

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Contacting of Ministers before Criticizing their Teachings

Contacting of Ministers before Criticizing their Teachings - posted by JCGarc55, on: 2009/9/15 15:12

Please feel free to delete this (Paul West) if you so please. I'm not trying to cause division, etc.

I do think a good question was brought up and one that is biblical and I'd be interested to get feedback because I know I'm possibly guilty. A few people mentioned that we should contact the person FIRST if we are going to make an accusation against a person based off (matthew 18:15-17). This is especially needful in your local church body. It's more difficult in today's world where Christians have the internet and we do not fellowship in a local church. I do agree that contacting the person first is the biblical thing to do BUT... with some people in reality it's nearly impossible. I can't pick up the phone right now and contact, for example, Joel Osteen, or Rich Warren. And actually I've seen a "discernment ministry" that shared their emails (unanswered to certain ministries) with questions. Joseph Farah of WND had this problem for awhile and Farah is well known.. at least more than me.. Most of the times these calls or emails go unanswered. Understandably, these men have many things to deal with and don't have time to answer every email or phone call. I'm sure some of us in our secular jobs have similar problems.

So how do we respond as Christians? These men have huge ministries and yet have books put out that are very unbiblical. Some have their own shows, and they are guest speakers and do conferences and influence MANY. Not just individuals but churches and even denominations. Personally, I've been part of 2 mega-churches where the teachings of Rick Warren and bill Hybels pretty much destroyed the church. I was involved in the church so I knew about the leadership going to their conferences, etc. Eventually I saw the outcome and had to leave. To this day they are still on the same path and I keep praying for these churches. So is it wrong for me to criticize warren or hybels? I'm sorry, but I don't think whether they do more for Christ should be a determining factor should it? Based on what?

I'm not a "pastor" but in the last 10 years or so, I've felt a responsibility to warn people about these false teachings and some times that includes sharing the false teachers names. I've seen first hand what happens when a church becomes part of Willow Creek Association. And yes, I'm sure people are saved in these churches that are in the WCA but does that mean that God approves of the method and we should not say anything? My wife was saved during a time when she was a covenant partner under Kenneth Copeland. Does that mean Copeland is right on? Not at all.

I do agree we need the right spirit when addressing these things. For me, the scriptures that have helped when considering false teachers is Luke 18:9-14.

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

The reason being is that I try to remember to NOT ever compare myself or think of myself as anyone more discerning or spiritual when criticizing someone. The truth is that I'm a wretched sinner in need of His mercy. As some of you know, we sometimes like to criticize others to make ourselves appear more wise, righteous, etc.

So in conclusion, I do believe there is a more pressing need as as shepherd or just a fellow brother in Christ to warn people in these last days if we see someone in danger (Ezekiel 33) but we need the right spirit to do so.

My pastor has mentioned names at times but he does it only to warn the sheep. sometimes a pastor needs to do this because some people will come into the church inviting others to so and so's conference or "revival" or talking about this "great book" they just read. Know what I mean? Should the pastor hold off saying something until he's sent so and so a letter or made a phone call?

I look forward to your feedback. Or like I said, if you think this causes division then feel free to delete. Email me privately if you prefer.

Re: Contacting of Ministers before Criticizing their Teachings - posted by bdcutler (), on: 2009/9/15 16:07

The scriptures in Matthew were dealing with personal offences ("...if thy brother shall trespass against thee..."). However, I believe that you are correct in that false teachers should be confronted about what they are teaching, but if they continue, they should be rejected (see 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, Titus 3:10). I'm sure that the Joel Osteens and Rick Warrens out there have had plenty more than two admonitions. Because of their pride, they've refused to question their own teachings and scrutinize it by the scriptures. However, I'm betting there are plenty of brothers and sisters out there who have been duped by these guys and have never been confronted by a brother in Christ about these teachings. We should remain patient with these men, that perhaps God will grant them repentance (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2009/9/15 16:41

Hi Jeremy and bdcutler...

Yes, I believe that all efforts should be made to contact individuals before we go about pointing fingers of "heresy" or "apostasy." This is not so much as to prevent a "watchman" from exposing the truth...as it is to gain clarity for any remark or idea that might have been misconstrued, badly communicated or misunderstood.

Quote:

bdcutler wrote:

I'm sure that the Joel Osteens and Rick Warrens out there have had plenty more than two admonitions.

How would someone know that this is true unless they actually contacted the accused?

I certainly think that we should "cry out" against false doctrine. However, I can't help but wonder if people are confusing "gossip" and "libel" with the duty of a "watchman?" We can certainly disagree with a pastor about doctrine. However, it is an entirely different matter to publicly call such a man an "apostate."

What harm can be done if someone goes through the trouble to VERIFY, TEST or allow for CLARITY before someone takes it upon themselves to call out someone as an "apostate?" I learned a long time ago that there is often "another side" of many (if not *most*) stories.

Re: - posted by JCGarc55, on: 2009/9/15 18:30

hello chris,

while I agree we should verify things, there are a number of teachers today where it's unquestionable that their teachings are dangerous. It's in their books, websites, and they have stated it several times over. In other words, it's not a question of hearing the other side or getting the proper context. In those instances, I think we need to warn people that are deceived or possibly being lead astray.. ...If the Spirit leads.

I do agree that we should be careful before using those "heresy" and "apostate" terms though.. It all depends upon the teaching in question.

