

A Church “Den of Thieves” is a Hideout for Bad Habits.

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CHAPTER 17 *Hideout for Bad Habits* 205

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Once you have overcome the shock of when Jeremiah and Jesus called a House of God and of Prayer a “Den of Thieves” they meant a Hideout for Bad Habits, then you can if you make a little effort recall how there is always at least one active church member, known by all, who has some bad habit also known by all in the community say for example of founding the young girls. It is both overlooked because he has a protected position in the community such as with a university, and because he holds attendance records for going to worship and other church meetings. Through the 20 to 40 years that he holds positions in the church such as deacon, he exerts an inestimable bad influence in that local church, including that the young people--the primary people who know--will not come to that church, and new members are attracted to that church who are much like him with similar or worse bad habits. Even as “like the priest, like the people” and “like the people also like the priest”, it is also true that like the senior leaders so become the other members of the church to the extent that one bad apple attracts and makes many bad apples. In fact, even the pastor is called of “itching ears” teachings and doctrines because this creature of bad habits and his cohorts in the local church after many years come to exert more influence than the good ones who have died or dropped out because they know the bad habits and their bad influence. The pastor who is the one that should, with any other righteous leaders in the church, reveal publicly within the church body, like II Timothy 3:1-8 where the follies of those of bad habits are revealed, and their church members should not worry; however since the leaders do not do their job, partly because of a lack of righteousness in their own lives and partly because of the fear of throwing the first stone--you know the live and let lie philosophy. ! In short lack advocated in II Timothy 3:1-8 the follies, or bad habits, are never revealed so that the perilous time of that passage pass after 20-40 years of unabated bad habits into the intolerance toward sound doctrine, alias the Falling Away, of II Timothy 4:3,4.

Most prayers of such a local church never go any higher than the church ceiling; and that is exactly what Jesus meant about any House of God when He told the temple attenders that while the House of God was meant to be a House of Prayer, they had made it into a "Den of Thieves". Granted you do hear some prayers, generally the same prayers from 30 years ago repeated, and given formally in the manner of the Pharisees and Sadducees, not in the manner of the model prayer as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. You would think that the Sermon on the Mount was only given yesterday, and local churches have not had 50 or more years to get use to the practicing of it. Most church members are afraid to pray like Jesus taught, "Our Father in Heaven..." etc.; because God would they think either strike them dead for their hypocrisy, because they are all too aware of the habitual sins and bad habits in their own lives, or God might honor their prayers like "thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven" to change their church and lives away from the comfort zone to which they have become greatly accustomed!

If you do not wish to believe that real prayer, especially of righteous men and women has become outdated in local churches, just look at how many churches there are that hold choir practice at the same time as the pastor-led Bible study and prayer. They are no longer interested in real prayer, in a depth of Bible study, and the leadership of the pastor. How often have we sat in prayer meetings to see a larger number of choir members flaunt their passage to the choir practice room behind the prayer meeting, often saying hello to the pastor in a "look at us, the larger crowd" manner. If you do not recognize this as one obvious sign of the Falling Away, then I think it is also too late for you!

17-1: Prayers in Most Churches go no higher than the Ceiling.

After God told Jeremiah to no longer pray for God's people in Jerusalem and in the Temple, the prayers of Jeremiah would not have reached or been heeded by God, had they gone beyond the ceiling. What was the hindrance to prayer, unrighteousness which we will see from Scriptures in this chapter, then and now? And the unrighteousness of God's people in Jeremiah was an alternative allegiance to a false god, an easy matter today for any church members who give priority to other idols over the seeking first of God and His kingdom.

Why do people go to these fallen churches dominated by people of bad habits? Several reasons can be noted: (1) it is a good cure for loneliness; (2) it is a good place to receive comfort for illnesses, not often healing in the pattern of the New Testament; (3) membership on a local church roll is mistakenly considered as a guarantee of salvation and rightness; (4) there are those few like the money changers in the Temple who actually profit in their business by the contacts they have at church **{how many business men do you know of who use Christ and Christianity to gain special favors for their business by identifying themselves as Christian businessmen}**; (5) many in such churches feed their own egos by making disciples to themselves as Paul predicted would happen in

Ephesus after his departure; and (6) also as predicted by the Apostle Paul, many would preach and lead for personal gain.

