

The Experience of Every Christian Life - Part 4

Encountering Unjust Criticism

Luke 13:14-17

Well I am grateful to have been raised in a solid Christian home where I was taught and trained to be a responsible obedient kid, which of course didn't always work out that way, as you can imagine. On one such day I was out in the backyard fighting with my older brother for some reason and I don't mean verbally fighting we were actually physically fighting as would happen from time to time. My mom must have gone by the window and seen us and she came out of the back door angry for our disobedient fighting. And she called us over sat us, I'll never forget on the back steps there, two cement steps of our back stoop there, the back porch. She sat us side by side and she began to lay into us with a real just reprimand, deserved. And my mom made one mistake in over estimating my intelligence in this discussion, where she decided to inject a little sarcasm into her reprimand. She said, I'll never forget, she said, "Go ahead, hit him again. Go ahead. No, no, no, go sock him." As in, "you wouldn't dare." I didn't pick up on the "don't you dare" tone of that. I thought my mom is finally getting it, man. She sees that I'm outgunned and that my brother is using me as a punching bag, I was trying, I was scrapping I couldn't get my punches in. I thought she knows the score needs to be settled right here. Mom gets it. Just one more, that would do it. So my little brain, I turned and just socked him as hard as I could. I really did, I punched him as hard as I could. Looking back to my mother for that look of approval, I will never forget that day. Man, was I in trouble. (02:38)

Now I understood as a little guy what it was to get in trouble for the wrong thing, but I was struggling to process what it was to get in trouble for doing the right thing. I was sure I was doing the right thing. I struggle to process what it was to do the right thing and to have people get mad at me. By the way, if you're a Christian, get used to that feeling, get use to that feeling. You will do the right thing, sometimes you'll do the best things, you'll say the best things, you'll believe the best things, you'll affirm the best things, they really are, and you'll get yourself into a lot of trouble. That is something you ought to expect as we will learn in our passage this morning in Luke chapter 13 we began this scene in verse 10 you might remember if you were with us, where Jesus does something not just good, he does something amazingly good. I mean this, off the charts good. (03:33)

Here is a woman that is struggling with an eighteen year disability; she's hunched over, some kind of medical issue she can't even straighten up. You see the top of her head, you can't even see her face, and she is suffering and Jesus there in the synagogue sees her, calls her over, says as she's walking toward him you are freed from your disability and she comes over and he touches her, lays his hands on her and immediately she straightens up. And look where we left off in verse 13, he laid his hands on her, immediately she was made straight. And she glorified God and you're expecting a conjunction in verse 14 and the crowd erupts. Everybody applauds; I mean the leader of the synagogue goes, "Yeah!" But we don't get a connecting conjunction; we get a contrasting conjunction that begins verse 14. (04:22)

Here we pick up our passage for the morning, the next four verses. Verse 14, but, that seemed like a good thing – the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Verse 17, as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. Interesting resolve, but more interesting than that is that anyone would be upset with this. (05:27)

How can someone with a word and a touch fix such a grievous problem and have people mad at him for it. Well, that's how it worked. All through out the ministry of Christ we see, yes some rejoice, some were happy but a lot of people and in this case the ruler of the synagogue, someone important, someone in power, someone in authority, who clearly was persuasive in the lives of others because of the response in verse 15 he goes from addressing him to a plural you hypocrites, a lot of people buying in to what the leader said. And here they were, criticizing Christ for something good. That is something we need to get use to. We need to understand that. If you're taking notes this



morning and I wish that you would jot down this. Number 1 on your outline, if you downloaded the electronic worksheet which is always available Fridays at 5 o'clock you'll find it there on our website, you can take notes by writing this down. When it comes to our lives, much like Christ, we need to prepare to be slandered. (06:29)

1. Prepare to be Slandered

Jot that down, verse 14, prepare to be slandered. And I say slandered because of something interesting that takes place in the middle of verse 14. Look at it again, once you jot that down look at verse 14. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath - look at this carefully now - said to him. No, said to the people. Isn't that interesting? Here he turns and says to the people, "You shouldn't be coming to get healed on the Sabbath day." Well, I'm not sure that the presentation of this story even looked as though people are coming to get healed. It doesn't say that, I mean it says he was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And even if they were who's to blame for the healing on the Sabbath? The one who's healing, and of course the ruler of the synagogue knew that. See that's what slander is. It's not just criticism, it's a kind of criticism and we'll get all kinds, but there's a kind of criticism, that takes the person that these people don't like, who stands for what they don't like, who says what they don't like, who does what they don't like and instead of addressing them directly they address everyone else. And he said to the people, listen this shouldn't be happening. (07:39)

