

Scriptural “Red Flags” – No. 3

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In 1 Corinthians 15:33 is another *be not deceived* passage, sending up a “red flag” of warning: “Be not deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals” (ASV). This warning in the great “resurrection” chapter seems to be primarily aimed at some who were denying the resurrection. On the basis of their denial, they apparently had taken up with evil associates and had begun to live wicked and licentious lives (v. 32). Paul gave them this warning to move them to shame (v. 34). Solomon wrote much the same thing almost 1,000 years earlier: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro. 13:20). It is a warning for all time.

In spite of this warning, many of the elect deceive themselves into thinking that they can choose people who have no fear of God or respect for His Word as their closest friends and/or spouses and not be adversely influenced by them. Sometimes we may leave the impression that young people are the only ones who are so naive and unwise. While they do seem to often ignore this warning, it is not uncommon to see those older, both in years and in the faith, who apparently believe they are exceptions to this maxim. How often such results in apostasy and backsliding.

I spent some of my adolescent years in the 1950s on a ranch in central Texas. We ran a sizeable heard of goats. They were not the best smelling animals in the world, but they kept us from starving during years of severe drought. When I first heard the expression a few years later, “You can’t run with the goats without smelling like them,” I did not have to ask what it meant. The Lord depicted the lost (those separated from Him forever because of sin) as “goats” (Mat. 25:33, 41–46). If the Lord’s sheep care more for the companionship of goats than of their own kind, they are in danger of taking on their characteristics and being lost.

“But how can we convert sinners if we don’t associate with them?” some ask. We cannot and should not avoid all associations with them. We have no choice but to work with them and do business with them (1 Cor. 5:9–10). We need to always be watchful for those whom we might teach the Gospel. However, such associations are different from making the ungodly our near friends and constant companions with no prospect of teaching them (2 Cor. 6:14–18)

Just as “evil companionships corrupt good morals,” righteous companionships strengthen good morals: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.” Let us therefore choose for our closest associates those who will help us get to Heaven.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, June 7, 2009, of which I was editor.]

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