

Truth or Societal Consequences (Exodus 20:16)

Introduction: *Societal Pressure Not To Speak*

In our speech, we wield an awesome power. “The tongue is a fire” (Jas 3:6). Fire can be a very good and useful thing; but it can also be very destructive. We have a divine obligation to use the power of speech for good—for bearing witness to the truth and for destroying the two great pillars of ignorance and error. It’s easy to tell the truth if someone asks you. It’s much more difficult to *speak* the truth. When Paul was intimidated in Corinth, “The Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9-10).

1. The Responsibility to Bear Witness

Eph 5:11, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose [reprove] them.” Jesus says in Mark 10, “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops” (Mark 10:27). Again, “Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

To be good, one must do good, in spite of the consequences. When Babylon invaded Jerusalem, the Edomites did nothing (Obad 11-12). For their guilty silence, they suffered. “We shall be taken for companions of the wicked, if we act like the blind and the deaf when we should restrain wickedness by setting ourselves against it, and (as much as lies in us) allow God’s honor to be so obscured that all decency is overthrown, and we say nothing about it. Therefore we ought to be the more attentive to this warning to rebuke evil” (Calvin).

2. The Reason for our Cowardice

“The world ... hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (John 7:7). Amos 5:10, “They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.” Ahab said of Miciah in 1 Kings 22:8, “I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” “We are too loath to provoke any man’s displeasure against us.... We have more of the shame of men than of the fear of God” (Calvin) Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear (Ambrose Redmoon).

Application

1. *Don’t forget to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)*

This is not a license for blasting people. Eph 4:29, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

2. *Don’t forget the gospel (Acts 20:21)*

We’re not in a culture war; we’re in a spiritual war. The culture is just one of the weapons used by combatants either to put the light out or to help the light shine. But we’re trying to win men. “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, *and believe* in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Don’t forget the gospel.

Conclusion: Does the Lord have such an honest servant in you? True courage is not the absence of fear—but the willingness to proceed in spite of it. C. S. Lewis says, “Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.”