

STAND UP, FIGHT BACK

The world asks us to “live and let live.” The thought is that we should be open and tolerant of others thoughts, ideas and even their way of life. At once this sounds thoughtful and maybe even wise. But on second thought it asks the Christian to discount his beliefs and remain silent while devilish influences corrupt our society. The Bible knows no such philosophy.

In Ephesians 5 and 6, Christians are called upon to oppose unrighteousness and to stand firm in the face of unrighteous assaults. A careful review of these passages, will demonstrate that Christians have no obligations to just “live and let live” where sinfulness is concerned..

The Ephesian letter was intended to be read by other churches throughout the regions of Asia and therefore dealt with a wide variety of issue. Of particular concern to Paul was the necessity for Christians to conduct their lives in a way which glorified God. At least six times in Ephesians, Paul uses encourages Christians to walk in a worthy manner. “*For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10); “*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.*” (Ephesians 4:1); “*And walk in love as Christ has loved us...*” (Ephesians 5:2), and “*...be careful how you walk...*” (Ephesians 5:15). These four examples demonstrate the need to behave ourselves before the world. Our manner of life comes from the love we have experienced in Christ Jesus. We are called to a higher standard to a better way of life and we should so live like it. In a world where hybrid plants and hybrid automobiles are the rule, there are no hybrid Christians. We do not mix our faith with the philosophy of the world. Paul warns us not to be caught up in ideas that dilute the message of Christ, he does not want anyone to “*delude*” us “*with persuasive argument*” (Colossians 2:4). The real power is in Christ and that is where we must abide.

The Ephesians were also frequently encouraged to stand firm in their faith and not be moved away. In Ephesians 6, as the apostle speaks of spiritual warfare he reminds us to stand firm (Ephesians 6:11,13,14). Battles, physical and spiritual, are never won by compromise and retreat. Only by standing ones’ ground can victory be attained.

But it is true that tolerance rules the day. We are told by societal experts that we must tolerate corrupt religious systems that bring terror to our shores, deviant sexual practices that corrupt hearts and minds, blatant pornography that invades our homes through advertising and Godless philosophies that fill our schools. However we, that is the Christian, must never speak out. We must tolerate the intolerance of our society. I suspect that Paul was a loving, compassionate man. Although I do not know for sure, I picture Paul as man who loved children, who enjoyed a hearty laugh and look forward to the fellowships common in the first century. But I do not think that Paul was ever tolerant of sin. Galatians 1:6 demonstrates little tolerance for religious error when he writes “*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel...*” He is no less condemning of mankind’s philosophies which rail against God. Consider Romans 1:22: “*Professing to be wise, they became fools.*” Of sexual deviants he writes, “*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper*” (Romans 1:28). The sinfulness which floods our airwaves and downloads to our computers would cause great anguish to Paul. Of the sins done by men he says “*it is disgraceful even to speak of things which are done by them in secret*” (Ephesians 5:12).

We have established Paul’s inspired disgust at sin. But we should further affirm that his anger was not to be contained. He tells Christians that we must not accept sin. We must not tolerate wickedness; we must allow unrighteousness to run unchecked through our communities. “*Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead, even expose them*” (Ephesians 5:11). His list of Christian armor in Ephesians 6:13-17 includes one very power offensive weapon: the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) which, he says, is the word of God. We may conclude that Christians are to use the word of God to attack and destroy the sinful influences that send thousands and thousands to condemnation.

In closing, consider the sober admonishment of Paul to the Corinthians: “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for*

the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

So Christian, how sharp is your sword?

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