

(8-23-15)

SHOULD WE BE *NICE*?

TEXT: Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; **and avoid them.**

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and **by good words and fair speeches** deceive the hearts of the simple.

"In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many prominent Christians and political leaders saw a degenerative influence in industrializing America. For them, urban culture had eroded gender roles, personal strength, and moral fiber. So-called 'Muscular Christians' prescribed physical exertion and wilderness experience to cure these ills...Roosevelt challenged the 'effeminacy of character' associated with urban 'overcivilization'..."

(Gordon J. Christen, *Roosevelt, Boy Scouts, and the Formulation of Muscular Christian Character*)

"For there is some danger of falling into a soft and effeminate Christianity, under the plea of a lofty and ethereal theology. Christianity was born for endurance...It walks with firm step and erect frame; it is kindly, but firm...It does not fear to speak the stern word of condemnation against error, nor to raise its voice against surrounding evils, under the pretext that it is not of this world. It does not shrink from giving honest reproof lest it come under the charge of displaying an unchristian spirit. It calls sin 'sin,' on whomsoever it is found, and would rather risk the accusation of being actuated by a bad spirit than not discharge an explicit duty...The religion of both Old and New Testaments is marked by fervent outspoken testimonies against evil. To speak smooth things in such a case may be sentimentalism, but it is not Christianity. It is a betrayal of the cause of truth and righteousness...I know that charity covereth a multitude of sins; but it does not call evil good..."

(Horatius Bonar, d. 1889, *God's Way of Holiness*)

"The predominating strain of the pulpit fifty years ago, one hundred years ago, was one of terror. Men preached the book...The effeminate Christianity of the present day is largely due to the thought that God will not reward righteousness, and that He will not punish sin..."

(Sam P. Jones, 1895)

NICE:

"To eat dainties or sweetmeats...squeamish...Delicate; easily injured...Weak; foolish; effeminate."

(Webster's, 1828)

"After discovering Webster's definition for the word 'nice,' it became pretty evident to me why I always recoiled when someone tried to use that term to describe me. If there was ever a word that existed that should NOT be used to describe the character and attributes of a man, it is the word 'nice'...it seems to me that our culture, including the organized church, has sought to subdue men into a category of being 'nice'..."

(Neal Hayes, *Man Up and Own It*)

"...late 13c., 'foolish, stupid, senseless,' from Old French nice (12c.) 'careless, clumsy; weak; poor, needy; simple, stupid, silly, foolish,' from Latin...'ignorant, unaware,' literally 'not-knowing'..."

(*Online Etymology Dictionary*)

"All the senses proceed from the lit. meaning 'ignorant'..."

(*The Century Dictionary*, 1911)

"What is the strangest change in meaning that any word has undergone?...The word *nice*, derived from Latin *nescius* meaning 'ignorant,' began life in the fourteenth century as a term for 'foolish' or 'silly.' From there it embraced many a negative quality, including wantonness...as well as cowardice and sloth..."

(<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2012/10/change-in-word-meanings/>)

"... it is a very nice word, indeed! - it does for everything..."

(Jane Austen)

"Perhaps there is no other word in our language to which so great violence is done as is done to this little word, *nice*...Let us all demand reform here..."

(*Manford's Magazine*, 1890)

"Whatever is so wrong with being nice? I certainly want to be nice. But given the way that word can be used today, I am not sure I always want to be known as nice. I have done a little research on that word...you do not find the word 'nice' once in the King James Version...'Nice' is more of a modern, essentially tepid word, like water that is neither cold nor hot but merely lukewarm...there are those who admittedly and openly dislike the God of the Bible...But there are also those who claim to adhere to and love the God of the Bible but interpret Him in such a manner that He becomes...nice. Just nice."

(R.T. Kendall, *Out of Your Comfort Zone: Is Your God Too Nice?*, 2009)

"I am not a conservative Christian. The terminology is all wrong. We are biblical Christians and therefore the far more appropriate term to use is radical. I don't want to 'conserve' our corrupt society - I want to turn it upside down (Acts 17:6)! The irony is that it is those who call themselves 'progressives' who are in fact the conservatives. They go along with the culture and shibboleths of our day...**We don't want to be 'nice.' And that is why being nice is not really a priority.** I am looking at my concordance just now and amazingly, for something so apparently essential to the Christian faith, I just can't find the word 'nice' in it. It does seem to me to be tied up with that 'conservative' image. Nothing to do with the real world and the real battle we are supposed to be fighting...I'm not prepared to encourage people to walk on the broad road just to be popular and win an argument... I accept that being unpleasant, rude, unloving etc is a horrendous way to behave, and not the way of Christ. **But the trouble with 'niceness' is that it is not about fact. It is about perception...**Martin thinks that liberals are so much better at doing 'nice.' I agree. Some have the smooth voice, the silky tones, the fine words. So what? The devil is also brilliant at doing nice. He comes as the angel of light...The major issue though is that **niceness seems to be defining what love, kindness and compassion are, rather than the other way round.** I believe it was love, kindness and compassion that compelled Jesus to drive the money changers out of the temple, to tell the Pharisees that they were liars like their father the devil...It was because Jesus, and his apostles, were so compassionate, so loving and so kind that they could not bear that people would be deceived by false teaching."

(David Robertson, *Christianity Today*, Nov. 12, 2014)

-Paul Coughlin, *No More Christian Nice Guy: When Being Nice -Instead of Good - Hurts Men, Women and Children*

"That stupid modern vulgarism by which we use the word 'nice' [for almost everything]...from sheer poverty of thought, or fear of saying anything definite..."
(*A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1870)

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: **hold** that fast which thou hast, that **no man take thy** crown.

Matthew 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, **Give us** of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, **Not so**; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Matthew 7:6 **Give not** that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls

before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth, and **sell it not**; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 27:5 Open rebuke is better than secret love.

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Ezekiel 13:22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; **and strengthened the hands of the wicked**, that he should **not return** from his wicked way, by promising him life:

Jeremiah 23:14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: **they strengthen also the hands of evildoers**, that **none doth return** from his wickedness:

Proverbs 28:4 They that forsake the law **praise the wicked**: but such as keep the law contend with them.

Psalms 10:3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and **blesseth the covetous**, whom the LORD abhorreth.

"Trump says a woman told him she wasn't sure if he was nice enough to be president. Responds: This is not going to be an election based on a nice person but a competent person. **'We're tired of the nice people.'**"

(<http://www.breitbart.com/2016-presidential-race/2015/08/21/live-updates-donald-trump-holds-massive-campaign-rally-in-alabama/>)

"The word *nice* once meant foolish, ignorant, weak, effeminate. It has now come to mean exact..." (*Slips of Speech*, 1901)

"...minutely cautious...distinguishing and judging with exactness..."
(*Webster's*, 1828)

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