

It Is Written

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Doers, Causers & Makers

by Andy Brenton

When all is said and done, there are three types of members of the church that are ever present: doers, causers, and makers. There are those that do good; those that cause trouble, and those that make excuses. The doer of good promotes and enhances the vitality and growth of the congregation. The causer of trouble obstructs and destroys the work and character of the congregation. The maker of excuses impairs the energy and impedes the progress of the congregation; essentially he is "dead weight, excess baggage."

The members of the Macedonian churches were doers. Paul wrote concerning them: "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God." (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

The churches of Galatia had causers of trouble among them. Paul noted this when he wrote: "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:6-9). John wrote to the church of which Gaius was a member concerning a causer of trouble there saying: "I wrote something to the church; but Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church." (3 John 1:9-10).

The church at Laodicea consisted of people who were makers of excuses. They excused their lack of love on the basis that they were "rich, increased with goods, and had need of nothing," but the Lord charged them with being "lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." He further stated that they nauseated Him to the extent that He would "spew them out of His mouth" (Revelation 3:14-19).

Question: Where do you classify as a member of a congregation of the Lord's disciples?

"BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US"

By Jim McDonald

"God ... delivered us out so great a death ... and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us; ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplications: that, for the gift bestowed upon us by means of the many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf"

(2 Tim. 1:10-11).

Paul had just spoken of a great danger which threatened him in Ephesus: a danger so grave that he despaired of life and had "the sentence of death" within himself. He did not choose to reveal the exact nature of that danger, so, no matter what our feelings may be, any conjecture is just that: conjecture and theorizing. Yet, while Paul did not identify the danger he faced, he did give abundant praise to God for his deliverance from it; which deliverance, according to v. 11, came about in part because of prayers Corinthian brethren offered for him.

Paul was a praying man, a truth attested to by the fact that nearly in every letter he wrote he included one or more requests he made to God for those to whom his letter was addressed. Moreover, we see by the examples of the apostle, his joint prayers with his brethren (Acts 20:36; 21:5). All this a declaration that Paul fervently believed in the power of prayer and thus he also enjoined others to pray, and often specifically requested they pray for him (1 Thess. 5:25).

Paul urged the Ephesians to pray "... on my behalf that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20). Paul was ever conscience of the grace of his apostleship and wanted never to fail to make that message boldly known. Thus he asked others to pray for him to act as he ought to act.

He wrote the Colossians "withal praying for us that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:2). While this request to Colossians "echoed" his request of the Ephesians that he might make the message manifest, "As I ought to speak," there is his additional request that the Colossians pray for doors to be opened for the word. If it was appropriate then that brethren pray for open doors for the word, it is appropriate today. James chastened his readers thus: "Ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:2). Is it possible that today we have not doors opened to us because we "ask not"? It is something to think about!

Even to a church he had never visited but with whom he was fellow servants of Christ, he did not hesitate to ask their prayers for him. When Paul was in Corinth at the end of his third journey, he was preparing to make a long, dangerous journey back to Jerusalem, carrying relief for needy saints there. Everywhere the Holy Spirit warned him of tribulation should he choose to venture back to Jerusalem and he knew (as he told the Ephesian elders) that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him there (Acts 20:23). And so, as he wrote the Roman letter, heavy on his mind was the journey before him and the many uncertainties surrounding it. Then he besought the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from those that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest" (Rom. 15:30-32). Paul was delivered from the disobedient in Judaea (had they had their way, he would have been dead rather than a prisoner); the contribution for the saints was acceptable to them, and although he came to the Roman Christians in chains; he did come to them.

We should never underestimate the power of prayer, for although the trials in Ephesus came suddenly to Paul and the Corinthian brethren could hardly have known the specifics of it, they had been praying for Paul and their prayers for him played a part in his deliverance from danger. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" - so said our Lord Jesus Christ!