

Calling Names

We have some in the Lords church who seem to think it is an almost unpardonable sin for a preacher or writer to call the names of false teachers and hypocrites; but it seems to me we have some precedents in the New Testament for doing just that. One could argue about the motives behind the name calling. Our motives should be pure in every action and word in daily life. If we call names simply to ridicule or get back at someone or something like that, of course that would be sin; but if we are trying to save souls, why not point out the erroneous teaching and who it is that teaches it?

But some will say that just preaching the truth should be sufficient. If we preach the truth, then we can simply leave others alone. The preachers and writers of the New Testament days did not behave that way. These men preached the truth and then contrasted error with the truth. John the Baptist was very personal in his preaching. King Herod was living with another man's wife. He was living in adultery. John knew this. He knew that it was not lawful for the king to live this way. I suppose John could have preached on a hundred other things without offending Herod and the woman with whom he was living. But why preach on other things and refuse to preach on the very thing the king needed? So, John just "approached" a bad situation and told the king in plain words. Of course, for this plain preaching he lost his head.

Some today would lose their heads if they were to tell some in "high places" of their sins, and not just hint at them. Sin is sin. and should be condemned in the severest terms. If we know of members of the church who are living in open sin in defiance of the laws of God and the laws of man, we ought to tell them. We ought to let them know that such characters cannot enter the kingdom of God. These sinful situations will not right themselves. It takes gospel preaching to do it.

Jesus called names. Two of the most bigoted sects of his day were the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were religious hypocrites. Time after time Jesus told them this, calling their names.

Read his scathing denunciation of them in Matt. 23:1-6 ***“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.”***”

Would Jesus have been true to His Father if He had refused to have spoken out against their sin? Did he do wrong in calling their names? By doing this, all knew of whom he spoke. He did not speak in uncertain terms. On Pentecost, shortly after Jesus ascended, Peter was preaching to the betrayers and murderers of God's Son. He held nothing back and called them out for what they had done. He did not preach a "soft" sermon on sin and tell them that there were some murderers in the world, and that it was not good to live that way. Listen: ***“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*** (Acts 2:36.)

Earlier in the sermon, he approached them and said: ***“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*** (Acts 2:23.)

That kind of preaching brought results. They could see that the innocent blood of God's Son was upon their souls; it was dripping from their hands. What were the results? ***“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*** (Acts 2:37.) What brought them to a sense of their lost condition? The truth had been preached and the application made. Peter let them know that he was preaching to them. So many today preach showy sermons, and folks go to sleep and do not know what the preacher is preaching. And preachers seem just a little timid for fear some might find out!

Simon, the sorcerer, thought he could buy the gift of God with money. Listen to the inspired preacher: *“But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall[a] of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”* (Acts 8:20-23.)

I guess Simon would not have much trouble understanding where he stood in the sight of God. Peter boldly preached the truth and made a personal application. From that kind of preaching Simon would not get the idea that his sin was not so bad after all. And it brought results! *“And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”* (Acts 8:24.)

After all, we are trying to get sinners to repent when we preach to them. This they will never do until they are brought to a realization of their sinful condition. And one time John Mark got discouraged a little too easily and turned back when the going became difficult. Paul did not think much of this. So, on another trip he refused to take John Mark with them because he had not gone with them to the work. The contention between Paul and Barnabas over this was sharp. Mark had done wrong in turning back. Paul rebuked him sharply for this. God thought enough of this to make it a part of the divine record. Read it in the latter part of Acts 15.

Peter ate with the Gentiles; but when certain of his Jewish brethren arrived, he separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. Did Peter do right in this? **No, he was to blame, and Paul told him so.** And that is a part of the divine record, recorded in Gal. 2. Paul withstood him to the face. That is where it should be done, not behind the backs of the ones who should be withstood to the face.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. He had some bad reports concerning them. Paul told them where he got the report. ***“For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.”*** (1 Cor. 1:11.) Paul seemed to think it was the right thing to do to tell where he got his information.

Paul talked about some who had made shipwreck of their faith. This is the way he wrote about two of those fellows: ***“among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”*** (1Tim. 1:20.) I think that is very plainly stated. These brethren had been delivered to Satan until they would learn not to blaspheme. Paul did not think it would be all right for them to go elsewhere preaching their false doctrine. They must be stopped.

“You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.” (2 Tim. 1:15.) Pretty personal, isn't it?

“For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.” (2 Tim. 4:10.) This brother had forsaken the old apostle, and Paul told another young preacher in a letter to him. Paul told Timothy not only that Demas had forsaken him, he told Timothy why he had done it!!

The apostle Paul is very near death but just before he departs this life he tells young Timothy; just before he lies down to rest: ***“Alexander the coppermith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.”*** (2 Tim. 4:14-15.)

Almost with his dying breath the apostle was warning young Timothy against bad men and false teachers. Did he do wrong in this? Of course not. He loved the church. He was jealous over it with a godly jealousy. And so, should we be. We should mark and name them that cause division. (Rom. 16:17.)

I'm not endorsing using the pulpit to call people out. I'm not endorsing using the pulpit to settle arguments or scores. I would never knowingly preach on a topic BECAUSE a certain person was in attendance. Having said that, we must preach the whole counsel of God.

That means we hold nothing back, we call things by Bible names and when error is preached, we identify it and those who are teaching it. A preacher is to be a watchman on the wall sounding the alarm that there is danger near.