

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM THE REAL ISSUE

In a battle over truth, one tactic that enemies of God often employ is doing all that they can do to try and get people to divert their attention away from the real issue at hand (whatever it may be). Let's note some examples from scripture:

- King Ahab was a wicked king. A champion of idolatry. Scripture says of him: “*And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*” (1 Kings 16:30-33). Ahab led the nation of Israel further into idolatry. The prophet Elijah announced the consequence for such: a drought would come (1 Kings 17:1; cf. Deut. 11:16-17). Later, during the drought, Elijah and Ahab met face to face. Did Ahab confess his sins and turn back to God? No! Instead he sought to divert attention away from the real issue by labeling Elijah a trouble maker (1 Kings 18:17).
- The apostle Paul, on one occasion, had the audience of some governing officials. One of these officials was a man named Festus. Paul spoke of the suffering and resurrection of Christ from the dead (Acts 26:23). Did Festus respond by saying, “*Wow, I need to look seriously into this claim for my soul's sake!*?” No! Instead he sought to divert attention away from the real issue by claiming that Paul had lost his mind (Acts 24:26).
- John the Baptist spoke plainly to the corrupt religious leaders of his day. He underscored their true character and called for genuine, verifiable repentance (Matt. 3:1-7). Did those corrupt religious leaders look inward and change? No! Instead they sought to divert attention away from the real issue by claiming John was demon possessed (Lk. 7:30-33).
- The hard-hearted Jews, tried time and again to divert attention away from the fact that Jesus was, indeed, the long awaited Messiah. They claimed He was demon possessed (Jn. 10:19-20). They attributed His miracles to the forces of evil (Mt. 12:14). They called Him the friend of sinners, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber (Mt. 11:19). Sad.

More biblical examples could be given, but let's focus in on the present time for just a moment. It is very obvious that today many “church of Christ's” are experts at diverting attention from many an issue. Let me share some examples with you.

- I know a preacher in Texas who some years ago stood up against the errors of the social gospel, institutionalism, unlimited benevolence on behalf of the local church, church co-operation, etc. Rather than accept the scriptural conclusions this man presented, the group he was working with sought to divert attention away from the real issue by claiming that the preacher had his mind impaired due to an electrical accident. By the way, is that the stupidest excuse you have ever heard or what?
- I know a preacher who stood up to the “elders” of a congregation in West Virginia. He informed them that they were off base in numerous areas. Rather than accept the scriptural conclusion the preacher presented, the “elders” (along with almost the entire congregation) vilified the preacher calling him “mean spirited” among other things. What were they doing? Diverting attention away from the real issue.
- I know a fellow who preaches in Kentucky. Not too long ago he had to point out some inconsistencies in one he was seeking to bring out of error. Did the erring individual accept the gentle reproof? No! Instead, he laid one charge after another at the feet of the one who tried to instruct him – seeking to divert attention away from the real issue.

On and on the examples could go! To dodge the real issue (whatever it may be), and in order to divert others from the real issue, it's common for the “learned” to say things like: “*He's just young,*” “*He speaks too forcefully,*” “*He has his own agenda,*” “*He preaches hate,*” “*He fell in with the wrong crowd of preachers,*” etc.

Beloved, be smart. Remember souls are on the line. Don't let some reprobate divert your attention away from the real issue.