

DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN

February 17, 2013

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said, “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not *to go* beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6 ASV). There are two ways that a person or congregation can go beyond which has been written. He can “loose” commandments that have not been loosed by God which is liberalism, or he can “bind” where God has not bound which is anti-ism. The way of righteousness and truth is not liberal or conservative, it is simply faithful. One belief system is no more sinful than the other because both have cost precious souls eternity over the years.

However, for more than half of a century, our brotherhood has been tormented with false doctrines supported by “forbidding” brethren. These brethren have been part of an anti movement that erupted in the 1950’s and 60’s that left great division and congregational splits in its wake. Not all hold to the same set of beliefs. Some forbid separating into classes by age group, some forbid the use of many cups during the Lord’s Supper, and many are opposed to having a located preacher, while others do not endorse the support of orphan’s homes or schools of preaching.

One of the things they may forbid is helping those that are not Christians from the church’s treasury. They feel that only a faithful Christian can be the recipient of help that is provided by the congregation as a whole. The Holy Spirit demanded, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto **all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10 KJV, emphasis mine). In this passage, the word “men” has been supplied by the translators and is a generic term indicating all people.

Those that oppose helping non-Christians try to limit this passage to the individual and not to the church as a whole. However, it is clear that what one or two individuals are permitted to do the whole congregation may do, as well. The Lord has taught His people that the only way for a congregation to function scripturally is for each individual to function scripturally. On at least seven occasions in the Revelation of Christ, He says, “**let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The individual was to follow the commandments given unto the church, but notice the commandment was given to the church, collectively!

The Bible is certainly replete with admonitions to personal responsibility. After all, in the end, we will be judged as individuals and not as congregations. However, God has never forbidden us to function jointly or with other congregations to fulfill His will. God did not forbid congregations from helping a non-Christian, instead, He said “do good unto all men.” There are places where the Lord does limit what a congregation can do, but this is not an example of that. His demand is a broad demand and can be clearly seen by the words chosen to convey His message.

There are other passages where God places responsibilities upon the congregation and individual alike. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), singing praises to God (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Js. 5:13); and the practice of true religion (Js. 1:27).

Obviously, we should prefer our brethren, but this is not an indication that we should ignore non-Christians, either. It is a joy to be around our brethren, but one cannot convert someone unless they

pay attention to them! Untold people have been converted because a Congregation demonstrated Christian love to them in some way.