Thanks again for the feedback.

Re: Contacting of Ministers before Criticizing their Teachings - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2009/9/15 18:43

Quote:

-----I look forward to your feedback.

I do commend your post; I thought it was well-written and conveyed a genuine concern. I can only share with you what I believe is the heart of God and the mind of Christ. I myself spent years as a watchdog and a sword-wielding sentry for the church and thought it my duty to ruthlessly expose all error, heresy, blasphemy, word of faith, charismania, antinomianism, et cetera in a broad, public way. Any person or ministry who didn't fit the pattern I found to be scripturally and theologically correct was sent directly to the firing squad without appeal.

However, I found myself increasingly bitter and judgmental throughout it all. I found that the more people I condemned to the proverbial heretic's stake, the more would then appear, and it became easier and easier each time to pronounce judgment.

gment on the next batch.

As I embarked upon my self-imposed heretic-rebuking fest, I found my own walk with Christ and devotion begin to wane. I noticed that I stopped hearing the still, quiet voice of God speak into my life. I was going so full-charge into battle with warning and rebuking that I couldn't hear the voice of my own Captain when He began to warn and rebuke *me*. One day, however, I heard a clear trumpet call that I've never forgotten:

"Leave them alone"

I heard that every tree my Father didn't plant would one day be uprooted; and that the blind following the blind would both fall into the same ditch. These were the words of the Captain, and I decided to follow Him in this instruction. I saw that while on earth, my Captain mentioned no names, never went on a tirade or a diversion against one particular person. He spoke instead against general hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees, and to beware of their leaven. He didn't mention the individual religious leaders in detail with specifics of their character or ministry that caused them to be damned. Even if you notice with Judas Iscariot, Christ never mentioned his name as the betrayer of the Son of Man publicly.

I chose to obey what I read and follow what I noticed as a pattern in Christ's ministry. It seemed He never had time to write any letters to the Sanhedrin or to the Herodians or scribes and lawyers -- He was too busy ministering to the sick and mute and blind and maimed and preaching the Kingdom to the poor to write a letter to those who were bent on scattering instead of gathering. In fact, when brought before them, He never even opened His mouth to either justify His ministry or rebuke theirs.

So I too stopped publicly rebuking others, and writing letters of criticism to ministries I had no business meddling with. When I spoke to other believers about these things, all God told me was to warn others not to follow them, and "not to do as they do", and I have found time and time again this to be totally sufficient. If we are careful to walk before God with a clear conscience and in a spirit of humility and meekness, the Holy Spirit will lend power and authority to our admonitions and warnings which will automatically vindicate the truth...and confirm that which is false without us so much as lifting a finger or launching into a vitriolic tirade.

I hope you pray about what I've written here. It will save you from a lot of headaches and embarrassment and further your growth into hearing the finer whisperings of God's voice to your spirit.

Yours,

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/9/15 18:48

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Please allow me to add to this discussion. It is very important nowadays to be, not only discerning of the teachings of others, but also to be openly critical, if necessary, in order to warn those who would otherwise be led down the wrong path. However, there is also a danger of possibly being so careless in our approach that we may cause even more harm than good.

Scripture gives us two basic things we must do before we start criticizing someone else or his/her teachings:

The first is - we must search ourselves, our own sinfulness and our own motives. JCGarc55 said:

Quote:
-----The reason being is that I try to remember to NOT ever compare myself or think of myself as anyone more discerning or spiritual when criticizing someone. The truth is that I'm a wretched sinner in need of His mercy. As some of you know, we sometimes like to criticize others to make ourselves appear more wise, righteous, etc.

So in conclusion, I do believe there is a more pressing need as a shepherd or just a fellow brother in Christ to warn people in these last days if we see someone in danger (Ezekiel 33) but we need the right spirit to do so.

Jesus also warns us:

Mt 7:3-5 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

We must be right before God before we attempt to correct others.

Second, we must determine whether the point to be argued is a clear and essential aspect of our faith that can and must be set right. **If the matter is non-essential, or if Scripture is unclear about it, then argument is pointless.**

Ro 14:1-10 "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."

All too often, heated arguments occur among brothers concerning peripheral matters of practice, or of doctrine, or of experience that really need not be discussed. Such things should be ignored, and we should stand united regarding the more important things we have in common.

I believe if we apply the two steps given us by scripture before questioning others, there will be a lot less to fight about.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2009/9/15 19:03

Personally I think the danger is when folk get so consumed with dealing with heresy, etc., that they miss what God is truly calling them to do. I look on (as I'm sure many of us do) and see the barrage of criticism going that some folk seem to be constantly doing and I wonder, "Hmmm, are they doing anything 'else' in the name of the Lord?" I mean, are they relieving the afflicted and ministering to the saints, etc?

I have a hard time dealing with folk that seem only to be a denouncer. We need doctrine and we need correction; but in many cases folk need to have established themselves in love within the body of Christ. I guess I have taken on heresy as much as anyone and share Paul and others concerns; but God help us to see Christ leading us also in the edifying of the saints. If all one does is reprove and rebuke it is hard to see any edification there.

Re: Contacting of Ministers before Criticizing their Teachings - posted by Lysa (), on: 2009/9/15 19:34

I have two things...

