

“You’re too Critical!”

A few years ago my wife was talking to two people that are very dear to her about why she wasn’t attending their church anymore and they began to ply her with questions about why she believed their church was headed in the wrong direction, and as the conversation progressed, one of the ones she was talking to kept getting louder and louder in protest, because they couldn’t refute what she was saying, and they said, “You’re too critical! We’re not supposed to be critical!”

In the first place, my wife didn’t bring up this conversation, they did. In fact, they had prepared and planned their questions and what their responses would be ahead of time and probably thought they had their ammunition from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy ready to prove her wrong, and in their minds, to save her from making a terrible mistake. But you know what? The promise of Jesus in **Luke 12:11, 12** was fulfilled to Cindy that day to “*take no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.*” But let me just say this, the Holy Spirit can’t bring things to your mind that you never put in there. And so, we need to study to show ourselves approved unto God, and then He will work in our behave like He did for Cindy.

All my wife was doing was trying to get these two people to take their heads out of the sand and open their eyes to what was very obviously a deviation from the truth, but they just couldn’t see it, and they didn’t want to see it. Afterward however, they did commend her for being able to defend what she believed from inspiration and admitted that they couldn’t do it if the tables were turned, but their loyalty to their church trumped everything, no matter how obvious the errors were. And you know, Cindy and I couldn’t help but sympathize with them a bit, because their position used to be our position just a few years previous.

So what do you think, is it wrong to be critical? Or is it right, and even a duty at times? First of all I think we should understand what the word critical means and make sure that when we do criticize that we do it with the right attitude, because there are many forms of criticism that are wrong, especially for a Christian, but on the other hand there is a form of criticism that can be very beneficial when the criticism is warranted and when it is done in the right way.

When we go to the dictionary we find these two definitions for the word critical: Number 1: “Inclined to find fault, or to judge with severity”. Obviously that’s the wrong kind of criticism, and then number 2, the right kind: “Capable of judging with accuracy”, or “exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation.”

You’ve probably heard the expression, “We need to look at these things with a critical eye before we accept them.” Nothing wrong with that. In fact, we’d be foolish not to. You’ve probably also heard the term “constructive criticism”, and yes there is such a thing when done properly.

In the *Review and Herald* it says something very interesting, but before we read, let’s pray.

Review and Herald, July 26, 1892 “Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed.”

At least one of the persons Cindy was talking to definitely became annoyed with her; so who was being critical? It was the one that got louder and louder as the conversation progressed, wasn't it?

If these two loved ones that were anxious to correct Cindy would have come to her with the proper attitude, don't you think it might have opened the way for the Holy Spirit to work? Absolutely! But as it turned out, they both stuck to their guns, and so did Cindy.

I took the time to search the Spirit of Prophecy to see what it had to say about negative criticism and here's what I found. We are not to be guilty of:

- unjust criticism;
- unkind criticism;
- ungenerous criticism;
- unfounded criticism;
- unsympathetic criticism;
- harsh criticism;
- petty criticism;
- jealous criticism;
- unfavorable criticism;
- unfriendly criticism;
- irreverent criticism;
- careless criticism;
- cold criticism;
- cold-hearted criticism;
- sharp criticism;
- undeserved criticism;
- unfeeling criticism;
- narrow criticism;
- satanic criticism;
- unrighteous criticism;
- severe criticism;
- over-bearing criticism;
- unwise criticism;
- hardhearted criticism;
- bitter criticism;
- scornful criticism;
- and unsanctified criticism.

And so, there are a lot of criticisms we need to be careful not to indulge in, aren't there? But here's the point; whenever you read about a negative, on the other side there's usually a positive. In other words when we're told there's “unrighteous criticism”, that implies that there's also a righteous criticism. Whenever there's an “undeserved criticism”, there very well may be a deserved criticism. Whenever there's a cold-hearted criticism, there may be the need for a warm-hearted criticism, and so forth. So criticism can be detrimental or beneficial depending on how it's given and whether or not it's warranted.

Now let me read you a few statements that are given in a negative or undeserved way when directed at those that are saying or doing what the Holy Spirit has prompted them to say or do.

By the way, usually reproof is looked at as undeserved criticism by those that don't want to change. And the word “criticism” is a synonym for the word “reproof.”