When over 40 years ago as I would struggle against the obvious lack of knowledge of sound doctrine in local churches, I failed to realize that church members were not that dumb. They failed to know and expose sound doctrine because that was the way they wanted it! Already the process had gone from un-revealed follies like in II Timothy 3:1-8, and the ups and downs of perilous times, to the intolerance toward sound doctrine of the Falling Away. Perhaps one reason that many of us active in southern Baptist churches failed to realize it is because we had become enamored with the eschatology of the Scofield Bible Notes, ignoring the real “binding” and “loosing” of Satan; and looking for a false big event of Christians removed from earth for a thousand years of peace, before all the real events before and during the Second Coming of Christ, as for example the Falling Away of II Thessalonians with a peaking of the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness, and revelation of the man of sin. **{It is amazing how selective we can get in our beliefs, excluding the sound doctrines of the Falling Away and the bad habits of some church members, and including such false beliefs as those of Scofield on eschatology where we look more for a false thousand years than we do for the Second Coming, the Falling Away that must preceded it, and all the clear teachings of the Bible that it is all over when Christ comes again. Then there is the gathering by the angels of all the sheep and goats, the great separation of the tares from the wheat; the placing of all unbelievers in the lake of fire and brimstone with Satan and his angels, and the new earth under the new heavens for all the new creatures of believers, and the New Jerusalem with the ultimate House of Prayer where there is no need for a Temple because God and Jesus dwell there with men.}**

You know living righteously is just as much sound doctrine as sound beliefs on God, Christ, and the Bible. You know sound prayer, and sound righteousness that avails in prayer to get results, is just as much sound doctrine as soundness on faith, gospel, and the assembly of Christ. Sound Christian living is just as much sound doctrine as beliefs on eschatology and the Holy Spirit.

Having faced up to the Bible realities on “Den of Thieves”, the realities from Jesus and Jeremiah and Isaiah, and the perspectives of God on morality and good people, perhaps you are ready to consider your own church. Yes, God made you a judge; and you must decide! What about Your Church? Has your church become more a Hideout from the Justice of God or more a House of Prayer? One preliminary way to quickly tell is on the place of prayer in your church. Has the prayer meeting and prayer become of less and less importance in your church with little or no attendance? Is the music program often replacing the prayer meeting and the place of prayer in your public worship?

17-2: What is the “folly” of That Leading Bad Apple we all know in a Church?

Look at the follies, or bad habits, listed in II Timothy 3:1-8, and decide which of the bad habits is the one practiced by your favorite bad church member.

1. Is it **self-love**, is it taking advantage of women in their homes laden with sins like Jannes and Jambres. Read carefully II Timothy 3:6,7 about “the sort” of church members and church leaders who creep into homes to take advantage of “silly women”. Dr. B. H. Carroll in his interpretation of the English Bible, prefers to call them “little women” in the nature of the famous novel by that name; and most commentators allow for two possibilities of interpretation, both which we find happening in our churches today.

a. Like in New Testament times where certain men went from city to city in the Roman Empire teaching in homes a peculiar logic of how to compete and win in conversation--one way to be “ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth--it was a form of cultural and self-improvement that gave them both something to talk about and a way to be among the elite.

b. There were actually gullible women in the churches of which church leaders and other members took sexual advantage. And before you re-coil at that distinct possibility remember both how the Bishop of an interdenominational church in Atlanta was using one of his lady church members to perform the services of a prostitute, also how she and others in the church gullibly accepted that as a form of religious service; also remember the large number of Catholic priests discovered each day in America, and no doubt when you consider it world-wide it is a drop in the bucket, who have the gall to sexually take advantage of the young men in their local churches; and then there is Ted Haggard who used the name of a New Movement Church and his authority as Pastor to take advantage of another homosexual. Also, in this category would the catholic priests who have sexually abused some many of their parishioners.

Likewise, recently we heard of the example of a “deacon” in a local church in Las Cruces who in his own home would under the disguise of teaching the Bible take advantage sexually of young women with videos around the swimming pool, which in reality combines both the two interpretations above. And these are just the sexual abuses that we know about in local churches, the ones that become public.

2. Could it be they are “**lovers of money**” {that would certainly apply to the pastor or businessman who would use status in the church for personal gain}. Also, any churches that would own and operate business for money. Definitely you cannot exclude these recent ladies movements who in the name of “faith resources” sell for personal profit many articles like jewelry, clothing, and personal objects while they assemble in the name of Christ and for Christian purposes

3. Could it be **women laden with sins** who strive after learning classes in their own homes and other places but who never come to a knowledge of the truth {say, church

members with a form of godliness that deny the power thereof, much like the Pharisees, and who never real get an internal knowledge of the truth of Christ}.

