

Are We Driving People Away?

As we write in newspapers, bulletins, religious journals, and preach from time to time in different places, we are often met with individuals, both within and without the body of Christ, who disagree with our teaching, do not appreciate the way we present the Scriptures, and say, "You are not winning people to the Lord. You are driving people away." With all seriousness, this accusation needs careful contemplation. Let's consider a couple of questions.

First, was the Lord driving people away? If you had lived during the time of Christ, would you have charged the Lord with driving people away? Was the Lord driving people away when He said, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34)? When the Lord accused men of transgressing the commandment of God, making the commandment of God of none effect, called them hypocrites, and charged them with vain worship, was He driving them away (Matthew 15:1-9)? When the disciples came to Him and said, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" (Matthew 15:12), do you think the Lord should have been concerned about driving them away? Jesus answered, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14).

Second, was Peter driving people away? If you had been present on the day of Pentecost as the first recorded gospel sermon was being preached by Peter, would you have accused him of driving people away? When Peter charged his audience with the guilt of crucifying the Son of God (Acts 2:23, 36), would you have said, "You had better tone it down, Peter. You need to find a kinder, gentler, smoother way of presenting the gospel to these people, Peter. You are going to drive them away"? Peter's proclamation of the gospel of Christ was of such a nature that it made people aware of their sin, that they needed to do something to get rid of the sin in their lives, and what it was they needed to do (Acts 2:37-38), and "they that gladly received his word were baptized ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41, 47).

There are those who gladly receive the word, and there are those who madly receive it. The reaction of men and women to the preaching of the truth is not based so much upon the presentation of the preacher as it is the reception of the hearer. When we "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), we are not driving people away from the truth. It is their own rebellious heart that keeps them from coming to the truth! I wonder, are you concerned about driving us away when you accuse us of driving others away?

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