

Unjust Criticism

Abraham Lincoln said: *"If I were to read, much less answer all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, then angels swearing I was right would make no difference.*

Others have suffered unjust criticism. Hannah moved her lips as she was praying silently and the watching priest accused her of drunkenness. Ahab said Elijah was a troubler of Israel. Jesus was said of his enemies to have no regard for real religion or for the king.

So many Bible characters are said to have experienced unjust criticism. Have you? And what should you do when you've explained, yet the criticisms continue? Some of it may be vengeful "cheap shots" to keep you stirred up. What should you do?

"Honest Abe" may well be reminding us of the Bible answer -- just keep going. There's too much good to do to look back. It may be like Nehemiah told his enemies seeking compromise. He knew it was a trick and said, "I am doing a good work and cannot come down."

Frankly, there are some things we are just going to have to let the Lord sort out at the end, and He'll do it right - don't worry. Our business is to get on and keep on with life, doing the best we can.

- by Bob Hines

Immersed in Jesus

When a person immerses himself in something, he totally surrounds himself with it. He spends time thinking about it and making plans around it. It occupies his mind, utilizes his energy and expends his resources.

People can immerse themselves in many different things. Some are immersed in hobbies, recreation or sports such as hunting, fishing, college football, baseball, golf, racing, collecting, or gardening. Others are immersed in their work or school. Some are immersed in their children or grandchildren. When a person is seriously sick, it is easy to become immersed with health concerns.

As Christians, "we were all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Most of us understand that the word "baptized" means "immersed." But what we may not have thought much about is the connection between being immersed in water and being immersed in Jesus. The apostle Paul puts it this way in Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Those of us who have been "baptized into Christ" are to have put Him on like a garment. We are to be covered up with Him -- immersed in Him.

By itself, immersion in water does nothing to change a person's life. But when that immersion is the beginning of being overwhelmed with Jesus Christ, lives are truly changed. Baptism into Christ results in a person being raised to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new life is one that is immersed in Jesus.

Every sinner needs to be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). But every one who is immersed in water is thus obligated to live a new life immersed in Jesus. Are you immersed in Him? "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

- by Steve Klein

FIRST

The Bible tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). There is so much more involved with this than just attendance. "Seeking first" is an attitude as well as a commitment to the cause of Christ. "Seeking first" means such things as:

- Putting others first (Phil. 2:3,4)

- Being willing to give up things for the sake of others (1 Cor. 8:13)
- Being wronged rather than going to court with a brother (1 Cor. 6:7)
- Going the extra mile for another (Matt. 5:41)
- Doing without things so you won't stumble (Matt. 5:30)

Is the kingdom important to you? Is it so important that you are willing to put it FIRST in your life?
- by Roger Shouse

Heaven & Hell: Most Believe, But Few Think They Will Go to Hell

The Gallup pollsters regularly conduct surveys about the religious beliefs of people in America. Some of the most interesting statistics have to do with the views of people regarding heaven and hell. Typical results are like these from a previous survey:

- Believe in heaven----- 78%
- Among those who believe in heaven, the percent that think they have a fair, good, or excellent chance of going there----- 94%
- Believe in hell----- 60%
- Among those who believe in hell, the percent that think they might go there:
 - probably will go----- 4%
 - uncertain ----- 19 %
 - little chance of going----- 77%

These numbers are particularly interesting when viewed in light of what the Bible clearly teaches. Jesus said,

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13,14).

It is not difficult to see why so few are really committed to a diligent pursuit of Christianity - they simply don't believe they need it - they're going to heaven anyway! It's time people began to wake up and realize that they are lost and doomed to hell unless they obey the Lord!

- by Greg Gwin