Signs of the Times, July 13, 1882, “The unconsecrated and world-loving are ever ready to criticize and condemn those who have stood fearlessly for God and the right.”

And so, if we are going to stand unflinchingly for the truth and right, it's a given that we will be criticized by those that refuse to hear the truth. Expect it. This goes right along with what the apostle Paul said; if we live godly, we will suffer persecution.

The Review and Herald, April 7, 1885 “God always has men to whom He intrusts His message. His Spirit moves upon their hearts, and constrains them to speak. Stimulated by holy zeal, and with the divine impulse strong upon them, they enter upon the performance of their duty without coldly calculating the consequences of speaking to the people the word which the Lord has given them. But the servant of God is soon made aware that he has risked something. He finds himself and his message made the subject of criticism.

“If the minister's face is not flint, if he has not indomitable faith and courage, if his heart is not made strong by constant communion with God, he will begin to shape his testimony to please the unsanctified ears and hearts of those whom he is addressing. In endeavoring to avoid the criticism to which he is exposed, he separates from God, and loses the sense of the divine favor, and his testimony becomes tame and lifeless. He finds that his courage and faith are gone, and his labors are powerless. The world is full of flatterers and dissemblers who have yielded to the desire to please; but the faithful men, who do not study self-interest, but love their brethren too well to suffer sin upon them, are few indeed.”

Remember what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about this? Notice what it says in **2 Timothy 4:2-4**

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (or the living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word (in other words, tell the people what God wants you to say and not what they want to hear); be instant in season, out of season (that is, whether convenient or inconvenient); reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (Why?) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Do you think this prediction has come true today? When Paul says that people would heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, that means that they would find and support teachers who say what they want to hear. The popular churches of the land are filled with such teachers. These verses are meeting their fulfillment today, even within the professed remnant church, I'm sorry to say.

Lately I've had several people who have asked to be removed from my monthly mailing list because they think I'm too critical, and I've read what others have said on social media lately about wanting to hear sermons that deal with righteousness by faith and not sermons that criticize the church. In other words, don't tell me what I need to hear, tell me what I want to hear.

Do you realize that it's impossible to be righteous by faith while attending and supporting a church that's preaching another gospel? Or a church that's catering to those that have itching ears?

There is a message of justification by faith that needs to be preached, don't get me wrong, and that's the third angel's message of **Revelation 14:6-12**, and I've talked about that plenty over the years, but there's another message that is just as important, and without giving heed to it you cannot remain justified by faith, and that's the fourth angel's message of **Revelation 18:1-4**.

If we have been justified by faith by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf and have been forgiven of all our sins but fail to come out from among those that have stepped off the platform of truth and are living in sin, because they've been taught by their teachers that they're saved in it, we will be lost! I know that's plain speaking, but it's true!

If you've been listening to the news lately, you know that Donald Trump is leading in the Republican polls, and do you know why he's leading in the polls? It's because his speech is not politically correct; he's got courage enough to actually say what the majority of people are thinking, and it's touching a responsive chord. I don't know if he'll flame out before long, and I'm not endorsing him for president; he's probably not qualified to lead this great country in the right direction, but then again, neither is the current one in my opinion.

Anyway, the problems in our country are not going to be solved by having a new president, because the problems we have are the result of feeding the carnal mind. The problem is with the heart. That's why Jesus didn't get involved with the politics of His day. He knew people needed a heart transplant, and that's the only thing that will cure the sin problem and lift our country from the brink of ruin. Regardless of what you think about Donald Trump, he's getting the people's attention because of plain speaking, and I think that's what's needed today in our nation and in the church.

Righteousness by faith includes both justification (**which is forgiveness**) and sanctification (**which is holiness through obedience**). When we have both, we will be pardoned and be found doing what God says. Once we've been forgiven, God expects us to do what He says, and if He says come out from among them and be separate, and we don't do it, how can we be righteous by faith?

I'm sorry, but if you want to be fed half a gospel, then you may very well want to be removed from my mailing list as well, because I'm going to take Paul's admonition to Timothy and preach the word whether people like it or not.

Friends, we are living during the time when the loud cry message is to be proclaimed. It's not a future message, it's a now message! It has been for some time. And that includes the third and fourth angels' messages combined. Read it for yourself in *Early Writings, page 277*. If you want true righteousness by faith, then you have to give heed to both messages. Either message by itself won't do it, you have to have both. And if you think that's harsh criticism, then you better blame God for it, because He's the One that made the rules.

