

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM
 Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

Preacher / bulletin editor:

Kris Vilander, (256) 472-1065

E-mail: kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org

Website: www.haysmillchurchofchrist.org

"But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness,"

—1 Timothy 6:11

**Servants during September/October:**

Songleader: Larry (27), Stanley (10/4), Larry (11), Stanley (18), Larry (25)

Reading: Stanley; Mike (Oct)

Announcements: Larry; Stanley (Oct)

Table: Larry, Marty, Stanley; Mike, Larry, Marty (Oct)

Wednesday Lesson: Kris (30), Larry (10/7), Stanley (14), Kris (21), Larry (28)

Area Meetings:

South Cullman, 27-30, Don Truex;
Ardmore, 27-30, Various
Eastside (Athens), 10/25-28, Bill Hall

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

"Examine everything carefully..." 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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Flee These Things (Part 1)

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness, 1 Tim 6:11.

Four times, Paul warns his readers to flee (twice to Corinthians and twice to Timothy). One of my teachers defined flee "to get on out from, do not get close to it, do not stay and flirt with." He was commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:18—"flee fornication." It is hard to improve on his definition. Christians can save themselves from "many sorrows," 1 Tim 6:10, by learning to heed Paul's admonitions to flee. Too many are playing moral and spiritual brinkmanship—seeing how close to the brink they can get without toppling over.

Sexual Immorality

Corinth was a wicked city. One would have had to go out of the world to avoid the company of immoral people, 1 Cor 5:9,10. When filth saturates a community, some usually gets into the church. It did at Corinth. One brother had his father's wife—sexual immorality repulsive even to the world, 1 Cor 5:1.

Some may have rationalized: "Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods," 1 Cor 6:13. Why have bodily appetites if we cannot satisfy them? One must learn to control the body's passions. The body is not for sexual immorality. The Christian's motto is not "foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods," but the "body is... for

the Lord, and the Lord for the body." The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. One must use it to glorify God. One way to do this is to "Flee sexual immorality [fornication, KJV]."

I doubt that our communities are worse than pagan Corinth. Some may run a close second. One cannot totally insulate himself nor his family from exposure to corrupt morals. They must learn to cope or else "go out of the world."

Most neighborhood schools teach "sex education." The emphasis is on avoiding unwanted consequences, like V.D. or pregnancy, rather than avoiding fornication. The Lord attacks the problem at its roots—"flee sexual immorality."

Christians, even preachers, have not always been careful enough. They thought it would not happen to them. They were wrong. One thing led to another until they went beyond the point of no return. It is a pity they did not have the foresight of Joseph in Potiphar's house. He literally fled fornication (Gen. 39). David was not as wise in the affair with Bathsheba. He later lamented, "my sin is ever before me," Psa 51:3.

Young preaching brother (or maybe not so young), you can hardly be too cautious. You may not know how far you can go without sin. You do not want to find out! What begins as innocent confidential counseling may turn to talk leading to

immorality. This is not fiction. It does happen. Preachers, especially young ones, do well to be extra careful here. One must protect himself and his reputation.

Preachers may do too much private counseling of young women. It might be better for qualified older women to counsel and teach younger women. If one feels that he must do such counseling, then by all means be discreet. Do it at a time and place where there can be no opportunity for it to turn in the wrong direction. If married, then take the wife along. If unmarried, then have someone else along to avoid anything happening—either in fact or appearance. Sure, I know some good brethren think this is being overly prudent. I don't think so. I have seen too many lives shattered, good churches troubled and preachers' influence destroyed. In most cases it could have been avoided had they stayed clear of surroundings where such could happen.

Peer pressure, natural desire, and social acceptance put a lot of pressure on young people to engage in sexual immorality. If young people really want to please God by avoiding sexual immorality, they must flee it. They would do well to stay away from people, places and predicaments that would be conducive to it. They need to avoid the pre-fornication condition of "lasciviousness"—sexually provocative dress, speech and actions. It does little good to apply the brakes after one has revved the motor to full speed with the throttle wide open.

No one says it is always easy to flee fornication in a sensually saturated society. It can be done. It must be done.

Idolatry

"Therefore, my beloved, flee idolatry," Paul later wrote to the Corinthians, 1 Cor 10:14.

