

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Conviction with Civility

(Jerry Fite)

**A**bsolute truth penetrates the depths of the heart leaving an indelible mark called conviction. No test, not even death, can change firm belief. First century Christians, saved by the blood of the lamb and putting the truth of the testimony above life, overcame Satan (*Revelation 12:11*). Conviction, though faced with painful reprisals, says, “*We must obey God rather than men*” (*Acts 5:29*).

While the Christian’s conviction is firm, it is not uncivil. How strong belief is manifested to others matters to God. Setting Christ apart in our heart as Lord, we should be “...ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (*I Peter 3:15*). It is not just a matter of giving the reason for your lively hope in Christ, but to do so with “gentleness and respect” (*NIV*).

Meekness keeps self under control in tense moments knowing the goal is not showing off one’s knowledge, but showing another the Scriptural basis for the inquirer to have hope in Christ. Reverential fear for the Lord takes precedence over the fear caused by

adversaries. Peter says, “...*fear not their fear, nor be troubled*” (*I Peter 3:14*). Therefore, the truth issues from undaunted conviction. But reverential fear for the Lord’s truth is also tempered with reverence for the Lord’s way – a gentleness coupled with respect towards the interested inquirer.

Paul reminds us how the Lord’s servant reacts to hearers of the word, especially those who initially contradict the truth. “*And the Lord’s servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will*” (*2 Timothy 2:24-26*).

The Lord’s servant defeats the devil with truth by not allowing one’s self to get in the way of another seeing the truth. Meekness meets the opposition with gentleness, not in your face arrogance. God gives a change of mind to the opposition through the civility of his teaching servant. The truth thus received equips the one taken captive by the Devil to escape his controlling grasp.

Teaching truth with civility characterizes the Lord’s winsome servant.

Paul was agitated when he viewed the numerous idols in Athens (*Acts 17:16*). One God is the truth imbedded deeply in Paul (*cf. I Cor. 8:6*). Being provoked over the numerous idols, Paul did not approach the people with anger or aroused frustration. He “*reasoned...*” not only in the synagogues but also “*in the market place every day with them that met him*” (*Acts 17:17*). He made those ignorant of the one true God to think. To reason from their own existence and poets was a civil way of opening the hearts of idolatrous people to the one true God.

Daniel, convicted of God’s truth, “*purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s dainties, nor with the wine which he drank*” (*Daniel 1:8*). Conviction did not come with a harsh demand, but respectfully he “*requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself*” (*Daniel 1:9*). Suggesting his diet be tried, Daniel proved his way superior. May we always stand firm, but express our conviction with civility!