So let's take a look at few examples in the Bible of those that were criticized unjustly for saying what God told them to say.

The first one that comes to my mind is Elijah. You can read his story in **1 Kings 18**, but you probably know it pretty well already. Elijah came on the scene during a time of national apostasy. Israel, the people God chose to give the gospel to the world was ruled by men that led the Old Testament church into idolatry and sun worship. Whenever you think of Elijah and the apostasy that developed during his time, the names Ahab and Jezebel come to mind, don't they? The Bible says that, Ahab "*did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*"(1 Kings 16:33), and this is said of him because he was the one responsible for introducing Baal worship to the people of God, and of course Baal worship is intimately connected to sun worship, which eventually developed into Sunday worship as we know it today. And I find it interesting that there are more and more Adventist churches that are now holding Sunday morning services for the un-churched in their communities that choose not to come to church on the true Sabbath. So, in the name of evangelism Seventh-Day Adventists are now beginning to make a shift by holding services on Sabbath and Sunday. Oh, but you say, "that's being too critical, they're just trying to use this to introduce the truth to these people."

Friends, do you realize that that's how Sunday worship was introduced into Christianity to begin with? Let me read you a few excerpts from *The Great Controversy*, under the chapter titled "**An Era of Spiritual Darkness**", it begins on **page 52**.

"This change (**that is, from Sabbath to Sunday**) was not at first attempted openly. (**In other words, at first they didn't tell the people that that was their purpose, but it was.**) In the first centuries the true Sabbath had been kept by all Christians. They were jealous for the honor of God, and, believing that His law is immutable, they zealously guarded the sacredness of its precepts. But with great subtlety Satan worked through his agents to bring about his object. That the attention of the people might be called to the Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Religious services were held upon it; yet it was regarded as a day of recreation, the Sabbath being still sacredly observed. . . In the early part of the fourth century the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects and was honored by Christians; it was the emperor's policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church (**that is, the church of Rome**), who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by both Christians and heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans and thus advance the power and glory of the church. (**That was the way ecumenism worked back then, and it's not much different today**) But while many God-fearing Christians were gradually led to regard Sunday as possessing a degree of sacredness, they still held the true Sabbath as the holy of the Lord and observed it in obedience to the fourth commandment. . . Vast councils were held from time to time, in which the dignitaries of the church were convened from all the world (**sort of like a General Conference Session**). In nearly every council the Sabbath which God had instituted was pressed down a little lower, while the Sunday was correspondingly exalted. Thus the pagan festival came finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be accursed."

Do you doubt that Satan is trying to do the same thing with the professed church of today as he did with the professed church of yesterday? It doesn't take a genius to figure out what his purpose is when Seventh-day Adventist begin to hold religious services on the venerable day of the sun. In fact, we were told over 130 years ago that this would happen, and we're just now seeing the beginnings of it, and people better wake up from their Laodicean slumber party before it's too late.

The Review and Herald, March 18, 1884 “The Lord has a controversy with His professed people in these last days. **(Notice, the context is a controversy that God has with His professed people. Now who do you supposed that would be, if not Seventh-Day Adventists? The Review and Herald articles weren't written, by in large, for Sunday keepers. In the previous paragraph in this article she says, “There is need of a Sabbath reform among us, who profess to observe God's holy rest-day”, so we know exactly who she's addressing here.)** In this controversy men in responsible positions **(that would be church leaders)** will take a course directly opposite to that pursued by Nehemiah. **(In Nehemiah's day, you'll remember, one of the principle ways the people had departed from God was in the desecration of the Sabbath, and Nehemiah saw that there was a need for Sabbath reform)** They **(church leaders)** will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but they will try to keep it from others by burying it beneath the rubbish of custom and tradition. **(In other words, SDA ministers will use the same arguments for Sunday sacredness as the Sunday preachers are now using.)** In churches and in large gatherings in the open air **(campmeetings)**, ministers **(SDA ministers)** will urge upon the people the necessity of keeping the first day of the week.”

I didn't say that, the prophet did! Was she being too critical? I don't think so.

