

Truth With Tears

by Anton Bosch

We should respond to those who are in opposition to the truth with love, kindness, and a desire to win them to the truth, rather than with aggression and abrasiveness.

Scripture: Matthew 5:44, Acts 18:21, Acts 20:28, Romans 12:14, 2 Timothy 2:23, 2 Timothy 2:25, Titus 1:9, James 3:10, 1 Peter 2:23, 1 Peter 3:9

Topics: "Defending The Faith", "Christian Love"

Description

Anton Bosch addresses the misconception that aggressive and abrasive behavior is justified in defending the truth by examining the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining a spirit of love, blessing those who oppose us, and not repaying evil with evil. The sermon highlights the need for pure motives and obedience to God's will when addressing false teachings, rather than engaging in malicious name-calling or threats. Bosch stresses the biblical mandate to protect the sheep from error and to seek the restoration of those in opposition, all while maintaining a heart of compassion and sorrow for those who are led astray.

Transcript

The servant of the Lord should not strive, but be gentle, be apt to teach, patient and meek when dealing with those who oppose the truth (2Timothy 2:23-26). This seems to contradict the fact that Jesus called the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 23:33), Herod "that fox" (Luke 13:32), and that he cleansed the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers.

These scriptures are often used to support the malicious name-calling, animosity, insults and threats of those in apologetics type ministries towards those in error. But do Jesus' actions contradict Paul's teaching and do we have the right, even responsibility, to be aggressive and abrasive in our defense of the truth?

First we have no instruction to act abusively, maliciously and uncouthly in our relating to others. In fact, we have clear instructions not to be malicious in our dealings with even our enemies. Jesus said "...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). He also said we must turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29).

Paul teaches "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse... repay no one evil for evil... do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says

the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14,17,19 - 21).

Concerning potential teachers James says: "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh" (James 3:10-12).

Peter reminds us that Jesus "when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1Peter 2:23). Peter further instructs us: "...not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing... Let him seek peace and pursue it... And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." (1Peter 3:9,11,13,14).

The writers of the New Testament are agreed that our attitude towards those who are outside the faith, even our enemies and the enemies of the Gospel should be one of love. Clearly, we are not to fellowship with them or invite them into our homes, let alone our churches (1Timothy 6:5, 2John 1:10). Yet, our attitude towards them should be one of love since we are not the ones who will execute judgment or vengeance.

There are no contradictions in the Scriptures and therefore Jesus could not have acted inconsistent with the clear teaching of the Bible or with His purpose.

Jesus' actions are normally explained by the term "righteous indignation" or "righteous anger". I am sure that is what it was. He was angry. When someone becomes angry there are two important considerations: The motive and the actions. Jesus' anger was one hundred percent for the right reasons. His motives were not tinged by even the slightest bit of personal vendetta, pride or any other wrong attitude. Neither did a single one of His actions not fully reflect the will of the Father.

So the questions we have to ask when we want to lash out at others who we think are heretics are:

First, are my motives perfectly pure and is there absolutely no sense of personal vendetta, trying to prove myself, pride, malice or any other motive which is contrary to the Word? Am I totally driven by a zeal for God's house and the Truth or is there something else behind my attitude?

Second, do I act exactly in obedience to the will of God? When saying what I say about the wolves, do I reflect the Father, and do I say and do only what He commands? Friends, after many years of observing (and participating with) those who go on major rants and tirades against the false teachers, I am convinced that the motive and the actions very seldom reflect the will of the Father and that the tirades seldom glorify Him but rather the speaker / writer.

Those of us who are defenders of the faith have two responsibilities in the area of false doctrine: Our first duty is to protect the sheep from error (Acts 20:28-31). Our second responsibility is to attempt to win the gainsayers (Titus 1:9, 2Timothy 2:25,26, Acts 18:21). (It seems that many are not doing either but are rather trying to show how right they are and how wrong others are - for this they have no Biblical mandate.) We do not protect the sheep any better by ranting and raving. On the contrary, we make some

folk wonder why we protest so much. We certainly do not win any heretics to the truth by slander, name calling and venom. Thus neither aspect of our purpose is served by antagonism and rough words.

Should we then not name names and expose those who lead weak disciples astray? No, we must name names. Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all named names. Every writer of the New Testament exposed error and warned against error. This is a very important part of the mission of any true teacher of Truth. Unfortunately, people often do not make the connection between the false doctrine and the face on the television, unless the names are mentioned. Weak and new believers especially, need to be given guidelines as to who is "kosher" and who is not. But, with what attitude do we name the heretics? Is it with glee and pride that we are not like so-and-so? Or is it with sorrow over even the need to have to mention another's name in warning?

Matthew 23 is often quoted as an excuse to rail against others. In this chapter Jesus warns against the Pharisees, exposing them for all their falseness and error. Eight times he pronounces woe over them. He calls them whitewashed tombs, snakes, hypocrites, blind, fools and a few other things. Yes He did all that but with what attitude? I have seen many men do what Jesus did in the first 36 verses of that chapter. I have even heard a few apply verses 38 and 39. But I have never seen one of these people do what Jesus did in verse 37 of the same chapter. He wept and lamented over the same men that He was lambasting: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37). Many have styled themselves after the aggressive prophets of the Old Testament without bothering to see that the private moments of these brave men were filled with tears and heartache for the state of Israel.

Only when we are willing to season our insults with tears from a broken heart do we have the right to say anything to those who are in opposition to the truth.

(To be continued)

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