

THINGS THAT HINDER

In the days of Christ the lawyers were men who claimed to interpret divine law so as to help the Jews to understand the will of God. They were a bunch of hypocritical religious bigots who deceived the people and hindered them from accepting the truth. Jesus strongly rebuked them for their inconsistencies and showed to them their true condition. He accused them of hindering the people from understanding God's word and from entering into the kingdom. Listen to Jesus, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered (Luke 11:52).

Today there are members of the church who are guilty of hindering people from obeying the gospel and are hindering the progress of the cause of Christ without even realizing the mistake they are making. They may not be guilty of "taking away the key of knowledge", But by their conduct, or attitude they may be guilty of hindering others from becoming Christians, or some from becoming strong and faithful members of the church. I am sure that no one wants to be guilty of this.

In this article we will point out some things which should help us to take inventory of our own lives to see wherein we might be guilty The apostle Paul says "Examine your ownelves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Members of the church who live worldly lives are a hindrance to the cause of Christ. People in the world are quick to take notice of the hypocrisy of those who claim to be Christians who do not live right. The apostle James says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Again, the scriptures teach, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth" (Col.3:1,2). The apostle John says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:16,17). A person may excuse himself by saying he is not guilty of bad things that are condemned in the scriptures, but by inspiration Paul even includes "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:4). Things that are not wrong in themselves can become sin to us by keeping us from being the strong Christians the Lord wants us to be. Our Lord teaches us to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), and we are told, "Be strong in the Lord and the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).

Christians who show no real interest in the church are a hindrance. We are told in Heb. 11:6 that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". Lukewarm Christians are sickening to the Lord. Jesus said in His letter to the church at Laodicea. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth"(Rev. 3:15,16). We are told in I Cor. 15:57,58, "But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Members of the church who refuse to cooperate in the Lord's work impede our progress and discourage others who want to do what is right. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus and said, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). In the Old Testament we are informed that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). Those Christians who have no time to contribute to the success of any program of work that is decided on by the brethren hinder and discourage others who want to cooperate and to do what they can for the Lord. Such individuals will give account in the day of Judgment.

People who allow trivial things to keep them from attending worship services of the church are a detriment to those who are interested and want to do right. A strong church cannot be built on weak Christians. There are three classes of church members: (1) Those who will, (2) Those who won't, (3) Those who might.

The first class can be depended on. They are the backbone of the church. They are the ones who will be present every time the church meets (if at all possible). They do not rely on excuses to justify poor church attendance or lack of personal service these people are "ready to every good work". If there is anything they can do to help the church, they are ready. You can depend on it. They are a good example to all, including their children. They are a source of encouragement to all others.

The second class, those who won't, can also be depended on. They are the ones who will not do more than they have to do and still be recognized as a part of the congregation. They refuse to attend more than

one service a week. They will not sacrifice any of their fun and game time to help do anything for the church. They are selfish and think only of themselves and their own interests. They do only the bare stint of duty, but expect the Lord in the day of Judgment to say to them, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

The third class is made up of people who might, or they might not be at the services. They might or might not show up to help on a day when others gather to help get the building and property ready for a meeting. They might or they might not attend when the congregation conducts a gospel meeting to help strengthen the church and save sinners. If they don't "have other fish to fry" they might show up for a service or two to see what is going on, but not get too involved. These are people who could change classes by making up their mind that they want to be more useful to the church and start taking advantage of opportunities to be made spiritually stronger; who could decide that they want their life to count for something before they die. They could decide that they are going to use their abilities and talents for the Lord so that their lives will have meaning. Or on the other hand the third class can change and become a part of the second class. They can decide that they want to join those who won't. Of course, this would be a bad decision, but sometimes people retrogress instead of doing better. No one is responsible for this but the individual himself. He may try to blame others, but in the day of Judgment he will be judged as an individual as all of us will.

Finally, members of the church who refuse to put into practice the truths they learn from the Bible are a detriment to the cause of Christ because by their influence they discourage others who want to do their best. The apostle James says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). This same apostle says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Again, he says, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

We know that no one wants to be guilty of hindering anyone from becoming a Christian, and no one wants to discourage anyone from doing his best to serve the Lord and go to heaven. But what are we going to do to improve our influence? It would be a terrible thing to hear our Lord renounce us in the Day of Judgment and say; "Depart from me into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!"

Let us do the best we can to serve the Lord and encourage others to do the same. It will all be worth it in the Day of Judgment and for all eternity.