

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Wrestling with Pigs

There is an old saying that goes something like the following: "Never wrestle with a pig. You will get dirty, and the pig likes it". In my life, I have found this to be good advice. But, this is more than just good advice; it is Biblical.

Many people will be reminded of what Jesus said:

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." **Matthew 7:6 (NKJV)**

The dogs and hogs fail to appreciate what is holy and valuable. More than that, they actually attack the one who has given them what is holy or valuable. But this is just the tip of the iceberg on this topic.

Consider the advice that Paul gave to the evangelists Timothy and Titus:

"3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is **obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,** 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of

gain. **From such withdraw yourself.**" **I Timothy 6:3-5 (NKJV)**

"20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, **avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge--** 21 by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen." **I Timothy 6:20-21 (NKJV)**

"14 Remind them of these things, **charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.** 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But **shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.** 17 **And their message will spread like cancer.** Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and **they overthrow the faith of some.** **II Timothy 2:14-18 (NKJV)**

"But **avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.**" **II Timothy 2:23 (NKJV)**

"9 **But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.** 10 **Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,** 11 knowing that such a person is

warped and sinning, being self-condemned." **Titus 3:9-11 (NKJV)**

These are five plain warnings about engaging in foolish, pointless, and ultimately harmful disputes in just three short letters. I get the idea that Paul thought this was important advice for an evangelist.

This is a concept that we see in the Old Testament as well.

"1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me." 2 I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; And my sorrow was stirred up." **Psalms 39:1-2 (NKJV)**

"A fool has no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions." **Proverbs 18:2 (NIV)**

"4 **Do not answer a fool according to his folly,** Lest you also be like him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes." **Proverbs 26:4-5 (NKJV)**

Considering these two verses together, someone said that you have to know what kind of a fool you are dealing with.

I think that you just cannot win with a fool. Either you become like him (you get dirty with the pig, and the pig likes it) or the fool is wise in his own eyes. The trouble is that the fool is already wise in his own eyes,

and you probably are not going to correct that by arguing with him.

"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Proverbs 26:12 (NKJV)

"If a wise man contends with a foolish man, Whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace." Proverbs 29:9 (NKJV)

Both David and Solomon understood that some arguments were not worth having. Someone once said, "You cannot win an argument with either a fool or a crazy man". I have tried and failed at both.

Jesus taught His disciples not to wrestle with pigs. We have already seen what he said about casting pearls before swine, but there is more. Jesus was the one who taught His disciples to shake the dust off their feet or flee to another city. **"14 "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet...23 "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." Matthew 10:14,23 (NKJV)**

I wonder if we would be more effective in evangelism by following the advice of Jesus instead of wrestling with pigs.

Paul practiced what Jesus taught in this regard. There are many examples of Paul moving to another city, but consider the following examples from **Acts**:

"46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles...51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium." Acts 13:46,51 (NKJV)

"25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 "saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." 28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" Acts 28:25-28 (NKJV)

Jesus did more than teach these principles; He lived them and left us His example to follow.

When asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, He asked them about a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath. He followed with a question about the relative value of men and sheep. **"10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" --that they might accuse Him. 11 Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Matthew 12:10-12 (NKJV)**

It seems to me that when a question is asked in order to make an accusation, we may follow the example of Jesus and answer with a question of our own.

When asked why His disciples did not wash their hands when they ate, Jesus did not answer the question, but answered with a question for the scribes and Pharisees.

"1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 2 "Why do Your

disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" -- 6 'then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Matthew 15:1-9 (NKJV)

When His disciples informed Him that the Pharisees were offended by this, He did not try to appease them in the least. **"12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.'" Matthew 15:12-14 (NKJV)**

Jesus refused to answer the chief priests and elders when they asked who gave Him His authority.

"23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" 24 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 "The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And

they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" 26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And **He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."** **Matthew 21:23-27 (NKJV)**

When the Herodians asked Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, He asked whose inscription was on the money. (This was after calling them hypocrites.) "17 "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? **Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"** 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "**Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?** 19 "**Show Me the tax money.**" So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "**Whose image and inscription is this?"** 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way." **Matthew 22:17-22 (NKJV)**

When the Sadducees asked Him about the woman with seven husbands, He told them that they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God before refuting their position on the resurrection.

"28 "Therefore, **in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?** For they all had her." 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "**You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.** 30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they

were astonished at His teaching." **Matthew 22:28-32 (NKJV)**

When they brought the woman taken in adultery and demanded to know whether they should do as "Moses, in the Law, commanded", Jesus ignored them at first and wrote in the dirt. "3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "Now **Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"** 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. **But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.** 7 So when they continued asking Him, **He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."** 8 **And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.** 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." **John 8:3-9 (NKJV)**

It is a good idea to follow the example of Jesus when people come with "stones in their hands" asking "Bible questions".

