

Why Don't We Ask Some People to Serve?

5-19-13

The word of God tells us the following: *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"* (I Peter 3:15). This command teaches us that all things we do (or do not do) need to be something we can answer from the Word. This series of lessons begins by exploring why it is we occasionally do not permit some visitors from participating in our services.

Several years ago a very dear sister in Christ asked me (in another congregation) if her cousin, a well known preacher, might come and speak to our congregation. A follow-up with this brother indicated that he both supported and was supported by the idea that church can use third parties to support evangelists to preach the Gospel. This idea is not part of the Biblical pattern. Therefore, we declined to invite this brother.

Why does it matter who preaches for us, who leads a prayer, or whose meetings we announce? It almost seems like nit-picking some times to refuse to invite or allow some to speak or serve and not others. Perhaps we ought to turn to the Old Testament and see a lesson to us from Joshua 6:18-19, and Joshua 7:1-22. There we find the man Achan not obeying the command of God, and the entire camp of Israel suffered for it. We need to learn a lesson here: when there is sin in the camp, we cannot expect victory.

Purity in the Church is a big deal in the Scriptures. First it must exist among the membership. We see this in I Corinthians 5:4-7 and I Timothy 6:3-5, where we are commanded to remove those who refuse to be obedient to the Truth from our membership. But it is also true of the dangerous visitor who is described in Romans 16:17 and again in II John 9-11. Both times we are told not to accept them as part of our group.

There is clearly a form of guilt by association that takes place when we receive and permit the service of those who are not sound in doctrine. Consider 2 Chronicles 19:1-2; there God was angry with Jehoshaphat for being in accord with King Ahab, whom he could have identified rightly as a brother. We need to respect that God considers some His enemy because they do not stand for the truth.

Let us revisit the original theme of the lesson: when someone visits us who we know or can discern is not sound in all doctrine, he cannot participate in our service. This means that the man who is not firm on MDR cannot teach a lesson, even if we ask him to refrain from that particular doctrine. It is offensive to the God we worship to permit such things.

In summation, we do not ask some visitors to participate in our worship for these reasons: To avoid "sin in the camp"; To keep the purity of the church; To reflect God's attitude towards sin. It is not about our choice on this, it is about respect to God.