Hey in our day how easy is it, in our internet social media world to have someone not like what you stand for, not like what you say, not just directly dialog with you in some private message, but turn to the people and say. I mean how often are we indirectly thrown under the bus because we believe the word of God as the truth because we affirm it as God's word because we see it as binding authority on how we live, because we go about doing the things that the Bible says not the things the culture says. We're thrown under the bus everyday. I mean this is a reality for us that we need to get use to, maybe even a little insight, not to psychologize any of this but as we look in the scripture we see that there are reasons for this that you just need to understand. For instance back in chapter 11 when Jesus had a similar incident where they were mad at him, it started with the leaders the Pharisees, the scribes, the teachers of the law, recognizing and admitting you've insulted us by what you've said. Now that's how it started if you want to jot this down, Luke 11:45. They said, "You're insulting us." And then it didn't take nine verses until we get this, as he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait to catch him in something he might say. Therefore it wasn't like they were passive and neutral. He says something, I don't like that. It's not that they're waiting for him to do something; I don't like what you just did. It's that they already didn't like him because they were insulted by what he said. So here's something about us, as we bear a message from God to a lost world. And we say you know there's a problem called sin and you're a participant in it, you need a Savior named Christ, and you need to be saved because your sin problem should condemn you before that holy God to a place of punishment. People don't want to hear that. That message insults them. And the message for their need for cross according to Paul to the Corinthians, it is a stumbling block to them; they don't like it they're offended by it. And so you need to know, they're looking for reasons to slander us. They're looking for reasons to criticize us. The world who heard our message if they are rejecting that message we're just, I mean they're just looking for a reason and a way and a setting and an excuse to slander us and criticize us. (09:50)

Here's something perhaps more subtle, but we also see this in the ministry of Christ. It's stated through out in many ways sometimes between the lines but certainly by the time he got to the crucifixion before Pilot, Pilot looks at what's going on with all the scribes and Pharisees and leaders delivering him over to be crucified. Here's what it says in Mark 15:10. Pilot perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. Now they had trumped up charges against Christ, and they had people come and testify how bad he was but clearly it wasn't based on something really he had done. It was on the fact that they were envious. (10:24)

Now here's something you see from the beginning of the Bible. When God lays his favor on people there's something about the favor on those people that makes those that don't have it really feel envious and jealous. They wouldn't say it but you can go all the way back to the first murder in the Bible we don't even get out of the first four chapters of the book of Genesis until someone is killing someone and if you look at why, it's because they're envious. This person has an acceptable life before God and I don't, I feel the rejection of God, they get the acceptance of God, I'm envious. They don't like that, which by the way that's how the book of Genesis closes out. You go all the way ahead in the end of Genesis and you've got a godly guy who God's favor rests upon, his name is Joseph, and God is blessing him and all his brothers stand by and say, "That's great, I'm so glad you're blessed by



God.” Is that what they think? They hate him, why? Who are you, why would God bless you? We sit around and sing about forgiveness, we claim to have found the truth; we talk about how great it is to be in relationship with God. I don’t care if they believe our message or not they really think that we sit around with this holier than thou, better than thou, we’re better than you attitude and that’s inevitable no matter how humble we present our Christianity to people. And they will look for a reason to criticize us and they will look for a reason to slander us. (11:39)

Be prepared for slander. I know a lot of people say, “Well, that’s why I don’t like talking about my Christianity at work. So it’s better if my neighbors don’t even know I’ll sneak off to church on Sunday morning but you know I don’t need to talk, I don’t want to cram my religion down anybody’s throat.” You can take that axiom about the Bible that all those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted and you will try to avoid it by not letting your godliness be public or known in the public domain, you’ll try to keep it private. You’ll keep your work life, your neighborhood life separate from your Christian life and you’ll say, “Well I’ll be Christian and I’ll be all about God at church and in my small group but in my home and at work, they won’t even know. I mean if they’re interested they’ll ask me about my Christianity.” Not that they even know you’re Christians. Here’s the thing, if you’re trying to circumvent the axiom that if you live for Christ you will be persecuted because you say, “Well I don’t let that message out, I don’t want my message to insult them, I try not to talk about the fact that I’m forgiven and God’s child and all that, I just keep that to myself. Here’s someone that knows all of that even if you don’t tell them, we discussed him in Job chapter 1 last week, do you remember? Here’s the enemy of God, you know what his name is, the most common appellation, the most common name for the enemy, the arch enemy of God, is Satan. That’s the number one title given to him most frequently in the Bible almost 2 to 1 that’s what he’s called. It’s actually a transliterated word from Hebrew into Greek, same pronunciation almost sounds Hebraic and sounds Greek and then we get it into English the same way. That word, Satan, Sa-tawn, that word is the common, where we just transliterate it. If you had to translate it, how would one translate the word Satan or Sa-tawn? They would translate it this way, the opponent, the adversary, someone who opposes us. (13:21)

