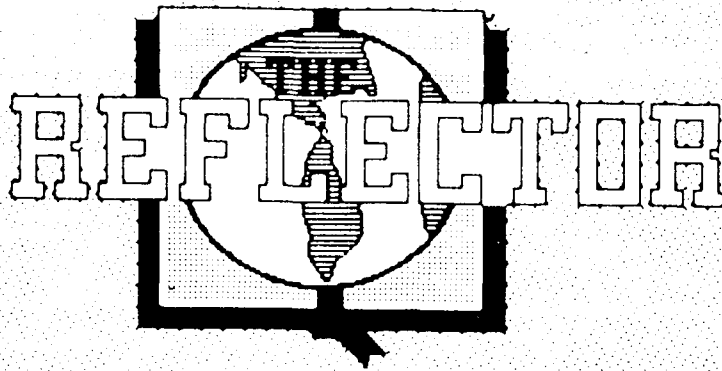


JULY

1985



VOL. 25 • NO. 7

THE BOOING SPECTATORS

• BILL HALL

Have you ever noticed who does the booing at a ball game? It's not the players on the field. They have made their own mistakes and they are not inclined to boo their fellow-player when he makes his. They are pulling for one another, encouraging, helpful. They play as a team, win or lose as a team, suffer together as a team, rejoice together as a team. It is the spectators who boo. So it is in every walk of life: it is the spectators who as a rule do the criticizing, not the participants.

Unfortunately, in every congregation there are the spectators and the participants. The spectators never teach a Bible class, preach, lead singing, or preside at the table; they really don't get that much involved in the worship itself. But more often than not, they are the very ones who are found criticizing the preacher or song leader or Bible class teacher. They are the ones who are so embarrassed and incensed when someone inadvertently commits an "er-

ror" in his efforts to lead the group. They come wanting to hear something interesting and that will make the time fly by. If they hear it, they "cheer"; if not they "boo".

Not so with the true participants, those who are really involved in the Lord's work. They are the ones "cheering on" that "rookie" who is preaching his first sermon or leading his first song. When a brother attempts to teach his first Bible class, they are looking for ways to be helpful. They are sympathetic; they rejoice in the success of others; they mourn over the sorrows of others; they feel for the one who has failed, make allowances for him, encourage him to try again, and assure him that he will do better next time. They rejoice especially in the development of the young men and women in the Lord's work. They are just as nervous and excited when the young people make their first attempt at presiding at the table or teaching a class as they would be if it were their own children.

How many preachers have decided to move because of the booing spectators right at the time when the participants were enjoying their greatest spiritual growth? How many elders have planned a work around the demands of the spectators rather than the needs of the participants?

Spectators need to become participants and find out what it's like out there "on the field". Participants need to keep on doing their best, ignoring the "boos" while looking to their all-seeing and understanding "Manager" for approval. All need to be preparing for judgment, where it will be the "doers of the word", not the critics, who will be saved. "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another: love as brothers, be tender-hearted, be courteous" (1 Pet. 3:8).

Christians, like ball players, make a sad mistake when they listen too closely to the "boo-birds".

△



WARNING AND WITHDRAWING

• EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

I heard a preacher ironically say, "We don't withdraw from anyone, we just drop them from the directory". Is this not true of too many congregations?

The brethren asked me to preach on "church discipline" during a gospel meeting. I introduced the lesson with a story. The roads were not paved out in the country where I used to live. They became extremely rough if they were not grated often. The Road Commissioner was elected every four years. One election year, the Commissioner was out campaigning for re-election. After a bumpy ride to a farm house, he told the farmer to expect the road grater within a week to smooth that road out. The farmer protested, "Please don't do that. I have a three year old cow that has never seen one of those contraptions. It might scare her so badly that she would jump the fence and run off."

I warned those brethren that since they had neglected discipline so long there would be many who had never seen it. They should prepare for it to scare some so badly that they will jump the fence and run away.

When a congregation makes it clear that it will practice discipline it can expect some problems. Experienced preachers and elders can testify to that fact. This is no excuse for abandoning a command of the Lord. (See 2 Thess.

3:6, 14, 1 Cor. 5). Such action is both corrective and punitive ("punishment"¹ - 2 Cor. 2:6). Punishment is not pleasant.

Some will resent and criticize any punitive action toward anyone. Some will resent it when it is toward family or friends. It may be simply deciding that it is unwise to use one in public worship. It may be deciding to withdraw from him.

Others will want the axe dropped immediately upon learning or suspicioning wrong-doing by a member. So, those whose responsibility it is to lead catch it from both directions.

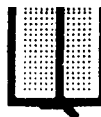
There comes a time when brethren must decide that warnings are not moving one toward repentance. They must take stronger action. We need to pray for wisdom for ourselves and others who must make this decision. We do the Lord, the church, and the disorderly a disservice by not acting. One may walk into complete apostacy without giving withdrawal an opportunity to shame him into repentance.

Punitive discipline should not be an early step of correction. Paul told the church at Thessalonica in his **first** letter to "warn² the unruly³ (disorderly)". He told them in the **second** letter (likely written weeks or months later) to "**withdraw** from the disorderly". Warn first, then withdraw. We are to reject the

heretic (devisive man⁵) AFTER the first and second admonition. I doubt that this means to give the first admonition² Wednesday night, the second on Sunday morning, and then reject him on Sunday night. Nor does it mean warn him this year, again next year and reject him the third year. First, we must determine that one is "**walking**⁴ disorderly". This takes some time. Then we must give each admonition or warning a chance to work. This takes time. We must hope that it will not come to punitive discipline. If one is obviously walking disorderly and proper warnings do not correct him - then we should discipline him in fear and trembling.