First, I used to go to a church where the pastor lied to me about three different things but it wasn't lying to him. He told me that he told me what I wanted to hear. My closest friends know this and I know that I know if they went to him to ask him about it, he would turn it completely around to be all my fault. That was my only point, that some pastors will never state the truth TRUTH, only their version of it.

Secondly, I don't know if this will help or not but this morning the Lord gave me a verse to help me (concerning an acquaintance)...

Give your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this your great people? 1 Kings 3.9

I want this to be my prayer for me when dealing with any child of living God.

God bless

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2009/9/15 19:58

Hi Jeremy...

Quote:
----- JCGarc55 wrote: hello chris, while I agree we should verify things, there are a number of teachers today where its unquestionable that their teachings are dangerous. It's in their books, websites, and they have stated it several times over. In other words, it's not a question of hearing the other side or getting the proper context. In those instances, I think we need to warn people that are deceived or possibly being lead astray... If the Spirit leads.

I agree. If something is obvious and apparent, then it is good to warn others about such things. I suppose that what I was referring to are specific issues that aren't so obvious. For instance, we can preach against the extreme "prosperity" doctrines that encourage its adherents to want the things of this world. We can even point out those preachers and teachers who preach such a message. However, it would be a little unwise to make claims about the person that is NOT based on the obvious or substantiated by indisputable evidence.

Unfortunately, the internet is filled with websites that go a step further than just stating the obvious. Rather than basing their words on something that is indisputable, these "watchmen" use their personal liberty to hurl accusations that are mostly based upon personal judgment derived from circumstantial reasoning.

As a teenager, I fellowshiped with a congregation that had several people who claimed to have the ministry of "discernment." There was a very sincere man in the church who I liked to talk with. He was noticeably into the things of God (if that makes sense). He was excited, and loved to share his faith with others. Within a year of having moved to town, this man became a Sunday School teacher. In fact, his wife became a Sunday School teacher for younger children. However, he disagreed with some of the "discernment" folks about a few things. This caused them to question his ability to "hear God." This friction was weird because the disagreement was over some silly issue.

One day, one of the "discerners" actually saw this brother coming out of a bar in a bad side of town. Within a week, word spread that this brother was seen coming out of a bar. Within two weeks, people were meeting with the pastor to discuss this brother's lack of leadership to merit teaching Sunday School. Within a month, the gossip had gotten very carried away. The brother decided to step down from teaching Sunday School. A few months later, he accepted a transfer to another location. No one had bothered to ask him about all of this. One day, I was driving past that same bar. Sure enough, there was this brother outside. However, he had his Bible in his hand and was praying for a man.

I think that we need to be extremely careful about just which accusations we make publicly (especially if one desires to be a "watchman"). It would be a sad condition to be right about such a man (that he preaches false doctrines) but guilty of bearing false witness against the same man by making a false or misleading accusation.

In other words, we should strive to tell the truth...and nothing more than the truth.
:-)

Re: - posted by Laviver, on: 2009/9/15 20:38

Great post Paul West. Wisdom is there that only experience can teach.

Re: , on: 2009/9/15 22:01

As this thread came about by a question asked by Ccchhhrrriiisss to me regarding Rick Warren - I would say that all the threads ever posted about Rick Warren on this forum speak for themselves and I question again why the reactions to his words and actions arose only today.

I have never seen such a reaction as what I've seen today. Unless a forum or website is Emergent - the points made today and evidence regarding him are on every forum and most of the respected shepherd's sites on-line cover the man as well.

I've never seen anything like what has happened today - except on emergent sites.

What does His Word say:

TRY THEM--"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets

are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

MARK THEM AND AVOID THEM--"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (Romans 16:17)

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM THEM--"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," (2 Corinthians 6:17)

REPROVE THEM--"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:11)

TURN AWAY FROM THEM--"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:5)

REBUKE THEM--"...rebuken them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;" (Titus 1:13)

REJECT THEM--"A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject;" (Titus 3:10)

WITHDRAW FROM THEM--"...we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

HAVE NO COMPANY WITH THEM--"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thessalonians 3:14)

RECEIVE THEM NOT--"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:10-11)

Joh 10:12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

Torrey's cross-references on John 10:12 -

Joh 10:12

he that: John 10:3; Isa 56:10-12; Eze 34:2-6; Zec 11:16-17; 1Tim 3:3, 1Tim 3:8; 2Tim 4:10; Tit 1:7; 1Pet 5:2; 2Pet 2:3
the wolf coming: Mat 7:15, Mat 10:16; Act 20:29

Falling Away to the Antichrist!

By David Wilkerson
June 26, 1995

The apostle Paul speaks of two frightful things that will strike the church just prior to Jesus' return. Indeed, the Lord will not come back until these two awful things happen. And I want to show you that both things are taking place right now - before our very eyes!

First, Paul tells us that in the last days there will be a great falling away. And second, he warns that an evil spirit of antichrist will overtake many believers who are turning aside!

Of course, the church has been preaching and teaching for years about the coming Antichrist. We have been expecting the appearance of the Man of Sin, the son of perdition. Some speculate that he will be revealed in our time - that, in fact, he already has been born and is living somewhere on the earth.

Is there such a man? Yes, I believe there is - and he is totally possessed of Satan. Yet when he appears, he will be well-received. He will demand the devotion of all mankind - setting himself up as God before the world!