And what’s interesting is in that opposition to us who knows those things about us whether we tell our neighbors and friends that or not is that he is seeking to; the number two most common title of the enemy of God is Diabolos. We transliterate that, the devil. That comes into our language the devil. And the devil if you were to put it in a lexicon and define it in a dictionary, you know what the definition would be? The one who slanders, the one who defames, the one who tries to take our reputation and tear it down. That’s what the enemy is trying to do. You may not be able to connect the dots between why you’re opposed in this situation and this business deal and these work relationships in the neighborhood over here. You may not be able to connect the dots because you’ve been an underground Christian, not telling everybody, you’re going to be outed anyway by the enemy because that spirit is now at work in the sons of disobedience and that creates a spiritual battle that you’ll be saying why is all this flesh and blood battling against me. Well because the battle is really not against flesh and blood it’s against the spiritual principalities and powers behind all that. And if you’re not tuned into that yet, and I may not convince you just by stating it indicatively you need to understand the reality of what’s going on in the invisible realm, that really is coming against people that claim the name of Christ. If you’re a Christian you’ve already got opposition. He’s like 1 Peter 5 a roaring lion, as I quoted last week, seeking someone to devour. So you might as well be vocal about your Christianity. You might as well be, you know, out from the underground and let people understand you are a Christian and that the message that we stand for and the ethics that we hold to come from the revealed word of God. You might as well let it out because your enemy already knows it and he’s going to work hard to defame you and slander you anyway. Prepare to be slandered. (15:07)

Now I use the word prepare and in this passage I don’t have any of the preparation listed for you so I got to quickly go outside of this text and if you’re a copious note taker you might want to jot down a few ideas here. They come from the scripture but let me give you three quick things that you should prepare to be slandered and criticized this week. Number one, when Jesus looked at Peter and he says, “Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat” which should send a chill up your spine. His response to that was, “but I have blank.” What? Prayed for you. Let’s start with that. When we are going to be assaulted by the enemy and his number one strategy is to defame us and he’ll use people to defame us and criticize us and belittle us in our society you need to be praying. So before you leave the house you should be praying. As Jesus said, “I’m sending you out here like innocent people, like little sheep, into the world full of wolves.” To update the analogy from 1 Peter 5, full of lions. And you know what? We need to pray up, we need to make sure that we are praying. As Jesus prayed in his great high priestly prayer, I’m sending them into the world, I don’t ask that you take them out of the world; they’ve got a job to do. I just want you to protect



them from the evil one. So we need to be praying like Jesus prayed for us. God protect us, we're going to be defamed, we're going to be attacked. We're going to be slandered; our reputation is going to be dragged through the mud that is going to be the default position for Christians just like Jesus when he does the right thing. He'll still get people indignant at him. I just want to be prepared by making sure I'm praying. (16:38)

And let's get more specific, Colossians chapter 1, when you are praying Paul prayed this for the Colossians. Pray that you would be strengthened with all power, I don't want to fold when I'm criticized, and that I might have – I love these words – endurance and joy, those are piled up there. You can start reading around verse 10 and you'll see that in Colossians 1. So every morning I want to pray. I'm going to go out into the world, I know that I'm the enemy of the one who has the spirit and power of this world working under his domain, 2 Corinthians 4:4 the god of this age, he's on a leash as we learned last week, but God protect me, help me, strengthen me. Prayer. (17:15)

Secondly, we need to think of Christ, think of his example, remember Christ, look to Christ, have the mind that continually remembers that the King of our organization, the Captain of our family, Jesus Christ, went through these same things. Jot down Hebrews chapter 12, here's a passage about endurance. And he says this, "Remember him who endured such hostility against himself by sinners." Remember his life. And we're studying a passage that'll help us remember that, it'll flesh it out in our own thinking. He just healed a woman and everyone should cheer, and instead there's a controversy about it, oh man. We need to remember Christ and if we think as he often said that some how the servant is going to be above the master, you got to get that out of your head. Of course we expect it but one of the things that I do to find strength in it is I look at Christ example and I learn from that. As it says in that passage when it came to the ultimate opposition of sinful people the cross when he was hung on a Roman execution rack he despised the shame, he looked down on the shame, he belittled the shame, he looked beyond it to the prize. He looked beyond it to the approval of his Father. He had a big perspective; we need to have the same thing. Prayer, remembering Christ's example. (18:30)

Thirdly I know this is a metaphor but let's jot it down. Ephesians chapter 6 which after the directive comes the reason. Here's the reason and you'll remember the directive. The reason is so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the diabolos, the slanderer. So that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Now what starts that sentence? Put on the full armor of God. Put on the armor of God. Now we don't have time to walk through that but you might want to jot it down and think this week, you know what I was reminded by my pastor that we should be prepared for slander. I've got to pray, I've got to remember Christ's example of standing up against a hostility of enemies in his life and you know what? I need to put on the full armor of God. Just walk through that list as preparatory, it gets us ready. (19:18)