In the days of King Ahab, the Lord sent many faithful messengers with repeated warnings to the King and the people, but in vain were their words of reproof. Things had gotten so bad that after 3½ years of drought God told Elijah to call the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves to a showdown. 850 false prophets against one man, but you know what? that one man was in the majority because he had all heaven on his side. Remember that when you're placed in a similar situation.

There they all stood upon Mount Carmel and Elijah gave the enemies of the Lord the first opportunity to call upon their god to consume their sacrifice, and after several hours when nothing happened, at noon Elijah began to mock them. And I can imagine those 850 false prophets saying, “now you've gone too far Elijah, take us off your mailing list, we don't want to hear any more words of criticism”, and they began to complain all the louder that Elijah's message was not loving and that they wanted to hear only words of encouragement and the gospel according to Jezebel, which was a salvation in sin message by the way; the same kind of message being promoted today by the professed church.

But Elijah didn't compromise did he? No, he showed them that obedience to the commandments of the God of heaven was one of the main elements of the true righteousness by faith message and showed them without question who was really serving God and who wasn't. And when the

showdown was over, all the false prophets were killed and the Lord opened the heavens and it began to rain. And oh how we need that rain today! And you would think that after an experience like that Elijah's faith would have been strengthened to endure just about anything. But when Jezebel got wind of what happened and made her threats, Elijah ran away and hid in a cave.

And when he finally came out, after a little coaxing from the Lord, Elijah said, "I've done everything you told me to do Lord, and I'm the only one left that has been faithful to you and now they're trying to kill me." And do you remember what the Lord said? He said, "I've got 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed their knees to Baal or kissed the hand of his idol" (1 Kings 19:18), and I'm sure Elijah was a little comforted to hear that he was not alone.

And I want you to notice something here; the majority were wrong and the minority were right. I'm sure there were millions of Israelites during this time, but it was the small company that were standing in the light that were the faithful ones. All the rest were in apostasy, and over and over again Sister White tells us that we are repeating the history of the Jewish nation.

And so, you may think you're the only one left that understands and obeys the truth for this time, but just know that God has His people scattered all over the place, and they have not fallen for the deceptions and falsehoods of the devil that will lead many Seventh-Day Adventists to receive the mark of the beast.

Another Bible prophet that comes to mind is Jeremiah. For 40 years he stood before the nation of Israel as a witness of truth and righteousness during a time of unparalleled apostasy. During the sieges of Jerusalem he was God's mouthpiece and predicted the destruction of temple. What do you think the professed church leaders thought about that? I bet they thought he was too critical, don't you?

Jeremiah stood right at the entrance of the temple, right at the door of the church as it were, and told the people plainly that if they didn't repent of their evil doings the Lord would reject them. He told the people, "don't trust in the lying words of your leaders when they tell you that this is the temple of the Lord and we are His servants", (see Jer. 7:1-4) because they weren't. Jeremiah said if they didn't hearken to his message, God would make their temple like Shiloh and their city would be a curse to all the nations of the earth.

And let me tell you, the people that listened knew exactly what he meant, and they didn't like it very much, because it was the equivalent of calling the church of today Babylon. Shiloh used to be the place of worship until the Philistines overcame Israel and carried away the ark of the testament because Eli didn't check the sins of his two sons.

And the church leaders said, "how dare you criticize God's church, Jeremiah, you're going to be sorry that you ever opened your mouth." And notice what happened next in **Jeremiah 26:9-11**: The church members said, "*Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD (right in church). When the princes of Judah*

heard these things, then they came up from the king's house (or the royal palace) unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, (he has criticized our beloved church) as ye have heard with your ears."

Later on Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon where he had to stand in a muddy pit for telling the people the truth, and don't you think the church back then deserved the criticism he gave? Oh yes! And their actions toward him proved it. So you can write this down in your book of true statements; whenever a church persecutes those that give righteous criticism and reproof, you can know that it's deserved criticism and reproof because of the way they're treated. It's kind of like taking people that criticize the church to court and sue them over the church name.

And what about John the Baptist? Surely he was thought of as being very critical of the church in his day. His job was to expose the falsehoods and hypocrisy of church leaders and those that were fooled by them, and John didn't mince words, did he?

