

**“THE CHURCH TO AVOID”**  
**2 Corinthians 12:20-21**

## **INTRODUCTION**

What are the signs of a church to avoid? Amazingly, the Lord had Paul write about the problems in the Corinthian church as a warning to us all. This should help any and all churches, if we pay attention. Their list of vices is what you *don't* want in your church! Our desire is the fruit of the Spirit!

## **NOT A PRETTY LIST**

Paul had written to the Corinthians and indicated that he planned to visit them. (v. 14, 20 and 13:1). He hoped for a good visit and didn't want to come there just to clean up a mess. He wanted the members of this church to deal with the issues *before* he got there. He was concerned that many had not yet repented. Unrepentant sin is a great hindrance in our relationship with God.

Here is the list of problems that Paul mentions: (1) **contentions** – argumentativeness; (2) **jealousies** – intense loyalty to the Lord is the good side of this. **1 Kings 19:10**. The sinful and destructive side is insecurity. **Job 5:2**. That's when we measure others successes; (3) **outbursts of wrath** – this describes those who are hot-heads. Usually this is justified by blaming others; (4) **selfish ambition** – is serving for your own desires, or thinking “what's in it for me?”; (5) **backbitings** – slander that is open and public; (6) **whisperings** – gossip that is usually more private. In either a public or private way, both are character assassinations; (7) **conceits** – being pompous and arrogant. Knowledge can puff us up. It should, however, humble us! The solution to pride is the cross! (8) **tumults** – this can be open warfare, longer feuds where everybody knows. The above sins are what can divide a church.

The next group of sins is sexual in nature. (1) **uncleanness** – anything that is filthy or dirty. They did everything except “go all the way”; (2) **fornication** - sex outside of marriage. It is sensuality that is strong, indifferent to public decency; (3) **lewdness** – lacking all moral restraint. It is sexual in nature. We seem to be saturated with this in our country and many are getting used to it!

Paul mourned over these things as should we. You should definitely avoid a church where these things take place and there is *no* repentance. Obviously most of these things don't happen in the church building, but are a part of people's lives. People don't change because they don't *want* to! Jesus changes people. Bible knowledge does you no good unless you do something with it.

The word “practiced” v. 21 is the word for a pattern. While we all do sin, what is our normal pattern? Church should be a place where grace and help are promoted and exhibited rather than scrutiny, just as Jesus did with the woman caught in adultery.

## **CONSIDER**

What do people look for in a church? Heaven sees a church full of people that acknowledge that they are sinners and the only hope for them is Jesus! He changes us! We need to put a high premium on being honest with ourselves. When one sinner repents, there is a celebration in heaven, just as with the return of the prodigal son! The culture in the church should be to admit and repent!

## **PRAY .....**

- \* That we would exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.
- \* That the church would not want or cater to sin, but desire holiness!
- \* That our church body would express the same grace and forgiveness that our Lord does!