

Not A Test of Fellowship or Salvation

1. Growing Hops, Tobacco and Swine Not A Test of Fellowship/Salvation

“In answer to many inquiries, we would say that we believe there is business for Seventh-day Adventists to enter upon for a livelihood, more consistent with their faith than the raising of hops, tobacco, or swine.

“And we would recommend that they plant no more hops, or tobacco fields, and that they reduce the number of their swine. They may yet see it duty, as most consistent believers do, to keep no more. We would not urge this opinion upon any. Much less would we take the responsibility of saying, ‘Plow up your hop and tobacco fields, and sacrifice your swine to the dogs.’

“While we would say to those who are disposed to crowd hop, tobacco, and swine growers among our people, that **they have no right to make these things, in any sense, a test of Christian fellowship**, we would also say to those who have these miserable things on hand, ‘If you can get them off your hands without great loss, consistency with the faith of this people whose publications and oral teachings have so much to say on the subject of reform, more than suggests that you should get them off your hands as soon as possible.’” Selected Messages, book 2, p 338, par 1-3.

Hops are grown to be used in making beer; tobacco is grown to be used in making cigarettes, cigars, snuff, etc.; and swine are raised for eating. So then wouldn't those who are growing and raising these items be guilty of actually aiding others in the use of all these items? Yes. Then why wouldn't this be a serious enough salvational issue to warrant us withdrawing our fellowship from these brethren, and even bringing them up for possible disfellowshipment from our midst? Because these brethren did not actually themselves break any of the 10 commandments, and thus were not themselves living in open sin.

2. What is sin?

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**” 1 John 3:4.

And what will happen if we continue breaking God's commandments and committing sin?

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ezekiel 18:20.

“For **the wages of sin is death**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23.

3. What actions should the members of a church of God take towards one of their own who chooses to continue living in open sin?

Unrepentant Open Sin Is A Test of Fellowship/Salvation

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for **what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**” 2 Corinthians 6:14.

“And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather reprove them.” Ephesians 5:11.

“It is true that **open sin excludes the guilty**. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches.” 1 Corinthians 5:11.” Desire of Ages, p 656.

Breaking any of the commandments of God is sin, and if we choose to continue to live in open known sin without repentance and overcoming, then this becomes a serious enough salvational issue to involve church censure and even withdrawing from fellowship.

Those that were growing and raising hops, tobacco and swine were not themselves involved in any open sin – they were not themselves involved in any open breaking of God’s 10 commandment law, and thus the subject of fellowshiping with them was not to be made into an issue or test.

4. Tobacco Use Not A Test of Fellowship/Salvation

“Some have taken a position that those who use tobacco should be dealt with and turned out of the church. In all of our experience for many years not a case of this kind has thus been treated by us. We have borne with them and labored with and prayed with them for years, and if after a time they did not reform, they became lax in other things and causes of a grievous character occurred which required an action on the part of the church, but then the responsibility was not assumed by merely the resident elder, the deacon, or any church member, but the church waited in patience for help, for wise counselors, and then moved with the greatest caution. These hasty movements in such cases tend to ruin a church. It shows a self-sufficient, self-important, bigoted spirit, which if indulged will ruin any church.” Manuscript Releases, vol 9, p 195, par 2.

Using tobacco is clearly a sin.

“Those who acquire and indulge the unnatural appetite for tobacco do this at the expense of health. They are destroying nervous energy, lessening vital force and sacrificing mental strength.

“Those who profess to be the followers of Christ yet have **this terrible sin** at their door cannot have a high appreciation of the atonement and an elevated estimate of eternal things. Minds that are clouded and partially paralyzed by narcotics are easily overcome by temptation, and cannot enjoy communion with God...**this sinful indulgence** has bound them in slavery.” Signs of the Times, January 6, 1876.

Wouldn't those who know this and yet continue to smoke, snort, or use snuff be going directly against inspired counsel and committing sin? Yes. Wouldn't this be considered an open sin sufficient enough to involve the issue of fellowship with these tobacco using brethren, and perhaps even bringing them up for church censure and possible disfellowshipment from our midst? Inspiration clearly states no. Why? Because these tobacco using individuals did not actually themselves break any of God's 10 commandments, and thus were not themselves living in open sin.

There is also another very important principle brought out in this above case. Because of these brethren continuing to use tobacco and openly refusing to follow clear inspired counsel, “they became lax in other things and causes of a grievous character occurred which required an action on the part of the church”. Or in other words, their rejection of the inspired counsel led them to become lax in regard to keeping one or more of God's 10 commandments, and then because of their open sin in breaking God's law their fellow church members were required by God to take action against them in this regard. But it was not their open disregard of inspired counsel that led the church to act, but their open breaking of God's 10 commandment law.