The only reason the Antichrist hasn't been revealed yet is because his time hasn't come. But one day the Holy Spirit will lift His restraining hand, and the Man of Sin will be revealed in full power. The Bible assures us, however, that when this evil man's time is finished, he will be consumed by God:

...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

There Is an Antichrist
- And There Is Also
A Spirit Of Antichrist!

We have a Savior who exists right now in glory as a man. He is a living person - with flesh, bone, hair, eyes - even though He is God. And though we are here on earth, His Spirit dwells within us:

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

Yet, there is another christ-spirit at work in the world - the antichrist spirit. Just as surely as Christ has given us His Spirit, there is an antichrist spirit possessing many apostate Christians. And that spirit is at work in the world - preparing hearts for the coming of the Man of Sin!

"...this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:3).

John is saying here, "You've heard about the coming of the Antichrist. It has been preached and taught, and you expect his arrival. But, beloved, wake up - because the spirit of antichrist is already at work!"

You must understand - the Antichrist is not going to suddenly appear on the scene and overwhelm humankind. Rather, his spirit is mysteriously at work now, setting up his kingdom in cold, compromising hearts. And when the Man of Sin finally appears, he will be publicly revealed to a world that is already prepared for him - to hearts his spirit already possesses!

Right now we see a growing antichrist sentiment and conduct. But soon this will turn into a flowing stream, and, eventually, a vast ocean. And when the Antichrist finally appears, even many former Christians will welcome him - because their hearts will be of a kindred spirit!

Paul warned of this. He said that in the last days false prophets would infiltrate the church, preaching another gospel and another Jesus. Many such false prophets have already appeared, preaching the gospel of the Antichrist:

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

The antichrist spirit is invading the hearts of many apostate Christians even now. They are being absolutely possessed of evil. "But how?" you ask. "Why would certain apostate Christians ever turn to the Antichrist?"

It is because they are like-minded with him! John writes:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world...."

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:15-18).

John is warning us that those who still love the things of this world have opened themselves to the spirit of antichrist. He is saying, "You know these are the last days - because so many are full of the covetous antichrist spirit!"

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (verse 22).

The apostle adds, "If you have not come under the total Lordship of Jesus - if you do not acknowledge Him in all your ways,"

ys - then you have opened yourself up to this spirit of evil!"

Beloved, if you are serving Jesus only 50 percent - or even 90 percent - then you are denying His full salvation. You are n't serving Him with all your heart, mind, soul and body. And you have opened up an inroad for the antichrist spirit to come in!

It's not enough to say, "I believe Jesus was God in flesh." Rather, we must say, "Jesus, You are God in flesh in me. You have all power and authority over lust and sin. And I yield to You completely!"

Those Who Are Righteous -
Who Worship God in Spirit and in Truth
- Are Prime Targets of the Antichrist!

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped..." (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

The spirit of antichrist is opposed to all who walk closely with God. He goes after true worshipers - because he wants the ir worship for himself!

Satan wants nothing more than to destroy pure worship. He wants to rob God of all praise! And if you who walk in intimacy with Jesus, the antichrist spirit will come against you with everything he has. He will attack you with fear, doubt, lust - anything to give him an inroad to hinder your worship.

Yet his spirit of lawlessness is being restrained by the Holy Ghost:

"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" (verse 6).

It is the power of God's Spirit in His church - that is, in you and me - that holds back Satan's anarchy. Indeed, if God were to lift His Spirit from on-fire churches and godly believers, our nation would be a raging hell.

Yet careless, lazy Christians - those who have never forsaken their sin, who are still engrossed in the things of the world - will not be able to stand in these last days. They will be overtaken by evil!

The apostle Peter writes:

"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ , they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:17, 20-22).

The people whom Peter describes here claimed to be saved. They once had escaped the pollutions of the world, delivered by the power of God. They had known the way of righteousness. And yet they became entangled again in sin. They were overcome by the spirit of antichrist!

Peter couldn't have been speaking of nonbelievers here. After all, the unsaved have no faith to fall away from. Rather, those who fall have something to fall away from. Obviously, Peter is talking about apostate Christians.

Yet such halfhearted believers do more than fall away from the Lord. They also fall into something - into the hands of the antichrist spirit! Peter says such people have been "...overcome..." (verse 21).

The apostle Paul makes an astounding statement. He says that even now the antichrist spirit has taken his place in the temple:

"...so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Beloved, it's time to stop looking to Jerusalem - to the rebuilding of the temple - because the spirit of antichrist is already ascending his throne!

"What?" you ask. "What is this temple where the antichrist spirit now sits, showing his power and reign?"

It is the temple of people's hearts!

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (6:19).

"...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Yes, we are God's temple. But for some, another spirit has invaded that temple. The Spirit of God is gone - and lust, pride, covetousness and slander all reign supreme. There is no longer anything pure, holy or divine. A mysterious spirit of lawlessness is in control!

How could such a terrible, frightful thing happen? At one time the living God possessed this temple, ruling and reigning. He was once enthroned here.

Beloved, this happens because so many Christians have grown careless. They no longer walk in righteousness or holiness. And they end up giving an inroad to the spirit of antichrist. Now he sits in the temple of their heart - showing himself to be absolutely in control!

There Will Always Be a Christ on the Throne of Every Heart
- Either Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, or the Antichrist!

Every person reading this message has a Christ on the throne of his or her heart - either the Spirit of Christ, or the spirit of antichrist.

