

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Isolation Perspectives

(Jerry Fite)

Isolation is defined “to place alone”, or to “set apart from others”. Holiness denotes “setting apart” something, distinguishing it from the common. But isolation is to set something or someone apart, or place alone in order to keep others healthy or pure. In medicine, one with a contagious disease may have to be isolated from others in order to keep the general public healthy.

The Lord wants His holy people to be in contact with the world, not isolated from them. The world needs to see the good works of the follower of Christ, leading to glorifying the Father in heaven (*Matthew 5:16*). The good works coupled with holding forth the word of life are needed contact points of light for a perverse world (*Philippians 2:14-16*). The Lord prayed not the Father “*shouldest take them from the world*”, but should “*keep them from the evil one*” (*John 17:15*), as the apostles engaged the World with the Gospel.

Faithful brethren in a local church must be willing to isolate the sinning brother or sister in order to protect the spiritual health of the whole congregation. Paul instructed the church in Corinth to

“*purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump...*” (*I Corinthians 5:7*). This purging was accomplished, not by putting the sinner in a separate room, or having no contact at all with the sinner, but by withdrawing the approving social contact of the many from the sinner (*cf. I Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 2:6*). For the sake of the soul of the sinner, and the spiritual well-being of the local church, the faithful need to “*deliver such a one unto Satan...*” (*I Corinthians 5:5*). Such withdrawing is delivering the message for all that the sinner is acting in harmony with the Devil, not manifesting fellowship with God.

Sometimes people isolate themselves from sound evangelists of truth: “*...they will not endure the sound doctrine, but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts*” (*2 Timothy 4:3*). They hear only the preachers presenting what they want to hear. Therefore, they isolate themselves from faithful evangelists ever ready to present what they need to remain spiritually healthy, not necessarily what eases their itching ears.

B.C. Goodpasture, editor of the Gospel Advocate, pub-

lished an article written in late 1954 by an elder in a local church looking for preachers who were not “hobby-riders” or “church busters”. This fostered another article containing four letters by different preachers and writers. The suggestion of “quarantine” of certain preachers was offered in one of the letters. Targeted were those speaking against the support of human institutions, such as orphan homes, and the sponsoring church arrangement in supporting evangelism. In January of 1955, Cecil Douthitt, in response to the quarantine suggestion in *The Gospel Advocate*, wrote an article entitled, “*The Yellow Tag of Quarantine*”. He pointed out how four factions could possibly follow even among those close to *The Gospel Advocate*, yet do not agree on other related matters.

Sometimes a form of isolation is demanded by God (*I Corinthians 5*) to keep from fellowshiping evil works (*2 John 9-11*). However, isolation can also be detrimental to our spiritual health (*2 Timothy 4*). Before isolation, we should sincerely pursue settling our differences over the application of Scripture. We should not shut ourselves off from Scriptural rebuke. Only persistence in error warrants isolation.