

Haters Hate Those Who Speak the Truth

The fundamental conflict in our culture and in our politics right now is a simple one. It is conflict between those who love the truth and speak the truth and those who hate the truth and want it repressed.

Things weren't always this way in America. I remember hearing an expression in elementary school that we almost never hear any more: "I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Those of us on the right still say it and believe it. We are for open and free discourse and open and free debate. We want everybody to have the opportunity to say their piece in the dialogue over things that matter, whether the topic is religion, homosexuality, marriage, politics, evolution or the climate. We are eager to have a vigorous and open exchange over these matters and let the best arguments win.

The left isn't. They are not interested in engaging in debate. They are interested in silencing debate, in stifling debate, in squelching debate. They are determined to muzzle anyone who would dare to question secular orthodoxy in any of these matters.

Those who believe in a scientific view of origins that is consistent with the Scripture must be silenced. Their views must not be allowed in the classroom or in polite society. Those who believe in natural marriage must be silenced and gagged since same sex marriage is now "the law of the land."

Those who believe in two genders or sexes instead of 58, as Facebook believes, must be silenced and hounded out of public life, business and politics. Those who believe in sexual normalcy must be punished and driven from campuses, from

bakeries, from floral shops, from the offices and boardrooms of major corporations, and made to feel unwelcome in dressing rooms, shower rooms and bathrooms.

This tyrannical repression of the free speech of those who represent the truth is a relatively new phenomenon in America, although it's standard fare in repressive and totalitarian governments.

But we are far from the first generation of truth proclaimers to face this challenge. The prophet Amos discovered in his day, 2800 years ago, that those who declare the truth will not be tolerated by those who hate the truth.

"They hate the one who prosecutes at the gate, and they abhor him who speaks with integrity" (Amos 5:10). The "gate" was the place where the people met to discuss matters and where city leaders met to establish public policy. It was the marketplace and the public square. What Amos discovered is that those who declare the truth are not welcome there. If you want to reprove some public policy in the quiet of your own home, or maybe even inside the four walls of your church, well, we'll let you do that. But say the same thing in the public arena, the left says, and we will land on you like a falling safe.

A lesbian activist once told me to my face, "I don't care what you say or believe inside your own church. Your church belongs to you. But the public square," she said ominously, "belongs to us."

So what are we, as the people of God and as people of the truth, to do in the face of such hostility?

First, we are to keep praying. Amos discovered that God answers prayer and is willing to spare a nation which will not listen to us from his judgment just because believers plead with him to do it. When Amos received a vision of a coming invasion of locusts, he prayed, "O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small." The response? "The

LORD relented concerning this: 'It shall not be,' said the LORD" (Amos 7:2-3).

When he received another vision in which the land was consumed with fire, he interceded again for his nation. "O Lord GOD, please stop. How can Jacob survive? For he is small." The response? "The LORD relented concerning this: 'This shall not be,' said the Lord GOD" (Amos 7:5-6). Our persistent prayer can be effective in staying the judgment of God over our land.

Second, we are to keep speaking. Don't let anybody shut you up. (I'm not talking about being rude or obnoxious; I'm talking about being silent when we don't need to be.) Amaziah tried to silence Amos completely. "But do not prophesy any more at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple" (Amos 7:13). In other words, what you want to say is politically incorrect, and so we're not going to let you say it all.

Amos' response? "But the LORD took me away from the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.' Now therefore hear the word of the LORD" (Amos 7:15-16a). In other words, Amos said, "I don't answer to you, I answer to God. And he has told me to speak, and so I'm gonna speak. I will not let you silence me."

When we are part of a conversation where others are advancing ideas that are contrary to what is good and right, it's perfectly appropriate and perhaps even necessary for us to say something like, "Well, I hear what you are saying, but I look at it a little bit differently. Here's the way I see it ..."

Third, we are to keep believing. Believing that God can and will overcome all spiritual and earthly opposition and bring spiritual awakening and renewal to our land. In his time, he will use our praying and our speaking to "raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up

its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11).

Amos' final words are words of great promise and hope for a broken land. "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them ... I will plant them upon their land, and no more will they be uprooted" (Amos 9:14-15a).

Our part is to pray, speak and believe. God's part is to do. He will do His part. Will we do ours? {eo}

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