



March 2, 2008

*Well Meaning, But ....*

From time to time we are contacted by others to join them in a cause that has great merit, but, we have to decline such an offer due to the attached doctrines that are being taught along with the “good” that is being done. We are able to decide what activities we should not be involved in, such as drinking, gambling etc, because they are clearly denounced in the scriptures. However, when it comes down to a “good” cause we may have to wrestle with feelings of guilt and may have to face attitudes from other religious people who do not understand why we will take the stand that we do. When approached for these types of activities it is interesting that at times there is no interest in finding out what we believe. The religious world around us believes that there is power in numbers. Prayer chains for example are believed to be more effective than when fewer people are praying. James tells us that the *effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5.16)*. Of course, it is good when Christians pray together. The collective fellowship of God’s people is a source of strength for all of us, but God will hear the prayer of one sincere disciple as well as that of a thousand. One of the problems when we try to explain the reasons for not participating in prayer chains, fund raising activities, vigils and related things, is that our friends who are religious may express their disappointment in us and even be completely surprised that we will not participate in some things. This type of situation is however not without some value. We may have a chance to teach the truth. Several years ago I was stopped outside a Walmart by a group working with troubled youth who had been involved in the legal system. The name of the church was on the sign in front of their table and they were receiving many donations and good wishes. I took the opportunity to explain to the folks at the table that the way in which the Lord’s church raises funds is found in 1 Cor 16 & 2 Cor 9. I discussed the passage, quoted it to them and explained the reasons why I would not contribute. I have also been asked to participate in the Emmaus walk which was being done fairly

regularly where I work. This generated a discussion that was very good with the individual who had invited me to attend but there was that bewilderment I could see in their face when the discussion was over. The problem for others is that they see religion as being a portal for social action and change. The first line of defense against the evils of the world. However, their pursuit of these things always appears to be coupled with the expression of their doctrine and they are happy to not only help but to “lead others to Jesus”. The problem that other religious people have with us is that they cannot understand how we can claim to be a “Christian” and not be interested in doing the same things that they are doing. I have had believers become so confused over this issue that they have not been able to continue a cordial friendship. I am reminded of what the Bible states and we might well apply it in this situation. Speaking of the pagan practices that the Gentiles had been involved in, Peter states, “*Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*” (1 Pet 4.4). We may not think of such well meaning activities as lawless but the fact is that this is an insidious evil that seeks to spread false doctrine and therefore lead people astray. Some have commented that they know others who are Christians and they “don’t act the way you all do”. It is mysterious that we do not participate in such things but we must deny such involvement. Why? The Bible is clear on it’s teachings. Johns states, “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed...*” (2 John 1.10). By assisting others with our time, money or moral support we may endorse activities and ideas that Christ will not be pleased with. However, there is a danger to this attitude, one that may lead us to become overly conservative. Next week we will discuss this danger and what we need to do about it. It is not just enough to refuse falsehood, we have to be doing good as well.

TLC