

Picky People Problems

by Dan S. Shipley

“Some people find fault like there was a reward for it!”

The author of that statement is unknown to me, but he obviously knew something about the chronic faultfinders among us. Few have contributed more to our misery and unhappiness than they. Their nefarious work has alienated friends, divided churches and resulted in irreparable harm to the Lord's cause in many places. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find any good that has ever come through faultfinding.

But don't misunderstand. The faithful Christian can no more ignore and condone sin than he can become a faultfinder. God says that “love covereth a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). In commenting on this passage, Lenski says: “There will be sins on the part of the brethren which may tend to slacken our love for them; such sins make it hard to show them love. Although the strain may be great, love is to stand it.” And again: “Love hides them (sins) from its own sight and not from God's sight. Hate does the opposite; it pries about in order to discover some sin or some semblance of sin in a brother and then broadcasts it, even exaggerates it, gloats over it. It is unjust to the apostle to say that he wants Christians to hush up and to hide criminality or vice that have occurred in their midst.” (Interpretation of 1st Peter, p. 194, 195). The faultfinder searches for fault to exploit; love recognizes sin to remedy -- and therein lies a vast difference. Paradoxically, however, much faultfinding is practiced under the guise of “love.” May we be spared that brand of love and its every expression!

But, even seeking out faults in the name of love wouldn't be all that bad if the “findings” were not broadcast and exaggerated, as Lenski notes. Trouble is, the faultfinder feels obliged to become the fault teller. Then, flavored with his personal innuendos and evil surmisings, what he is telling has a way of swelling — all out of proportion to the real or imagined fault. But the snowballing process does not end here. For with the telling comes a hearing — and most likely, the hearer will be influenced by what he hears. The influenced hearer easily becomes the prejudiced teller who influences other hearers. And so goes the expanding circle of involvement — and to the detriment of all parties. Few have escaped the effects of the picky people problem. Is there a remedy?

Yes. It has already been referred to in 1 Peter 4:8. It is love. Too many Christians have only heard the negative side of love; that it is not a gooey, emotional, sentimental and mushy cover-up for whitewashing sin. A serious study of 1 Corinthians 13 would go far to correcting misunderstandings about love. Bible love needs studying, preaching and teaching desperately! God's people are to do all in love (1 Cor. 16:14). Love does not look for evil in others neither does it speak evil of others (James 4:11). Love ever seeks what is best for others. It suffers long with their shortcomings and faults; it is always kind (1 Cor. 13:4). It seeks and sees the best in others; it promotes good finding, not faultfinding. Let's preach and practice loving one another from the heart fervently!

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