCTION FROM WITHIN**

Several years ago in Del Mar, California, I witnessed a startling exhibit. A man took a glass beaker, which had a small neck, but was enlarged to about seven inches in diameter below the neck. The beaker would hold about a quart. The demonstrator used the glass beaker as a hammer to drive a spike into a wooden plank. The glass was so well tempered that the beaker did not break. The man then took a small steel marble (or bearing) the size of a pea, and holding it at the neck of the beaker, dropped it inside. When it struck the bottom, the glass was shattered. The blow from within broke the beaker. The church of our Lord, when perfectly united in the scriptures can resist the heaviest of blows from the outside. But just a small force on the inside can destroy the unity and harmony. The brethren must also be tempered with love to withstand the blows from within. We are to always watch. Not only from without, but also from within. The devil will destroy us any way he can (I Peter 5:8). It is utterly foolish to ignore his devices and to completely be blind to those who seek to spy out our liberty in Christ. Open your eyes!

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