

“TWO CANNOT WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY AGREE TO DO SO”

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

~King David

Amos 3:3 has been used by many misguided people for years to justify a separation of God’s people from one another. It is a twisted and perverted use of scripture. A quick look at a quality Interlinear Bible and a simple word study can quickly clear up any questions. A more accurate translation of **Amos 3:3** is: **“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? (NIV)”** Today’s English translation reads: “Do two men start traveling together without arranging to meet?” (TEV) Other translations have very similar renderings of Amos 3:3.

This is true! Until God’s people determine and agree to begin to walk together once again – the division will continue. Those who abuse their office and authority in a way that keeps God’s people apart – other than for GROSS HERESY – are unwittingly doing the work of the devil. But they would have no power at all if God’s people did not give it to them! There is personal responsibility involved here as well. John said, “Do not follow that which is evil, but that which is good” (3 John 11). Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for proving or testing those who claim to be apostles, but were not. Would Jesus commend us?

Have you too misapplied Amos 3:3? Have you known those who have misapplied Amos 3:3 to justify an action, a division, or to keep God’s people apart?

Clearly there are Biblical grounds for separation. Paul said “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor.5:6). To protect the church, Paul had to separate a man from the flock for serious sexual sins until he repented. Ministers are responsible for the welfare of the flock and must act as faithful shepherds to protect the flock from those endangering it, just as the priests had to put the contagiously ill out of the camp. A pastor is also responsible to feed, encourage and even correct God’s flock in love. But one of the main ways he protects the flock from those endangering it is to TEACH the *brethren* how to know when to separate *themselves* – not by “marking” those separated out. “Marking” is a doctrine of the

great false church.

Notice for example what Paul actually said in (the often misquoted passage of) Romans 16:17: *“Now I urge you, BRETHREN, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

Three quick facts about this verse are usually left out when using it to justify “marking.”

- 1 The Greek word is NOTE, not mark. The brethren were to take note of certain types of heretical individuals and avoid them. There was not a common public marking as is done today.
- 2 It was the BRETHREN who were encouraged to do the noting, not an official public act of the church or ministry. Paul was teaching the brethren how to choose their company to avoid having the simple deceived, and how to protect them from those who were after their pocketbook (see verse 18).
- 3 This noting by the brethren was only for division and offenses which were CONTRARY TO TRUE DOCTRINE which was learned from the apostles! It was not something done to settle disputes, or Paul would have “marked and disfellowshipped” Peter, Barnabas and Apollos etc. In turn Peter could have put Paul out and publicly marked him, as could Barnabas. Does this sound like some of the recent letters in which one COG evangelist publicly puts out another COG evangelist, who in turn publicly puts out the evangelist who put him out? Such conduct was a shameful misapplication of scripture – and it was all over strife about who would be in charge.

Indeed, two cannot walk together, unless they humbly agree to be at peace with one another.

There is rarely complete agreement between any two people on all topics. The subject matter of Amos 3:3 is speaking about an appointment for God’s people to meet and walk together with God. Amos 3:3 has been twisted and misquoted out of context (and by use of the KJV translation, which is unclear in this instance) in a way that has been used to separate not only church members, but it has been misapplied to separate good friends and even husband and wife and children from their parents! The context of Amos 3:3, and other clear passages of scripture, make it clear that is not what God was saying.

Without being disagreeable and argumentative, can those of us who are ministers and leaders in God’s Church learn to disagree respectfully, without always “pulling rank” like unconverted Gentiles. Can ALL members of God’s Household have the humility to avoid the temptation to misapply scriptures to support a particular view? We ministers, and all of us have a lot to be accountable for (see Ezek.34)! Humility and a more careful examination of God’s Word will serve us well in the judgment, and it will serve God’s flock well today.

God’s true people can indeed agree to walk together peacefully in the pursuit of truth, just

as soon as they stop letting a misplaced allegiance to some leading ministers or corporations (that foster division) keep them apart.