

SILENCING THE CRITICS

Criticism is a fact of life, especially the Christian's life. If one lives for Jesus Christ, he will be analyzed, scrutinized, vilified, and ostracized. During our Lord's personal ministry he prepared his disciples for what lay ahead of them. He told them in clear terms: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake" (Luke 6:22). He also warned, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). If a man wants to be a gospel preacher, but prefers the praise of men more than the Lord's, I suggest to that man that he find another work. Sometimes a man's actions merit just criticism, and he should receive it for his own benefit; but at other times, criticism is unjust and he should brush it off as he would a speck of dust which lands upon his shoulder and press on toward the mark of prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

It is wise for men who are preparing to preach the gospel, as well as their wives, to be forewarned of the fact that the preacher's life is not all peaches and cream. Though the rewards are great, the road sometimes is bumpy. Nevertheless, how shall we deal with criticism? There are two kinds of criticism that I want to discuss; namely, personal criticism and Bible criticism.

In Peter's first general epistle he wrote, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Peter 2:11-16).

In general instructions to the saints scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia Peter exhorts

them, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, to live honorably among the Gentiles, to submit to each other and to obey those in positions of authority (1 Peter 2:11-14). The overriding reason for doing so is because it is the will of God. The fact that something is God's will is reason enough for anyone, especially a saint, to be in compliance.

Peter wrote of "well doing" (agathopoieo) which is translated from two Greek words, (agathos - good; poieo - do). The Christian's life is a life of well doing. He is to do right. He is of no value to the cause of Christ if he does not do right (Matt. 5:13-16). By one's good life he can put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Personal attacks or impugning motives are best answered by outliving them; that is, set the right example.

When this is done one silences his critics. The words "ye may put to silence" translates one Greek word (phimoun) which means "to make speechless, reduce to silence." (Perschbacher, *Refresh Your Greek*, p. 932). It literally means "to muzzle." Paul, in defending his right to receive financial support from the church, used this word in alluding to Moses' words: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" (1 Cor. 9:9). Sometimes by words we can silence the critics, as Jesus did (Matt. 22:34); at other times, the best way to silence the critics is by outliving the criticism. This may mean we have to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. But this is exactly what Peter was saying in 1 Peter 2:15: "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

When another form of criticism comes, we cannot be silent. We must speak. Solomon said, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak..." (Ecc. 3:1-8). Silence may be golden at times, but sometimes, it is just yellow. Discretion, at times, is the better part of valor; however, at other times, it is desertion - from the truth. When the word of God, the gospel is being undermined or attacked, soldiers of Christ cannot sit back in silence. "Dignified silence" is not an option when truth and souls are at stake! Paul stated to the Philippian brethren: "I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). There are times when a gospel preacher would like to discuss the common salvation, but the

exigency of the hour requires addressing error. Jude wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Peaceful coexistence is not possible when false doctrine or practice would cause some to turn away from the faith. Paul had to address the hypocrisy of Peter in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14).

In giving instructions to Titus concerning elders, Paul wrote that an elder must hold "fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:9-11). The Greek word (epistomizo) for mouths stopped means literally to put something over the mouth, but figuratively, it means to silence.

Elders must be able by sound doctrine to "convince" the gainsayers. Thayer defines the Greek word for "convince" as "to find fault with, correct, by word; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove" (Jude 22). The Greek word (antilego) for "gainsayers" means those who "speak against something or someone." The instrument by which an elder corrects or finds fault is "sound doctrine" or healthy teaching. This requires that elders know the Bible, be able to teach the Bible and be able to refute errors against the Bible. There are men who are called elders who know the Bible, who can teach the Bible, but cannot or will not refute error that attacks the Bible. There are men who are called elders who know the Bible, but cannot teach the Bible. Then, there are men who are called overseers who do not know the Bible. It is no surprise that error becomes entrenched in some congregations.

So let us be wise in knowing how to silence the critics.

Ben F. Vick, Jr. from The Informer

ANNIVERSARY

Bob and Dee Adams, 10-16 – 53rd Congratulations!

BIRTHDAYS

Marion Stone, 10-14; Wanda Wilson, 10-15.

ILL

Sunday: Kathleen Camp; Janice and John Cody Carter (PM). Jamal Abyad continues to have difficulties with cancer.

Those battling cancer: Jamal Abyad, David Cole, and Ledgia Campbell. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Millie Robertson, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams resides at Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

SYMPATHY

Our sympathy is extended to the family of Jess Beard and the Cenla congregation in the passing of brother Beard on Wednesday, October 10.

OUT OF TOWN

Debra Gragg is on vacation in New Mexico. John and Barbara James returned from their vacation in New England last Sunday.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held this Sunday, October 14, following our AM worship. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

LATVIA MISSION

Jim O'Connor will be leaving October 15 with a mission group for a three week work in Riga, Latvia.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 46; Sunday PM, 46; Wednesday PM, 41.

Those To Serve

October 14, 2007

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Brown

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS.....Steve Brown
SONG LEADER..... George Thomas
OPENING PRAYER Jared Nelson
PRESIDE..... Jeff Nemecek
ASSIST..... John Cody Carter
ASSIST.....David Parish
CLOSING PRAYER..... Trent Thrasher

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER John Dodson
CLOSING PRAYER..... Chris Edwards
LORD'S SUPPER..... Jeff Nemecek

WEDNESDAY 17th

SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
INVITATION Jared Nelson

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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