

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Watchdogs or Hushpuppies?

By David Baker

Often those who find themselves in indefensible positions resort to “invective” for justification. One of the more popular invectives is for those who speak out against error and criticize false teaching is “watchdog.”

Now, it is funny that the usual criticism of “*watchdogs*” is that they are not kind in the way they deal with problems. It is resented that they should be critical or that they should communicate their concerns to others. It rarely matters whether the language used is kind or unkind, or what kind of spirit is manifest when a “*watchdog*” does his thing. The fact is that they have done it, and they have actually used such terms as “*false teacher*” with reference to those who teach that which is false. The funny part is that “*false teacher*,” while it may not be pleasing to hear it used about oneself, is an entirely useful term. It describes one in terms of what he does, and it rarely is applied unless one persists in his teaching of error. That is fair. But “*watchdog*” is intended as invective, not a kind or descriptive way of putting things at all. Those who use it must make an effort not to sound bitter or superior. And it wreaks positively of what it is intended to criticize.

What does God say? “*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*” (Ezekiel 3:17-19). God commends the function that some have decried as being “watchdogs,” but uses a more functional and less abusive term – “*watchman*.”

Those who take it upon themselves to speak for God are privileged to do so. With the privilege comes grave responsibility. “*Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment*” (James 3:1). As servants of God we are entrusted with the spiritual welfare of the world, the souls of men. As each must answer to God, we must answer for how we have affected their answer. We have a responsibility to teach and to warn of those who teach error. If we cannot do that, then we dare not claim the privilege.

Paul said, “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them*” (Ephesians 5:11). Was Paul being a “*watchdog*” when he told the brethren to reprove those who work darkness? By the way, “*reprove*” makes an interesting word study. “*But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*” (Galatians 2:11-14). When error is publicly proclaimed or endorsed, it needs to be publicly exposed. That is Paul’s teaching and his example. To do less is to neglect God’s will in the matter.

The best watchdogs are the ones who make the most noise. I had a friend once who had a vicious Doberman. He bragged that no one would dare rob his house because of the fear that dog would provoke. He came home one day to find his house empty and the dog chewing on a strange “soup-bone” while his mind was apparently “lost in space.” What good was that mutt? The dog the thief fears the most is the poodle or Chihuahua. Have you ever seen one of those that didn’t bark his head off? The noise of exposure and contradiction the false

teacher cannot abide. He must do his work unopposed by the light of truth. He searches out the dark corners of vulnerable ears to plant his seed. Those who would warn are called “*watch-dogs*” as though that classifies them as vile. But it is the dog that doesn’t bark—the “*hush-puppy*”— that is condemned in Scripture. ***“His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter”*** (Isaiah 56:10-11). Faithful servants are watchful. The best watchdogs are the ones who make the most noise. ■

“It’s Too Far To Drive!”

By James Lusby

It never ceases to amaze this writer that people who are so meticulous concerning their physical well-being often times become so careless about their spiritual welfare.

People in our area will drive for miles to a little town in order to eat in a restaurant which is considered by many to have the best food and most reasonable prices. If we can save a few cents on clothing by shopping in another town, whether ten, twenty or even one-hundred miles away, we scarcely give it a second thought. Why, we would not think of buying our groceries at the store next door if the supermarket down the street or in the next town has the same items at a cheaper price. But, when it comes to feasting on the word of the Lord with faithful brethren in a sound church a few miles away, the expression is heard, “It’s so far to drive.”

There must be something wrong with one’s thinker who believes it is all right to drive a few miles in order to feed and clothe his body but too far to drive in order to feed and clothe his soul.

Brethren, is your spiritual well-being any less important than your physical welfare? Is ten or twenty miles so far when your soul hangs in the balance?

Your soul is too precious for you to worship in a church where there are unscriptural practices just because it happens to be a little closer to where you live. If you consider your soul more valuable than money, then worship with a faithful church. ■

Why I Attend Worship Assemblies

I attend the Sunday and Wednesday assemblies because...

1. I want to go, and I am wanted.
2. I need to go, and I am needed.
3. I had rather be there than anywhere else.
4. People are watching me and will follow my example.
5. My soul is strengthened by the teaching.
6. My heart is warmed by the scriptural songs as I praise God.
7. I am better prepared to meet in discussion those who do not understand the truth.

What about you?

— Selected and revised

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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