Well, this is a very encouraging sermon so far this morning Pastor Mike, I'm glad I woke up to come to church. Sounds depressing, a lot of depressing sermons at this church. Prepare to be slandered. That is the forecast by the way. How evil of me to be a pastor, see these things and not warn you. I mean there's a hurricane coming and I said, go out and enjoy your afternoon. You'd think if I knew it was coming what a terrible person I would be. So I don't apologize for giving the forecast because the forecast in the Bible is very clear. We're going to be slandered, we're going to be criticized. But I'd like to spend the rest of our time trying to equip you and encourage you as to how to respond to it. Try to give you something about being prepared for it. But let's start in verse 15 and 16 now and try to learn how to respond. (20:06)

Then the Lord, verse 15, this is Luke 13:15, then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites!" Now, notice the grammar here, this is very important. He says to the ruler of the synagogue singular and he says to him singular, you hypocrites plural. Do you see that? So here's the leader talking to the group, of course what happens when leaders talk to the group is often times the leader, like the leaders in our culture talking to the masses, he gets a lot of people to believe him and so there are a lot of people that are buying this. And whatever they're buying Jesus wants to respond to logically and though it sounds like a pejorative term an insulting term, you hypocrites. What you need to remember is what the word hypocrite means. Hypocrite is like, I always give you this little gesture when I talk about the word hupocreeno which we transliterate into our English word hypocrite. Hupo underneath and creeno to judge or assess something. If you were to get under the mask you would assess differently then when you have the mask on. So there's two ways to look at this person. You look at me now with my mask on I look one way, I take the mask off I look another way. Hupocreeno, masks I have different masks. That is now going to be explained by them going home from church if you will and untying their ox and their donkey from the manger and leading it out to get some water. And he says listen now there's some inconsistencies here in how you go about your afternoon work

with that mask on and now over here you're going to put this mask on, or you're going to have a mask on as you talk to me about criticizing me for healing someone and then underneath that mask you're going to go home and you're going to water your animals. Now what's the point? Well, you're worried about work on the Sabbath. Now the Bible does say you shouldn't be doing any regular work on the Sabbath if you're under the Old Testament Mosaic ceremonial law and that's true, you shouldn't. And the Bible says what you should and shouldn't do. The Rabbis built a whole gigantic structure of sub-rules as to what you should and shouldn't do and everyone knew your animals are going to get dehydrated if you don't let them drink, so there's no problem in the Rabbi's wrote about it, when it comes down to not working we certainly don't mean you can't take your ox or your donkey to the water. You can untie them from their little leather strap as they're strapped there to the post and take them out and water them and when you're done, walk them back, put them back. That's not work, that's not the kind of work God had in mind when he wrote the Torah. So when it came to the law clearly they're saying we understand that. (22:36)

And he says, now listen if it's not too much "work" for you to let your donkey or your ox not to get dehydrated and you think it's okay to untie them and walk them over here so that they can be refreshed and continue to live. Well, then he says, ought not this woman, who I hope you would see is a lot more important than an ox or a donkey, who is a daughter of Abraham, I mean you love Israel you love the people of Israel you're telling me this daughter of Abraham who has been bound for eighteen years and has suffered there, talk about dehydration. I mean she has not had this life that she should and wants to have and for me to come and with what? With a word and a touch, I mean that's all it took for me to loosen; you don't think she should be loosed on the Sabbath because you're going to go loose some things on the Sabbath. And I guarantee you you're going to have a bead of sweat in the heat of the afternoon on your forehead a lot more than I had simply by demonstrating divine power by speaking a word and laying my hand on her shoulder. That's kind of logically inconsistent here. Number 2 one your outline, let's learn from this, we need to be wise in responding to our critics. (23:45)

2. Be Wise in Responding

Wise in responding to our critics. I mean we can look a little further at the logic of all this, which I hope you understood as I read it with commentary. Can you at least understand that sometimes the wisest response is no response at all? Would you agree with that? The wisest response sometimes is no response at all. Now did we learn that from Jesus' life? Did he ever have critics criticize him and him not saying anything? Yeah, a lot of that was taking place during his trial before the crucifixion. He didn't answer, and there's times when we shouldn't answer. Do want some biblical proof of that, jot this reference down, I quote it all the time to you, Proverbs 26, Proverbs chapter 26 verses 4 and 5. It says, I'll read you the first line of both verses, do not answer a fool comma, verse 5 answer a fool comma, now I'm thinking get your story straight. Answer a fool, don't answer a fool. I got a fool, he's babbling in my face, do I answer the fool or do I not answer the fool? Well, read the second half of both of these, I'll read the both of them. Don't answer a fool lest you be like him. So there's times when you're not going to answer a fool according to his folly, responding to his folly because you're going to end up just like him. Answer a fool, verse 5, according to his folly, respond to what he's saying that doesn't make any sense, lest he be wise in his own eyes. So let's start with the first phrase here, let's build a quick little structure here to think through next time, and it may be tomorrow, it may be Thursday, it maybe next week when you go, oh that sermon we just had about being criticized unjustly I'm being criticized now unjustly. And whether it's directly associated to my Christianity or maybe it's some kind of dots I can't connect humanly, I'm thinking I didn't do anything wrong, how do I respond? (25:27)

