



The Voice Of Truth

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THE LORD'S CHURCH MUST STOP TREATING SIN LIGHTLY

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Likewise he said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear" (1 Tim. 5:20).

At times I wonder if some have even read this charge today. There are those who are disgusted, displeased, offended by sound gospel preaching. **REPROVE** implies that one is in error and needs arguments presented to convince him of the truth. **REBUKE** implies that one must be warned of wrong doing.

There is a trend to believe that the possibility of offending someone in preaching the Bible is to be avoided. We are to preach the word not pamper the world. We are to reprove, rebuke, not relax in sin, approve, and exonerate! We hear such remarks as: "None of

us are perfect", "You will drive them away," "We don't want to make anyone mad", "That will split the church," being used by some. There is an attitude, a stance, which has crept into the Lord's church to abolish, banish, expel, eliminate reprovng, and rebuking from our message. "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools" (Eccl. 7:5). In some areas, the Lord's church looks more like a "social club" of religion, than it does the blood bought body of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:19).

Today, we hear, "Don't rock the boat," and "It will tear the congregation apart if you preach on that," "This is called getting too personal." Many preachers are afraid to take a strong stand and help the congregation see the need to bust sin out of the camp. God did not allow His people of Israel to continue in sin because He was afraid of stirring up a hornet's nest, or getting personal or that His

name would suffer if He allowed His people to be taken into captivity. The Lord desires that His church be pure. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26 27).

Christian's are to put off sin (Col.3:8); and, the word from whence put off is translated signifies moving out and away from. It is unthinkable that Christ will own His bride if she becomes unchaste, plays the harlot after the world, and has her affections taken way from Christ and set on things of the earth.

Paul told the elders from Ephesus, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26 27). Paul is saying in these verses that we have the charge to point out a brothers sins (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19 20). We have many in the Lord's church who assemble with the saints when they want to, who haven't attended in weeks and instead of reproofing and rebuking these members about their sin, we ask them to serve on the Lord's Table or lead prayers. We act like nothing is wrong! And that tells the member he is fine in the sight of God, and this tells him also that he can miss and still be called on these duties. Instead of tolerating sin, we are to reprove it (Eph. 5:11). Tolerance of sin is condemned (Rev. 2:20 21). If a congregation permits impure individuals

to remain unchastened within its fellowship, it thereby becomes a partaker of their sin and will also drift out of favor of the Lord (Rev. 2). Failure to reprove, rebuke and purge out sin leads to toleration of sin, and toleration of sin leads to a love of sin, the love of sin leads to a practice of sin, and the practice of sin leads to spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). The church is wounded when we fail to reprove and rebuke sin. A single sin which is permitted to remain in the body will destroy the whole body (Rev.2:1 5). When we cover up sins in the church, we corrupt the morality and virtue of the church and destroy its efficacy to honor God or to save men. Sin must be exposed and purged out of the church or the church becomes corrupt and a synagogue of Satan instead of the church of Christ. God cannot be honored by covering up evil in the church. To expose sin, error and false teachers is to proclaim to the world that they seek truth, purity, holiness, and godlikeness.

But sadly, Bible preaching that gets to the heart of the matter is often rejected. Sin is just a misunderstanding, not transgression of God's will. Sin is something you just do not bring up, even if it is true. One preacher was told that there were certain subjects which he was told not to preach. What happens when a man preaches on a Biblical topic and is then told his preaching is "too hard?" The cry is not to "repent of sin," but "get rid of the trouble maker, the preacher." We need to hate every false way (Psa. 119:140).

The key to the whole matter is love. "As many as I love, rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19). To ignore or tolerate wrong doing among its members is not a sign of true love. How much do you love God, His word, the church, your brothers and sisters?