5. Meat and Flesh Eating Not A Test of Fellowship/Salvation

“If meat eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumors, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating.

“**We are not to make the use of flesh-meat a test of fellowship**, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh-meats have over others. As God's messengers, shall we not say to the people, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"? Shall we not bear a decided testimony against the indulgence of perverted appetite?” Review and Herald, March 3, 1910, par 3-4.

“We should consider the situation of the people, and the power of lifelong habits and practices, and should be careful **not to urge our ideas upon others, as if this question were a test, and those who eat largely of meat were the greatest sinners.**” Counsels on Diet and Foods, p 462.

“I advise every Sabbathkeeping canvasser to avoid meat eating, **not because it is regarded as sin to eat meat, but because it is not healthful.** The animal creation is groaning.” Manuscript Releases, vol 5, p 400.

Meat or flesh eating was permitted after the flood, but today it is so full of disease as to be completely harmful to our body, and is dearly counseled against eating any of it in the Spirit of Prophecy. Wouldn't those who know this and yet continue to eat flesh meat, be going directly against inspired counsel? Yes. Wouldn't this be considered a sin sufficient enough to involve the issue of our fellowshiping with these continued meat eaters, and perhaps even bringing them up for possible disfellowshippment from our midst? Inspiration clearly states no. Why? Because these meat eating individuals are not actually themselves breaking any of God's 10 commandments, and thus they were not themselves living in open sin.

6. Dress Is Not A Test of Fellowship/Salvation

“The dress reform was among the minor things that were to make up the great reform in health, and never should have been urged as a testing truth necessary to salvation.” Review and Herald, October 8, 1867 par 16.

“...persons who carry matters to extremes, had been **cautioned not to make the dress question a test of Christian fellowship**. What influence do these things have to undermine the confidence in my testimonies! It is not the testimony that is at fault, but perverse human nature.” Pamphlet #104, p 12-13.

God's will regarding how His people are to dress today is that: They are to all dress sensibly, healthfully, simply, modestly, without display, and according to the character of the climate around them (see Ministry of Healing, p 293-294; 1 Timothy 2:9-10). If a Christian is not following this inspired counsel and is dressing improperly for the weather - thus affecting their health, or is dressing immodestly - thus affecting morality, shouldn't this be sufficient enough to involve the issue of our fellowshipping with them, and perhaps even bringing them up for possible disfellowshipping from our midst? Inspiration clearly states no. Why? Because these improper dressers were not actually themselves breaking any of God's 10 commandments, and thus they were not themselves living in open sin.

7. Difference Between Two Different Types of Sin

The Bible mentions this difference between these two types of sins.

“If any man see his brother sin **a sin which is not unto death**, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. **All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.**”
1 John 5:16-17.

What are these sins not unto death? It is not the sins of openly breaking God’s law, because those sins do indeed involve death (Romans 6:23). But these sins that are not unto death must be referring to the personal choice to ignore or otherwise disobey any of the inspired warnings and counsels of God. This personal choice does not constitute the open breaking of God’s 10 commandment law, and therefore does not include the salvational issue of no longer fellowshiping with the guilty ones. But choosing to ignore or disobey any of the inspired warnings and counsels of God does indeed break God’s will, and therefore does include the personal sin of going against His will, especially in regards to areas on health.

“God gave the light on health reform, and **those who rejected it rejected God.**”
Review and Herald, April 14, 1903, par 24.

“**It is willful sin in them to be ignorant of the laws of health or indifferent to them**”. Counsels on Health, p 322.

“**It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the Ten Commandments**, for we cannot do either without breaking God's law. We cannot love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength while we are loving our appetites, our tastes, a great deal better than we love the Lord. We are daily lessening our strength to glorify God, when He requires all our strength, all our mind. By our wrong habits we are lessening our hold on life, and yet professing to be Christ's followers, preparing for the finishing touch of immortality.” Testimonies, vol 2, p 70-71.

This personal sin of not following God’s inspired counsel and will can also lead the guilty towards openly breaking the commandments of God.

“Practice habits of strictest temperance, and be careful to keep sacred the laws which God has established to govern your physical being. God has claims upon your powers, therefore careless inattention to the laws of health is sin. **The better you observe the laws of health, the more clearly can you discern temptations, and resist them, and the more clearly can you discern the value of eternal things.**” Temperance, p 188.

“...if after a time they did not reform, **they became lax in other things and causes of a grievous character occurred which required an action on the part of the church**”.
Manuscript Releases, vol 9, p 195, par 2.

8. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.** Bear ye one another's burdens (with patience), and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2.

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and **every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**” 1 John 4:7-8.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But **speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:** From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body **unto the edifying of itself in love.**” Ephesians 4:11-16.

“**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!** It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: **for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.**” Psalms 133:1-3.