I am totally convinced that the antichrist spirit's most effective means of preparing hearts are cable TV and filthy movies. He knows that the eye is the gateway to the heart. And he marches straight through the corrupted, jaded eye of a Christian and takes over the throne of his heart!

This is why the antichrist spirit has taken control of the secular media - TV networks, movie production, Broadway theater, the press. Who but the antichrist spirit could so bias the media that abortion is now considered a right rather than a sin? Who but this spirit could justify euthanasia, the killing off of the elderly or infirm?

Who but the spirit of antichrist could mock everything that is sacred and holy, through wicked movies and vile TV programs? I believe the antichrist spirit is actually producing the programs on MTV and the Fox Network. From what I read of their shows, it's all absolute filth. Who but the antichrist spirit could be responsible for it?

The spirit of lawlessness is growing bolder and bolder, and our society is on the brink of becoming a raging hell. The antichrist spirit now pervades our schools, our courts, our streets, our businesses, even our homes. And, sadly, this evil is rapidly moving into the church.

I believe the spirit of antichrist is establishing churches all over the United States. This spirit is the motivating force behind "**outsider friendly**" churches. Who but the antichrist spirit would call for the ungodly to set the spiritual agenda - sending church founders door to door, surveying people: "What would you prefer church to be like? We want to tailor it so that

you'll come."

These megachurches are being built on skits and dramas, because people don't want to hear reproof. They want no conviction - so they hear a gospel that is almost totally devoid of repentance, judgment, the Cross. They are told all about God's grace and mercy, how to cope with problems - but nothing of God's judgment and hell. They're being lulled to sleep in their sinful lifestyle.

I ask you: What would happen if I went into the streets, rounded up all the kids who were skipping school, and asked them, "What kind of school would you like? I'll build one that you'll enjoy, just so you'll want to come."

Those kids would answer: "We want a school that lasts only three days a week - and just two hours a day! We want no algebra, no calculus and no science. And we want lunch from noon to two, with nothing but pizza and snacks. There won't be any lectures, rules or grades. And we'll be able to come and go as we please."

If I followed through on that, I would have the biggest school in New York, with every dropout in sight. But what would happen to those kids ten years down the road, without any real preparation for living?

That's what preachers in "**outsider friendly**" churches should be asking themselves! What will they do when they stand before God's holy throne and watch helplessly as, one by one, many of their sheep are condemned because they were never confronted about their sins? Their people never heard a word of reproof that would lead them to true righteousness. There was no convicting message to shake people out of their sins and to prepare them to face the judgment seat of Christ.

This is exactly what the Bible warns of - churches with forms of godliness, but without power. I ask you: Who brought the music of the world into the church? Who turned weekly prayer meetings into "entertainment night" at the church? Who made Christians more concerned whether their team wins the Super Bowl than whether lost, dying people are saved? The spirit of antichrist is telling Christians they can drink from two cups - the Lord's cup, and the cup of demons!

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

You may be thinking, "This is really scary. How does a Christian get to the point of being overcome by the antichrist spirit?"

There are two causes by which the spirit of antichrist can overcome a Christian:

The First Cause by Which The Antichrist Spirit Can Take Over an Apostate Believer Is a Loss of Love For the Truth.

"...they received not the love of the truth..." (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

The spirit of antichrist moves in when God's truth is no longer loved or appropriated:

"...all might be damned who believed not the truth..." (verse 12).

The prophet Jeremiah wrote:

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

"And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear it falsely. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have

they made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return" (Jeremiah 5:1-3).

This passage is not speaking of heathen, but of Israel, God's people. God is saying to Jeremiah, "Go find me just one person who has a heart for the truth - anyone - and I'll pardon him. But you won't find one, Jeremiah! These people say they love Me, but they don't receive My correction. They don't grieve when I reprove them. They no longer tremble at My Word!"

You may think, "I'm glad I'm not like Israel. I love God's Word. I haven't lost my love for truth." Yet I urge you to test yourself! Let me give you three ways to determine whether you have the love of truth in your heart:

1. The first sign of a loss of love for the truth is when you forsake assembling with other believers.

If it's a task for you to make it to church, then you've lost your love for God's truth:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

When you no longer look forward to being in God's house with His people - when the preaching seems boring and worship no longer matters - you have opened yourself up to the spirit of antichrist. And the Lord admonishes you: "The closer you get to My coming, the more perilous the times will be. And the more important it is that you gather with My people!"

Yet something tragic is happening all across America and Canada. Pastors are calling our ministry and telling us, "We have to shut down our midweek service because so few show up. We've already had to stop holding Sunday night meetings, because people won't come unless we show a movie or put on a concert. And people don't want to come on Sunday mornings anymore if they think the service will last more than an hour."

Where are God's children if they aren't in the Lord's house? They are at restaurants, parties, socials, sporting events. Most of all, they are parked in front of their TVs - watching programs of ever-increasing evil!

2. A second sign of a loss of love for the truth is when reproofing messages make you think of someone else's sin and not your own.

Whenever you hear a prophetic sermon, do you sit smugly by, thinking, "Wow, does that ever describe Brother So-and-so. Thank God, he's finally being reached. Lord, pour it on!"

I ask you - how much, if any, of this newsletter message are you applying to yourself? How much stirring and conviction are going on in your heart? Are you praying, "God, turn Your Word on my heart"?

