

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

August 23, 2009

Handling Disagreement With Grace

“Come now, let us reason together.” God and the nation of Judah had a problem. They did not agree. The above quotation is from the first part of Isaiah 1:18 where God informs Judah that they could still be cleansed if they would repent and turn to Him. There was disagreement between He and they and He wanted to discuss the issues with them. He wanted to reason with them.

It is unfortunate that so many religious people today do not possess the desire to reason with those who disagree with them. What do I mean? A year ago two men knocked on my door back in Cincinnati. They introduced themselves as members of the Morning Star Baptist Church. Initially they were very kind and cordial. However, things began to change after they asked me if I attended a church. Having informed them that I was the evangelist for the Evendale church of Christ, one of the men, entirely unprompted, rather aggressively said, “You know that baptism won’t save you, right?”

I thought that we were about to have a Bible discussion. However, before I could get a word out the man said, “You believe in a works based salvation. Baptism is a work. You’re trying to earn your way into heaven.” Now understand, he has said all of this before I had the chance to say anything beyond the fact that I preached at Evendale. However, he had worked up quite a head of steam so I let him continue to see what arguments he would make and what direction our study would go. At this point, I was still certain that we were about to begin a Bible study.

“You believe that you can lose your salvation once you’re saved. So again, you believe that your salvation relies solely upon you. We don’t believe that. We believe what the Bible teaches-salvation by grace through faith.” At that point I asked where the Bible ever says that baptism is a meritorious work? I asked him to turn with me to Acts 22:16 and asked him if Ananias, in commanding Saul to be baptized to wash away his sins, was asking him to do a meritorious work? I also asked him if Saul could have been saved without this act that washed away his sins?

That was the very abrupt end to our “study.” His Bible slammed shut with a huff and a rather petulant “I’m not concerned with what Acts 22 says. You are not going to change my doctrine.” I commented that a person claiming to be a Christian and a lover of the Scriptures should get his doctrine directly from the Scriptures. He fired back with the following: “You are a heretic and condemned to hell. I don’t have the time to waste on you.” Perhaps he could give his “pastor” a call and we could study these things together at the house. “Absolutely not! He does not have the time to waste on heretics, either!” That was that.

Being disagreed with and maintaining one’s kindness and cordiality is something that must be worked at. When these two men knocked on the door they had no intention of being mean and nasty. I am positive that it was the farthest thing from their minds. However, they did not know how to take disagreement or questioning gracefully. We can learn a lesson from the apostle Paul in this respect. In Acts 17:16-18, we read, **“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, ‘What does this babbling wish to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’-because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.”** Every day Paul discussed spiritual things with these people. Do you think that in the city of Athens, a place given entirely to idolatry, people did not disagree with him regularly? Read his address in the Areopagus in verses 22-31 and you will see what it is to deal with disagreement gracefully.

My friends, if we haven't already leaned this lesson, let's learn it now: often when spiritual things are discussed there is going to be disagreement. There is not a topic that has the potential to be as explosive as religion. However, disagreement is not all bad! As a preacher of the gospel, I expect a fair amount of disagreement when speaking about spiritual things to strangers. I expect it sometimes even among my brethren. I always remind myself that disagreement simply provides an opportunity for teaching to take place. I was thrilled when these two Baptists knocked on the door. When they began to espouse false doctrine, a little tremor of excitement crept through me. This excitement was not because they are wrong in their doctrinal beliefs, that is tragic; but because these two men had found their way to my door where perhaps we could study the issues. It is exceedingly unfortunate that it turned out the way that it did and I pray that those two men finally come to a knowledge of the truth.

When we are discussing spiritual things with people our topic of discussion is far too important for us to turn mean and nasty when we are disagreed with. I am not saying that we must not press our points forcefully and with zeal. Paul did this very thing in speaking to a crowd of unbelievers. **"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent"** (Acts 17:30). Also, there will be times where we are dealing with a person who is just dishonest and will disagree and argue for no other reason but their dishonesty. We need not waste time there (Matthew 10:14). Having said all of this, there is never any reason to be disrespectful and cruel in our discussion of spiritual things just because someone disagrees with or questions us. Study the issue with them and see what the Bible teaches on the topic. Who knows, we might just learn something.

In Need of Prayers	General Information
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Remember Kristen Osterling's unborn baby.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman.</p> <p>Pamela Clayton has passed from this life.</p> <p>Rachel Knollman will have her surgery on September 2.</p> <p>Wayne Galloway is in Central Baptist Hospital undergoing dialysis for kidney failure.</p> <p>Robin Miller's surgery will be in September 3.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan's mother) is recovering in a care facility in Ohio. The contact information is posted on the bulletin board in the hall.</p>	<p>There will be a congregational meeting this today at 5. Please make your plans to attend.</p> <p>Our weekend meeting begins Friday and runs through Sunday evening. Invite your friends!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p>

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