

Men Who Oppose Themselves

"And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves: if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Having urged Timothy to *"flee youthful lusts;"* to follow after righteousness, faith, love and peace, Paul now urged the young preacher to avoid foolish and ignorant questions. Such promote strife. *"The Lord's servant must not strive."* Every disciples of Jesus is a servant. One can hardly be anything else and be a disciple of Christ. He said, *"I am in the midst of you as one who serves."* He did serve. He ministered to the hungry, the distressed, yea, He even washed His disciples' feet (Jn. 13:3-10). However, the Holy Spirit has the preacher in His eye with the command. Paul called himself the servant of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:1); as did James Peter and Jude (James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1). The command that the Lord's servant is not to strive follows the Spirit's statement that foolish and ignorant questions gender strife. Since the Lord's servant must not *"strive,"* he must refuse foolish and ignorant questions.

Gentleness in dealing with others is required of any who proclaims the word. This gentleness does not mean cowardice nor failure to speak the truth. Jude wrote that we *"contend earnestly for the faith"* and Paul urged Timothy to *"Preach the word. Be urgent in season, out of season"* (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). Still, our attitude in speaking the word goes a long way to produce the results God wants from it. There are three things Paul gives to go along with our gentleness. God's servant must be *"apt to teach."* Ability to teach is necessary for any who would lead in a congregation, whether elders, preachers, teachers or deacons. Ability to teach includes knowledge (one cannot teach that which he does not know) and the skills to make his point clear. A teacher may become "bogged down" in technical explanations and verb tense, etc. -- so much so that the hearer or reader is lost to the point the speaker (writer) wishes to make. Never forget that the shortest difference between two points is a straight line! Thus we should avoid superfluous "detours" to reach our point of understanding. Some "side" explanations are necessary but should be sparingly used so that the overall point is not lost. If we have not imparted knowledge to our audience, we are not *"apt to teach,"* no matter what our knowledge or IQ may be.

Forbearance is part of being gentle. We cannot teach others if we "hog the conversation." Those with whom we study must be allowed to express their

views, field their questions, offer their objections to our points. We cannot "force feed" the gospel. Obedience must come from a convicted believer, not one who has been overwhelmed by the array of facts given them. "*In meekness correcting those that oppose themselves.*" The teacher or believer of false positions, although they do not think so, "*oppose themselves.*" Their position puts their souls in peril, and although they think otherwise, is detrimental to their own eternal best interests. Our task is to patiently, with forbearance, show them exactly what they are doing to themselves by the stand they have taken on their false positions.

Such people, contrary to their own convictions, have been ensnared by the devil to do his pernicious works of opposing the truth. They are his servants, his tools, his vessels. They are blinded to the truth and their own standing before God (2 Cor. 4:4). It is the task of the apt, gentle, forbearing servant of God to cause the truth to be as brilliantly illuminated so that the truth dawns on them and that, having an honest heart, may repent of their false teaching and life.

It is often a formidable task to bring such a teacher or practitioner of error to the awaking of what their true stand and station is; but, oh how rewarding that such a one may repent of his ways and embrace God's truth!

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