

A walk with Mr O (58)

An allegation is an allegation

Mr O, I suppose you've heard about our pastor.

Yes, I have, So, tell me what you want to say,

Well, our elders have suspended our pastor from all his functions. He's now on forced paid leave. It's because of allegations about his leadership style. Apparently he's been bullying people, belittling them, threatening and intimidating them. It's such a shame, He seems to be such a lovely person and he's an excellent preacher. I can't get my head round it all. It just shows how wrong you can be.

Stop! stop right now!

That's a bit abrupt Mr O! It's not like you. What's wrong?

I'm sorry to be abrupt, but you must stop talking like that. An allegation is an allegation is an unproved assertion. It is a firm statement that a person is guilty of some fault or crime. But it is not a fact. When we start talking as if allegations are facts, our speech has become satanic.

I'm quite shocked by what you are saying, especially about my speech being satanic.

Satan is the great accuser: He's the father of lies. Those who are in his kingdom frequently talk as if allegations are facts. Trial by allegation is happening all over the world at the moment. that is nothing new The Pharisees did it. They rubbished the reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ and expected others to do the same. But Nicodemus , one of Jesus' friends asked them a question: Does our law condemn a man without first bearing him to find out what he is doing?' Jesus' friends still ask that question.

I'm sorry, Mr O. I can see now where you are coming from. So, how should these allegations against our pastor be handled?

We can answer that question from the Bible. Both Testaments of God's Word have clear teaching on the subject. They teach us that both the accuser and the accused have rights. The accuser has the right to be taken seriously, to be listened to, and

for his evidence to be thoroughly examined. The accused has the right to know exactly what is being said about him, and by whom. He has the right to respond to the accusations being levelled against him., and for his evidence to be taken seriously and thoroughly examined. Finally, no one is ever to be condemned on the testimony of just one person.

Biblically, who has the right to preside at such an investigation and to make a judgment?

Scripture is clear. *In our churches there are believers who are well known for their impartiality, wisdom, and integrity. In most, but not all cases, these will be the elders of the local church. An outside agency must never be involved. Scripture insists that among us, who will one day judge angels, there will always be people of sufficient competency to handle these matters.*

But what if it seems reasonably certain that the accused person has broken the law?

In that case the police should be informed and the whole matter handled by the courts. But allegations of a building leadership do not normally fit into that category.

So, what should happen if the allegations against our pastor prove to be true?

He should be dismissed – but this does not mean that he and his family should be deprived of pastoral care. those making the allegations must be recognised as victims , and therefore suitably supported for as long as necessary.

And what if our pastor is exonerated?

Then it is he and his family who are the victims and who should be suitably supported. if the allegations were motivated by malice, those making them must be subjected to church discipline. If, however, they were motivated by ignorance or misunderstanding, then, of course , they will need to be handled more gently.

Some people are too scared and vulnerable to step forward and accuse an abusive pastor. Is it all right for them to be anonymous whistleblowers?

No, it is not. Such people should be sensitively accompanied and helped in their search for justice, but no anonymous allegation can ever be countenanced in the church of God.