4. **“Boasters”**--yes, right there in the list of bad church habits of II Timothy 3:1-8, in the context called **“follies”**, and in the middle of and well-established in our churches--well, I don't know about you but I always look skeptical at the church member who is a loud mouth, or wind bag, that boast and has all the answers on every question. This church habit of boasting is extremely hard to get away from and keep away from, indeed continues to grow with the world, as the wind bag with all the answers is now very popular like Opry, Russ Limbaugh, Dr. Phil, and many more. These have always been around, but what is different about these times is that they are so popular.

5. Is it the captive of **gullible women** who allow such practices of bad habits to come into their homes under the pretext of learning, or just do learn less than truthful things all the time.

6. Could that one leading and bad apple you know in the church be **“proud”**, a **“blasphemer” of God** by the taking of God's name in vain, and there are many in our churches and growing in numbers and influence. I know of one Methodist woman, also active in home health care, who is a Worship Leader in a local Methodist church who habitually takes God's name in vain, also has a temper; and of a preacher and his wife at a local Baptist encampment who habitually take God's name in vain, acknowledge it as an habit but really expect the listeners after the initial shock to accept it.

NOTE: by the way have you “turned away from such” as the Word of God recommends in II Timothy 3:5--these that have a form of religion but deny the very doctrines of God and Christ and the new birth by their actions--for if you had many years ago, that would have been a form of revealing their follies and would have prevented the passing into the intolerance toward sound doctrine of II Timothy 4:3,4.

7. How about **“disobedient to parents”**--do you not know a seminary educated minister of parents in your church who does not even have the sound doctrine of **“honor your father and mother”**, knowing that something inside them is very wrong as an indication of the denial of the power thereof.

8. Or **“unthankful”**--complain all the time; **“unholy”**, few today in churches would make claim to their heritage as **“saints”**, holy and righteous; you know that religion, that **“form of godliness”** like the Pharisees and the Sadducees manifested, not lifting a little finger to visit Jesus and help the needy, or with their long and repetitive prayers to be seen of men in public worship when there is really **“dead men's bones”** inside instead of an inner spirit of God, will not cut it.

9. **“unloving”**, how quickly church status and membership and formal religion and some kind of false doctrine can be used to replace love and the visit Jesus habit of the New Testament.

10. Often the **“unloving”** are also the **“unforgiving”** as they have learned to practice the habit of the American Conscience, led by the baby boomers, of **“accusing others while they excuse themselves”**.

11. And perhaps your favorite bad apple leader in a church is **“a lover of pleasure more than a love of God”** {and I think that would more appropriately describe the bad apple I knew in one church that drug it down by the well-known habit of foundling young girls, and it is at this point that many of us church members have a problem, not in the foundling of young girls but in loving some other pleasures more than God}.

12. Or do you know a **“slanderer”** in your church of this continuing bad habit that has remained uncorrected and un-revealed to the church in spite of almost all knowing about it except the potential new members and perhaps youth, or the Sunday School class that such teach.

13. **“without self-control”**--I am sure we know plenty of these in every local church to which we go.

14. **“brutal”**, yes some of those also. You know where you see this brutal behavior on the part of church members more than any other place is in the treatment of pastors that are run off. Often it is with no notice, a complete severance of pay in spite of wives and children; and church members of bad behavior treat a former pastor like they would a dog. After all, did he not have the gall to question their own rightness, and to attempt to preach sound doctrine to them when they had already progressed deep into the Falling Away of intolerance toward sound doctrine.

15. **“despisers of good”**, well such practitioners of bad habits in the church have just about hit rock bottom when they show a despise for the good. Many church members just cannot stand to look at or be around those Christians who actually exhibit the goodness of righteousness. Like the people of Plato who lived underground so that they thought reflected light was the real light, these members have settled on a rightness far from that of Christ and of the good. The Holy Spirit has been denied access to them in His efforts to convict of righteousness so that neither can they see Christ or any other rightness. Often by the community, as is the whole community so called, are they called **“good people”** in spite of the clear teachings of the Bible in Romans that **“none are good, no not one.”** And if you cannot accept that **“lie”** you cannot be an accepted member of the community; naturally, not of the churches. One might wonder how close the Big Lie that we are the Temple or House of God is to the lie of **“good people”**. One would think that the Temple attenders in the time of Jeremiah considered themselves to be good people, since everybody around them was also like themselves; and the people of Herod's

Temple that Jesus severely chastised considered themselves good people. After all what is a little money changing in God's House; or the selling of sheep and doves.

