



March 9, 2008

*Do Good Unto All ....*

Last week we discussed the dilemmas that come our way when others of the religious world seek to enlist our aid and assistance in their cause. We may have to grapple with the uncertainty of how to answer an individual when these requests are made, or, we may have to deal with some degree of anxiety and guilt over not doing something more effective and positive than simply refusing. It was noted that many times what others want are the well meaning prayers and wishes of other believers without regard to the doctrines that are practiced. It becomes quite a judgment call when faced with donating food to a church operated food pantry, money to a religious group's homeless shelter or participation in a fund raiser such as the garage and rummage sales that are popular with many groups. The danger is that being of a conservative mindset, and knowing that we cannot support the fundraising or evangelizing efforts of these groups, we may become callous and lose sight of what we can do. In spite of the clean, well kept presentation of others who engage in such things we have to keep in mind that this is how the devil operates. Paul states, ***“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”*** (2 Cor 11.13-14). Are all involved in these activities aware that they are furthering false doctrine and therefore evil? No! Most people have zealously been drawn into a religious persuasion that “feels” right and is something that they can be proud of. They are not aware of the spiritual error that they are spreading and the eventual harm this will cause. The words of Paul however provide some direction once more into what we can do. ***“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his***

***will.”*** (2 Tim 2.24-26). Any request made of us can be utilized to create a teaching opportunity. Will this be effective? In most cases probably not, but there is the possibility that the seed may be planted in the heart of one who will one day question what they see and hear. Another danger that befalls us is that we may, by not voicing a reason and therefore teaching the truth, give the idea that we are either indifferent or that we are in agreement with the things that are being done. An attitude that we must avoid is to admit defeat before the attempt is made. There is strength in the conviction of many religious people, particularly those who are charismatic in their beliefs, and there is a great difficulty in getting some of these folks to understand why we oppose the things that we do. The best analogy that I have found to describe some of these folks is that they are like kids energized on candy and junk food and we are offering them a plate of brown rice and broccoli. It just does not make sense to most. We can also further the idea that the church and it's mission is not to relieve the social inequities and injustices of the world. Not even Christ did this. When Judas asked why a bottle of precious ointment had not been sold and the money given to the poor, the Lord stated, ***“For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.”*** (John 12.8). If the mission and work of the church is perceived as being that of relieving the human condition, there are those who begin to lose sight of the spiritual nature of the church and focus on the material. I have spoken with others over the years who ask about what “my church” is doing concerning various things and are usually disappointed with the answer. That really, to me seems to be a lead in to their true purpose; to brag about what “their church” has done and what they have to offer. It almost appears as if there is a marketing appeal being presented by a competitor.

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