

SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE

One of Satan's most effective weapons against the people of God has always been the appeal to compromise. When the enemies of Nehemiah failed to hinder the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by their ridicule and threats of carnal warfare they attempted to get Nehemiah to come down to the plain of Ono to meet with them (Nehemiah 6:2). However, Nehemiah refused to leave the great work he was doing because he knew their intent.

Even today we see such appeals being made by the enemies of truth. In recent months I have read many articles written by various individuals that seem to suggest that since one can not know everything he must not oppose or reject anything.

If you dare suggest that you can not accept a certain belief or practice you are immediately labeled as a narrow-minded legalist "know-it-all" who believes everyone must agree with you on everything or else be rejected. This kind of thinking has caused many to decide that we cannot speak out against anyone regardless of what he may believe or practice.

I do not know of anyone who claims to know everything or demands that his opinions be made the standard of authority, but I do know those who believe that the word of God is the final standard of authority and if anyone teaches or practices anything contrary to its teaching he is not acceptable to God and must not be upheld in his error. Paul commanded the Ephesians to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Ephesians 5:11). How can this command be obeyed if we are not even able to determine what "works of darkness" really are?

Every person must read and study the word of God for himself. No one should discourage such individual study. However, the encouragement of personal and individual study does not demand that I accept every idea or conclusion such individuals set forth. In fact, if through my own study of the word of God I am convinced that certain doctrines are false, I must, in order to have a clear conscience, refuse such teachings. It is true that I may be wrong in my conclusions, but this does not change the fact that I cannot violate my conscience by upholding something I believe to be contrary to the will of God.

Some brethren have accepted ideas and have engaged in activities which many brethren do not believe to be right. When brethren speak out in opposition to such ideas and refuse to condone these brethren in their practices they are often met with ridicule or some of the charges we mentioned earlier in this article. Brethren, I respect your right to study for yourself and your right to believe what you believe, however don't assume that I (or others) are just closed minded or bound by tradition if we do not accept your conclusions. Some of you leave the impression by your writings and/or your comments that if someone does not agree with you or is unwilling to accept you and your ideas it is simply because he is unwilling to study or is so steeped in traditionalism that he will not change. Did it ever occur to you that the one offering opposition to your teaching may have studied just as much as you have and that his opposition is based on his belief in what the word of God teaches and not just because "he has always believed that way"?

There are some things that are contrary to God's will. The person who truly desires to please God will not engage in such nor will he bid Godspeed to those who do so (2 John 9-11). Paul spoke of some as being "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4) and concerning these he said, *"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (Galatians 2:5).

Let us continue to encourage all to study the word of God for themselves, but let us not encourage compromise with error or expect brethren to support and encourage us in that which they believe to be contrary to truth.

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