

Dealing with the Opposition

by Bryan Gibson

This is the Lord's way: "(23) But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. (24) And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, (25) in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, (26) and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

What We Can Know

We can "know the truth" (v. 25) and therefore know when others are in opposition to the truth. We might even discover that we're in opposition to the truth.

The Condition of the Opposition

It's a serious, life-threatening condition—for any and all opposed to the truth. They're not thinking straight, which is why they need to "come to their senses" (v. 26). They're not helpless victims, but they are in the devil's snare, doing the devil's will, and they will stay that way if they don't receive correction (v. 26). And the more they realize the seriousness of their condition, the more likely they are to receive this correction.

God's "Go Ahead"

Man says "judge not," be more tolerant; God says correct (v. 25). His commandment compels us, but so does love—for God, for the truth, and for those in opposition.

The Goal of Correction

It's not to "outquarrel" the opposition (v. 24), or to simply win an argument. It's not to display our brilliance, or intimidate them into giving up their opposition. Carnal weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4) have no place in this important work. The goal is to free them from Satan's snare, and the only thing that can do that is the truth (vv. 25-26).

The Attitude Used in Correction

Do it in **humility** (v. 25), because after all, everything we know we learned from God (1 Thessalonians 4:9). And, it may be that we were once in the same condition as our opponent. Do it with **patience** (v. 24), understanding among other things that the opponent may be hearing the truth for the first time, that he may have heard nothing

but error his entire life. Long, careful study may be required, which takes a lot of patience. And do it with **gentleness** (24). Use sharpness (2 Corinthians 13:10; Titus 1:13-14) in situations which call for it, but not in EVERY situation. It's hard to correct someone in opposition to the truth when the same could be said of our attitudes.

Ready, Willing, and ABLE

Correcting those in opposition to the truth is a noble work, a soul saving work; but it can only be accomplished by those "able to teach" (v. 24), by those thoroughly acquainted with the truth themselves. No need to leave it entirely to others when you can be a teacher yourself. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers..." (Hebrews 5:12).