

# CONFRONTED or PACIFIED?

Let's face it. Not too many of us enjoy confrontation. Oh yes, there are those that truly get a charge out of being confrontational. There are others that run as fast as they can to escape from or do everything they can to avoid confrontation.

The definition of the term "confront" or "confronted" is as follows. First of all it is a verb therefore it is an action word. It means to face up to and deal with (a problem or difficult situation); to compel (someone) to face or consider something, especially by way of accusation. To appear or be placed in front of (someone) so as to unsettle or threaten; to challenge in opposition; to encounter face to face. Confront or to be confronted means either to face a situation that makes you uncomfortable, or to say something to someone about something they've done that bothers you.

The polar opposite to being confronted is "pacified." The term "pacify" or "pacified" is also a verb (an action word). It means to allay the anger of someone; to soothe; to appease; too propitiate; to restore to a tranquil state (to settle them down); to reduce someone to a submissive state (subdue); to placate.

If we compare the two above definitions of "confronted" and "pacified" it would seem that the gentler and nicer of the two would be the term "pacified." After all, the term "pacified" is associated with the term pacifist which is associated with the aspect of being peaceful which would avoid any confrontation at all. To many believers we would think that this is what we were called to be. Wasn't Jesus a pacifist? Didn't He speak of peace and love and speak against confrontation?

It is true that Jesus taught in His "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." However, we have taken this teaching out of its context and used it many times to say something different than what Jesus' intent was. When the concept of "peace" is used in the Bible it is not necessarily concerning peace among one another. Its primary usage is first to be addressed between God and Man. Biblical peace is primarily concerned in conjunction with the restoration of the relationship between God and Man.

At Jesus' birth the angels announced "*peace on earth and good will to all men.*" What they were saying was that God was making a way of restoring relationship between Him and Man. It was to be found in Bethlehem, laying in a manger, in the form of a newborn whose name was Jesus who would one day be crucified on a cross to save us from an eternity of being separated from God. True peace according to the Bible is first experienced through being "set at one again" with God. This only comes through faith in the Son of God - Jesus. We are to be God's "peacemakers" by being His messengers, His ambassadors, to others so that they can then turn and enter into a restored relationship with the Father through Jesus.

That is exactly what Jesus did. He was God's "Messenger of the Covenant." (Malachi 3:1) He was God's "peacemaker." He is the "Prince of peace." However, we also see that in fulfilling His role as God's "peacemaker," during His ministry, a large part of Jesus' method of bringing God's truth was the use of confronting people. Yes, Jesus was a "confronter." He confronted the religious leaders. He confronted His disciples. He confronted even the sinner.

Using our definition of "confront," as we look through the Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus definitely challenged and exhorted people to face up to and deal with their sin and sinful attitudes of heart. He compelled them through His teachings and parables to consider their ways. When dealing with the religious leaders He did actually accuse them, even to the point of calling them "white washed sepulchers" in the hopes of waking them up to change from their wicked ways. There were times when He gave them the "unsettling" news that they were committing blasphemy and therefore in danger of hell fire and eternal damnation. He definitely challenged and was in opposition to the "traditions" that they were placing upon the people which were never a part of God's teachings and instructions found in Torah.

He confronted and challenged people by speaking about life's sinful tendencies for the purpose of bringing them to a place of decision concerning their own lifestyles and turning back to the Father. He confronted His disciples concerning their lack of compassion for the people, their unbelief and their lack of faith in Him. Above all, Jesus confronted people face to face and not behind their back. He confronted, and He did it quite openly, without any "veiled" words. He said what He meant and He meant what He said. All for the purpose of bringing people to a place of change and turning their hearts back to the Father.

Having said all of the above, the most important aspect to remember is that when Jesus did confront people it was done with absolute, 100% pure love. Those who were open to being confronted with their sins and failures seemed to be drawn even more to Him. Those who refused and rejected to be confronted with their sins and failures despised and rejected the Good News that Jesus brought. In their own "self-made self-righteousness" they remained blinded to the truth and became "un-teachable."

We fail to realize that a very large part of the Gospel message is the message of repentance. Uh-oh!! I said the dreaded "r" word. To repent means to turn from your wicked ways and turn towards God and His ways. John the Baptist declared this in preparation for the coming of Jesus. Jesus taught the need to repent. He and John both declared, "*Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.*" True repentance always precedes a true experience of the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

All this leads us to our essay topic question, "Confronted or Pacified?" I am asking this question to each of us as believers. I guess the question in its entirety should really be, "When we gather together in a corporate setting in which we come to worship and as the Word of God is being brought forth, should I be desiring to be confronted to change or do I simply want to be pacified thinking that I am okay and there is no need to change? Does this hold true in my own personal time of study and prayer?"

This may seem like a silly question. However, what prompted me to begin asking this question was a sign that I saw as I was driving by a church the other day. The sign read, "Welcome. Don't Worry. We won't try to change you." Now on face value, as I read that, I said to myself that it is true. Only God can truly change a person. However, as I began to ponder on that sign, I began to think to myself, "Hmmm... Was that what that sign was really saying?"

