

## **“Come Forth, My People” – No. 13**

**Dub McClish**

"This church has many problems in doctrine and practice, but so did the Corinthian church and Paul still called it a 'church of God.'" Liberals have so often made this justification of apostate congregations that even some otherwise sound brethren now parrot it to justify remaining in a corrupt church.

True, Paul addressed the Corinthians with all of their doctrinal and moral problems as "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:2), but this is not the end of the matter. The whole point of 1 Corinthians was the **stern rebuke and correction of those errors and their perpetrators**. He thought the church was salvageable and he was right. Most of the Corinthians repented at his first letter, giving the apostle great encouragement (2 Cor. 7:5-16). However, some were still liberal and rebellious. Paul addressed this element in 2 Corinthians 10-12, vowing to deal sharply with them when he arrived (12:20-21; 13:2-10). Had the church refused Paul's reproofs in his first letter, he could not have continued in fellowship with them and remained consistent with his teaching (1 Cor. 5:11-13; cf. Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; et al.) or the Lord's (Mat. 15:13-14; 16:6, 12; et al.). It is warped reasoning that argues that Paul's address of the Corinthians as "the church of God" was an endorsement of their sins and errors. It is also warped thinking that uses the Corinthians to excuse sin and error in apostate congregations today.

Another factor is that Paul dealt with these errors upon first learning of them and before their perpetrators had gained unbreakable control. Unlike many modern congregations, their problems did not represent a long pattern of error. Many of today's error-plagued congregations have had numerous good brethren (from within and without) attempt to correct their false ways over a long period, only to see the elders and preachers doggedly lead them further into apostasy. As suggested earlier, if even a ray of hope exists, faithful brethren should stay in a congregation and try to salvage it. Sadly, there was more hope for the Corinthians than for many congregations today. Shame on anyone who would cite the Corinthians as an excuse for apostasy or for staying in an apostate church.

In urging **good** brethren to leave **bad** churches, we are not in any way "sheep-stealing" or urging others to do so. Rather, we are encouraging them to have the courage of their convictions. It is imperative that they hear the mandate of the Lord: "Come forth, my people,

out of her sins and that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, July 19, 1990, of which I was editor.]

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