



## Articles and Sermons :: Fear of Controversy

Fear of Controversy - posted by savannah, on: 2016/11/30 16:24

### FEAR OF CONTROVERSY

By Robert Haldane

(Written in 1874 A. D.)

Many religious persons have a dread of controversy and wish truth to be stated without any reference to those who hold the opposite errors. Controversy and a bad spirit are, in their estimation, synonymous terms. And strenuously to oppose what is wrong is considered as contrary to Christian meekness. Those who hold this opinion seem to overlook what every page of the New Testament lays before us. In all the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, we never find Him out of controversy. From the moment He entered on the discharge of His office in the synagogue of Nazareth till He expired on the cross, it was an uninterrupted scene of controversy. Nor did He, with all the heavenly meekness which in Him shone so brightly, treat truth and error without reference to those who held them or study to avoid giving its proper appellation to those corruptions in doctrine or practice that endangered the interests of immortal souls. His censures were not confined to doctrine but included the abettors of false principles themselves.

And as to the Apostles, their epistles are generally controversial. Most of them were directly written for the express purpose of vindicating truth and opposing error--and the authors of heresies do not escape with an abstract condemnation of their false doctrine. Paul again and again most indignantly denounces the conduct of the opposers of the Gospel and, by name, points out those against whom he cautions his brethren. When Hymenaeus and Alexander erred concerning the faith and when he delivered them unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme, he did not compliment them as amiable and learned persons. Even that Apostle who treats most of love and who possessed so much of that spirit which was so eminently manifested in his Divine Master, does not avoid controversy--nor in controversy does he study to avoid severity of censure on the opposers of the truth. In the examples of opposing error (left on record for our imitation) we perceive nothing of that frigid spirit of indifference which smiles on the corrupters of the Word of God and shuns to call heresy by its proper name.

With what holy indignation do the Apostles denounce the subtle machinations of the enemies of the gospel! In vain shall we look among those faithful servants of the Lord for anything to justify that trembling reserve which fears to say decidedly that truth is truth--and error is error.

In what style, indeed, should perversions of the truth of God be censured? Ought they to be treated as mere matters of opinion on which we may innocently and safely differ? Or ought they to be met in a tone of solemn, strong and decided approbation? Paul warned Christians against men who arose from among themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them--and instead of complimenting false teachers in his day, denounced an angel from heaven on the supposition of his preaching another gospel. And if an Apostle was withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed, are the writings of those who subvert the Gospel to pass without rebuke?

When the canker of the principles of neology, derived from the Continent and from America, is perverting the faith of many and seducing them into the paths of error--which a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference to truth is advancing under the mask of charity and liberality, there is a loud call on all Christians to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel," to present a firm and united phalanx of opposition to error under every name--from whatever quarter it may approach. Should believers become unfaithful to their trust and be seduced to abandon their protest against false doctrines, they may gain the approbation of the world--but what will this avail when compared with the favor of God? But if (with prayer to God, in the use of the appointed means) they contend earnestly for the truth, then they may expect the gracious fulfillment of the blessed promise, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

**Re: Fear of Controversy - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2016/11/30 16:55**

When I read this article I observed the writer apparently did not subscribe to political correctness that bedevils moderns. Then I noticed this was penned back in the 1800s! Well!!! Once again it affirms the preachers observation that "there is nothing new under the sun."

After casually reading the thread concerning manipulation my mind went down the alley this writer wrote about. He said it well.

Thanks for sharing.

Sandra

**Re: Fear of Controversy - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2016/12/1 1:48**

Very interesting and timely admonition! Thanks for sharing!

I live in a very liberal part of the country that is often very hostile to Christians -- particularly those who truly believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You can find animosity toward believers everywhere. It is seen in the way people correspond at work, online and even in coffee shops.

I've even noticed that many local pastors, youth pastors and Christian workers in this area seem to have a fear of "offending" others with the truth. It isn't that they don't believe the truth, but that they fear stroking controversy when it comes to things about abortion, homosexuality, drugs, illicit sex, etc. So, they focus on "being there" and "showing love" for others and would only gently mention the biblical view on various issues long after individuals are "saved."

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with focusing on the love of God and sharing that love to this lost world. However, the problem in this area is that people are largely oblivious that they are lost at all or in need of a Savior.

In fact, I do think that many Christian workers around here are afraid. They are afraid of being considered "xenophobic," "closed-minded," "misogynistic," "science deniers" or "bigoted" -- common slurs for people around here that don't celebrate things like homosexuality, legalized drugs or abortion. It isn't that they know that it isn't true but that they fear what such spurious slurs and labels might do to their effectiveness.

