
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: ***Is it wrong to "proselyte" people from other churches?***

The word proselyte means to "convert." The question we are asking is this: Is it wrong to purposefully try to convert people from their present church and encourage them come be members of our church?

Many people answer this question with a resounding, "YES ... this is wrong. It is wrong to proselyte people." In fact, there is a passage of Scripture which seems to suggest that proselyting, or converting men from one religion to another is wrong.

Matthew 23:15

¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

And so, it seems like Jesus is saying, "It is wrong to make proselytes." Is, then, this passage and is the Bible in general saying that it is wrong and "unchristian" to convert men from one church and encourage them to come to another?

LOOK CLOSELY AT THE PASSAGE

Let us begin by looking closely at the passage we just read and let's see exactly what Jesus was condemning in that text.

Matthew 23:15

¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

If we treat this passage fairly, Jesus was not condemning the act of proselyting, or converting men. He was condemning the scribes and Pharisees because when they did convert men they were not converting them to serve God. Instead of converting men from sin and encouraging them to serve God they were simply fashioning men to be "children of hell."

"PROSELYTES" IN THE CHURCH

In contrast to the proselytes of the Pharisees, there were good proselytes in the early church who served the Lord.

Acts 6:5

⁵ ... [there was a disciple named] Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

Acts 13:43

⁴³ Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

These men that are called "proselytes" used to be heathens. Formerly they had been pagans and had worshiped idols, but they became proselytes -- that is, they had been converted and so believed in and worshiped the true God of heaven.

So then, whether it is right, or wrong to "proselyte" depends upon what you convert them to.

- On the one hand, if you proselyte, or convert a person to believe and practice error, then it is wrong to proselyte men to that. This is exactly what Jesus condemned the Pharisees for in Matthew 23:15.
- On the other hand, if you proselyte, or convert someone to believe and practice truth, it is right to proselyte men to that!

A COMMAND TO "PROSELYTE"

In fact, did you know that in the Bible people are commanded to convert men and women to the truth.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Here Jesus instructs His disciples to go forth into all the world, to "compass land and sea" and "proselyte," or convert people to the gospel. Men and women must be taught the truth and they must be baptized to have their sins washed away.

Obviously, then, if a man or woman is a member of a church that teaches false doctrine (and there is false doctrine), they must be converted from that to believe the truth. If people are in a church that practices unscriptural worship (and there is such a thing as vain, unscriptural worship), then they must be converted from that to practice the truth.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

According to this, when men and women stray away from the truth they become lost. Their soul is headed for hell. Would it be right to remain silent? Would it be the "Christian" thing to

do to simply say nothing and not warn the person who has strayed away? Certainly not! We must warn them and in so doing we save a soul from death in hell and a multitude of sins is hidden in the process!

This is the goal of this "Bible Talk" program -- to convert people from error to truth; to encourage people to leave behind false doctrine and erroneous practices and to turn to the truth found in the inspired pages of the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore

"Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you."

¹⁸ 'I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty."

This is the Lord speaking! The Lord said, "Come out from among those who teach and practice error and remain separate from them." If you do this, God said, "I will receive you and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

It is not wrong to "proselyte" men and women to the truth, but it is wrong to "proselyte" (convert) them to error.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.