I urge you to heed David's words:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

3. A third sign of loss of love for the truth is when reproof angers you rather than humbles you.

God says a hatred of reproof reveals a forsaking of the path of holiness:

"Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die" (Proverbs 15:10).

Perhaps you often walk away from a reproofing sermon, saying, "That word was just too hard. And that preacher is just too angry!" Beloved, any godly shepherd will preach with holy anger. That's because he is angry at the devil, angry at the antichrist spirit - angry at anything that draws your soul away from true worship of the Father!

The Second Cause by Which the Antichrist
Spirit Can Take Over a Compromised
Christian Is The Love of Pleasure.

"That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

Paul is speaking here of "pleasure madness." Yet he is not talking about the jet set, the wild crowd, gamblers, prostitutes, drug addicts. No - the last-day pleasure-seekers referred to are found inside the church! Paul warns:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

"Blasphemers in God's house?" you ask. "Truce-breakers? False accusers? Traitors? Surely not!"

Oh, yes - absolutely! When Paul uses the phrase, "...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God...", he is intimating that these people have a measure of love for God. But that love is overcome and polluted by a love for the pleasures of the world. Paul is talking about those who pursue the pleasures of unrighteousness!

Beloved, you can pluck down five dollars for a movie if you want, and sit through two hours of violence, bloodshed and blasphemy in which God's name is freely taken in vain. But be warned: You will be drinking from the cup of devils - fellowship with demons! You see, when you pay for that kind of thing, you show your allegiance to the antichrist spirit who rules the media. God calls it a sacrifice to demons:

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Worst of all, you are inviting the antichrist spirit into your heart. And if you keep drinking from the cup of devils - if you keep letting that filthy antichrist spirit seep into your soul - it won't be long before nothing bothers or convicts you.

A Holy Remnant Will Love the Truth!

Paul gives thanks to God for a holy people who remain steadfast in perilous times. This holy remnant will rise up against the spirit of antichrist and stand strong. They will never be overcome. On the contrary - they will overcome the world, the flesh and the wicked one!

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17).

This holy remnant loves the truth. They aren't afraid to be reproved. So they examine themselves in light of God's Word, letting it pierce them to the very marrow - and God is able to sanctify their mind and spirit.

Beloved, if you keep your heart open to the truth - if you continue to love God's Word - the Lord will establish you. And when the evil spirit of this world comes in like a flood, Satan will be unable to make any inroad to your heart.

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity" (Psalm 125:1-3).

The Antichrist spirit has a rod, signifying authority. But his power and reign will not be over you. On the contrary - you will overcome him!

"I have written unto you...because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

"...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Let the spirit of antichrist come. You won't be moved, because you'll be firmly established on the truth of God's Word. You'll be found in God's house, worshiping from a pure heart. And your faith will overcome all that the enemy brings against you - because Jesus sits enthroned in the temple of your heart.

I want to give you a great defense against the antichrist spirit. It's found in Psalm 139:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Hallelujah!

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Re: - posted by JCGarc55, on: 2009/9/16 3:34

I hope you pray about what I've written here. It will save you from a lot of headaches and embarrassment and further your growth into hearing the finer whisperings of God's voice to your spirit.

Amen and thank you for the advice. The difficult thing for me has been that I constantly come in contact with people who are affected by this seeker sensitive / church growth movement. *Even when I go on vacation*, I run into people who are influenced by it. I also hear from Christian folks that are scratching their heads. It seems there are so many that don't know what's happening.. Over and over I hear from Christians and they are asking what is happening to their church where once upon a time, the Spirit would move on hearts? 99% of the time, their church has joined the Willow Creek Association. It's so sad. I share with them of course what I know regarding the free "field tested" sermons that are given out, the kits, etc...I've sent some people to this forum so they can download some good Wilkerson, Ravenhill, etc. sermons and get fed. I also give them TSC CD and DVDs. But yeah, many are famished these days.

So anyways..please pray for me. I really don't want to have the wrong spirit. I also don't want to be a coward either if God opens the door for me to share. I understand that as Christians we must contend for the faith. Amen and may God bless each of us with wisdom.

Re: - posted by JCGarc55, on: 2009/9/16 3:38

Falling Away to the Antichrist!

Excellent message. That was one of the first messages I heard way back in the 90s that opened my eyes as to what was happening. There's another one that Wilkerson preached called "Seven Women Shall Lay Hold of One Man" that is also excellent on this issue. Anyone have the mp3 for that one? Also "The Passionate Bride" is a favorite of mine too.

Re: - posted by bdcutler (), on: 2009/9/16 12:54

Quote:

-----ccchhrrriiisss wrote:

Quote:

-----bdcutler wrote: I'm sure that the Joel Osteens and Rick Warrens out there have had plenty more than two admonitions.

How would someone know that this is true unless they actually contacted the accused?

What these men preach is no secret; many have been vocal in pointing out that these men are not preaching the Gospel of Christ (this is also no secret).

In Galatians 1:6-9, Paul calls anybody who preaches any other gospel than the one delivered to them accursed. Notice that Paul is not judging the motives, but the message. Even if an angel from heaven preaches another gospel, let him be accursed. What about a really nice guy who's sincere in his teaching? Paul makes it explicit, if any teach another gospel, than the Gospel which they received, let him be accursed. Again, we are to reject a heretic who does not repent (Titus 3:10). Certainly, someone, who is teaching another gospel than the one Paul preached is a heretic (a follower of false doctrine), because another gospel is a false gospel.

