

PLAIN SPEECH

Volume 1 – Issue 42 – 3 August 2008

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

IS IT A SIN TO PUBLICLY NAME NAMES?

Are those who call out names in sermons and Bible classes and those who publicly read letters of withdrawal out of step with the wisdom of God? The answer is no. This is true for several reasons; some of which I will set forth in this article.

Listen, don't get it twisted, I know that as we stand fast in the faith we must do all things with charity (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Further, I am not for one moment suggesting that a haughty spirit is to be conveyed in calling out folks. Such is not the attitude that finds favor with God (Isa. 66:2; James 4:6). Further still, I am not suggesting that we grind axes and wrongfully hurt people out of impure motives (Philippians 1:15-16). I will, however, prove that those who call names: (1) are not sinning, (2) are walking within the parameters of Scripture, and (3) find themselves in the presence of superb company.

First, let's note that subtlety is a tool of the devil (2 Cor. 11:3). For too long Satan has been consuming souls via vague messages and shadowy statements from those in leadership in local churches. How much drama has ripped through congregations all because nobody had the courage to stand up, call it just like it is and press for the appropriate response from the members? So much heartache could be avoided if preachers, teachers and elders would simply make certain sounds (1 Cor. 14:7-8). There is not one instance in all of Scripture wherein I can find a preacher talking like some smooth politician or changing the message to appease the wishes of the audience. This being true, why should we?

Second, let's test the logic of those who claim it is inappropriate to call out names in sermons and classes and publicly read letters of withdrawal. Remembering 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21, where does the argument end up? It ends up making God inappropriate. Who will hang his hat on this? Moreover, using said logic, Deity must be labeled the biggest sinner of all time since He had men forever etch within the pages of Scripture many names. Yes, God named names. In fact, when you get to thinking about it, who has publicly named more names than God via inspiration? Shall we accuse God of sin in authoring 2 Timothy 4:10? Many, many more examples could be given. Hmm.

Thirdly, let's see the company we keep when we combine boldness with love, and name names.

- While upon the earth Jesus said to His disciples, “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).
- How about Jesus' words to the church in Thyatira? They read: “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Revelation 2:20).
- Peter stated plainly to the men of Israel: “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:13-15).
- John stated: “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 John 9). Did John sin?
- Paul wrote: “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim. 1:15). Also cf. 2 Tim. 2:16-18. Are those who condemn name calling going to call Paul a sinner?
- More from Paul's pen: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:19-20). To do so, one has to publicly “point fingers.”

As stated, we need to make sure we are not using public proclamations for a platform to act upon impure motives. People who are not pure in heart will never see God (Matt. 5:8).

However, if our attitudes are right and our motives are pure (Gal. 6:1; Philippians 3:18), when we name names we are opposing the tactics of the devil and are in harmony with Jesus, Peter, John and Paul. Now if someone has a problem with that then they really need to rethink their position.