

Right in the Sight of God

Sometimes what man calls right and what God knows to be right are two different things. The scriptures indicate over and over that God does not view matters as does man (Isa. 55:8,9) It should be our utmost concern to do things in harmony with God's ways.

I do not believe it is difficult to understand what God requires of us to be his children. I do not believe it is being ugly or vindictive to stand for what the Bible teaches on any subject. We are not being the enemies of people because we tell them the truth. I think it is totally unfair to categorize all teachers and preachers who oppose error as vindictive because someone somewhere may manifest an ugly spirit.

There are certain fundamental principles that ought to guide us, and we should not be caught up in the obvious traps of Satan. For example:

1. Honesty and sincerity does not make one right. I admire the man who is honest and sincere, and that is a much needed Christian quality, but it alone, and by itself is not enough. "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. 14:12).

2. Feeling is not love. We ought to feel good about our Christianity, and I am not against good feelings, but feelings ought to come as a result of our faith and not, in of themselves, become the authority of our religious life. Commanded love in the Bible is not a feeling, but a demonstrated action as a function of the will of man. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15) This involves our decision making processes.

3. Having a good conscience does not certify one as being right. Paul had a good conscience, but while he was persecuting the church and making havoc of it, he was dead wrong. (Acts 23:1) What makes a man righteous is doing what is right. (I John 3:7)

4. God does not overlook even the "insignificant sins." One unrepented of sin is enough to keep us out of heaven. Think of Lot's wife, Uzzah, and Nadab and Abihu who were all killed by the hand of God over what we might consider "insignificant sins." Even a partial lie caused death in the early church. (Acts 5:1ff)

Can we say because a man (or church) is in error in only one doctrinal point that is unscriptural, that therefore, we ought to extend full fellowship to him (them)? Let us say he uses the instrument in worship. What about if he also does not believe in

partaking of the Lord's supper each week? What if he thinks foot washing ought to be a part of the church worship? Where does one end what he allows?

The truth of the matter is that we must not allow anything that is unscriptural. It is not being vindictive or ugly to maintain a standard. It is possible to be ugly and vindictive in maintaining the standard of God, but the sin lies in being ugly and vindictive, not in maintaining the standard of God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."