So, what is the gospel that Paul preached? In Acts 20:20-21, we read that he preached: "...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." If anybody preaches any other means of salvation (which includes freedom from sin), other than this Gospel is preaching another gospel. If it's adding to this or taking away, it's another gospel. The Galatians were being taught another gospel, because they were being taught that their perfection was through the works of the law, and not faith in Christ (Galatians 3:1-3). These are clearly the teachers that inspired Paul to write what he did in chapter 1.

Notice in contrast what Paul says about preachers of the Gospel in Philippians 1:15-18. Regardless of their inward motivations, he rejoices whenever Christ is preached. This is true judgment. Instead of judging the motives of the heart (which Christ indeed warned about), we should judge the message being preached. How many times, when we hear a preacher of the true gospel, do we judge their motives? Yet, we refuse to judge a message as a false gospel simply because the preacher appears to be sincere.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2009/9/16 13:26

Quote:

-----So anyways..please pray for me. I really don't want to have the wrong spirit. I also don't want to be a coward either if God opens the door for me to share. I understand that as Christians we must contend for the faith. Amen and may God bless each of us with wisdom.

Yes, amen. Wisdom is everything - wisdom and discernment. The hardest thing with all this is just keeping silent. People will doubtless think you are a coward, or indifferent. Can you imagine the scene of Christ before Herod and all his decorated men of war, them ridiculing, provoking and spewing forth all sorts of wicked, ugly blasphemies at Him? The false witnessing? Throughout it all, He never once opened His mouth to criticize or defend. He never answered any of the false charges, never spoke a word against Gamaliel and his elite school of Rabbis and how wrong they were.

He kept his mouth shut and everyone, including the Procurator of Judea, marvelled. I tell you, people will also marvel if you will desist in joining in with all the popular heresy hunting and preacher critiquing going on these days. Modern Christianity is full of criticism: one group criticizing another, arguing over words and doctrine. One side says the other is Babylo

n, and the other side calls its accusers "legalists". It's never ending, it engenders perpetual conflict like a bad soap opera, and whoever indulges in it suffers in their walk.

There is a time to rebuke and a time to keep silent. Most of the rebukes you see in this forum - I'll say 99% of them - are done in the wrong spirit and out of season. The truth is, people are not content with God in their own walks due to various reasons (i.e. defiled conscience, unrepentant sin, hurt pride, unforgiveness, etc.) and so they have no peace with God. Because of the lack of peace, they cannot be edified by things and topics that are lovely, noble, of good repute, full of charity and devotion, gentleness, kindness, peaceable to the soul, born of meekness, etc. These things are not conducive to their turbulent spiritual condition, and so they are drawn to fault-find and meddle in other men's affairs and ministries that rub them the wrong way. Since misery loves company, they relish in publishing their attacks in public forums in the form of libel and slander.

The thing is, however, many of their criticisms are correct and true! They may have the correct doctrine and their rebukes are foundationed on scripture and healthy theology; sadly, though, all this is often negated through a fleshy rebuke and a spirit of contention. The correction itself is true, but the spirit in which it is done is false, and thus God does not accept it; He does not anoint it or put His authority behind it...and all it ever accomplishes is the furtherance of more strife and contention.

As for me, I would rather be labeled a coward by other believers and accused as one who does not stand zealously for truth - and keep the anointing of God upon my life and ministry - than join the popular rebuking crowd of critiquing believers and lose God's anointing upon my life and ministry. The truth is that God very seldom calls us to publically rebuke another man. Most of what we see and the letters we read are but the spoiled fruit of believers out of touch with God and expressing what is only natural to them.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiss (), on: 2009/9/16 13:49

Hi bdcutler...

Quote:
-----What these men preach is no secret; many have been vocal in pointing out that these men are not preaching the Gospel of Christ (this is also no secret).

I am not saying that we cannot publicly disagree, refute, or even expose false doctrines. The issues that I have with Rick Warren are entirely doctrinal. However, it is another thing altogether to make accusations about the man that are OUTSIDE of obvious or blatant doctrinal issues that are supported by fact.

Rick Warren appears to be WAY OFF in regard to some of his doctrine and many of his methods. However, it is another thing altogether to accuse the man of "*working feverishly to create a one world religion*" or "*one world government*." While someone might try to make such a claim based upon what they see as "circumstantial evidence," I think that in such cases that it is better to confirm such a claim by contacting the man himself (or those who work with the man).

In other words, we need to make sure that our accusations are based upon truth and not any sort of prejudicial "conspiracy sleuthing" and then call it "discernment." I don't listen to Rick Warren because of reasons that are obvious to me. I don't need to accuse him (or entertain accusations) about his supposed involvement in some sort of "one world" conspiracy. I think that, in regard to this accusation, it would be best to contact the man himself.

A few years ago, a well-meaning person on SermonIndex was making claims about David Wilkerson. This person made claims that David Wilkerson no longer believed in a "pre-tribulation" rapture. As a result, I actually contacted his ministry and his church. I was quickly sent an email from Pastor Neil Rhodes in regard to the matter. In other words, I "tested" the claims of this particular person.

