

## **Principle or Institutions**

Many emotions have been running through my heart in recent months. What a world of pressures our dear friends face! (We, too, are often in the middle of that pressure as well.)

Isaiah 59:14 "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

1 Samuel 12:24 "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you."

Many years ago, I heard our pastor, Brother Hyles, speak on the subject of being loyal to principles not to institutions.

He spoke of the love one can develop for a person or place and how dangerous that love is. Love can lead us to accept error; it can blind our eyes, and it can cause us to turn our heads and fail to deal with the obvious.

I, for one, could not believe anyone would be so foolish as not to love, but after more than 30 years in the ministry, I can say it is an easy thing to do. We do love people; we love our home church or our college. Anyone without deep love will fail in the ministry, but that love must submit to a love for the truth.

Love is vital. It is the basis of obedience as our Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

But love for God and love for truth must take precedence over a love for people or places. Many a faithful, older Christian continues to attend a church that has changed and no longer stands for the things it once stood for. The Christian often accepts the change in doctrine or Bible standard because of his own love for the place and the people. Dr. Hyles used to say, "If you attend a church because grandpa is buried out in back of the church, then dig up grandpa and move him to a place that stands for the truth."

Add to that...

I would rather stand right for right than anything else, but there are times my emotion, my circumstance, or the passion of a situation causes me to want to bend, to give, to sidestep truth. In this case, it is better to stand wrong for right (in attitude or reaction) than to be nice and let truth fall in the streets.

As a teen I was trying to break off a relationship. I liked the girl but knew the relationship was not right. We were young Christians, and her tears kept moving me to agree to a continued relationship against what I knew was right. I think we were sincere young believers, but my heart wrestled with my brain, and finally because I had to stop the relationship, I said some things I am sure were not kind. Truth will sometimes sound unkind, such as jailing someone who has done wrong or firing an unproductive employee; however, these things have to be done IF THEY ARE THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

You may be accused of being unkind as you stand for the truth. I believe you ought to do your all to be kind, but not sacrifice the truth. Truth outweighs "nice" any day.

Many preachers allow themselves to be manipulated by friends, loyalties, and love. I am for love; I am for thoughtfulness; I am for loyalty, but when it comes to the Lord and truth, I am for putting truth before emotions. Emotions are not tied to truth, but they can surely move us away from truth. Any policeman or doctor will tell you that right must rule over emotions; preachers need to catch that same truth. One problem in our courts today is the undue weight we place on feelings. Truth is what matters -- first and foremost.

I have had to go through some gut-wrenching hours over loyalties and principles. I have had to chose truth, principle, and God over my deep feelings and tear-filled eyes. The cross was no easy thing for our Lord -- it was right; it was necessary; and it was the hope of the world.

Figure out what you believe and stand for it. If possible, stand kindly, but if you are afraid your love will cause you to relinquish your stand for the truth, stand any old way you need to -- but stand.

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