This area is highly-educated and prides itself on both "diversity" and "acceptance." You'll see those blue "COEXIST" bumper stickers on a daily basis. However, it is also the part of the country that is least tolerant of a Christian faith that proclaims there is only ONE WAY to the Father -- and that is through Jesus Christ.

One verse that I find especially comforting here is Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

One thing is true though -- you have to know what you believe and why you believe it. You have to show people that you can rightly divide the stereotypes of Christianity (e.g., "bigoted," "hatemongers," etc.) with truth. You can call out sin for what it is and show that this is not the same as "hate."

A couple of weeks ago, I was sharing the Gospel with a 22-year-old woman who identified herself as a lesbian. She explained that being a lesbian was "very important to her." When I spoke about Christ, she was immediately dismissive. She looked at me with all of the stereotypes that society has built to mock, vilify and ridicule Christians. She immediately began defending herself as a lesbian and asked me if it was "sinful." I told her, "That isn't my call. That is an issue for which the Bible is pretty clear about and, yes, the Bible clearly speaks against homosexuality."

At one point, she even said, "I know that you think that I'm disgusting..." I interrupted her. I laughed and told her, "Are you kidding? God loves you just as much as he loves me! We all need him equally. The only difference is that I've given my heart and life to him, but I still need him just as much as you. He loves us equally." I went on to explain that -- no matter how much he loves us equally -- sin is still sin and the wages of sin is eternal death. I explained that the only way to eternity is to know him and give your life to him.

This struck a chord with her; however, she said that no one can "change" her. I told her that everything else is secondary to being able to have a relationship with God. I explained that anyone can approach him -- but you have to be willing to

give up your very life to truly know him. I told her that she could come to him anytime and anywhere. I encouraged her to talk to God when she is alone and to simply tell him that she wants to know him. She said that I was the first person who ever "explained" this to her like this (which made me sad). Before I left, I recommended a church in the town where she lives but told her that the most important thing is to first meet God on her own.

I think that this is a problem with the church. We're not willing to simply tell the truth. I am not saying that we have to focus on sin, but we cannot ignore it either. We cannot present partial truths to this world out of fear of offending anyone.

This world is very different than most of the people that the apostles approached. The Gospels and much of Acts and the Epistles are directed at Jewish people who knew the Old Covenant quite well. Now, America does have a Christian heritage in the sense that the nation has been historically saturated with various elements of Christianity (some right and many wrong) for centuries. However, many of us are now seeing an era in which many of the people know so little about the one true living God. It is more akin to Paul speaking about "THE UNKNOWN GOD" to the people in Athens.

We should not fear proclaiming the truth to the people of this world -- and our little corner of it -- despite how we imagine that they might react.

**Re: , on: 2016/12/1 14:35**

Great post Chris! I could not agree more and the Romans Scripture is the Scripture the Lord laid in my heart this summer for the Body of Christ. Now is the day and now is the hour more than ever, that we must not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus. There is a very loving way to share even the hardest of truths, now it may not be accepted or it may be violently rejected but what is that to us? It is not our message, we are simply the messengers. I loved the way you shared with the young woman, this is a model for how to share the Gospel when the door is open for us to share.....bro Frank

**Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2016/12/4 23:19**

Thank you, Frank. I agree with what you've written.

BTW, I have a prayer request related to what I wrote last time. The young woman that I mentioned speaking with a couple of weeks ago is one of the people missing in the warehouse fire that happened this weekend in Oakland.

When I read about the warehouse fire and learned that some people actually lived inside the warehouse, I immediately thought of this woman. She mentioned that she lived in a warehouse in Oakland (and how she had been locked out one night and couldn't manage to either open or climb through a window).

I'm not sure if she has been located; however, the local papers list her as someone who still hasn't been found. If she died in that fire, I do hope that she turned to Christ before the end.

**Re: Fear of Controversy - posted by savannah, on: 2017/1/7 9:06**

This was stated in the thread on alcohol,

"...I do wonder what your motive is to post on these contentious issues so often."

And so I figured I'd bump this thread in response.

The article in the OP begins with these words,

"Many religious persons have a dread of controversy and wish truth to be stated without any reference to those who hold the opposite errors. Controversy and a bad spirit are, in their estimation, synonymous terms. And strenuously to oppose what is wrong is considered as contrary to Christian meekness. Those who hold this opinion seem to overlook what every page of the New Testament lays before us."