

Nehemiah 8:14-18

And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

WELCOME CORRECTION

Pastor Timothy was urged to "correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2 NIV). Here is a good word on correction, adopted from A.W. Tozer's thoughts *On Receiving Admonition*: "An odd little passage in the Book of Ecclesiastes speaks of "an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."It is not hard to understand why an old *foolish* king would feel that he was beyond admonition. After years of giving orders, he simply might not be able to entertain the notion that he should take advice from others. To him right had become synonymous with his will and wrong, anything contrary. The idea that there was anyone to reprove him would not enter his mind.

Regardless of the moral process by which he arrived at his hardened state, the bell had already tolled for him, he was a lost man. God had left him to his fatal conceit. And soon he would die physically, yet as a fool dies. When Christ came to the Jews He found them chuck full of that arrogant self-confidence that would not accept reproof as well. "We be Abraham's seed," they said coldly when He talked to them about their sins and their need of salvation. The common people heard Him and repented, but the Jewish priests had ruled the roost too long to be willing to surrender their privileged position. Like the old king, they had gotten accustomed to rule. They were beyond reproof."

Churches and Christian organizations have a tendency to fall into the same error: inability to receive admonition. After a time of growth and successful labour comes the deadly psychology of self-congratulation. The leaders come to accept themselves as special objects of the divine favour; their success is proof enough that this is so. They must therefore be right, and anyone who tries to call them to account is instantly written off as an unauthorized meddler.

Those who have already entered the state where they can no longer receive admonition are not likely to profit by this warning. But we can place markers along the way to prevent the next traveller from going over. Here are a few:

1. Don't defend your church or organization against criticism. If the criticism is false it can do no harm. If it is true you need to hear it and do something about it.
2. Be concerned not with what you have accomplished but over what you might have accomplished if you had followed the Lord completely. It is better to say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."
3. When reproved, pay no attention to the source. An enemy is often of greater value to you than a friend because he is not influenced by sympathy.
4. Keep your heart open to the correction of the Lord regardless of who holds the whip. The great saints all learned to take a licking gracefully-and that may be why they were great saints.

What is my response:
