

Words of Truth

Friendly Enemies – What?

By: Brian A. Yeager

I sat at a desk of an older “preacher”, who was also an elder at the congregation wherein he was a member. We sat and discussed various spiritual matters. During our discussions we talked about the unscriptural practice of forming human institutions, divorce, etc. During our discussion various names of false teachers came up. This man then boasted that he had marked Florida College teachers and others. We discussed various known false teachers. All seemed well. Then, he began boasting about how he had discussions with these false teachers and even had written correspondences with some “strong words”. Yet, he said: “I am proud of the fact that I can disagree with these men without being disagreeable.” This man boasted that he had marked one false teacher many times, but was still welcome at this man’s dinner table because he had exposed him in a “brotherly way”.

Like the preacher I just mentioned above, I have heard many proclaim that when dealing with false teachers among the “brotherhood” we should do so in a “brotherly manner”. Now, where in all of God’s word is that written? How do you even come to a thought of treating a false teacher as a brother in Christ (Proverbs 28:4 and Proverbs 29:27; cf. Matthew 3:7-9)? Brethren are those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 12:46-50 and I John 1:3-7).

I have read and listened to many “debates” amongst so-called “brethren” wherein they spend their opening statements befriending their enemies. Statements like: Brother Smith and I have been friends for many years. I admire the work he has done for the Lord. During this debate I will refer to him on a first name basis. I don’t want this to be misunderstood as being disrespectful. We were friends before this debate. We will be friends during and after this debate (this is not an actual quote).

Is the above mindset Scriptural (I Timothy 5:20 and Titus 1:10-14)? How can someone appreciate the work someone has done for the Lord if that someone is a false teacher (Matthew 7:15-20)? Rather than continuing to give examples of “friendly fire”, let’s see how God’s people acted towards the erring.

The Prophets Sure Didn’t Act “Brotherly” Towards The Erring

When Ahab accused Elijah as being a troublemaker, did Elijah respond by kissing Ahab’s backside? Let’s see: *“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim”* (I Kings 18:17-18).

When Israel erred, did God have the prophets write soft messages to them? Did God tell the prophets to be sure to write in a “brotherly way”? Let’s see: *“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are*

greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter... For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot... Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart... Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied” (Isaiah 56:10-11, Jeremiah 2:20, Jeremiah 14:14, and Ezekiel 16:28). That’s the prophets, what about Jesus and the Apostles?

Many So-Called “Brethren” Would Conclude Jesus Didn’t Act Brotherly

Did Jesus befriend false teachers? Did Jesus speak softly? Did He express His thankfulness for the “good” the false of that day did for His Father? Notice: *“Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites... And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also” (Matthew 22:17-18 and Luke 11:39-40)?*

Did the Apostles exchange pleasantries with those in error? Did they act like buddies with the enemy? Notice: *“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity... But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand... O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you” (Acts 8:18-23, Acts 13:8-11, Galatians 3:1)?*

Conclusion

We are always at war (Ephesians 6:10-17, Philippians 1:17, I Timothy 6:12, and Jude 3). The examples of godly individuals handling enemies strongly are many more than we’ve looked at in this article. The standard of our Lord is that you are either a friend or an enemy (Matthew 12:30). It is not that we should rejoice in having enemies, but we must recognize who our enemies are (Philippians 3:16-19). Even with the ignorant that need taught (II Timothy 2:24-26 and Jude 22-23), we cannot act like good ole’ pals when they err (Matthew 16:21-23). With some we cannot be longsuffering at all (Romans 16:17-18 and Titus 3:10-11). Whether willfully ignorant or unintentionally ignorant, the erring are our enemies. Thus, we cannot treat these individuals in a “brotherly manner” (II John 9-11). There is no such thing as an enemy that we should befriend (Ephesians 5:6-11).