

Wednesday, September 14, 2011 – Are You Afraid?

Why is it that more of our “faithful” brethren have not defended the faith as one might have expected them to do? There are those in the brotherhood who have problems adhering to sound doctrine. Some loose where these scriptures do not loose. Some bind where the scriptures do not bind. We would do well to remember “Speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent.” Sound doctrine is that which is healthy to us spiritually. To teach doctrine that is not sound is to teach a corrupted doctrine that will cause one to be lost. Regardless of what form of error is occurring, God demands His people stand up and combat it! Why don't we?

Could it be that we are afraid to speak up because we are ashamed of the gospel, the Truth of God's Word? In **Romans 1:16** the apostle Paul states, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**” Then in **Acts 4:19-20** we read, “**But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**”

Could it be that we are afraid to stand up and defend the truth because it would cause us to have to disagree with those we know and those with whom we frequently associate? Paul informs us that he was “**set for the defense of the gospel**” (**Phil. 1:7,17**). We should be as well! The apostle Peter says we are to “**...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear**” (**1 Peter 3:15**). Are you set for the defense of the gospel? We will be asked why we believe what we do? Are we ready?

Could it be that we are afraid to speak up on various doctrinal issues because we fear that we might lose some of our close friends? **Revelation 21:8** states, “**But the fearful...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**” Are our friendships more important to us than Truth? To whom do we owe our loyalty -- God or friends? Who and what will judge you in the last day (see **John 12:48**)?

Could it be that we are afraid to speak up because of a family? Do we feel we would be "condemning" in so doing? Jesus said in **Matt. 10:34-38**, “**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of**

**me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”** Jesus came to bring peace between God and man (**Psalm 72:3, 7; Luke 1:79; 2:14; 7 50; 8:48; John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21; Romans 5:1; 10:15; 14:17; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 6:20-7:2**). However, those who reject the gospel and the peace it brings become enemies of Christ. Christians have a conviction. They cannot compromise. This is going to cause division between right and wrong, good and evil. It will separate those who believe in Jesus and obey him from those who reject Jesus and disobey him. Sometimes that includes family!

Could it be that we are afraid to speak up because we feel we would no longer be accepted by the so-called "in-crowd?" Was Jesus concerned about such? No! Then neither should we! But yet there are those who seem to "go-along-to-get-along." Timothy was told in **2 Timothy 4:2**, **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”** The phrase, "be instant in season, out of season" has the connotation of preaching the truth when people want to hear it and also when they do not!

Gary Summers wrote an [article](#) that provides an excellent example of those who are afraid to stand up for the truth:

Elijah proposed a gathering of all Israel at Mount Carmel. King Ahab agreed and summoned 450 prophets of Baal, as he had been requested to do. Before the nation, Elijah spoke: "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." Should that be a difficult decision? What other things are as important in life as knowing who God is? Which of these two choices would the people select?

"But the people answered him not a word" (**1 Kings 18:21**). Why were they silent? Was the reason that they knew that Queen Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, was supporting the false prophets? Were they intimidated, therefore, by Ahab's presence? Or did Elijah unnerve them by posing this question to them? It is unlikely that the people did not know whom they had been worshipping. They were afraid to admit it. If they answered Baal, the prophet of God would certainly have taken them to task. If they claimed to worship Jehovah, they risked the wrath of the king. So they remained silent.

For years, brethren have rightly termed their actions cowardly, because they refused to stand for whatever convictions they held. Following are the two paragraphs that comment on the silence of the Israelites:

The people had been vacillating for some time; they could not decide who to follow. They limped back and forth between the two like a staggering drunk with no sense of direction. Elijah said, "Make up your minds!" They were as silent as those Jews Jesus faced centuries later when He asked them, "**Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?**" They too held their peace (**Mark 3:4**). The next verse says that Jesus looked at them with anger, being grieved with their hardness of heart.

How tragic that God's people will not wholeheartedly embrace the truth! How can anyone logically neglect to defend error but at the same time refuse to give it up? Yet the same pattern is repeated in the Lord's church to this very hour. How often do friends of false teachers balk at defending their heresies and blasphemies yet refuse to break fellowship with them? How many times have God's people heard moral purity proclaimed by godly preachers and never protested the message but then gone ahead and dressed immodestly and engaged in worldly and sinful activities? They act as cowardly as those at Mount Carmel.

My friends, what kind of soldiers of Christ do we make when we are too afraid to stand for the truth?