Now, while I am not a fan of Rick Warren and disagree with quite a few of his views, I have been tempted to try and contact the man or his ministry in order to see what THEY have to say about some of the accusations. I would probably still disagree with those things that are obvious (at least, obvious to *me* and my understanding of the Word) flaws in his doctrinal views or methods. However, it would be interesting to see what he has to say about other accusations (like the "one world" insinuations).

Brother Paul West, I agree with what you are saying. I think that there is quite a bit of wisdom in such an approach.

:-)

Re: - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/9/16 14:32

Please forgive this diversion from the topic. I have taught high school math both in public and private high schools in California, and I couldn't help noticing what Jesus-is-God said....

Quote:
-----I ask you: What would happen if I went into the streets, rounded up all the kids who were skipping school, and asked them, "What kind of school would you like? I'll build one that you'll enjoy, just so you'll want to come." Those kids would answer: "We want a school that lasts only three days a week - and just two hours a day! We want no algebra, no calculus and no science. And we want lunch from noon to two, with nothing but pizza and snacks. There won't be any lectures, rules or grades. And we'll be able to come and go as we please." If I followed through on that, I would have the biggest school in New York, with every dropout in sight. But what would happen to those kids ten years down the road, without any real preparation for living?

... aptly captures what is happening to US public schools today. Their goal is to please the students, and no longer to teach them.

Let us pray that our churches will turn away from this humanistic trend of becoming man-pleasers, back to the true purpose of being God-pleasers.

In Christ's Love,
Leo

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2009/9/16 15:44

"There is a time to rebuke and a time to keep silent. Most of the rebukes you see in this forum - I'll say 99% of them - are done in the wrong spirit and out of season."

Brother Paul,

I couldn't agree with you more, and I have been in that 99% at times, and I believe that I have given a rebuke before that I believed to be the truth, but I did it in anger, so it wasn't done in the right spirit. Everytime that I have ever done this, the Lord has dealt with me about it.

Many years ago I was in a Church where there was a pastor that was very dominant and controlling. He was a good friend of mine, but we had our disagreements and even had some words, and I was ready to leave that church. I believed that I had every right to do this, but everytime that I would pray about it, the thing that I always came away with was that I was not leaving in the right spirit, and that the Lord would not be pleased until my heart was right towards that pastor before I left that church.

I believe that most of the time that the Lord shows us some fault or error in a brother or sister that it is for the purpose of us taking it to God in prayer. Even if we are led to go directly to the one in fault, it should always be done in the spirit of meekness with the purpose of restoration in mind.

The chastisements of God towards His children are always for the purpose of restoration and not for destruction.

Mike

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2009/9/16 16:16

Quote:
-----I have been in that 99% at times, and I believe that I have given a rebuke before that I believed to be the truth, but I did it in anger, so it wasn't done in the right spirit. Everytime that I have ever done this, the Lord has dealt with me about it.

I have too, dear brother. When I first came to SermonIndex I lacked discernment in this area. I too eagerly jumped on the bandwagon of what we are talking about. Consequently, there are threads and posts one can dig up in the forum archi

ve that I am not very proud of. Little did I know that during these times, God was testing and trying me and challenging my pride at the inner heart level. His voice became more and convicting until finally I remember a thread popping up basing Joel Osteen (if my memory serves correct) and as I got ready my flamethrower to torch the territory, I heard the Lord speak to my heart discreetly: *"Let him alone"*

I had no stirring in my spirit over the "other gospel" the man preached; I had no inclination to grieve over his probable demise and over those who followed him, heading into the ditch. What right did I have then to lambast? To defame, to rebuke and torch? My heart simply wasn't right, though in my head I *knew* he was preaching another gospel and leading millions astray.

It suddenly became a heart issue each time one of these heretic threads emerged, and I discovered that the verve to publicly flay these men went away. It became sufficient instead to warn without condemning; I saw myself instead as a witness in court and not the judge. God sent His Son into the world not to condemn, and therefore God also sent me to SermonIndex not to condemn. The blind leading the blind both fall into the ditch irrespective of anonymous forum diatribes.

That all took place a few years ago, and I lost some friends because I've refused to take sides or support one camp over another. I just want to be on the Lord's side. I have also found that God honors those who honor Him, and if you humble yourself He will for sure exalt you in due time. The secret is in not giving up doing good before the harvest. If we are careful to keep a good, clear conscience and walk in the humility of what we know the Lord expects from us, He will show Himself mighty in our lives.

We also find that the more we submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the more peaceable our lives become...and the more insight God lends us to see the compassion and longsuffering He has for all men. As we continue to look unto Jesus we learn these things, and much more, as we become more and more fashioned into His image.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by JCGarc55, on: 2009/9/16 17:10

As for me, I would rather be labeled a coward by other believers and accused as one who does not stand zealously for truth - and keep the anointing of God upon my life and ministry - than join the popular rebuking crowd of critiquing believers and lose God's anointing upon my life and ministry

Thanks again Paul. I really appreciate your feedback. I see that we've all experienced the Lord's loving rebuke in these matters. Like I shared earlier, the Luke 18 one was the one that hit me pretty hard because I began to 'thank the Lord that I wasn't deceived like them other people' rather than seeing myself still as the wretched sinner that needs mercy.

In regards to being a coward, I was thinking more in terms of God's view and my fearing man's rejection, etc. Some of these opportunities have happened with people that are close to me so that makes it even more difficult.

Your point about not being worried about being labeled a coward is good though. I hadn't thought of it that way.