Do you remember reading what it says about John's message in *Testimonies For The Church, volume 1, page 321*, "The forerunner of Christ's first advent was a very plain-spoken man. He rebuked sin, and called things by their right names. He laid the ax at the root of the tree. He thus addressed one class of professed converts who came to be baptized of him in Jordan: 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. . . . And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'" (**"Oh John, you're being too critical when you say these things about us. We are good honest men and upstanding citizens in the community. Why do you say things like this to us? Don't you know it will make us look bad to all the other church members?"**)

The quote goes on to say, "In this fearful time, just before Christ is to come the second time, God's faithful preachers will have to bear a still more pointed testimony than was borne by John the Baptist. A responsible, important work is before them; and those who speak smooth things, God will not acknowledge as His shepherds. A fearful woe is upon them."

So the next time you hear a pointed message, don't be so quick to condemn it and pronounce the one giving it as being too critical, because you just might be rejecting the message you most need to hear and give heed to.

Let's take a look at one more example of someone who was thought of as being way too critical of the professed church and it's leaders. Do you think the church leaders of Christ's day thought He was too critical when He told them, "the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," or when He said, "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," or when He said to the church leaders, "You are of your father the devil"? or when He made them the main characters of some of His parables that didn't make them look too favorable? or when He finally had to say "your house is left unto you desolate"?

You see, the criticism and reproof Jesus gave was always of the positive kind, but the church took it negatively, and because of that they were not helped by it; and because of that Jesus had to finally separate from them; and that's why we must do the same, because history is being repeated today.

You see, Jesus will never ask you to do anything that He has not done. Not only did He do everything possible to save the Old Testament church, but when all efforts failed and He knew they weren't going to change the course they were headed, He walked out of the synagogue and never returned.

Notice what it says in *The Desire of Ages* about this, on **page 232**: "The Sanhedrin had rejected Christ's message and was bent upon His death; therefore Jesus departed from Jerusalem, from the priests, the temple, the religious leaders, the people who had been instructed in the law, and turned to another class to proclaim His message, and to gather out those who should carry the gospel to all nations."

Jesus realized that the Old Testament Seventh-Day Adventist Church wasn't going to do it, so He gathered out of that church all who were willing to listen and to give the true gospel to the world, and the same scenario is taking place once again; the very thing Sister White hoped would never happen.

In the book *Last Day Events*, **page 48**, after the rejection of the true gospel at the Minneapolis debacle, and their refusal to reform the church in God's way, she wrote the following, and by the way, they have still not accepted the true gospel and reorganized the church according to God's instructions. "I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis, that a reformation must go through the churches. Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out."

But as it has turned out, her worst fears have been realized. And why did Jesus leave and call people out? Because He knew that the church wasn't going to give His gospel to the nations, and if they stayed they would be lost, plain and simple.

So what should our attitude today be toward a church that refuses to heed the counsel it was given? Well, that's not difficult to answer, we should have the same attitude Jesus had.

In *The Desire of Ages*, **page 353** it says, "tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes." That means that Jesus loved them enough to tell them the truth; that He was trying to help them understand where they had gotten off track; that He wanted them to open their eyes and see where they had veered from the straight and narrow path that leads to the kingdom of God.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, because they refused to receive Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and you don't weep for someone unless you want them to be saved, or because you're fearful they'll never listen. And if that's the way you feel, you'll give righteous criticism, and loving criticism, and godly criticism where and when it's needed; that's the way I want to come

across, don't you? Maybe I fail to tell it like Jesus did sometimes, but that's what I want; that's what I try to do. And this I believe is exactly why we've been given a description of the true people of God in these last days in *Testimonies, volume 3, page 267*, where it says, "Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those 'that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done' in the church." That is, in the professed church, that could be and should be the true church.

God has not called me, and He has not called you to just expose the problems in the church, but tell people it's still God's church like so many are doing today, because it's no more God's church today than was the Jewish church when Jesus walked out. And I know it's a hard message to receive if you're on the receiving end, and I have no desire of my own to give it, but I must if I want to retain God's smile, and I hope and pray I can do it in a loving and caring way. And once you understand the gravity of it, you must do the same.

I'd like to close by reading a short statement from *Testimonies For The Church, volume 9, page 126*, "The judgments of God are in the earth, and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we must give the message of warning that He has entrusted to us. We must give this message quickly, line upon line, precept upon precept. Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and it is our duty to see that they are given an opportunity to understand the truth, that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side. The Lord calls upon His people to labor—labor earnestly and wisely—while probation lingers."