

Unsaved Church Members, the Essential Enemies of Her Spirituality

by Milton Haney

Unsaved church members are a peril to the church and Christian Protestantism, and their influence leads to a decrease of attention to the perfecting of our moral nature and an increase in worldly pleasures.

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Church Discipline", "True Conversion"

Description

Milton Haney preaches about the powerful testimony of a backslider who was wonderfully saved, causing a stir in the church and leading to the salvation of others. He highlights the opposition unconverted church members have towards Christian testimony and the battle between sin and holiness within believers. Haney emphasizes the importance of discerning spiritual leaders and the dangers of unsaved individuals influencing the church negatively. He also addresses the need for true conversion and sanctification, contrasting it with the worldly desires and pleasures that many church members seek, ultimately pointing to the narrow path that leads to life.

Transcript

A wretched backslider, whose darkness had become so deep that he was posing as an ascetic was wonderfully saved this summer. His soul was so flooded with glory that he went from house to house, as saved people often used to do, declaring the great things God had done for him. His testimony in the church was so clear and assuring that a number of young people who were in the church without salvation were being disturbed about their condition, and the pastor became alarmed about them.

He was the pastor's friend before his conversion, and more so now, since being saved. The pastor in private made several efforts to dissuade him from testifying, as his bright testimony would discourage his converts. He could testify with his life, but this strong testimony with his lips was dangerous to the peace of the church! But the fire kept burning in the young man's soul, and cottage prayer meetings sprang up as the result, and some were saved.

In these meetings the pastor tried to convince his friend of the evil of testifying to his happy experience from the statements of a whole group of ministers of recent date. These had each said in the conference love feast, that they had not testified, some of them for months, others for years, because they thought it not best! Such occurrences, it would seem, are sufficient to bring John Wesley from his grave! Fancy, if

you can, such statements in annual conferences of Methodism, with Wesley at their head!

1. Unconverted church members, as a rule, are antagonistic to Christian testimony. Any soul either outside or within the church who is in earnest, seeking God for pardon, is always glad to listen to Christian testimony. The majority of outside sinners are always moved by the testimony of God's saints, and a multitude have been saved through hearing it; but every soul who has substituted church membership and church work for the new birth is averse to hearing it. This statement seems strong, but we affirm it without hesitation.

(a) All human beings who are in sin are restless and never can be satisfied. Because of this, and for selfish purposes, uncounted thousands have drifted into the church. Each one of these has sinned against God, and has a depraved heart, which rules him and loves sin. Every human being enlightened by the Holy Spirit who rejects Jesus Christ as a Saviour from sin, loves sin and the pleasures of sin more than he loves Jesus Christ. It is impossible to be born of God without the complete renunciation of sin, up to the light given. No man ever entered the joys of pardoned sin holding on to any one sin of which he was conscious, great or small.

(b) Definite testimony to conscious pardon of all past sins, to the glorious life of God within the soul, to being adopted into God's family and the conscious witness of the Holy Spirit to this experience, cannot but be alarming to members of the church who are without God. No soul trusting his church membership and his own works to save him can possibly have such an experience, and such testimony cannot but reveal his emptiness. Being convicted of his need of salvation, and unwilling to part with sin, he has to fight the testimony which convicted him, to maintain his position in the church. This is the philosophy of the bitter opposition which has been rendered to holiness testimony.

All truly converted people, who hear plain, direct witnessing to the experience of entire sanctification are compelled to see that they have not reached that experience; and each of such as thus convicted will either seek sanctification or make war on the testimony. This, too is what Wesley calls "the Methodist testimony," but Wesley's sons are seeking for it a burial place. The rejection of this testimony and experience [of both salvation and entire sanctification] has made it possible that uncounted thousands should be reckoned with the people of God, and not be disturbed in their church relationship. Their aversion to such testimony made it necessary to repeal the law making attendance upon class meeting a condition of membership. Let the reader fancy, if he can, over three millions of Methodists shut in with old-time class leaders of the John Wesley type once each week! This trend to fill the church with worldlings must die or the class meeting must die as a church institution.

2. All discerning, spiritual pastors will notice that unsaved men in their churches are especially exacting in their demands. Not infrequently one old sinner with money at his back in the church, will have his say against the judgment and wishes of one hundred spiritual members. This is preeminently true in the choice of pastors to serve the church. No really spiritual pastor can meet the wishes of such a man. Jesus Christ would be [to the unregenerate church member] the most of all distasteful to him as a pastor. It was exactly such men who murdered him, because of his spirituality.

It is doubtful whether Paul would have ever been seriously persecuted had it not been for the wicked agency of unsaved church members and ministers. There are a few cases of persecution where there is no mention of Jewish agency, but such ministers and such false professors of the true religion followed these holy men from city to city to stir up opposition to their testimony and preaching and to incite the Gentiles to

murder them. Millions of God's true people have met martyrdom at the hands or by the instigation of unsaved ministers and unsaved church members. Christ Himself could hardly have been crucified by the civil authority of Rome had it not been for the insistent demand of unsaved ministers of the true religion and the officary of the Jewish church. It was this very power which sawed Isaiah's body in two with a wooden saw, and in later ages fitted up the Spanish armada with weapons of death and instruments of torture and cruelty to sink Christian Protestantism and silence the testimony of its white saints. Had Saul of Tarsus been an outside sinner, with his magnificent manhood, he never could have incited the murder of God's saints, nor could he have held the garments of the Jewish mob while stoning Stephen.