16. **"traitors"**, yes to God and to Christ and to the real church written in heaven, and to Christianity and what a House of Prayer was meant to be.

17. **"headstrong"**, wow, do we know plenty of these who think the church was made to allow them to express strong opinions and a strong democratic will.

18 and **"haughty"**, you know how the most violated Scripture among church members has to be "not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to" --there is something about the local church as a democratic organization of charity as compared to the business or government or school where church members work that it more congenial to allow such self-expressions, and people take advantage of it for personal gain.

Wow, the reader might say, how does any church survive that has all these bad habits. As Bible commentators on 3:1-8 will tell you the context does not imply that any church of the perilous times has all of these bad habits, and not that all members have all of these bad habits, but you can bet that many of your church members also will have some of these bad habits. And as far as survival, the world loves it. They gain the approval of the world, and the increased attendance of the world in places like Olsten's church that by the complete sell-out to another Gospel of another kind, the Gospel of Prosperity, that local church has become very attractive to the world. And like with an individual Christian life, as Jesus taught in John 14, that one cast out when there is no longer any fruit, having been no longer chosen by God to be made more mature in pruning, is cast off, a process between God and that person that hardly becomes visible. It is the same for a church. Especially with a habit that tares have of putting on sheep's clothing to hide the resultant wolf nature, churches or individual Christians are more difficult to recognize unless, like the Bible teaches, you have cultivated a habit of either (1) testing the spirits, or (2) judging with righteous judgment instead of the appearance. You know any of these persons in the local church of bad habits or follies can appear to be normal and leaders if you allow it, according to the custom of the majority; but if you cultivate righteousness and cultivate judgment based on the righteousness of Christ and the Bible, suddenly these seemingly "good people" will turn to chameleons in your sight.

17-3: Where is the "Reproof" and Correction of ALL SCRIPTURE?

While we dare not neglect as also part of the Word from God, all the scriptures on unbelief and unbelievers; it is also true that the positive and opposite scriptures on "believe" and "believers" dare not be neglected. Even as "ALL SCRIPTURE" is given by inspiration of God and profitable, so also the methods God in His Word advocates for the spreading of all scripture go hand in hand with a faithfulness to the total Bible, such as "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." Many pastors and TV preachers today in their efforts at self-promotion, making disciples to themselves {like Ted Haggard

did in the new life church movement and as head of the National Evangelical Association--later adding the sin of lying to cover up his homosexuality and drug sins; and we still have not come around to the possibility that those disciples he made may have enough major problems in the very central spirituality of their conversions in which he assisted them as to fill up a church with empty people that may well be labeled by Jesus and Jeremiah as a "Den of Thieves"--as what we really find in the Evangelical Movement is a continuation of the fundamentalists, moral majority movement of good people without sin, and more an old fashioned gospel of custom and community traditions, a glorification if you would, of the community heritage of Bible Baptists as having all the answers all the time}, and personal gain are even more likely to choose their own methods, or singular methods, as they are to neglect major topics and doctrines of the Bible such as the Falling Away and their own members who are using the church or denomination as a "Hideout". We just cannot comprehend that a fighting spirit as manifested throughout church history in America by the fundamentalists is the opposite of the spirit of Christ, also of the spirit of grace and graciousness as seen on the part of the Apostle John in the Gospel of John as well as in the little epistles of John.

