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Statement

Statement from Mark Dever, Ligon Duncan, and Albert Mohler

May 23, 2013

We are friends who have been brought together for the gospel. Over the last several months, we have wanted to speak publicly to the issues that have related to our friend C. J. Mahaney. A Maryland judge's recent action to dismiss a lawsuit against Sovereign Grace Ministries offers us the first opportunity, and responsibility, to speak to this issue. We could not speak to the issues involved so long as they were raised only in the context of an action in the civil courts. We have never made a public comment with regard to claims and counter-claims in a civil lawsuit, and we will not violate that principle now.

Claims presented in a civil lawsuit seeking financial compensation are beyond the ability of the public to render judgment. Often, such claims are even beyond the ability of a court to deliberate. To comment on such claims is irresponsible, since no one apart from the court and the parties directly involved has any ability to evaluate the claims presented. If the filing of civil litigation against a Christian ministry or leader is in itself reason for separation and a rush to judgment, no ministry or minister is safe from destruction at any time. Furthermore, the effort to try such a case in the court of public opinion prior to any decision rendered by an authorized court is likewise irresponsible.

We have stood beside our friend, C. J. Mahaney, and we can speak to his personal integrity. We can make no judgment as to the truthfulness of the horrifying charges of sexual abuse made against some individuals who have been connected, in some way, to Sovereign Grace Ministries and its churches. Our hearts must go out to anyone, and especially to any child, who suffers abuse at the hand of anyone. In such a case the legal authorities must use the full power of the law to investigate and to prosecute any perpetrator of such crimes. We must take any responsible action to protect the vulnerable, and we must act immediately to inform legal authorities of any charge or claim of sexual abuse, and do so without delay. Our first response must be to call the police, to act to protect the child or young person, and then to proceed to biblical church discipline when the facts demand such a response.

If a Christian leader is accused of any wrongdoing, those to whom he is accountable must investigate the charges and then deal responsibly with the evidence. If a criminal accusation is made, Christians have a fundamental duty to inform law enforcement officials. This does not, however, preclude or mitigate the church's responsibility for biblical church discipline.

A Christian leader, charged with any credible, serious, and direct wrongdoing, would usually be well advised to step down from public ministry. We believe this lawsuit failed that test. For this reason, we, along with many others, refused to step away from C. J. in any way. We do not regret that decision. We are profoundly thankful for C. J. as friend, and we are equally thankful for the vast influence for good he has been among so many Gospel-minded people.

Our heart goes out to anyone who has ever suffered abuse of any kind. Our emphatic encouragement would be for anyone who has ever suffered such abuse or knows of anyone made vulnerable to such abuse to contact law enforcement officials without delay. We must then allow the law enforcement agencies and the courts to do their proper work. When criminal charges are filed, the public is then presented with evidence upon which it can draw a responsible judgment. On matters of protecting the vulnerable, Christians know what judgment must be made. We side with the victims.

Our hope and prayer is that Christ's healing and health will come to all parties involved in this matter and that justice and righteousness will prevail for all. May every true victim of any injustice be vindicated. May every doer of wrong be exposed. And may all of us speak no further than we can responsibly speak.

Those who minister in the name of the Lord Christ bear an inescapable duty to live and to minister in a way that is above reproach. Those who teach, reminds James, will face a stricter judgment. [James 3:1] May everything we do, everything we teach, and all that we are be measured against that standard.

Together for the Gospel,

Mark Dever, Ligon Duncan, Albert Mohler



News

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