

FELLOWSHIP WITH OUR EVANGELICAL NEIGHBORS

We are not the only folks being troubled by the change movement. Terry Peer is a minister with the Independent Christian Churches. In an article entitled, "A Plea for the Plea" he says,

"When the connection of togetherness is embraced with the 'evangelical community,' who does the bending on the essentials of doctrine anyway? I contend that it is always those of the Christian Church/Church of Christ. When does a 'Billy Graham' lay down his 'believe only' invitation or a 'Promise Keeper' promoter abandon his 'pray and receive Jesus' message for the benefit of unity with those who are Christians only? I've never seen it happen. The terms of fellowship are ALWAYS based on the Christian cowering into silence and laying aside the Bible message of gospel salvation in order to be accepted by the evangelicals. The evangelicals are not laying aside their 'believe only' message to be accepted by Christians. Doesn't that say something to us? Is there not an obvious issue there to examine?"

"We are called to be 'separate.' We are called to this 'separation' on the basis of the Word of God. The New Testament draws the lines of fellowship. So we plead with all who claim to love God...let's agree to agree ON HIS WORD...and so be pleasing to HIM!" (The Restoration Herald, Sept. 2004, p. 7).

The observations of Mr. Peer are applicable to those of our brethren who are eager to embrace in fellowship men and causes of their denominational neighbors. They enter these relationships, understanding that to continue in them they must not try to share their convictions about those Biblical principles that are not accepted by the others. Such things as baptism's link to salvation, praising God only with the human voice, men only leading the church in worship are items not allowed on the table for discussion.

Paul rebuked Peter for compromising his faith in the presence of erring brethren, by refusing table fellowship to the Gentile Christians of Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). What would he say to preachers of our day who compromise their faith in important doctrinal matters, including the way of salvation?

We should accept any opportunity to go among denominational folks if it provides us the privilege of teaching them the Word of God in an untrammelled way. This our brethren have done over the years. But we should not lend our endorsement or encouragement to any organization or activity that is contrary to the Will of the Master. Nor should we enter in with others if they would muzzle us and forbid us to speak the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26) as it is in Christ Jesus. Certainly if such opportunity is afforded us, we should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16) use good judgement and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). But speak the truth we must else we bid godspeed to error and partake of their evil works (II John 10-11).

In our Postmodern age with its pluralism and ecumenism, it take courage and conviction to "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate..." (II Cor. 6:17). JHW