Well, first of all there's a kind of response that make you as foolish as your adversary. And how would I know that? Let me give you three quick principals. Number 1, when your response is completely blocked, it's blocked. In other words there's no penetration of your reason or your logic or your rational or your explanation. They're not going to receive it and you know it, you recognize it. Jesus illustrated it this way; it's like giving pearls to swine. Now picture that. Don't throw your pearls before swine. Oink, oink, oink, they bounces off their snout. They don't want your pearls, what do they want? They want slop, they don't want pearls. Pearls are no good; the pearls are not going to be received. The pearls are going to bounce off their dirty little noses and fall into the mud and that's all. It's a waste of your pearls. So don't throw your pearls before swine because it's like bullets off of Superman, they're not receiving it, they're not listening, they're not interested. So here comes the stiff arm when your words are blocked, completely blocked. And you can perceive this in conversation. (26:30)

Secondly, when they mock, they're going to mock you. You know that when you say something they're going to

take what you say and use that simply to mock you. Proverbs chapter 9 verse 7 and 8. Proverbs chapter 9 verse 7 and 8. Whoever corrects a mocker, a scoffer, he gets nothing for himself but abuse. He who reproves the wicked man incurs an injury. Don't reprove a mocker, a scoffer, or he'll hate you. Now if you reprove a wise man, he's done something wrong, he saying something foolish, he'll learn to love you. He'll love you. So I know that some people when we degenerate from the issues to personal attacks you call that back in debate class in high school what? Ad hominem arguments. We're no longer debating the issues, they immediately turn to saying you guys are so stupid, you're so narrow minded, you're immorally... Now that's a personal attack. Why would I respond to that? The Bible says all I'm going to do is give them fuel to keep beating me over the head. I've been invited to do some debates that I looked at there's no way I'm going to do that debate. I know those people I know what they do. All they're going to do is take my words and mock us for them. So I'm not interested in debating. And in our personal lives we find that when we're blocked, when we're mocked, it's getting really cute now. Number 3, when we want to throw rocks. (27:50)

How do you like that? Want to throw rocks, when you're starting to throw rocks. And you find yourself unable to obey the most basic passage in all of the Bible regarding our response to people when they accuse us. It's found over there in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15, 1 Peter 3:15 he said we should always be prepared to make a defense to everyone who asks us for the reason for the hope that's in us. Yet, here it is, do it with me you know the words, gentleness and respect. If I cannot be respectful and if I cannot be judiciously gentle in how I'm saying this, if my blood pressure is up, if my forehead is sweating, if my palms are sweating and my blood pressure is going and the vein in my neck is popping out and I'm typing a response to this tweet so loud that my kids down the hall can hear me typing, probably not a good idea to hit send. Matter of fact, stop typing. It may be that you're not blocked or mocked but you've gotten so angry this is going to be wrongly received, it will not be profitable, it will be nothing but pugnacious. I try to give you stuff, blocked, mocked and rocks. Can you remember that? If you just think that through you'll get criticized on Thursday and you'll go, ok should I respond, should I not? Blocked, mocked, rocks. No (29:08)

Well, when should I respond? Well Jesus responds here. The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites!" And then he lays some reason and rational on their lives. Well, to use our passage there in Proverbs 26:5. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. So clearly there's a receptivity there. I wrote it down this way, that when I can perceive there can be a benefit derived from my response. I really think there will be some benefit from my response. In other words, I'm going to reason with the reasonable. There are some reasonable people here and I'm going to reason with them. I mean I don't mean to over blow it but you understand I get criticized, you get that. I had someone yelling on the phone this week, you know on my, of course with the Twitter followers I got people, I oppose them no matter what scripture post I post someone is going to get mad and angry and personal message me a lot. A lot of the times I get, it's not going to work, it's not going to work. And sometimes like I got one this week, and I thought there are people listening in, this guy may not respond but here's the thing it may be helpful for some that are and there may be reasonable people in the audience of these so I'm going to respond. I'm going to respond gently and respectfully, logically and I'll do that because I think some people may be listening. (30:29)

Takes me back, before social media, in the Stone Age, back when I was coming out of high school and went to Long Beach City College to take, of all things, a speech class, my very first speech class. And I go to this class, with Carlynn, we weren't quite married yet, quite married. You can be married or you are not married, we weren't married. We were not married. And we go and we sit through this class and I went to a secular high school and we certainly had people that, you know, made fun of Christianity now and then. This guy was a full blown, anti-Christian, mocker of everything Christian. I mean he just went after us and every chance he had to stand behind the lectern he was bashing Christians. Now I recognize this and of course I didn't have all the experience or knowledge that I may have now in terms of responding to critics but I intuitively recognized I'm probably going to get no where with this guy, and yet I wanted to respond and since it's a speech class what a great opportunity to stand up and be able to respond. So I prepared a response, to all, I took notes on what he said and I was like I need to respond to this. Well I got up and responded and gave what I thought was a fairly decent logical response to his criticism against Christianity and had really no hope of penetrating this guys façade. If you had asked me blocked, mocked, throw rocks all of those were true, but I thought I got to keep my emotions in check and do this and one of the reasons I look back on now by God's providence was because there were reasonable people sitting in the class with me. We had people come to Christ in that class, non-Christians, because Carlynn and I were willing to stand up in that class and speak up and logically defend Christianity that never would have been exposed to that unless there would have been a response. (32:10)

