

First Century Church Problems

We sometimes think that we are the only ones who have problems. If we are not so naive as to think that we are not the only ones who have problems, then we are confident that our problems are so much worse than others.

But I want to challenge that assertion in this article. In this short space, we are going to consider, from concrete examples, some of the problems in the first century church. I believe you will find that they were plagued by the same types of problems as churches in our day:

- Lying (Acts 5:1-11; Psalm 101:7; Proverbs 12:22). It is telling that the first official church problem is lying. Brethren who will not tell the truth to one another will destroy a local work.
- Hypocrisy (Matthew 6:2-6, 16-18; Galatians 2:11-14; 6:12-14). This is “play acting” — convincing someone that you are something when you really are not.
- Forsaken duty (Matthew 25:24-30; Acts 6:1-6; 15:38; Proverbs 25:19). Once this problem was corrected, the early church grew. The church today can accomplish the same. Brethren must be steadfast and diligent.
- Factionalism (1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-3; Philippians 1:27; 2:2-5). In the first century, the church was rife with divisions. Brethren still must be on guard against petty opinions and divergences from the truth.
- False teachers (Matthew 7:15; Acts 15:1, 24; 2 Timothy 2:16-18). This is one of the greatest dangers a church can face so it has many warnings sounded in the New Testament.
- Immortality (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Revelation 2:20). It destroyed churches then and it will still destroy them now.
- Unfaithful preachers (2 Timothy 4:10; Philippians 1:15-18; 1 Timothy 1:5-7, 19-20). Error can be easily spread by those who should be spreading the gospel.
- Indifference (Revelation 2:2-5; 3:15-17; Ephesians 5:14). This is perhaps the most insidious of all. Apathy slowly sets in and makes us not care about the Lord, His church and other brethren.

Churches did have their own problems in the first century. How did they overcome them? By heeding Paul’s instructions: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). Churches can also overcome sin by heeding the Lord’s words: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:5).

Do not think we are unique when we have to deal with sin and wickedness. Churches throughout the ages will continually deal with these problems until the Lord comes again. Watch and pray lest you fall into temptation.

Kyle Campbell