**“Should We Quote Martin Luther?” – By Thailer Jimerson**

This year’s series through the book of Galatians has been on my mind for a while now. The excitement that I feel about a church walking through God’s inspired word, verse by verse, cannot be contained. Now, I’ve not always preached this way. For the longest time, I thought a topical sermon was the only way to deliver God’s word. But I’ve been growing to understand that all God’s people have ever needed has been a simple exposition of Scripture where the point of a given text is the point of your sermon, and we should discipline ourselves to walk through entire books to perceive the very same, and ever relevant, messages given to the first Christians.

But when one walks through Galatians around the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation (technically beginning October 31, 1517, commemorating Luther’s 95 theses nailed to the church door in Wittenburg), they can’t help but quote Luther a time or two.

No doubt, some probably question the propriety of it all. After all, many see the existence of the Church of Christ as being historically divorced from the Reformation. Or some would rather steer clear of ever even appearing to endorse one with whom they share great disagreements theologically. Still some, informed of Luther’s antisemitism in his declining years, and the writings that embody such beliefs – writings that were even used by the Nazi’s to further their agenda – would find a reasonable justification for their scrutiny.

“Is this scriptural? Should we quote and endorse teachers with whom we do not align doctrinally?”

Allow me to provide a few reasons why I answer that question with a hearty “Yes!”.

1. **The Great Caveat**. Every time a church leader quotes another, it should be understood that just because one is quoted doesn’t mean all of their beliefs are endorsed. That is the condition of the quote. If I had to endorse all the beliefs of every person I aspired to quote, I wouldn’t quote anyone because there is no perfect doctrine or understanding of it outside of the Bible. A quote is an endorsement of this particular way the author has worded his point – and no other!
2. **Paul Quoted Others**. To the question “Is it scriptural?” Absolutely, it is. Don’t misunderstand Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2.1-5 as him saying he wasn’t educated or eschewed learning. Paul was a man greatly educated and possessed great learning as is evident through his writings and the even the rhetoric employed throughout his letters. Instead, notice that Paul shows how much he read and how informed he was of the writings around him when he quotes Epimenides of Crete (whom he quotes again in Titus 1.12) and Aratus’ poem “Phainomena” in Acts 17.28.
3. **Intellectual Honesty**. One reason why it’s not only scriptural, but even *responsible* to quote others is that there is a such thing as plagiarism. Intellectual dishonesty in particular includes delivering ideas, phrases, or ways of thinking as your own which you’ve actually received from others. If one has received an idea from someone, he has to give credit where it is due. Paul not only quoted other authors, but even cited them!
4. **Blindness is real**. It is a strong conviction of mine that if one wants to see the entire puzzle, he must use every piece. If you choose to confine yourself to only one understanding or one school of thought, you will share all the blind spots of that one school of thought. However, if you broaden your perspective and consider all facets of a given jewel, you can more confidently see which is the greater cut. Quite frankly, there are other theological and doctrinal leanings that understand some biblical concepts better than others.
5. **It’s Helpful.** I couldn’t have worded it better than John Piper here: *"There are bad reasons to turn to other writers besides the Bible. And there are good ones. One of the bad reasons we turn to other writers is that we find the Bible tame and tasteless. It is anything but tame and tasteless. One of the good reasons we turn to other writers besides the Bible is that we savor the taste of God not only in the Bible, but also in the way others savor Him. The best writers intensify our taste for the Bible, and especially for God Himself."* And, yes – I do realize I just used a quote to justify using quotes.

Though there remains many a theological disagreement, I do believe the spirit that animated Luther’s reformation and the spirit that moved Campbell’s restoration were one and the same. I feel content in saying that I remain very emotionally sympathetic to Luther and his contemporaries, rather than doctrinally so.

Here’s what I mean. Surely you can agree with the following statement: *“A simple layman with Scripture is to be believed over a pope or counsel without it.”* This statement is one of the strongest convictions of our church, it is the heart. Do you know who said it? Martin Luther.