I don't know what happen to the ruler of the synagogue here, maybe he was too far gone, maybe he was part of the crowd that was saying, "Crucify him, crucify him." And we are in the Judean ministry of Christ; he had an opinion of Christ that here was obviously negative. Maybe he never won him over but Jesus responds and I'm assuming because he's going to reason through this issue and there was some reasonable people that were willing to listen. And I think verse 17 bears that out. So be wise in responding, when you can benefit someone with your response, then reason rather with the reasonable. (32:41)

I quoted 1 Peter 3:15 which I know is a scary verse for people because the word prepare is in it. But I don't want to scare you with that. We should be prepared to give a defense for everyone who asks us to give a reason for the hope that's in us. Now, prepared is a scary thing, some people think I got to go take some, you know, apologetics course or read philosophy or get in tune with all the beliefs and tenants of the cult groups. You really don't have to. It's good that some of us do and I certainly welcome us to broaden our knowledge of what lost people believe and how they try to attack Christianity but here's the thing. I love going all the way back to the beginning of the church in the 2nd century when we had a group of people that emerged within the church that were called the apologists. And if you're new to all this it's not because they were apologizing for anything, that's where we get the word, the passage that we just read, 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15. Where it says make a defense translates to Greek word, apologia, which transliterates apologetics. Apo – away from, logia – the charge. I'm suppose to get this charge away from me. I'm giving an answer that's reasonable, that gets the charge off my back. (33:46)

Justin Martyr was one of the apologist and you learn a little about how it ended for him by the way with his nickname. Not well, 165 he had his head chopped off by the enemies of Christianity. Beheaded in 165 AD. But the thing I appreciate about Justin Martyr is he's now known, is that he did a lot in his writings not to go toe-to-toe with people on philosophical issues, although he was well versed in that and he did talk about those things, from a stoic philosophic perspective and Greek philosophy. But one of the things that I thought was most helpful in reading the things that he wrote was that he often simply engaged in explaining what we do to people. You've got to know that some people attack us for believing this Puritanical book, this Victorian book, you know, this ridiculous book full of fables and all that, because they never read it, they never been in church since the time they were 6 years old. They don't even know what we're all about. Justin Martyr was good at simply saying, "Okay, all you critics I just want to explain why we do this." Now you don't have to study philosophy to figure that out. I mean to engage in that. You don't have to know all the tenants of the cult groups or understand the secular mindset or relativism to just engage. Here's why we believe the Bible is God's word. Here's why we do what we do in church. Here's why we engage, I think of Justin Martyr, here's why we take the Lord's Supper, here's why we baptize people. People don't know that. You heard hundreds of sermons. Guess how many they have in the last ten years? Zero. So they're not taught in these things. Justin Martyr is a good the example of helping us know that to prepare is to sit there sometimes in church and just take notes on what we're learning so that I can explain to someone when something comes up like, "Christianity is suppose to be all about a happy life, seems like you guys are suffering." Let me talk to you about unjust criticism, you know the Captain of our team here when through it all the time. I mean whatever the topic is, just explain to non-Christians the reality of our faith. Prepared, reasoned, prepared, I know there's a lot of sub-points if you're tracking all these, but just one more. (35:49)

2 Corinthians 10:5. Be wise in responding, don't respond when you're blocked, mocked or you want to throw rocks. Respond when it can benefit someone in a reasoned way, in a prepared way. Here's the last one, 2 Corinthians 10:5. It says, we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised up against us. No, that's not what it says. You know your Bibles you might know what it really says. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised up against the knowledge of God. There's a distinction I tried to make in misreading the passage on purpose so that you would recognize sometimes we're baited into fighting for our honor, fighting for our reputation, fighting about peoples thoughts of us. Now there is a time to clarify things that we did that aren't wrong that they think are wrong but when it comes down to it, we're more concerned with their view of their knowledge of God, their knowledge of Christ, their knowledge of the Holy Spirit, their knowledge of scripture. I want to fight for the honor, to use Paul's words, fighting the good fight. I want to fight honor of the truth. There are times I have to back away from an argument even though I'm leaving them with a bad view of me personally because I recognize really if I engage in this all I'm doing is defending me. When really it's about distinguishing whose honor I'm fighting for right here. So make sure you're doing it for the benefit of the truth, you're doing it for the benefit of God's honor not just trying to make sure that no one thinks poorly of us. (37:20)



