

Zealousness and Knowledge

Our federal government is based upon a "checks and balance" system. The President, vetoing a bill of congress or congress not passing the President's proposed legislation are examples of the "checks and balances" system on the executive and legislative levels. In other words, each branch of the government keeps the other branches in line. Likewise, there are certain words, which when applied to one's character serve as a "checks and balance" system. "Zealousness" and "knowledge" are two such words.

Zealousness

Zealousness without knowledge is dangerous. Sometimes a congregation will consist of two or three members who are "babes in Christ" and who are overflowing with zeal. They are so enthusiastic about the work of the Lord that they want to push all kinds of programs. The motives and intentions of such individuals are not in question at all. But all too often the programs are pushed without any regard for feelings of others or possible unwanted consequences. In some cases, programs or ideas are pushed with or without the elders' consent. The incident then becomes not only a bad situation but also an unscriptural one. We read of elders overseeing the flock (Acts 20:28), but I fail to find in my Bible where zealousness qualifies one to overstep the elders and take the oversight. The apostle Paul said of the Jews in Romans 10:2, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." Young men (and a few old ones) need to have experienced, well-grounded Christians to keep them in line. One of the causes of the division of the kingdom under the Old Covenant was because Rehoboam "forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him" (1 Kings 12:8). Zealousness is a must-but it must be accompanied by knowledge.

Knowledge

Just as dangerous as zealousness without knowledge is knowledge without zealousness. The Lord's church is filled with too many lazy members who are content with "keeping house for the Lord." This was never the Lord's intent "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37, 38). A Christian is something somebody is, not just merely what someone is called. John records in Revelation 3:15 concerning the church in Laodicea, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot, I would that you were cold or hot." Perhaps a few of the older members need to be prodded by the zealous workers. If the prod is justified and done in the proper spirit, the older ones should not despise the youthfulness of the younger. (1 Tim. 4:12)

Zealousness without knowledge, perhaps, will affect more people, but knowledge without zealousness is just as sinful. The opposite of zealousness is "apathy." The antonym of knowledge is "ignorance" - the church needs neither. Try being a Christian without knowledge or zealousness and there will always be a vast void. Would that all God's people were zealous and knowledgeable!

- by Larry R. Houchen

Our Duties to the Local Congregation

It is certainly true that we are converted to Christ, not to the church. However, it is also true that the church is a vital part of God's plan for His people (Ephesians 3:9,10), and we know that membership in a local congregation is crucial for every disciple (Acts 9:26). Therefore, all Christians should be committed to the local congregation where they are members.

With these facts in mind, what are our duties to the local church? Consider these:

1. The congregation's reputation in the local community is very important. We cannot expect people to visit, investigate, study, and ultimately be converted if they know that individual members of the church are not living up to the standard they proclaim. If others see hypocrisy

among the members of the local church, it will not prosper. Each and every individual Christian must be 'salt' and 'light' among the lost (Matthew 5:13-16).

2. No organized group can progress without good leadership. This is definitely true of a local church. But, good leaders need supportive and cooperative followers. Thus, as the elders lead and guide according to the God's truth, each member has a duty to submit and obey (Hebrews 13:17).
3. There are certain financial obligations that must be met with regularity. Consequently, the members need to sense their obligation to give generously, regularly, and consistently (1 Cor. 16:1,2). Though circumstances may force one's absence occasionally, extra effort should be made to make sure one's financial support to the congregation is always honored.
4. Ultimately, the very existence of any congregation depends upon the attendance of its members. The very life of the church is dictated by attendance. For this reason, every saint should feel a duty to be present at every possible service, Bible study, special meeting, etc. (Hebrews 10:25). Each one should realize that an unexplained, unjustifiable absence strikes a blow to the energy, enthusiasm, and efficiency of the congregation.
5. The growth of the congregation depends upon new people being converted. If this is to happen, the members must grasp the importance of sharing their faith with others who are in their sphere of influence. Neighbors, co-workers, family members – to name a few – should be among those that we seek to win for Christ (Matthew 28:19,20).
6. It is critically important that the members feel a sense of love and loyalty to every other member and to the group as a whole. Just as one would not 'turn their back' on their physical family, neither should they callously turn away from their spiritual family. This means that there will be a concerted effort to maintain peace with others (Ephesians 4:1-3). Genuine concern should be shown for those with special needs, both physical and spiritual. The brotherly love between individual saints should be open and obvious – it is, after all, a sign of our discipleship (John 13:35). When a Christian leaves a local church without good reason, it is an indication that he did not have a sense of loyalty that is so necessary if the church is to succeed.

- by Greg Gwin