

COMPROMISED CONVICITONS

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Concern for the church rightly emerges when the need is ever increasing for distinctive Bible preaching, the methodologies of denominationalism brazenly are employed, and the congregations use men for gospel meetings and special events who publicly and prominently have been exposed as false teachers. If convictions ever were present, they thusly have been compromised. Or, as Peter said, “[They] have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray” (II Pet. 2:15a).

Christians should be reminded they are in a battle for truth. Paul wrote, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [Gk. *methodeia*, i.e., methods, specifically tricks] of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...” (Eph. 6:10-14a). Elsewhere Paul charged, “Fight the good fight of faith...” (I Tim. 6:12).

An influential preacher and editor during the restoration movement of the nineteenth century was David Lipscomb of Nashville, Tennessee. On this point, long ago he wrote, “The number of men who are willing to work on either side of a question that will pay would be surprising to those not in position to know and who have not become accustomed to such things. It is the discouraging feature about the work of the churches today. So few men are willing to stand to their convictions--nay are willing to have convictions on any subject that will interfere with their worldly success. But truth can never be maintained, save by those who are willing to honor their own convictions, cherish a keen sense of right, are afraid of the least participation in that which is wrong, and will honor and maintain the truth, let it cost what it may of popularity or private prosperity. Let us, then, drink deeply of the essence of the spirit of Christ. Without it the Christian religion cannot exist.”¹

Christians compromise their convictions when they plead ignorance of erroneous practices and teaching within their own congregations. The condition is even more pitiful when it occurs among the elders. Jesus taught all Christians to be watchful

(Matt. 24:42-25:13). But, elders have accepted watchfulness as a special and particular vocation (Acts 20:28-31).

Christians compromise their convictions when they participate in erroneous practices and allow false teaching to go unchallenged and unchecked within their own congregations. The criticism of Paul to Corinth concerning fornication is memorable, “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (I Cor. 5:2). He set a good example of conviction when the liberty in Christ was challenged at Jerusalem by false brethren. He wrote, “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Gal. 2:5).

Christians compromise their convictions when they criticize those who are valiant for truth. At Galatia, Paul questioned, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). Known as the argument *ad hominem*, that is, literally “to the man,” meaning to attack the character instead of the contention, the critic endeavors to dodge the force of the argument by prejudicing the minds of his auditors. Like Christ, Paul said, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge” (II Tim. 4:16).

The challenge of courageous convictions hereby is communicated to all Christians. Finally, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Cor. 16:13).

Endnotes

¹David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, ed. by J.W. Shepherd, Vol. V (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1942), pp. 100-101.