3. Sin and holiness have always been at war. They cannot be friendly on any field nor meet without battle. Hence the peril of every truly converted soul till the sinful nature within him is destroyed. That nature is known by every true Christian by its unremitting antagonism to all the graces of the Holy Spirit within. It has never been known to favor or help one of these graces. Hence the fearful battle with pride, selfishness, disobedience, unbelief, spiritual darkness, unholy anger, perverted love, the fear of man, unholy ambitions and fleshly lusts, all within the soul. These two lives within -- the old and the new -- the spiritual and the carnal -- constitute the great battle ground of every experienced believer till he is wholly sanctified. The flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

The new life is always imparted preparatory to the destruction of the "old man," and the one or the other has got to die. Two antagonistic potentates cannot sit together on one throne, and it is only a question of time when the spiritual will expel the carnal or the carnal will expel the life of God from within. These two, sin and grace, represent two antagonistic kingdoms, the one seeking the destruction of the other, and the other of the one.

A soul under grace cannot but be interested supremely in the kingdom of grace. The soul ruled by sin cannot but be supremely interested in the things of the other kingdom. "The Church is the ecclesia, the Lord's called-out ones." Jesus said that such were not of the world, as He was not of the world, and because they were not of the world, the world would hate them. All adult people

are in one of these two classes. This truth threads the Bible of both Testaments, and concerning it we can hardly be mistaken. All agree that the spiritual body of Christ, the true New Testament church, is made up of those who are born of God, as we have previously shown. Yet it has always been difficult, when this body becomes the visible church, for God's ministers and people to distinguish between the saved and the unsaved. Hence, despite the utmost scrutiny, some unsaved people have crept into the visible body.

Christ surely sounded this note of warning in His addresses to the Seven Churches, and the epistles concede and bemoan the presence of this evil; but to increase numbers and wealth, the admission of uncounted thousands of mere worldlings, who have given no evidence of real conviction for sin or repentance, or the new birth, is a crime against God and a calamity to the human race.

The Methodist Episcopal Church probably contains a larger number of people who have been truly born of God than any other, and these are a part of the true church in the sight of God. She surely has a great body of true ministers, who love her doctrines and discipline and know her capabilities to evangelize the world. Such are giving their lives at her altars and expect to die in her communion; but her constantly increasing number of unsaved people and unsaved ministers are a peril to the church and to Christian Protestantism.

The tastes of the most refined worldlings are worldly, their life is of the world and not of God. Being without God, like other worldlings, they must have substitutes for Divine fellowship, and hence the endless clamor for worldly amusements and insistent demand for worldly pleasures. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," their heart cravings are back of the demand that the Church shall take down the bars she has placed between them and the corrupting agencies of the theater, the lustful dance and the card table. Tens of thousands, if not five hundred thousand, of our membership, if compelled to deny themselves of these three corrupting worldly pleasures, would sell their church birthright, as Esau sold his birthright, for a mess of pottage. But still it is true as when He [Christ] said it, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

With our greatly increased attention to human learning, there has come fearful decrease of attention to the perfecting of our moral nature, an unprecedented effort and sacrifice to culture the head with a painful and God-dishonoring neglect of the heart. Tenfold interest in the refinement of the intellect and the culture of the body more than the salvation of the soul. The highest and most refined intellectual culture alone has never saved one of Adam's sons or daughters from sin or depravity of heart and life. Ministers of the highest mental polish, who have never touched the hem of Jesus' garment have furnished living demonstrations of human depravity sufficient to prove the doctrine, if there were no other evidence of its truthfulness -- not one or two exceptional cases, but in every case of which this writer has knowledge.

The depravities of a cultured mind are rarely so vile or gross as with uncultured people; but a cultured villain is more dangerous to society than any other. Satan's kingdom would soon go into ashes in civilized countries had he no cultured helpers. Satan himself knows more of human sciences than any son of Adam has ever known, and has doubtless interspersed his scientific teaching with scientific discoveries through the ages, with subtle design to have it contradict the word of God ... Satan, and through some of his inspired servants built a system of falsehood [Evolution] with design to uproot the authority of the Bible and faith in the very existence of a personal God. But it is amazing to spiritual minds the avidity with which unsaved church members and unsaved ministers of learning laid hold on that Satanic ruse, and rejoiced that the authority of the Scriptures was broken and God retired out of sight.

Such ministers prove beyond the possibility of a doubt that "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Their faith is in accord with the ruling power within, and if the end sought could be accomplished no longer would sinful pleasures be disturbed by the exactions of God's law or the out-limits of depraved desire curbed by the thunders of awakened conscience. The severity of this judgment may be justified by illustrations in the chapter which is to follow.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/milton-haney/unsaved-church-members-the-essential-enemies-of-her-spirituality/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net