

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 the 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

PRAYER LIST

Judy O'Connor, Susan Tigner, Drew Shinn, Tabby Jenkins, Mary Huffman, Tom Tucker, Clara Herndon, John Dodson, Jacob Wright

OUT OF TOWN

The Thomas' are in Branson vacationing and will return tomorrow (10/15).

AREA EVENTS (SEE FLIERS ON BULLETIN BOARD)

Harrisonville Gospel Meeting
October 21-24

FALL GOSPEL MEETING

Our fall gospel meeting with Brock Kendall begins October 28 and goes through October 31. The theme is "The Christian's Dialect". Fliers are available to hand out to all. Please sign up to provide Brock and his family a meal if you are able. A sign-up sheet for a sandwich themed potluck following the Sunday morning services (10/28) is posted on the bulletin board.

WORKDAY

You are invited to an inside workday on October 20 from 9AM-1PM in preparation for our fall gospel meeting. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

FALL GET TOGETHER

A fall get together will be hosted at Trent and Leah's house October 27 beginning at 5:30 PM. A sign-up sheet for food is posted on the bulletin board.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

We will have the men's business meeting following AM services next Sunday (October 21) in the lower level. All men please plan to attend.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM 28; Sunday PM 20; Wednesday 21.

Those To Serve

October 14, 2018

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Trent Thrasher

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... George Thomas
SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
OPENING PRAYER George Thomas
PRESIDE Dave Parish
ASSIST John Carter
CLOSING PRAYER..... Trent Thrasher

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER John Dodson
CLOSING PRAYER..... George Thomas
LORD'S SUPPER..... Trent Thrasher

WEDNESDAY October 17th

SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
INVITATION George Thomas

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

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

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Thursday (October 18)

Ladies Bible Class..... 7:15 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher
E-mail: thrasher@oabs.org

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