
Energy and Supporting Indefensible Positions

Some years ago, I copied a quote from a book I was reading and hung it on my wall. I have since lost that piece of paper, and I don't remember where the quote was from, but I do remember the gist of it. The author said something like this: when we hold a position or belief, even when confronted with information that contradicts what we believe, we will spend far more energy defending our belief than it would take to change our minds. For example, there are people who believe that the mission to the moon was faked, and they spend a lot of energy proving that pictures and videos of that event are false. Instead of allowing their opinion to be changed by the evidence, they spend hours developing theories that they say prove that the whole story of landing on the moon is a lie. More energy is expended in holding an indefensible position than would be expended in changing one's mind based on the evidence.

As Christians we say that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and it is the one book that has the final say on what we believe and how we live. We say that, but far too often we find those who believe in Jesus defending positions that are decidedly unbiblical. Take slavery as an example. Many of the slave owners in the United States went to church every Sunday, and they said that they shaped their lives according to God's Word, but, at the same time, they claimed that they had the right to own other human beings and could use them as they desired. They spent a great deal of energy and time defending their rights to be slave owners, even twisting passages of Scripture for their own purposes. We wonder how they could be so blind to the clear teaching of Scripture, namely that all human beings are created in God's image and are to be treated with respect and honour.

Why does this happen? Why do people who call themselves Christians work so hard at making the Bible say something that it does not say? There may be a variety of reason, but the most obvious one is that we are affected by our environment more than we want to admit. In other words, as we grow up, our worldviews are shaped by what our parents teach us, what our culture shows us, what we learn at school and what our friends believe. Thus, a young man who grows up on a farm outside of Nobleford might think that the only vehicle suitable for himself is a pickup truck, had he grown up in the city, might believe that the electric vehicle is the most desirable mode of transportation. In either case, it would be difficult for anyone to change his mind. This is a trivial example, of course, but it is true that more often than not we are products of our environment and therefore we come to Scripture with preconceived ideas of how things should be. Thus, someone who grows up in an environment where she is taught that she has to behave or she will lose her salvation cannot understand how anyone can believe that we can have assurance that we are saved for all eternity. She will point to passages of Scripture that she thinks will prove her point, and she will spend a lot of energy figuring out how to discount Scripture passages which prove her wrong.

It is easy, of course, for us to look at others and wonder how they could be so blind to the clear teachings of Scripture. Over the past few months, especially with the ongoing debate about biblical human sexuality, many have wondered how anyone who reads their Bible can say anything but that sexual activity of any kind is to be reserved solely for a married man and woman. Anything else is a deviation from the truth

and must be considered sin. How can anyone say anything else? And yet there are many Christians who hold a high view of Scripture and who seek to live by it who would disagree. We would say that those who hold a different view from the one we hold are too influenced by the world and they have allowed something other than the teachings of Scripture to influence their beliefs and perspectives. (I would agree that they have allowed the teachings of the world to be the foundation for their worldview.) It is easy to criticize others for their beliefs and say that they have blinded themselves to the truth. We also see how hard they work at making passages of Scripture conform to their belief system rather than conforming their belief system to the teachings of Scripture.

Interestingly, though, some of the very same people who are quick to condemn others for maintaining a belief that is not biblical, in the very next sentence do the very same thing themselves. In fact, in one conversation someone had harsh criticism for those described above but, within thirty seconds, was using racial slurs and saying that “those people should stay where they belong.” The extreme of this racism is what is known as Kinism, the belief that people of different ethnicities and skin colours should not mix, a heresy that was also strongly condemned by the CRC synod a few years ago. Racism is a mild but equally harmful form of the heresy of Kinism.

I could go on and list a few other examples of how I have observed that people who say they believe that Bible and shape themselves by it fail to live biblically in their own lives. I would also have to admit that I am one of those who says I live by God’s Word, but I am sure that you can find places in my life where I do not. And, if you challenge me using Scripture, I may even find ways to get around what appears to be a clear teaching of God’s Word. I may expend a great deal of energy proving myself right even when the evidence is clearly against me. Be assured that we all do that, and we must be slow to condemn others for what we do ourselves.

So, how do we solve the problem? It would seem that humility is the first solution, humility that allows us to admit that we are wrong and humility that enables us to listen closely to others. Further, we must admit that we do expend a lot of energy proving that our belief system is right (even when it is indefensible), and we must work at using that same energy to be directed toward changing our view or belief. Admitting that just because we say we live by God’s Word doesn’t mean that we do is a good step forward to being more faithful in life and belief. And through all this, we should be slow to condemn others because they are defending an unbiblical position, and we should be slow to force them to “toe the line.” Rather, the proper way forward, it would seem, would be to love them as brothers and sisters, encourage them to examine their views, and, even more importantly, allow them to challenge us so that together we can grow in Christ. Yes, there are times when we do need to speak strongly to others when they fail to follow the clear teachings of Scripture, but we must never do so with the intent to destroy them but, rather, to bring them back to God’s Word. And we must be willing to let others do the same for us.

Pastor Gary