A word or two about the warnings, admonitions, and rebukes. It is not just a matter of telling one: "You are wrong. Shape up. Or else." We are to couple any reproving or rebuking with "all⁶ long-suffering and teaching". (2 Tim. 4:2). It doesn't take much effort or study to merely tell one that he is wrong and ought to be disciplined. There are many who a very gifted at this kind of admonition. It takes a great deal of study and effort to do it with all long-suffering and teaching. We should not simply tell one that he is wrong. We should patiently **teach** him that he is wrong and why. (See 2 Tim.

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THE REFLECTOR
USPS 606-140
 is published monthly by
Fultondale
Church of Christ
 meeting at
2005 Elkwood Dr.
Fultondale, Alabama

MAILING ADDRESS
The Reflector
3004 Brakefield Dr.
Fultondale, AL 35068

Edited By:
Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

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Warning & Withdrawing (Continued)

2:24-26.) It takes a lot more time and patience to teach one that he is wrong than it does to tell him so. If warnings, rebukes, reproofs or admonitions "with all longsuffering and teaching" fail to bring the person to his senses - then and only then is punitive discipline in order.

Let us learn both to warn and to withdraw. Not neglecting either. Putting each in its proper place. Doing our best to do each in the proper way.

¹ **Punishment** - "EPITIMIA... in the N. T. denotes penalty, punishment, 2 Cor. 2:6. Originally it signified the enjoyment of the rights and privileges of citizenship; then it became used of the estimate... fixed by a judge on the infringement of such rights, and hence, in general, a penalty." - **Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words**, W. E. Vine.

² **Warning & Admonition** - "NOUTHETEO... means to put in mind, admonish,... 1 Thess. 5:12,14 (A.V. 'warn')...It is used (a) of instruction (b) of warning. It is thus distinguished from paideuo, to correct by discipline, to train by act, Heb. 12:6; cp. Eph. 6:4." - Ibid.

³ **Disorderly & Unruly** - "ATAKTOS"... signifies not keeping order... it is especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate; it is used in 1 Thess. 5:14, describing certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit, whether by excitability or officiousness or idleness." - Ibid.

⁴ **Walk** - "PERIPATEO"... "(b) figuratively, 'signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life, whether of the unregenerate, Eph. 4:17, or of the believer, "1 Cor. 7:17; Col. 2:6. It is applied to the observance of religious ordinances, Acts 21:21; Heb. 13:9, marg., as well as moral conduct." - Ibid.

⁵ **Heretic or Divisive man or Factious man** - "HAIRETIKOS"... primarily denotes capable of choosing...; hence, causing division by a party spirit, factious, Tit. 3:10" - Ibid.

⁶ **Longsuffering** - "MARKOTHUMIA... forbearance, patience, longsuffering (makros, long, thumos, temper), is usually rendered 'longsuffering'...**Note:** 'Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; (Emphasis by EOB) it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy..." - Ibid. Δ



SOLVING LOCAL PROBLEMS

• MORRIS NORMAN

The book of Acts can be studied as to problems facing 1st century saints and how they were solved. Acts 6:1-7 is such a setting, read it now. Now Jerusalem solved this problem teaches us how to solve problems today.

1. There will be problems: as long as there are people. Personalities will clash; needs will vary and lack of concern will cause neglect; various stages of growth will show immaturity; proper leadership will be lacking. With mature leadership, the solving of problems will result in growth and harmony.

2. Problems come from neglect (6:1). This is true in the home where family members neglect responsibilities. It is true when individuals neglect God-given abilities (1 Tim. 4:14). So in the local church, souls are lost when those weak in the faith are neglected. We lose a full 50% of those baptized by neglect. We are too busy with personal affairs to be aware of the needs of others. Lack of planning and expediting needed

work causes lost opportunities, and those who would be tender to the truth are lost in error.

3. Neglect can result in murmuring (6:1). Murmuring is condemned and listed with the vilest of sins (Jude 16; 1 Cor. 10:10). We are urged not to (Phil. 2:14). But when needs are not met, this can produce frustration resulting in murmuring. Many a church with great potential, with incompetent leadership, has ended up with a frustrated, complaining membership.

4. There are priorities (6:2). A neglect is not intentional. It could be an oversight because of the priorities toward spiritual work, which is always more important than food or raiment. Comfortable, convenient buildings are nice but saving souls tops the list. If there is neglect, let it not be here. Neither should personal problems be put before the more pressing problems of faltering souls that need attention.

5. God has solutions through leadership He provides

(6:2). Paul urged Corinth to seek the wise to aid in spiritual judgments (1 Cor. 6:5). He tells us to follow the example of those who mind to be righteous by faith (Phil. 3:17). God ordained qualified men (elders) to feed (shepherd), to take oversight, to watch for souls. Most of our problems, neglect and murmuring results from immature, unqualified leaders.

6. Allocate the work (6:3). Elders can't do it all; when they try, there is neglect. Involve others; develop leadership; let it be their work too. The apostles told the church to select their own servants.

7. Select qualified people (6:3). Let them be a part of the leadership. There are many competent saints; assign them work to do, then turn them loose and let them do it. We may be surprised at the result.

8. Give yourselves to prayer. (6:6).

9. The work will prosper (6:7). Proper solutions give positive results.

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