Actually, we can learn about the process and results of "unbelief" by a hard look at the positive and opposite of belief; and when it comes to Scriptures on believe and belief there is little doubt that the single book of the Bible which leads in this category is the book of John. The Gospel of John leads the 66 books of the Bible on the subject of believe and faith, and many recognize that the very stated purpose of John is to present signs for believing in order that the reader or listener may believe in Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of the Living God, thereby having life from God and life eternal. Once we see from a preponderance of Scriptures that "believe", the verb form, and belief are trust and confidence in God and what God says, we can more easily see unbelief as a slap in the face of God that we do not believe Him or the words which He has delivered to man. Of course, as long as we see the Bible as a good book to study and learn about rather than what it is, an over one-thousand-year effort on the part of God, using over 40 different authors during that period, to communicate what He considers most important to man. **{Thus, much of the effort today in Bible study and so-called Bible preaching is more "about" the Bible than the message of the Bible itself that God is communicating to man. This is independent of a good spiritual Bible survey where it is emphasized that "the Bible is a gradual revelation of God coming to an eternal climax in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ". This is true; but more important is the fact that God today, like from the beginning of the Bible with the books from Moses and Job, is trying to talk to us!}** Faith in the Bible and faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ go hand in hand. If you believe in a God of such character that He wants us to know truth and eternal truth, then it makes is much easier to also have faith that He did communicate to the world in the Bible, and that it is His Word; and further that He made Himself fully known in His own Son by what Jesus taught, said, and did. **{By the way this would be considered the prime REPORT of the Bible for unbelievers to be considered in the John Quinn Corner for unbelievers of the website www.biblecombibleman.com, and**

of the reports in the book with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Remember that in the spirit of Carroll and Scarborough of "With Christ After the Lost", we would emphasize "With the Holy Spirit and with Reports for Churched and Unchurched Unbelievers, remembering that deeply into the Falling Away there may be more unbelievers--the tares in the kingdom and the churches--in the churches than in the world especially as men with itching ears teachings like Warren and Joel Olsten make it so popular to be a church member, the surfers on the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness that we must discuss later.}

17-4: The Problem of Association.

On what members to associate with there is no lack of clarity--according to II Timothy 3:1-8, and assuming you can recognize bad habits or follies from good habits, you are not to associate with those members and groups in the church that show such bad habits--the problem comes when there is a split in the church, a thing that happens often these days and must be another sign of the Falling Away, which side is right; and here we must turn to other Scriptures for help like I John and Paul in Ephesians.

1. The fellowship of the Apostles was the key in the first century and can be a guideline today.
 - a. Rather today it is more a fellowship of the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles.
 - b. There is a certain ONENESS of unity of which Jesus speaks in John 14 that does not depend on physical association, and it is that oneness with the Apostles and Jesus that is a guideline for the right group versus the wrong group.
2. The "LEARN CHRIST" of Paul and Ephesians 4:20,21 is also a guideline, the way one group has learned Christ, some like the rest of the Gentiles, versus the way another group has learned Christ indeed--heard Christ and be taught by Christ.

17-5: Your Church, A Hideout or a House of Prayer?

Having faced up to the Bible realities on "Den of Thieves", the realities from Jesus and Jeremiah and Isaiah, and the perspectives of God on morality and good people, perhaps you are ready to consider your own church. Yes, God made you a judge; and you must decide! What about Your Church? Has your church become more a Hideout from the Justice of God or more a House of Prayer? One preliminary way to quickly tell is on the place of prayer in your church. Has the prayer meeting and prayer become of less and less importance in your church with little or no attendance? Is the music program often replacing the prayer meeting and the place of prayer in your public worship?

17-6: From the Perilous times of Church Follies to the Falling Away

The Perilous Times with a list of follies among church members of bad habits are listed in II Timothy 3:1-8; then the Falling Away, with the time has come when church members

will no longer endure sound doctrine in II Timothy 4:4-5; and with an identification from the Bible in between of when a church passes from perilous times where there bad habits are no more than follies to where the follies, un-revealed, turn into an intolerance toward sound doctrine in II Timothy 3:9 as follies are no longer revealed.

And as always in between follies and intolerance, and the revelation in the churches of these follies versus no longer any real church disciplines based on scripture and without "prejudice" and "partiality" is what can always make the difference in the Falling Away or not: Respect for the Bible as the Word of God, and acceptance of the teachings of the Bible as practical and daily doctrine for living, for correction and instruction in righteousness to make thoroughly mature--fruit that remains in disciples and "believing" if you would--men and women of God.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God {true in the perilous times, the mountain tops, or the Falling Away}, and is profitable {it is always practical and profitable for daily living of the Christian life and for proper church membership in perilous times or in the Falling Away} for doctrine {remember another word for teachings, of Jesus and of the Bible which you already knotty the Word of God given as a source from God}, for reproof {yes, that is still right here in the Bible and if you do not see or hear it then there is a chance that you and your church are well into the transition of from the perilous times into the intolerance toward sound doctrine of the Falling Away}, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

"that the man of God {it is generic like always in Bible for generic man like in Creation of male and female} may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16,17)