

The Messenger



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

A Weekly Publication of the Christians Meeting at
2291 Highway Z, Wentzville, Missouri
westlakechurchofchrist.org

Dedicated to the Proclamation of the Truth in the Spirit of Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Volume 13, Issue 14

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April 8, 2012

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Have I Become Your Enemy Because I Tell You The Truth?

by Dempsey Collins

One of the greatest lessons we can learn about teaching others the gospel is contained in Paul's words to the Galatians in Chapter 4 verse 16, "*So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*"

This letter was written by Paul to the churches of Galatia to root out false doctrines. Judaizing teachers had crept in among the churches and were teaching that parts of the Mosaic law were still binding, especially the practice of circumcision. Because some of the Galatian Christians had accepted such teaching, Paul rebukes them and describes their sad spiritual state in various places throughout the book.

Paul's bold question in Gal. 4:16, "*So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*" teaches all of us some very important lessons. Let's consider a few of them.

- I. There is a time for admonition and rebuke as well as encouragement. In II Tim. 4:23, Paul demanded Timothy to "*Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.*"

Notice Timothy was taught to "*reprove and rebuke*" as well as "*encourage*." In keeping with this instruction, we find numerous examples of reproof and rebuke in the New Testament.

1. In Acts 8, the apostle Peter rebuked Simon for trying to buy the gift of God with money. *20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you."*
2. Because of the sin of pride and prejudice the apostle Paul once rebuked the apostle Peter. Gal. 2:11, 12, "*Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.*"
3. In I Tim. 1:19, 20, Paul rebuked Hymeneus and Alexander. *19 "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme."*
4. In I Tim. 5:19, 20, Paul wrote: *19 "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning."*

These examples and others we could cite prove that there is a time for rebuke as well as encourage. Paul's question, "*So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*" also shows that preaching the truth will sometimes make enemies.

As Christians, we desire the friendship of all men but never to the point of compromising the truth of God's word for then we would not be a friend of Jesus Christ. In Gal. 1:10, Paul wrote, *"For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?" Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ."*

Jesus was crucified because He told people the truth, not because He agreed with them. The apostles were persecuted and eventually put to death because they told people the truth. Why do you think John the Baptist was beheaded? Not because he sent Herod Antipas a wedding gift. John was put to death because he told this wicked man and his adulterous bride the truth, *"It is not lawful for you to have her."* Matt. 14:4

Stephen was stoned to death not because he told the Jews he appreciated their sincerity of heart. Stephen was stoned to death because he put the gospel hammer down on their sinful and prideful lives. He said to them, *"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."* Acts 7:51 Upon hearing these cutting words the Jews were cut to the quick and began gnashing their teeth at him and picking up stones to stone him to death. v. 54

So much of the preaching being done these days is nothing but mushy sweet spirited slop, good for nothing except pleasing the ears of worldly minded church goers and hireling preachers drawing pay.

Jesus in Luke 6:26 made it clear that it is impossible to preach the whole truth and be everybody's friend. He said, *"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."* In II Tim. 3:12 Paul said, *"Yea and all those who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution!"* Ahab said of Micaiah, *"I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me but evil."* I Kings 22:8

People today hate Christians for the same reason, but very few are honest enough to admit it. Very few are honest enough to actually say, *"I hate him because he does not tell me what I want to hear."*

Make no mistake about it, preaching the truth will sometimes make enemies. Christians must decide whose friendship they desire the most, the friendship of the world or the friendship of Christ. Paul said, *"If I were still trying to please men then I would not be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ."* Gal. 1:10 The question and its context also confirm the fact that truth must be preached at the expense of making enemies. A comprising attitude toward preaching leads to apostasy.

Paul wrote, *"The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine but will heap to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires and will turn away from the truth and turn aside to myths."* II Tim. 4:3-4 Notice the departure from the truth began with the compromising attitude of not enduring sound doctrine. The attitude, *"Preach the Bible, but let everyone else alone"* is an impossibility. You could not preach the first verse in the Bible, for it refutes the atheist. You could not preach the first chapter, for it refutes the evolutionists. The first book, for it refutes the modernists. The first five books refute the Muslims and so on. There are very few verses in the Bible that do not upset somebody. Does that mean we should not preach them? If that is our concern then according to Paul, we are not a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:10. Much of the sweet spirited slop taught from pulpits today is the equivalent of a commander telling his army to shoot, but be sure to not hit anyone. Such strategy will bring certain defeat and for Satan certain victory.

This attitude of attempting to please the people instead of save the people is greatly responsible for the moral decay in our land. Standards have been lowered in an effort to draw the crowds. One preacher lowers the standard in an appeal to the crowds and draws a certain number. The preacher on the next corner sees what is happening and he lowers the standard even lower in an effort to appeal to the multitudes.

Blue light special salvation or salvation at a discount is the trend of many churches today as they get caught up in the culture and numbers game, rather than holding to God's unchanging word. Friend, don't be fooled by big numbers and carnal programs. These cannot save you. Only the truth can make us free. John 8:32 Let's stick to the simple gospel truth and stop being a part of some church that is nothing more than a glorified YMCA.

Men have fought truth for at least two reasons. Some have been unconscious enemies of truth. They fought it ignorantly. Paul is an outstanding example fighting truth unknowingly (I Tim. 1:13). But those who seek truth will find it, as Paul eventually did. Others have knowingly fought truth. Jesus explained the cause by saying, *"Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* John 3:19. Creatures of darkness, physical and spiritual, despise light. Did you ever roll a rotting log over in the forest? Do you recall seeing those little creatures run in every direction? Why? They were creatures of darkness running from the light. Likewise, some people have preferred darkness to light, error to truth, because they were creatures of darkness, *"because their deeds were evil."* But no matter how much truth is fought, it shall survive. It can be crushed to the ground, but it shall rise again. Let us never be afraid to say what must be said to save the soul of another.

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16