

When Is A Local Church “Sound?”

We hear much talk now-a-days about “sound churches.” Usually, among brethren, a church is considered “sound” if it does not contribute to or support human benevolent, or missionary societies, which have been formed by men for the purpose of doing the work God bound on the church. On the other hand, if a local church supports, condones, or endorses the many innovations that are sweeping the land, it is often termed “liberal.”

However, we ask is a church “sound” merely because of certain things it does **not** do?” Physically, the word “sound” denotes that which is “free from injury, damage, decay, defect, disease, etc., etc.; in good condition; healthy, or robust” (**American College Dict.**). Biblically speaking, we read of “*sound doctrine*” (I Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9), of “*sound words*” (I Tim 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:3), and of the importance of being “*sound in the faith*” (Tit. 1:3; Tit.1:13).

When one’s body is sound, it is healthy and in good condition. Soundness of health takes into consideration the whole body — not just a part. By the same token, a church is “*sound in the faith*” when all its distinctive features are according to “*the faith*.” This includes its organization, its worship, work, and even its purity. It includes both positive and negative qualities.

Is a church “sound” that does not use mechanical instruments of music in worship, but whose members refuse to **sing**? Is a church “sound” that does not contribute to man-made Missionary Societies, Benevolent Societies, or to “Sponsoring church arrangements” in order to carry on its work, but whose members **will not work** toward the building up of the church and striving to save souls? Is a church “sound” which preaches against worldliness,” but which fellowships worldly members? In brief, is soundness determined merely on the basis of what an individual or a church is **opposed** to?

Is it not possible to speak “*sound words*,” preach “*sound doctrine*,” and from a doctrinal standpoint to be “*sound in the faith*,” and yet be displeasing to God? Ephesus was such a church. The Lord commended that church, saying, “*thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars*,” Rev. 2:2. Nevertheless, they were in a “*fallen*” condition” because of having left their “*first love*,” and were therefore commanded to “*repent and do the first works*,” Rev. 2:4,5.

I say, therefore, that in the sight of God, true soundness is both positive **and** negative in its approach, and it takes into consideration the things to which we should be scripturally opposed, and it also embraces the many duties and responsibilities which devolve upon each of us as children of God. Too many professed Christians, as “*salt*,” have lost their “*flavor*,” and as “*the light of the world*,” have let their light be hidden “*under a basket*” of neglect, indifference, and worldliness. Cf. Matt. 5:13-16. Indeed, true soundness is both positive and negative — negative in that we must oppose that which is not authorized, and positive in that we must be zealously involved in that which is commanded.

Brethren, it is not enough merely to **sound** “*sound!*” We must **be** “*sound*” both in

doctrine, godly living, and fervent activity in the service of God. Soundness includes all that is done in “*word*” and “*deed*,” Col. 3:17. It also includes abstaining from “*the works of the flesh*,” Gal. 5:19-21, and developing in our hearts and lives those qualities described as “*the fruit of the Spirit*,” Gal. 5:22-23. Yes, let us do more than merely **sound** “*sound*,” let us **be** sound — both in doctrine and conduct.

**** B. Witherington

“To know what is right and not do it is cowardly.”

Is It Legalism?

By Irvin Himmel?

As Lot and his family were brought forth out of Sodom, they were told, “*Escape for thy life; look not behind thee...*” (Gen. 19:17). Lot’s wife did not follow this command in the strict sense, for she looked back. God turned her into a pillar of salt. Had she strictly conformed to God’s command, that might have made her a “Legalist,” but who wants to be a nasty “Legalist” when he can be a pillar of salt?

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, offered fire before the Lord which he had not commanded. (Lev. 10). The liberal view is that details do not matter. They may have reasoned that fire is fire, so what difference does it make? Well, God sent fire which devoured them both and they died. If they had been “legalist” enough to do only what God commanded they would have lived, but they chose fiery death to that terrible thing called “Legalism.”

At Kadesh, Moses was told to speak to the rock and it would give water (Num. 20:8). As if in opposition to the idea of strict conformity to divine law, Moses took the liberty to smite the rock twice and to say, “*Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of the rock?*” He got the water without being a “Legalist,” but he missed the land of Canaan. (Numbers 27:12-14). But who wants the Promised land if he must be a “legalist?”

If strict conformity to law makes one a “Legalist,” and “Legalism” is so terrible as many preachers describe it, why not hail Lot’s wife for her practice of individual liberty and think of the pillar of salt as a memorial of freedom? Why not praise Nadab and Abihu for their broad-mindedness and view them as martyrs for the cause of freedom to worship as we please? Why not exalt Moses as one who denied himself the blessings of Canaan rather than be guilty of strict conformity?

Is strict conformity to God’s word “Legalism?” ... Or is it just plain obedience?

Is this opposition to strict conformity to divine law anything other than opposition to doing exactly what God teaches? What is “Liberalism” but “Infidelity” in disguise?”

—**Apostolic Doctrine**, March 1962

Why So Many School Shootings?

As of Friday, Mar. 2, there have been at least 12 school shootings this year in the United States. Why so many? Obviously, this writer does not know all the reasons. But some seem obvious.

This writer remembers when the school day began with a reading from the Bible, prayer, and a pledge of Allegiance to the flag, but he doesn’t remember a single deliberate school shooting. Why the difference between then and now?

One factor is **the philosophy of Secular Humanism** which now undergirds much of what is taught in public schools. A secular humanist believes that man was not created; he evolved. Therefore the Bible is ridiculed as a standard either to believe or follow. Situation Ethics becomes the philosophy that governs how one lives. In other words, it is the survival of the fittest. If God is ruled out, then there are no absolutes, so man is left to “do his own thing.” “The bottom line” is this: Secular Humanism cheapens one’s concept of the sanctity of life.

The Legalization of Abortion. On March 5, 2018 there were 2,176 abortions in the U.S. Since the Roe V. Wade Supreme Ct. decision in 1973 there have been 60,236,679 abortions (baby killings) in the U.S. Since 1970 Planned Parenthood has murdered 8,038,944 babies. This year Planned Parenthood (as of Mar. 3) has murdered 62,700 babies. Legalized abortion promotes the culture of death; it cheapens life.

The breakdown of the home! God “*hates divorce,*” Mal. 2:16. Millions of children do not have the presence and guidance of both father and mother; many are left to “fend for themselves.” They are often not taught right from wrong, and frequently are not disciplined when they do wrong.

The Media. Ratings go up when they endlessly publicize the shooter, while giving comparatively little attention to the victims. This enables sociopaths to obtain the exposure their warped mentalities long for, and motivates them to go on a killing spree. Also the hypocrisy of the media comes into focus as they ignore the number of innocent babies killed (even while advocating abortion rights) and endlessly providing day after day coverage of the same school shooting, continuously posting pictures of the killer, providing a form of celebrity for his warped personality. The sort of thing often results in “copy-cat” killings.

No doubt there are additional causes for the barrage of school shootings. But the **real** problem is not “guns;” it goes much deeper than that! -Bobby Witherington