

Wise Opinions

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Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of words. Ecclesiastes 5:2, 3.

*Guard Thou my thoughts, I Thee implore, And of my lips keep Thou the door;
Nor leave my sinful heart to stray Where evil footsteps lead the way.*

Psalter No. 396, v. 4

In my last Critique, I considered with you opinions. These, you recall, are not convictions of the truth God has given us in the Bible. Rather, they are judgments we make about whatever seems true to us. These “seem-like” truths are, as we noted, not a matter of the doctrines of the church concerning our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, nor are they of any matter concerning His judgment, mercy and faith.

The Profit and Responsibility of Making Wise Opinions

Taking heed unto our opinions can, however be profitable for us. We are, after all, always Christians, no matter whether we “talk spiritual talk” or talk baseball. And we believe, do we not, that the admonition: Let your light so shine that they (the whole world) may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven, (Matthew 5:6) applies to us always. We take heed, therefore, to good sound doctrine and to ourselves and words and deeds (I Timothy 4:16) in light of that doctrine all the time. We do this that we might, all week and in all of our activity, be faithful to and consistent with the Christian and Protestant Reformed Christian confession we make in church every Sunday.

In light of the above conviction, namely, that it is important for us to take inventory of all that we say (how we take inventory would be a matter of opinion), let us in this article look at opinions from the perspective of wisdom. This will mean that we deal with opinions as to their content and as to when we should make them.

Wisdom, we read, Proverbs 8:6-11 speaks excellent things, right things, and truth. If we are concerned always about wisdom, then we will be wise always. Then we will always be concerned, in church or on the beach, to speak the excellent and right truth of God. And at the same time, knowing the tongue is an unruly evil (James 3!) we will be concerned to hear, to think, to ponder before we speak. It is wisdom so to wait and consider before we say the sky is gray or the Church has one foundation. There is a wise time to keep silence, and a wise time to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

Let me just underscore the importance of our making wise and truthful opinions. The ninth commandment commands that we not bear false witness. We shall not bear false witness against our neighbor. We also may not bear false witness of anything. As Rev. Ron Hanko explains in the June 1st, 1987, issue of the Standard Bearer, “The ninth commandment means to forbid all forms of deception, lying, and evil speaking in forbidding the gross sin of lying under oath (Perjury) . . . Obviously, the positive calling to speak the truth is something that applies in every area of life (in our making of opinions, too! MD) and not just in our civic responsibilities. We must, as Scripture teaches, be of the truth (John 18:37) and walk in it (II John 4).” Among the things the Lord hates is a false witness (Proverbs 6:19). Making wise opinions is crucial to keeping God’s holy commandment. It is one of the many ways the Lord has given us to abide in

His love and truth.

Opinions: Full of Wisdom

The excellent things that wisdom speaks are those things which are plain to all creatures, namely this: the LORD He is God and there is none else besides. The Hebrew of Proverbs 8 gives us to read literally that these excellent things are those things which are “out in front.” Most of the time the expression is used in the Old Testament it refers to one who is out in front of others and/or a ruler of the people. When Wisdom speaks excellent things it is, therefore, speaking of none other than Himself, Jesus Christ, the ruler and captain out in front of and over His people.

Right things are truths of the righteousness and justice of God. Solomon would instruct his son in wisdom, justice, judgment and in right things, that is, in the righteousness of God.

And the truth which wisdom speaks is every word by which we live which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We have all the truth of God written and preserved infallibly for us in the Bible.

That is the content of Wisdom, and so, of our conviction. But how can we apply this Biblical speech to our grocery or job or narthex or street or classroom talk?

Surely this application will have to do with what the Bible says: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. . .” (Colossians 4:6). In fact, if we look at the context of this verse we see that beautiful, graceful speech seasoned with truth (my opinion of one of the ways salt can be understood) is one of the means whereby we make wise use of our time. We are wise in our speech toward them who do not believe as we do. Also amongst ourselves ought we to guard our tongue that all might be done for edification (cf. Romans 14:9; 15:2).

So I tell Joe at work “I slept real well last night. . . I am truly thankful (aren’t we?!) for God’s gift of sleep” (SEE Psalm 127:2). And Mary tells her Mom “I dislike this rainy weather, but I trust that God is guiding each rain drop in His wonderful providence.” Or the Christian-fighter-of-the-faith shopper will say to someone in the aisle, redeeming the time with her opinions: “Food prices sure are high nowadays. But I am sure it is all part of God’s plan to make His people better stewards. The price of everything looked at from this perspective is just high enough so that I and my family might have what we need and not too little or too much (Our prayer: “Feed me with food convenient for me. . . Proverbs 30:8).”

Opinions: Wisely Timed

Wise opinions are made with an eye on excellent things, the right things, and the truth of God Who is sovereign over all creation and every situation in that creation. They are also made at the right time. Regarding the wise timing of our opinions, we ought to be discerning about how often we make them and on what occasions we make them.

Heaven, we know, is a place filled with the songs of angels and of men. And the new heavens and earth also will redound with songs of praise to God. Now, however, it seems (my opinion) that there is much more noise on this earth than there is beautiful song. The wise opinion-maker seeks not to add to this noise. His faucet, so to speak, is fixed by grace: he will not leak and drip his words all the time and all over the place. And all his water, even his opinions, is good to drink. One more use of the metaphor and then I will drop it before I get too crude. In a word, the wise and God-glorifying man always being more quick to hear than he is to speak (see James 1:19 where the context is being on guard against anger), is first busy in the faith-work of assuring that He is “tapped in” to the right source (the Word) and turned on by the right Spirit of God.

You and I want to speak wise opinions? We must then learn to be silent, to shut up before the

LORD (Zechariah 2:13). It is a fact: we cannot hear God and others right if we are often or always moving our jaws. Even if we are convinced that what we have to say is very important, let us try at least once a day to hear the other guy's very important or not so very important words first. We are probably wiser then, in general, if we work on cutting down the amount, the sheer amount of opinions we express. This, especially if it has been a while since we thought about or even studied a topic before we added, for our opinion's sake only, to the drivel of our opinionated and unconvicted society.

As far as time goes, we are wise also in discerning what occasions are good ones for opinions. We are wise when we refrain, for example, from speaking opinions because we should be speaking our Christian belief instead. And we are wise also when we discern when it is proper to utter this opinion and not that or that and not this. For example, it may not be wise to talk about the Tigers if you know the one with whom you talk watches too many games to be called a "moderate" fan - he is a fan-addict, and ought to be led by your conversation to fill and enjoy his time in moderation in other pursuits than watching baseball.

As we can see, all kinds of considerations are involved when we consider even making a peep from our lips. If we are in our homes or with friends who are of the same faith in Jesus Christ, we speak in the love and knowledge of the fellowship of saints. If we are amongst unbelievers, or even amongst Christians who yet err in doctrine and walk, then we speak in the love of the hope of that fellowship of saints. We do not with our opinions seek to be "idle", simply to fill time, nor do we seek to argue with people. But there must be a height and breadth and depth even to our opinions which is wise in content and in every situation. And this speech of ours must be driven, compelled, "hurried along", and yet soberly paced by His love (Ephesians 3:17-19).

This leads to our next article concerning our reasons for making opinions and the manner in which we make them. For we may be the wisest of opinion-makers, perhaps; we might say just the right thing at the right time. And yet if there is no love, there is no benefit, no glory given to God, and only tongues dripping poison.

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