Be wise in responding, Jesus was wise in responding, very logical in responding, trying to point out the logical inconsistencies of him saying something and touching someone though it's a demonstration of divine power, he didn't break a sweat. And you guys are going to take your animals out to drink this afternoon in the hot sun. (37:38)

Verse 17, as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame. Now don't misread that. As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame. You should ask the question, which is not fully answered here, in whose eyes? I don't think it's reasonable that Jesus gives a logical response and every one of his adversaries go, "Oh, I'm so ashamed I said that, you're right, I'm wrong." I doubt it, matter of fact I would think the flow of biblical history here shows me in the gospels that is not what happen when he responded here, much like my encounter with my first speech teacher in college. No, but I'll bet a lot of people looked at Jesus' response and said, "You know what? The ruler of the synagogue is wrong, Jesus is right." And he shamed them by his answer. (38:29)

But more than that, last phrase verse 17, and all the people rejoiced at – now if I read this wrong you correct me – at the one glorious thing that he had just done. Is that right or wrong? That's wrong, interactive 11 o'clock crowd, that's not right. And all the people rejoiced at ALL the glorious things that were done by him. Now how many do we have at this eight verse scene? One, he heals this woman. No, but they were rejoicing at all the glorious things that were done by him. I'll bet that helped persuade some people to say, "Rulers of the synagogues logic, shameful." Why? Because he came in to that synagogue with his reputation preceding him, people were saying, "Look at all the things that he does that are good." I put it this way, number 3 that would be a good reminder for us as we engage in being criticized and slandered, we need to speak loudly with our lives. (39:26)

3. Speak Loudly With Your Life

Speak loudly with your life. Your life says something that can do a lot as its put in scripture to silence the ignorance of our opponents. Our life becomes something very important. Now of course I'm not into the nonsense of preaching the gospel with your life and if necessary use words, that's ridiculous. I hope you know. Of course we're all about our words but we ought to back up our words with the integrity of our deeds and that does something when people are on the fence at us being Christians and they think, "Well, that was pretty logical response." But if they look at people that have moved from the issues to ad hominem attacks on us as people the best response to that shift which happens in slander is, no, no, no, you know my life, look at my life, am I a good worker? Am I a good citizen? Am I engaged in good deeds? Once you see that it helps to really defend the people that attack us as people. And it happens all the time. We've got to think more clearly about the one-two combination of us reasonably answering people with a life that reflects the integrity that God has called us to have. (40:40)

Let me read this passage for you, jot it down if you're taking notes, and you should jot this one down, Titus chapter 2 verses 7 and 8. Matters of fact turn there, let's – wow. I've turned you to no cross references this morning haven't I. You thought we're going to have to change the middle name of our church. No, no, no, Compass Bible Church, we're going to turn there. Here we go, to another passage. This one is so good it needs to be marked up in your Bible or highlighted on your iPad so get ready. (41:09)

Titus chapter 2 verses 7 and 8, show yourself – now I've got to remember the context here. Crete, Sunday School Grads know it's a bad place, lot of immorality, bad place, it makes Las Vegas look like Chandler, Arizona – show yourself - he says to the Pastor of this church in Crete - in all aspects to be a model of good works, in your teaching show integrity and dignity. So when you're preaching these things I need integrity which means you're going to practice what you preach. There's going to be dignity, solemnity and appropriateness, propriety to your life. And sound speech, when you're reasoning with people that cannot be condemned. Now you see the credit here? So that the opponent may be put to shame – so I want logical responses, I want intelligent reasoned responses why we believe what we believe, you may not agree with the presuppositions, the foundational presuppositions, the starting points logically, but you got to say, we're logically consistent people. As Francis Schaeffer said, "because we believe there's a God and he has revealed himself and based on those presuppositions we are stuck as being evangelical conservative Christians in this world." And we're stuck, we can't play with our sexual ethic, we can't wipe out the truth and the biblical norms. We are who we are because we're logically consistent. Now have a life that goes with that. Now, having nothing – last part of verse 8 – having nothing evil to say about us. Do you see the combo here of our words and our life? Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that the opponent may be put to shame comma having nothing evil to say about us. That according to 1 Peter chapter 2 is to silence the ignorance of



foolish people. Why? By a good life, by doing good I can do that. (43:05)

And by the way, you're going to go, well, that sounds like perfection and I'm not perfect. Okay, I know that, you're not perfect. But when you mess up at work, when your neighbors know you did something you shouldn't do, when it's known that you sinned, here's a way to show yourself as a model of good works that they don't get from your non-Christian counterpart. Ready? A good sincere apology. It's called repentance, that's what we call it. But it's you owning the problem. Do you think they're hearing from their non-Christian friends real sincere apologies? No, the best they get is, if I offended you, that's not an apology you understand. An apology is owning the transgression. As others have put it let your repentance be as notorious as your sin. If your sin is known to your neighbor because you lost it, then go over and make your clear sincere repentance and apology just as well known as the sin that you committed. If you did something at work, you lost your temper at a meeting and you blew it, look just get a one-on-one with all those people that saw you lose your temper and sit down and apologize sincerely. Do you think your non-Christian counterpart in the office is doing that? No way. And you know what that becomes? A model of good works, it's not that we're perfect, we're not perfect but when you blow it make your repentance as notorious as your sin and you'll go a long way to being a model of good works so that they have nothing evil to say about us. (44:32)