Jesus refused to answer the High Priest until he was put under oath. He answered not one word to Pilate regarding the accusations of the chief priests and elders. He made no answer to Herod. "62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "**Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?"** 63 **But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"** 64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and

coming on the clouds of heaven."" **Matthew 26:62-64 (NKJV)**

"12 And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. 13 Then Pilate said to Him, "**Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?"** 14 **But He answered him not one word,** so that the governor marveled greatly." **Matthew 27:12-14 (NKJV)**

"8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. 9 **Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.**" **Luke 23:8-9 (NKJV)**

Jesus could certainly have answered any, and all, of these questions with ease. However, He decided not to wrestle with pigs. There are times when we ought to do the same.

Not everyone who heard Paul preach was converted or even convinced. Not everyone who heard Peter and John preach was convinced. Not even Jesus Himself was able to convince everyone of the truth that He spoke. Why should we expect anything different? "24 "**A disciple is not above his teacher,** nor a servant above his master. 25 "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. **If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!"** **Matthew 10:24-25 (NKJV)**

There is a time when even God gives someone up to uncleanness and vile passions. "24 **Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness,** in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 **For this reason God gave them up to vile passions.** For even their women exchanged the natural use

for what is against nature.” **Romans 1:24-26 (NKJV)**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a prominent German theologian who spent the last two years of his short life imprisoned by the Nazis before they hanged him in 1945. He was not afraid to die for his beliefs. However, he clearly saw the wisdom in not wrestling with pigs. While in prison, he wrote the following words:

“Folly is a more dangerous enemy to the good than malice. You can protest against malice, you can unmask it or prevent it by force...There is no defense against folly. Neither protests nor force are of any avail; against it, and it is never amenable to reason. If facts contradict personal prejudices, there is no need to believe them, and if they are undeniable, they can simply be pushed aside as exceptions. Thus, the fool, as compared with the scoundrel, is invariably self-complacent. And he can easily become dangerous, for it does not take much to make him aggressive. Hence, folly requires much more cautious handling than malice. We shall never try to reason with the fool, for it is both useless and dangerous.”

You simply cannot win every argument regardless of how true and logical your position might be. There are none so blind as those who refuse to see. Sometimes, you just need to stop wrestling with the pigs and find someone who is willing to listen.

Sometime back, I had been having a written debate with a man who could best be described as an apologist for the Jews. I had given him detailed answers to questions that he had posed along with well thought out responses to some of his assertions.

This was met with nothing but more and more ridiculous and illogical assertions and arguments. I quit responding to him for a while. Eventually he asked whether I was going to respond to his most recent claims.

Below was my response. Before reading it, you need to know that, among other things, he had asserted that only Jewish rabbis could be trusted to interpret Scripture. This assertion alone has several obvious problems. Here was my final response:

“My question is: To what end [would I respond to your claims]? I’ve looked at everything you have sent me and considered everything you have said. It is clear to me that you are either a terribly sloppy researcher or a dishonest one. Neither option encourages me to continue our discussion. Seriously, did you even read the articles you quoted from? I did and they were quite interesting. I have sent you detailed answers before, but your responses made it clear that there was no point in continuing that. We simply have not been having a reasonable conversation.

There is much that I could say about all this, but it is clear to me that doing so would be nothing but a waste of my time. I don’t have enough extra time for that. The one Jewish Rabbi that I listen to above all others said something about where not to cast your pearls. He was manifestly correct. I think I’ll listen to Him.

I am fully aware that you will consider me another “notch on your belt”, one more preacher that couldn’t answer your questions. That doesn’t bother me in the least. The world is full of such people.

I’ve been around long enough to know that nobody can convince anyone of anything if they are determined not to be convinced. The wise Jewish king, Solomon, recognized this too. He wrote about it more than once. No, I don’t think you will hear from me anymore. I’ll be busy talking to people who will listen.”

With the possible exception of social media, there is no place where you are liable to end up wrestling more pigs than in the political arena.

There are a lot of pigs to be found there and most of them love to wrestle. There are a couple of Scriptures to keep in mind regarding that: “15 But when Jesus knew it, **He withdrew from there.** And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. 16 Yet **He warned them not to make Him known,** 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 18 “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. 19 **He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.** 20 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; 21 And in His name Gentiles will trust.” **Matthew 12:15-21 (NKJV)**

“12 For **what have I to do with judging those also who are outside?** Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But **those who are outside God judges.** Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.” **I Corinthians 5:12-13 (NKJV)**

Someone may ask how you know that you are dealing with a pig who should not be wrestled. I simply answer, “If someone looks like a pig, walks like a pig, and sounds like a pig, they are probably a pig”.



Are there any pigs that you need to stop wrestling with? Remember you will only get dirty, and the pig likes it.