

Strategic Silences:- When Good Men Say Nothing

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 15 September 2010 09:04

Over the years many Christian preachers and organisations have told me they want to be 'broad based'. They want to reach out to as many people as possible, and so they do not want to 'offend' them. As part of this philosophy, they carefully avoid any kind of controversy. I am referring to good men, faithful exponents of the Gospel, brothers in Christ. Is their approach valid?

No, it is not. To me, this is the same as a man who watches an old lady being mugged and does nothing for the sake of peace! Not wishing to 'get involved' and possibly hurt, he remains in the shadows. He will not help, but he might complain to his friends about the awful state the world (or the Church) is in, or about the way someone else conducts a tough ministry. Too many Christians are like this. They talk amongst themselves, and sort out the ills and woes of life without leaving their armchairs or putting down their tea-cups.

I am not trying to be harsh, just truthful. I have, on occasions, done the same things myself, and was later ashamed for doing or saying nothing. I would respectfully remind my brethren that we have not joined a silent order! We are not here to examine our own navels. We are soldiers of Almighty God and must be ready to fight to the death at any time, in what is a continuous battle.

There is an anomaly in Christians wanting to 'reach' people, and yet who do not tell them *all* of the truth. God does not expect us to pick and choose our battlegrounds, nor the topics for discussion. He does not give us executive powers to select the 'brand' of Christianity we wish to present. Scripture is full of warnings and very blunt statements. But many of us either pretend they are not there, or we quickly gloss over them, so that what we say is suitably bland and passive.

There is an old saying: the truth hurts. It seems that the world knows this, but Christians do not! There is never an excuse to hurt people willingly or deliberately just for the sake of it. But there are times, and such times are increasing, when we must speak bluntly and forcefully. Some will acknowledge such a need, but they stop short when these things must be done **by them**, publicly. These good men sincerely want to reach others, but they stay quiet on vital issues and aspects of the truth. This, friends, is a policy of strategic silence. It is not true Christian witness and, at times, it is shameful.

It seems that to 'reach' Roman Catholics or those in other cults, we must not 'offend' them by

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talking about the sins and errors of their despotic, false religions. To 'reach' homosexuals, we must not 'offend' them by talking of their depravity, perversion and filthiness; we must not tell them that God hates what they do with vehemence. To 'reach' charismatics, we must not 'offend' them by exposing the apostasy of their false systems and beliefs, nor must we tell them their behaviour is corrupt or vile (nor use the word 'vile!'). No, we must select the bits of truth we wish to portray, and hope that *somehow* these folk will get the idea and *somehow* change for the better.

What is behind these strategic silences? There can be many possible reasons for remaining silent when all around is sinking into a mire of sin and error, and each reason is sinful. One reason is the need to gain or keep the approval of the world. To do that we must not oppose or fight, but must smile and always appear to 'come alongside' wrongdoers. That is, we must be at their beck and call and be their lackeys. There is more to this particular reason, and it is the old Arminian heresy. This tells us that God cannot operate unless **we** get all the elements right first. So, we must not 'offend', but must always seem to be 'positive'. We must always display 'love' and must always be 'relevant'. Friends, I cannot work whilst being strangled! I am not the lackey of men, but the servant of Jesus Christ. I do

His

bidding, not theirs. To crave approval of the world is to invite a ravenous tiger home for tea!

Another reason is the desire to be approved by our fellow Christians... those we deem to be 'leaders' or influential, that is. Few Christian preachers or organisations care much about the views of 'ordinary' Believers, because *they* only huff and puff privately, whereas 'leaders' will think ill of us and will tell *other* 'leaders' what we are doing! It is vital to maintain the (superficial) image of goodness and decorum at all times. To get involved in controversy is to be unpopular with one's peers, and it could open a 'can of worms'. My friends, let us open those cans of worms and deal with them!! Scripture tells us to do so before the *world* opens them and ruins us in shame. Time and again, the world justly complains that the Church remains silent and does not speak against error and wrongdoing.

A **big** reason for remaining silent and for not engaging in 'controversy' is **money**: certain subjects must be kept from view, otherwise one can lose huge amounts of income. This is rarely spoken of or acknowledged by brethren in this position, but it is glaringly obvious. It is why the Evangelical Alliance refuses to throw out heretics from its midst. It is why it refuses to condemn what is so obviously heretical. It is why pastors preach delicately, refusing to talk about certain subjects (that is, they do not preach the whole gospel). As more than one well-known preacher has admitted to me, they dare not speak on certain topics for fear of a rebellion or a mass walk-out, causing the church's income (**theirs**

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, they mean!) to drop like a stone. These are otherwise faithful brethren, but is such an attitude above, or below, contempt?

Then there are those who ignore truth, even though it is plainly stated in scripture. Or, there is *ignorance of God's word*

- plus a concurrent refusal to listen to others who know better. If they are frank, few preachers and teachers will accept being taught by another preacher or teacher! Pride dictates otherwise.

Another reason for silence is a mistaken view of 'controversy'. Anything that raises the dust is thought to be 'controversial' and must be avoided at all costs. Many see 'controversy' through horror-stricken eyes. They will carefully, and sometimes very openly, shun or avoid those who are 'controversial', even though they have no Biblical warrant for their actions. As one who has been shunned and avoided for many years, I know only too well how my Brethren think and act. Do you really know what 'controversy' is? If you know, then you also know that we are not to avoid controversy at all times. There are times - like now - when we must enter into controversy with all the arms of war, and must fight to the death.

Yet others stay silent for fear of getting hurt or defamed. Thank God Jesus did not think that way, otherwise there would be no Gospel to preach! When my eldest son was in school, he wanted to join the rugby team, but was never selected. We went to a park and I started to throw the ball at him, gradually increasing the force of the throw, until the ball began to knock him over. Then he began to avoid the ball, because he was afraid of getting hurt. I gave him some advice: if you are afraid of getting hurt, then you won't be able to play rugby! Go into the game *expecting*

to get hurt, and deal with the pain, and you will get on the team. After that, he played without allowing fear of injury to stop him. A year later he won a trophy as did his winning team, and sported a broken nose and many cuts and bruises!

Oh that Christians had a healthy regard for getting hurt, but who did not let that stop them from joining the fight against evil! Many times I fear and quake as I present my arguments. But, like Paul, I know I have to continue, injuries and threats of damage or not. If I stay silent, the truth is not preached in its fullness. I will remain respectable, will start to increase my income, and will earn the approval of my peers... but I will have dishonoured the Lord and brought others into subjection to sin.

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Whilst my brethren work hard, and sometimes feverishly, to toe the politically-correct line, wolves enter the fold and tear Christ's lambs apart. Silence glosses-over a multitude of undealt-with sins, as Satan whoops in victory and claps his hands with glee.

May God loosen our tongues from paralysis and self-imposed silence! May they be loose enough to preach the Gospel and **also** to shout loudly - and publicly if necessary - against error (1 Tim.5:20). Those who insist on strategic silences will one day find those same silences *enforced* against them from without. In that day they will not have the luxury of choosing what to be silent about. Only then will they prize the freedom of speech Christ gave them, but which they have denied themselves for so long.

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