The Corinthians constantly faced "things offered to idols," 1 Cor 8:1. The meat would be in the market place, in their neighbor's homes, and at the idol's temple. What was a Christian to do about all this? Could he buy the meat and eat it? Should he eat it if served by a neighbor at dinner?

Should he eat at the feasts in the idol's temple?

Paul addresses these problems in 1 Corinthians 8-10. He concedes that eating the meat was not inherently wrong, 1 Cor 8:8. It was within the liberty they had in Christ, 1 Cor 8:9. The strong understood that the idol was nothing in the world. When they ate it they would not be worshiping idols. They knew that there is but one God.

There were other things to consider. The effect it would have on weak brethren. The effect it could have upon themselves.

There were brethren, possibly formerly idolaters, who could not yet safely eat the meat. Would the weak brethren be encouraged to eat it as meat offered to an idol by seeing the strong eat? Where this would likely happen, the Corinthians should have enough love for the weak brother to waive this liberty.

Paul concludes, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble," 1 Cor 8:13. Then, in chapter nine, he gives examples of his own yielding of rights for "the gospel's sake," v23. Did he not have the "right to eat and drink" at the brethren's expense, 1 Cor 9:4? Did he not have the right to "take along a believing wife," 1 Cor 9:5? I believe he infers that, if he had a wife, that she also could "live of the gospel."

I wonder how many churches would turn Paul down for local preaching because he had no wife. I also wonder how many would turn down Peter for a meeting because he would bring his wife along—at the expense of the church!

If Paul could voluntarily forego his rights for the gospel's sake, surely the Corinthians could give up some meat to keep weak brethren away from idolatry!

Could knowledgeable Christians ever safely eat meat offered to idols? Yes, if sold in the market place, 1 Cor 10:25,26, or at dinner in someone's home, 1 Cor 10:27,28—unless someone at the dinner says, "This was offered to an idol."

This would be giving religious significance to it. In such cases one should not eat.

What about in the idol's temple, 1 Cor 8:10? Paul discourages this altogether. Why? It would still just be meat there too. It would be much harder to disassociate the meat from idol worship. There was the problem of influence: "For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?"

How far one could go without fellowshiping the demons? When a Israelite ate from the altar he symbolized his fellowship with the altar, 1 Cor 10:18? When a Christian eats the Lord's supper he symbolizes his fellowship with the Lord. Likewise, when one ate at the idol's table he symbolized his fellowship with the idol or demon the idol represented. It is not that the idol or the offering was anything themselves, 1 Cor 10:19. But, it was the meaning given to them at the temple feasts. If the Lord's table signified communion with the Lord, the idol's table signified communion with demons. Eaters signified their fellowship with the ones in whose honor the table was set—the Lord or demons. So, one should not eat at the demon's table—the table in the idol's temple.

It is in this context that Paul says, "Flee idolatry," 1 Cor 10:14. No matter how strong he might think himself to be, he could not be that sure that he could frequent these feasts and be totally clear of idolatry. He gives ancient Israel for an example, 1 Cor 10:1-11. They were delivered and

sustained by the Lord, v1-4. Yet, they slipped into idolatry with its associated sins, v7ff. How could these strong, knowledgeable Corinthian Christians be that sure that they could go to the idol's temple, eat at the idol's table, without sinning? So he writes, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands [that brother who had knowledge was sure that he could eat without sinning—eob] take heed lest he fall," v12.

He concludes "Therefore, my beloved, flee idolatry" Do not see how close you can get without being contaminated. Why should one test his power to resist religious error? Religious groups do things that are innocent apart from a religious setting. Participating in these things, though you may personally detach the religious significance, is not a good way to flee false religion. It is hard to effectively oppose a neighbor's religious error while non-religiously participating in his religious activity. The things might be innocent themselves, but they are sponsored by them as religious activities. One cannot be that sure that such close association will not sooner or later lead to acceptance—religiously. "Therefore, to him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." "Therefore, my beloved, flee idolatry" (or any other form of religious error). Do not cuddle up to it, but see how much distance you can make between you and it.

Next week, our brother will finish his article, considering flight from greed and youthful lusts. 

Remember in Prayer

Hospice care has begun for both **Carolyn's brother, David**, and **Cindy's father, Don**. **Donise's friend, Helen** is in the hospital. Please also pray for

Carolyn; Hazel; Larry's mother, Polly; Dwight and Shirley; Cindy's parents and brother; Joshua V and his family; and John, Sylvia, and Paige Pollard.