

December, 2008

# Pause Ponder Profit

## Churches And Their Buildings

by Bill Hall

**B**urton Coffman, in his Commentary on Romans, makes the following comment concerning the church's meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla:

*In view of this historical fact, and the inspired evidence of it before our eyes, one may only marvel at the divisions among brethren over the question of whether or not food may be served in a church house! From the facts, as evidenced in, the example of Priscilla and Aquila, it can safely be inferred that anything a Christian might do in his house could under the proper circumstances, be done in a religious meeting house, the home in fact having been the original meeting house of the apostolic church (513).*

We suspect that our readers are surprised at such a statement. Do we really believe that anything that can be done in one's home can be done appropriately in the meeting house owned by the church?

But wait! This is not the real issue involved in the "division" mentioned above. According to these brethren not only can churches serve meals in their meeting houses but they can build the

facilities into their meeting houses that are needed for serving meals — and this from the money contributed for the Lord's work. Could we not carry bro. Coffman's reasoning one step further, and say that anything a Christian might build into his house can, under the proper circumstances, be built into religious meeting houses? Bedrooms? Swimming pools? Recreation rooms? We know a family that has built a beauty shop into their house. A beauty shop in the church building? And the lady gives perms and sets hair as a business in her home. Could she do this "under proper circumstances" in the church building? In fact, it is at least possible that Aquila and Priscilla had a "tent-making" area in their house, for that was their occupation. A tent factory built into the meeting house with money from the treasury?

Besides, we have known of churches that met in YMCA's, union halls, prisons, and courthouses. Does it follow that anything a Christian might do in one of these facilities "could under proper circumstances," be done in a religious meeting house?

The truth is a church meeting house is authorized as an aid to worship and Bible teaching, which are God-ordained church activities. Whatever is needful to facilitate these God-ordained activities should therefore be built into meeting houses. In keeping with this, if God ordains social activities, recreation, and secular education as local church activities, churches should build facilities, and provide food, balls, bats, racquets, school teachers, books, etc., that will serve as aids to these facilities. But if they are not God-ordained church activities, churches have no authority to build into their buildings facilities for such. And to do that for which there is no authority is sin (2 Jn. 9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:4). This is the real issue in this controversy.



## Satan's Most Effective Tool

by Lowell Blasingame

If you were to guess, what would you pick as the most effective tool that Satan has to allure us to sin? Some would guess that the use of recreational drugs is it. There is no question that each year many are caught by him in this snare. He laid the trap by legalizing alcohol and making it socially acceptable. Some lean upon the use of recreational drugs to escape pressures and problems in their lives but as Solomon said, *"Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whosoever is led by it is not wise,"* (Prov. 20:1). It creates woes, sorrows, contentions, and wounds without cause. It bites like a serpent and stings like an adder and causes one to see, say and do foolish dangerous things, yet when one sobers, his desire is "to seek another drink," (Prov. 23:29-35). Such is a potent weapon of Satan.

Others may think that sexual permissiveness and immorality is Satan's most effective tool and there is no doubt but that these are strong appetites of the flesh. Gross sexual perversion lead to the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). Abraham's concern for his nephew, Lot, caused him to plead with God to spare Sodom if ten righteous souls could be found in it (Gen. 18:32). However, when he went "early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord" and looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, he saw "the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace," (Gen. 19:27-29) and he knew that these had not been found. Samson was a strong, powerful man but he became putty in the hands of Delilah (Judg. 16) and his folly cost him his life. David may have been Israel's sweet singer but seeing a naked woman as she bathed, created a burning lust that lead him to sin and murder the woman's husband, a trusted soldier of the king, in an effort to cover

his sin (2 Sam. 11). What a cost David paid for his sin and although Samuel, whom God sent to expose him, told him that God had forgiven him — the scar remained and we see it in his crying out, *"And my sin is ever before me."* (Psa. 51 -3) Sexual perversions, such as homosexuality, fornication and adultery in American society may have become socially acceptable, legally permissible and renamed to give them a veneer of respectability but they remain tools of Satan that will lead to one's being eternally lost without repentance (Gal. 5:21).

As we look for Satan's most effective tool, we must not overlook the love for money. Paul warned Timothy *"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tim. 6:9-10). Achan's love for a Babylon garment, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold in Jericho lead him to take and hide them in his tent. When Israel went up against Ai, they were defeated. When Joshua inquired of God about the cause for their defeat. God's answer was that there was an accursed thing in their midst and they couldn't stand before their enemies until this was removed. When trial was made, Achan was taken and confessed what he had done. Achan's love for money had cost Israel a victory in battle and now would cost Achan and his family the lose of their lives and possessions (Josh. 7). The love for money caused Judas to betray the Lord for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 27:3-5). The love of money caused Felix to keep Paul, an innocent man, incarcerated. *"He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him, wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him,"* (Ac. 24:26). For money,

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some will sell themselves into prostitution, murder, steal, lie, will use false advertisement, alter weights and measurements and do any ungodly thing — if the price is right.

These three things are powerful tools that Satan uses to deceive men and lead them to make the wrong decisions in life, however neither of these three things is the most effective tool that Satan uses in his work. The serpent used this weapon in the garden of Eden to deceive Eve. He asked her, *"Has God indeed said. You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die,"* (Gen. 3:1-3). Paul wrote the Corinthians, *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus,"* (2 Cor. 11:3). Subtilty is from "panourgia" means "unscrupulous conduct, craftiness, is always used in a bad sense in the N. T." (Vine's Ex. Dic . . . Vol. I. pg. 254). Beguiled is from "exapatao" which is a strengthened form of "apatao" and means "thoroughly beguile" or deceived. In other words, Satan told Eve that she would not die by eating the forbidden fruit but "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," (Gen. 3:4) and Eve swallowed Satan's lie, hook, line and sinker! Lying is Satan's most effective weapon. Jesus said to some with whom He contended, *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it,"* (Jno. 8:44).

In the Old Testament God sent His prophets to guide and teach His people in the right way but

Satan sent false prophets to lead the people astray. God said to His people, *" . . . Amend your ways and your doings and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying. The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these,"* and He told them what to do and He would cause them to dwell in the land which He had given their fathers but instead of heeding His words, *"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit,"* (Jer. 7:3-7). Again, *"And the Lord said to me, the prophets prophecy lies in my name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophecy unto you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart,"* and because I did not send them and they deny that my punishment will come, *"I will pour their wickedness on them,"* (Jer. 14:13-16). Judah's refusal to heed Jeremiah's warnings and their giving ear to the lies of false prophets caused them to spend 70 years in bondage to the Babylonians. This poses the question. How can one know a true teacher from a false teacher. Isaiah gave the answer, *"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,"* (Isa. 8:20).

The New Testament is equally plain in its warnings against lying teachers. *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,"* (1 Tim. 4:1). Peter warned about false prophets who would bring in destructive heresies (2 Pet. 2:1-2) and John warned against believing every spirit and tells us to *"test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world,"* (1 Jno. 4:1). Paul warned the Corinthians about "false apostles" who transformed themselves into apostles of Christ

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and said "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, . . ." (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Ephesus had tested some who claimed to be apostles "and have found them liars" (Rev. 2:2).

God's word is truth (Jno. 17:17) and we are forbidden to add or take from it (Rev. 22:18-20). To preach a message different from it is to invite the anathema of God upon one's self (Gal. 1:6-8). Things taught in religion contrary to N. T. teaching are lies and the chaos of denominationalism illustrates that a lie still remains Satan's most effective tool in deceiving men.

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