



The Voice Of Truth

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“Our Attitude toward Sin and Error”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Today, many in the Lord's church avoid the subject of rebuking sin and error. Many “Christians” tend to think that things like open debates, and confronting error are out of place in the life of a Christian. Is this true? Let us open up the Bible and see what those folks did in the first century when it came to rebuking sin and error. Did they confront it, or did they allow time to pass, and hope it just “went away”? What did they do? Since the New Testament is our guide in faith and practice (I Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17; II Tim. 3:16-17; etc.), let us study some New Testament examples and see what attitude we should have. Should we confront sin and error, or just leave it alone? Should we allow people to stay in the wrong, or do we need to be pro-active and help lead them in the right way?

Jesus Christ

Jesus certainly left us an example to follow (I Pet. 2:21-22). While upon this earth, no man preached as He did. No one taught with the authority He had (Matt. 7:28-29). Jesus certainly showed His compassion for all people. He healed people on many occasions, showing that He was the Son of God and loved them (Matt. 20:29-34; Lk. 7:13; etc.). Jesus also spoke to people that the majority of Jews would not (Jn. 4; etc.). Even when facing those in sin, His attitude was not one of hatred toward the people, but a hatred of sin, and a love for those who were lost. For example, let us note the attitude of Christ after He drove out the money-changers the second time: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37).

No, Jesus was not one to “shy away” from controversy. Please read Matthew 15:1-9 and learn that Jesus had absolutely no problem rebuking and refuting error. After having rebuked those folks for their sin, the apostles told Jesus that the Pharisees “*were offended*” in verse 12. Let us take note of Jesus’ answer. He was not worried about popularity or position. He told them, “*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*” (Matt. 15:13-14). Let us learn to be like Jesus in love and concern for lost souls. Let us also be like Christ and not apologize for the truth! (Heb. 1:9)

The Apostle Peter

Peter certainly stands out in his work for the Lord. He had a part in the preaching on the day of Pentecost where about 3000 were saved after hearing the word of God preached (Acts 2:1-41). A portion of his sermon is recorded in Acts 2:22-36. God also saw fit to record “*the boldness of Peter and John*” in Acts 4:13 as they declared Jesus to a people who did not want to hear them (Acts 4:18-20). I wonder if we would have the courage to stand in the face of the government (or anyone else) and declare the truth of God to them when they did not want to hear it?

Acts 5:24-29 is another occasion in which Peter stood for the truth. Remember, Peter had been put in prison for preaching Christ and healing folks, and then an angel released him from the prison (v. 17-20). Upon being taken into custody once more (v. 26), he then stood before the

Sanhedrin, and said, *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). He did not stop with that statement, though. He went on to preach the very thing that would have resulted in his imprisonment or death (Acts 5:30-34). Peter was not afraid to stand for the truth. He was ready to die for his conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that the word of Christ will save men's souls. Are we willing to stand for the truth as Peter did?

It is recorded that Peter was bold enough to go to the Gentile race and teach them the truth when it was not "politically correct" to do so (Acts 10:1-11:18). This took great courage to preach to those men considered vile in the eyes of the Jews. He told Cornelius, *"Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation."* Yet, God had shown him that no man was to be called common or unclean (Acts 10:28)! We find as a result of his bold stand that some contended with him (Acts 11:2-3). After he explained fully what had happened, the others realized, *"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"* (Acts 11:18). No, he was not a sinless man, but his boldness is a great example to us even today to take the gospel to every person, regardless of outward circumstances. Let us be as bold as Peter!

The Apostle Paul

After his conversion, Paul wasted no time in stirring the people up unto righteousness (Acts 9:19-25). In Acts 17:1-6, we see what God's word did in just one city. As a result, the apostle was accused of turning *"the world upside down"*! Paul was no stranger to controversy, and did not back down from the false teachers of his day (Acts 17:3-4). Why did these people say that Paul, Silas and others *"turned the world upside down"*? Was this said because they did something evil? Did they say it because Paul, Silas and others were trying to cause a revolt on Rome? Could it be that they said this because they simply wanted to "pick a fight"? No, these things were said because Paul, Silas and others preached the truth without apology and those folks did not like it!

In Acts 17:16-21, Paul went to Athens, and waited on Silas and Timothy to travel there. The text reveals that Paul went ahead because there were residents of Thessalonica who went to Berea to stir them up against Paul (Acts 17:13-14). Paul entered into Athens, and when "stirred up" to preach, we find him wasting no time in stirring up the people to righteousness (v. 16-17). Please read Paul's sermon on Mars' hill to those in the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34). The results of his preaching about God creating the world, and preaching about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were: *"some mocked"* (v. 33), and others said, *"we will hear thee again*

on this matter" (v. 33). At the same time, we see some who believed and wanted to hear more (v. 34). (Aren't these the three reactions people will have today?) How sad it is to see people backing away from God's truth in order to compromise with sin and error! Let us strive to be like Paul, and be a people who will turn the world upside down for the cause of Christ!!

Other Apostles And Disciples

While the men mentioned above are great examples for us, let us look at some who are perhaps not remembered as often. The apostle John was one who accompanied Peter on his journeys many times. This apostle went with Peter to lay hands on the Samaritans and preach the truth to them (Acts 8:14-17). Was there any "controversy" that came as a result of teaching God's word to a people that had never heard it? Of course, there was, and John faced it without apology! We saw that John was with Peter and stood boldly against the governing authorities when they were told not to teach or preach Jesus to the people (Acts 4:18-20).

Barnabas accompanied Paul on many journeys, and certainly was no stranger to controversy! Barnabas was with Paul while he was still called Saul (Acts 12:25)! Barnabas then was with the apostle Paul, who *"waxed bold"* in the preaching of God's word. Barnabas also stood against those Jews who blasphemed God and spoke against Paul (Acts 13:46-49). He was the *"son of encouragement"* (Acts 4:36).

Silas was also valuable in the Lord's work. He was present when Paul cast out the demon that possessed the girl in Acts 16. He also suffered in prison with Paul (Acts 16:22-25). He helped the Philippian jailor to learn what he had to do to be saved (Acts 16:30-34). Silas was also named with Paul as one who *"turned the world upside down"* (Acts 17:1-6). What a great example for us!

Conclusion

Let us all pray to God that we can be as the disciples of Acts 4. Let us pray that God will, *"grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word"* (Acts 4:29). Let us be busy in proclaiming God's word to people who need to hear it! *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"* (II Tim. 4:1-2). Please pray that we will never forget this charge!

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