

The Fallacy of Entitled Opinions

By: Keith Keyser

“Everyone is entitled to their opinion.” How often does one hear that bit of conventional wisdom? Ironically, that familiar axiom is itself a commonly held opinion – but is it true? If the number of people who believe it is the determiner of something’s veracity, then this adage is clearly verified. Yet this is circular reasoning: this statement of opinion is substantiated by the opinions of a great mass of people! The modern age of “tolerance” exalts personal opinions as sacrosanct – one may disagree, but one may not declare another’s opinion as invalid. In contrast, God is the arbiter of truth; thus His word offers the true determination of any statement’s truth or falsehood. The written word of God reveals the mind of the One Who describes Himself as the truth (Jn. 14:6.) Consequently, the Scriptures supersede human opinions, upholding them or casting them down depending on whether or not they agree with the Bible.

Unfortunately, this elevation of human opinion to the same authority as Scripture is not limited to the lost. Many professing Christians – doubtless some of them truly saved – approach the Bible with the attitude that they will receive the portions that appeal to them, and banish the unpalatable parts from their thinking. If the prevailing culture and philosophy finds the Bible’s teaching on gender roles, homosexuality, or church order objectionable, then they will gladly set aside the scriptural teaching for sake of their personal well-being and respectability. After all, no one wants to be branded as intellectually deficient or culturally irrelevant. To have others think less of you – or worse still – speak harshly of you, is a detestable fate to be avoided at all costs.

When God’s Word Comes To Town

Like other cities in the Greco-Roman world, first-century Thessalonica was populated by idolaters, who knew little or nothing of the true God of heaven. After Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to town on the apostle’s second missionary journey, there was a marked change among some of the inhabitants. As 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 describes their dramatic conversion:

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Their remarkable transformation from pagans to Christians was a direct result of the hearers’ response to the message, as Paul notes: “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because **when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not**

as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thes. 2:13; emphasis mine.) The power of Christianity lies in believing God when He speaks. When the Almighty is taken at His word, He radically changes lives.

What A Wonderful Change In My Life Has Been Wrought

The above verse affirms that the Bible “...effectively works...” in believers (v. 13.) The Lord Jesus revealed the Scriptures’ centrality in the work of sanctification, saying: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17.) God uses His Word to instruct and edify Christians, as well as warn, rebuke, and correct them (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.) His word gives light and direction (Psa. 119:130.) It also produces spiritual cleansing (Eph. 5:25-26.) What is more, God ingrains it on the hearts of believers (Heb. 10:16.)

The Word of God astonishingly alters men and women who believe it, changing them from the inside-out and making them resemble the image and character of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 8:29; Gal. 5:22-26; 1 Jn. 3:1-3.) The sanctifying experience of the Thessalonians was not unique, for in the dissolute city of Corinth Paul addressed moral degenerates who had been transformed by the power of God (1 Cor. 6:11.) Throughout history, biblical Christianity has irrevocably saved and changed drunkards, addicts, prostitutes, thieves, liars, hypocrites, and so forth into moral and ethical people who faithfully serve others.

A story from the life of the expository preacher H.A. Ironside illustrates the power of the God of the Scriptures to convert notorious sinners. One day while conducting a Gospel street meeting, Ironside was handed a business card by a celebrated agnostic orator who challenged him to a debate the merits of unbelief versus Christianity. The preacher responded by setting the preconditions for the contest: the agnostic must bring two people who were enslaved to degrading vices and sin that were utterly transformed by their embrace of infidelity. In turn, Ironside avowed that he would bring two hundred such examples of moral and spiritual transformation by God’s power and Word.ⁱ

Like Mr. Ironside, the author of this article knows many people from dissipated backgrounds who are today trophies of the transformative grace of God. Drug addicts, smugglers, drunkards, fornicators, not to mention many “respectable” sinners whose wicked hearts were invisible to their fellow men but fully known to the Lord, have been regenerated and sanctified by the living God. Today they put aside their opinions and old way of thinking in favor of the Lord’s mind and will as revealed in the Scriptures. Furthermore, as the Bible so often attests, such fidelity to God and His Word will inevitably lead to opposition and persecution in this world (e.g. Jn. 16:1-4; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-14.)

God’s Unassailably Limitless Wisdom Or Man’s Vague And Uncertain Speculations?

Rather than shrink back from controversy and the world’s scorn against the unpopular message of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians must resolutely affirm that the Bible is truly their sole

authority for life in this age and the one to come. No matter how difficult obedience to the Bible proves, believers must recognize that obeying is the mark of their love for Christ and the only wise course to follow. “I think” and “It seems to me” must be set aside in favor of “The Bible says” and “God’s Word teaches.” The modern church faces the choice between man’s philosophy and the Almighty’s revealed will – there is no third option. To try to mix human thinking and the Bible is really to prefer the former at the expense of the latter. Man must not sit in judgment on the Scriptures, but instead allow God’s Word to search and judge him. Moreover, the church must be built on the sure foundation of Christ as revealed in His Word, and every believer must adhere to this blessed book as the sole arbiter of truth. Human opinions, impotent as they are to change a sinner to a saint, must yield to the eternal Word of God which saves and sanctifies those who receive it.

ⁱ E. Schuyler English, *Ordained of the Lord: A Biography of H.A. Ironside*, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1976, pp. 98-101.