When Daniel, who is not perfect, was in that place much like Abel, much like Joseph being honored by God, living for God, being distinct from the culture, not eating the Kings food, all of that, people learned to hate him. And so they said, "We're going to go after him." And they looked for something, and I love this verse, Daniel 6:4, they could find no grounds for complaint nor any fault because he was faithful and no error or fault was found in him. And if you think that's an absolute statement it's clearly not, he's a human being, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But just like David who can be called a man after God's own heart when he did sin I'm sure his repentance and his apologies were just as well known as his sin. (45:15)

Speak loudly with your life, offer kindness, Romans 12, restrain your complaints, Philippians 2, trust yourself and entrust yourself to God who is able to keep you not retaliating when people poke you in the proverbial eye because they want to criticize you. Listen the only way to do that is just like Christ did on the cross, categorically forgiving. Doesn't mean he's reconciling, it's not individual forgiveness and reconciliation. It's a categorical forgiveness of listen God this is your deal, well this is entrusting himself to a faithful creator and continuing to do good. Now think this through, we learned earlier in the gospels that on the cross he could have called seventy-two thousand angels to come down and wipe out his opponents but he didn't. What's that restraint all about? How are you able to walk away from an argument, how are you to endure the curse and the abuse of people and return with courtesy and kindness, how? Because in your mind, just like in Romans 12, you're letting go and saying this, "God, it's not for me to take vengeance. When I'm cursed I'll bless, my enemy is hungry I'm going to give him something to eat. I know you'll deal with all of that. I'm going to let my life speak loudly." And sometimes these counter cultural Christian not possible characteristics are going to speak very loudly. As he said these things all his adversaries were put to shame. I would hope some of them owned it, perhaps some of them did. But on the whole the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. I hope people in your work place and your neighborhood can say, they're good neighbors, good workers, upright people. (46:54)

There's a second century document that's come down to us by a man named Athenagoras. Which you probably never heard of Agoras wrote a depiction a history of second century living really in the wake of guys like Justin Martyr he died 40 years later but after Justin Martyr. But He wrote about his observations, he chronicled his observations about Christians in the 2nd century. If you think we're in a unique situation, I hear it all the time, oh this is a such unique situation. Listen here, 2nd century document, the difference between Christians and the rest of mankind, is not a matter of nationality or language or customs. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own, they don't speak a special dialect, they can conform to the ordinary clothing, customs, diets and other habits but never the less their community does exhibit some features that are remarkable. Though they are residents in their own countries, their behavior is more like transients. They obey the prescribed laws of the land but in their private lives they transcend those laws. They show love and yet their persecuted. They're misunderstood, they are condemned, some of them even are meant and lead to suffer death. I mean they're generally poor, most of them lack many things and yet they always seem to have enough, and actually they live in kind of abundance, they repay curses with blessing and abuse with courtesy. They do good and yet they're treated as evil doers. If you're tempted to think that the second millennia of the church is something unique it is getting darker I understand that in our culture, I want you to think the second century of the church it's not any different. Our brothers looking over the rails of heaven from the second century go, ah, I know what that's like when we're the odd man out. When our



views are said to be ridiculous, when we do good and we're reviled in response we're persecuted. Oh yeah, it's starting to heat up for those Americans isn't it. They know what this is about. We stand in a long line of faithful Christians who have been unjustly criticized and opposed. But let us like I trust that second century church look to Christ remember scenes like this when he did ultimate good and was responded to with angry people in positions of power. To be unfazed by the problem, prepared for the slander, intelligent in our response as Christ was, knowing how to respond and doing good with our lives, making sure our lives speak loudly. That's a winning prescription for us in a culture that's just getting harder and harder as Christians. Hang in there church, don't get discouraged and don't think that we're in some unique situation, we're certainly not. Let's pray (50:00)

God help us as we continue to encounter unjust criticism for simply echoing the principles and standards of your word. Of claiming as we run off to church that there is absolute truth that you've revealed it to us, that it's changed our whole relationship with sin and guilt. That we have hope, that we are not going to be condemned when we meet our maker, God all these things, are things that should help us to realize that though in and of themselves do not deserve the hostile response we often get. It's part and parcel of how we live as Christians in a non-Christian world. So help us, encourage us, let us learn from this example of Christ. Let this be a real time of bolstering our strength to face the criticism that we do encounter with the kind of strength and endurance and even as it says in Colossians 1 a real joy in our hearts. Dismiss us now and have us be ready for all of this that we might endure together as a team, we look forward to the day when we'll see you when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord, may it come quickly. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. (51:11)