

Speak Out! How Much?

By Paul R. Blake

To what extent do I need to be vocal about an issue? I am not certain that question can be answered in a single article or even a single book. There are so many variables involved. Is the issue spiritual or social? Is it an authorized matter or an individual scruple? Does it impact multitudes or just me? Do I have enough information, resources, and wisdom to handle the matter in a way that pleases God and influences others for good? But in spite of all of these factors, it is possible to offer a reasonable, responsible, right-minded answer to the question.

I hear this question even more frequently of late. With the advent of the Internet, it became possible for everyone with access to a computer to become a global advocate for their favorite cause. This increased exponentially with the development of social media. Not only is the issue promoted, but the identity of the person speaking out on the issue is permanently attached to the advocacy. In view of this, it is even more important that Christians are careful to avoid speaking out in such a manner as to harm their influence for the Lord or cross the line of good taste.

It has become quite fashionable for Christians to use the social media to express views about which they are passionate. There is nothing wrong with that per se; however, passion can move one to say more than he should or to say it in such a way that he shouldn't. It is just as important to weigh our words when we post as it is when speaking face to face with another person, perhaps even more so as many more people will potentially see the post than will hear your voice.

Just because it is acceptable for Christians to speak out on serious issues doesn't necessarily mean that we all should. A young sister recently asked, "Am I a poor Christian if I do not post my views on social media? How much is too much or not enough?" Apparently, there is some pressure to post on every issue simply because so many others are doing it. If the standard is such that all good Christians post their views on contemporary issues on the social media, then I am at risk of being labeled a poor Christian. I waste precious little time reading the "forwards" or visiting the links sent to me in emails by friends and fellow Christians, and I certainly do NOT forward them to others. I do not use my Facebook page to promote a cause, and I do not visit the pages of those who do. I use it to keep up with friends. And that doesn't make me a weak or fearful Christian.

If there are posting Christians treating non-posting Christians as weaker brethren because they are not speaking out on Facebook on the flavor-of-the-month issue or the latest political cause, then I will liken them to the Pharisees who judged Jesus' disciples for not doing the ritual washings (Mark 7:1-4). There are other means of standing up for truth and right, and it is not mandated in scripture that one must use the social media to do so.

While we are on the subject, I have noticed some misuse of the social media by some professed Christians. As I read the Bible, I note that railing (reviling) is still a sin. "Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1Peter 3:9). "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 1:9). And a few of the messages I have read taste like railing. I have read posts that are best described as dishonest, at the very least deliberately uninformed. Many of them are exaggerated, speculative, or filled with flawed and paranoid reasoning.

Is the current Presidential administration misguided? Without doubt, much of this leadership has seriously damaged the overall moral atmosphere, the economic stability, and international influence of this great nation. Can a Christian say this? Not only is it acceptable to say this, but we had better be praying about it. But posting that the President is not a citizen?

Dishonest. Posting that he is a closet communist? Exaggeration. Posting that he has plans to make Islam the official religion of the USA? Ignorance. Do not say more than what is true and proven.

When people post recycled paranoid mongering, they discredit well informed and respectable conservative messages and damage the overall cause of the moral right. But when Christians post those kind of messages, they hurt more than social efforts; they hurt the name of Christ that they wear, and damage the work of the church as the pillar and ground of truth.

Guard your words carefully; do not repeat the words of fools; speak words that build up, not tear down. Remember, you will change this world more profoundly with the Gospel than you will with the social protest.

"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19). "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Prov. 29:20) "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

The Parable of Ten Preachers

"Then shall the religious world be likened unto ten preachers, which took their religious beliefs, and went forth to debate the Devil. Five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. The foolish took their beliefs, but took no Bible with them. But the wise took the Bible into their minds and their hearts. While the devil tarried, they all prepared their notes for the discussion.

And at midnight, there was a cry made, 'Behold, Satan cometh, go ye out to meet him.' All of the preachers arose and presented their religious doctrines. And the foolish said to the wise, 'give us a passage from your Bibles to support us, for our doctrines are without scripture.' But the wise answered saying, 'Your doctrines are not in the scriptures, and we cannot have part with error; but go ye rather to the scriptures and learn for yourselves.'

And while they went to hunt for scriptures; the Devil came, and they that were ready went in to the discussion, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other preachers, saying, 'Open to us.' But Satan answered and said, 'Verily, I say unto you, we have nothing to discuss, for you are with me.' Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein you must answer error. (Adapted from an article by Larry Dickens)

Worth Thinking About

Two wives who were Christians sat mending their husbands' pants. One of them said to the other, "My poor John is so discouraged in his church work that he said the other day he felt like quitting. Nothing ever seems to go right for him." The other replied, "Why my husband was saying just the opposite; he is so enthused, it seems like he is closer to the Lord than ever before." A hushed silence fell as they continued to mend the trousers, one patching the seat and the other mending the knees.

A Moments Wisdom

--Sin is anything that separates us from God. If we are so good that we don't feel any need for God's mercy, then our goodness is sin.

--The greatest pleasure I know is to do a good action by stealth, and to have it found out by accident.

--Let us not paralyze our capacity for good by brooding over man's capacity for evil.

--The omission of good is no less reprehensible than the commission of evil.

--Ever stop to think and forget to start again?