

Sound Speech Or Sound Silence?

Titus is a treatise on the subject of “sound doctrine.” Sound doctrine is to be employed in exhorting and convincing gainsayers (Titus 1:9). The word “sound” means “in good health” or “wholesome.” In reference to teaching it means free from any admixture of error. The design of sound doctrine is that the taught may be “sound in faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:1-2). The fruit of sound doctrine is living “soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12). The vocabulary of sound doctrine is “sound speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8). To employ “sound speech” is to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

But I wish to point out that the word of God requires sound speech, not silence. Whatever is included in “sound doctrine” is to be spoken, not silently held within. In the struggle over the nature, work, and organization of the church, which resulted in a terrible division among the Lord’s people, there were certain men who, in private conversation professed the truth, but they would not speak up or speak out. Brethren of that inclination thought their soundness could be measured by their silence. These days there are many subjects troubling the people of God. Once again, we have some who are soundly silent. The “whole counsel of God” must be spoken “in season and out of season.” To refuse to speak up and take a stand when the kingdom is on fire is not soundness at all. It is cowardice, pure and simple. The advocates of unsound doctrine are not silent. The only antidote is the pure word of God. We must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). But, it is not love for God, man, or the truth to refuse to speak.

Doctrine which is sound can be expressed in language which is scripturally correct. It is when people have doctrines to uphold which are not biblical that they must resort to unsound terminology to describe what they mean. Every religious movement has been characterized by its own peculiar vocabulary. A return to the faith and practice of the early church was, and is, impossible without a return to the language of the Scriptures in discussing religious topics.

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