

Condemned by Association

H. E. Phillips, *Searching the Scriptures*. July, 1964. Vol. 5, No. 7. page 89

“And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). This was said of Christ because the Publicans and sinners drew near to hear him. The Lord then taught a series of parables to show that his mission was to save these people.

Today a man is frequently marked because he is seen in the presence of one who is not what he should be. There are times and circumstances when we should avoid the company of sinful persons, but there are also times when we should contact them in order to try to save them from eternal damnation. Never should these contacts or associations be of such a nature as to indicate "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). Those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ should be avoided (Rom. 16:17). We should not keep company with a brother who is “a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner” (I Cor. 6:11). This means that there should be no social contact with him. However, Galatians 6:1 shows that some contact should be made to restore him.

I have had people to completely shun me in the presence of some person who differed with me on some doctrinal point, but would be as friendly as possible on other occasions. This was obviously to avoid being marked by his association with me. I believe I can strongly disagree with anyone and at the same time have the right attitude toward him in the presence of anyone and desire the salvation of his soul. Personal enmity and malice never corrected a wrong situation. When men do wrong we should be sure that our association with them does not encourage or endorse their wrong, but we should not avoid an opportunity to teach them even if someone might “mark” us for being seen with them.

This same attitude prevails in the publication of a paper such as **Searching The Scrip-**

tures. If a certain person writes an article on a given subject that does not agree with the views of another, immediately the editor is classified as holding that view. I want to make it clear that I may not endorse every position taken by every writer, but he has the right to state his position. That is the way we learn where the truth is. A journal that permits only one side of a question to be presented is not worth reading so far as learning the whole truth is concerned. I am ready to state my convictions on any subject I know anything about, and I am open minded enough to hear the other fellow state his convictions. That does not mean that we must permit error to be taught without exposing it as error. Truth and error can be separated by examining all the evidence and comparing it with the word of God.

I was recently asked if I ever received unfavorable “comments to the editors.” Yes, I do, but not many. Well, why do I not publish them? Most people who have something critical to say do not usually want it published, and I do not want to take advantage of anyone, but those who have something commendable to say do not mind if it is published. If I ever get an unfavorable statement with the request to publish it, I will do so.

Each man who writes anything we publish in this paper is responsible for what he says. It does not necessarily represent the convictions of the editors. We do not edit articles to make the writer say what we want him to say. If an article does not edify and attempt to seek truth, it serves no purpose in this publication.

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