I decided to look up the website of that church and its denomination. Sure enough and lo and behold what I read was, let's say, very liberal. It was very much into the LGBTQ agenda and other things that have become and are very much infiltrating more and more church bodies these days. Therefore, the sign was declaring that it was okay to come, just as you are, with all the wickedness and carnality of your lifestyle of sin – you will not be confronted but rather you will be affirmed, pacified and placated.

Now, I know that there is a fine line here that I am teetering on. Let me first say that I believe that every church door needs to be open to anyone and everyone without discrimination or prejudiced in ANY way. That is exactly what Jesus did. He preached the Good News to anyone who would listen. However, as mentioned previously, Jesus never compromised His message. He always confronted everyone He came in contact with when it came to sin and lifestyle choices.

In John 5:1-15 we read of the account where Jesus healed an invalid by the Pool of Bethesda. The man then walked from the pool and went to the Temple. Jesus personally went and sought out the man again. He told him, "*See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you*" (verse 14). It is clear that Jesus knew what had caused the man's condition. According to Jesus it was caused by the man's sinful choices. In this, Jesus actually "confronted" the man with a choice that he and only he could opt to do or not do. Jesus warned the man that he had been given a second chance and that he should make better choices. Jesus never said that the man's healing would be taken away. However, if the man **returned to his sinful behavior**, he would have wasted the opportunity Jesus gave him to live a whole and forgiven life.

In essence Jesus was saying to this man, "Go and sin no more." We must realize that Jesus was not speaking of a life of sinless perfection. Let's face it. That would be a cruel thing to ask of anyone for no one can do that. What Jesus was saying was that He was warning against a **return** to sinful lifestyle choices. His words both extended mercy and at the same time exhorted a mentality of holiness. Jesus always walked in the perfect balance of "grace and truth" (John 1:14). With grace, mercy and forgiveness comes the expectation that we will not continue in the same path of rebelliousness (sinful lifestyle choices).

Those who know God's love should naturally desire and want to obey Him, thereby expressing their love of and for Him because He first extended His love towards them. Those forgiven by His amazing grace and mercy should understand this whole concept and desire to obey the Lord's commandments simply because this is what blesses His heart and allows for His blessing to flow even more. Obedience is never to be done out of fear and bondage, but rather out of love and adoration, doing all things "unto Him," not for Him, as acts of worship.

Unfortunately, the problem that has risen up in these last days is the misconstrued and twisted concept of what is or what is not, sin. As mentioned previously, concerning that sign I saw. What it was saying was that if you are gay or transgender, that it is no longer sin. If it is no longer sin then there is no need for anyone to be "confronted" to change. Instead they are "pacified" into believing that everything is okay. The individual is not confronted to turn (repent) from that lifestyle but rather they are encouraged to stay in it.

The bigger problem is that if homosexuality is not a sinful, rebellious lifestyle contrary to God and His Word, then where does it end? That must mean that adultery and living in an adulterous affair is no longer a sin so there is no longer a need to change from that lifestyle (although it is one of the Ten Commandments). That must mean that living a life of fornication is no longer a sin so there is no need to change from that lifestyle. That must mean that abortion is now to be permitted because the baby within the womb is not really a living breathing person (even though the Word tells us differently). And the list goes on – there is no need for a thief to change; there is no longer the need for a murderer to stop their murdering ways; there is no need to stop lusting over what others may have; etc.

Where does it end? If you bring it to its fullest conclusion, the finality of is that there is no longer any need to repent and change your lifestyle because there is nothing to be repentant for. This breeds lawlessness and ultimately, as it states in 1Timothy 4:2, *"...having their conscience seared with a hot iron..."* Unfortunately, in many places that call themselves the Body of Christ, this is what it has already become and they justify it by a misconstrued and twisted concept of the Word of God taken out of context.

Just as Jesus confronted people with their errors in lifestyle and misunderstanding of God and His Word, so does Paul, the great apostle of "grace," confront His readers and those he preached to and taught concerning these things. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it clearly, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."* This means that the "old sinful lifestyle" and its ways are to become dead to the individual and they are to take on the new lifestyle that was role modeled and is found in Christ. Through the blood of Jesus, we are no longer looked upon as a sinner in the eyes of the Father, therefore we need to stop living the life of a sinner and begin living the lifestyle as a child of the Most High God.

Paul clearly states in his letters that we are to "put off" the old man with its deeds of the flesh with its lusts and wickedness. We, as joint heirs with Jesus and children of God, are to "put on" the deeds and lifestyle that the Holy Spirit within will lead us into living. We are the temple of His Spirit. He dwells within us. Let us read 1Corinthians 6:12-20 as I believe it states our point quite well, *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and*

*will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

All of the above does not negate nor does it affect God's grace towards us. It actually accentuates His grace. God's grace sees us in our sin yet still reaches out to us because of His love for us. God is a gracious God. He shows and bestows great favor towards all. He saw us destined to an eternity of separation from Him (eternal death). It was God's love (John 3:16) that caused His grace and favor to be poured out to a sinful Man (Ephesians 2:8-9). His love and grace was then manifested through His great mercy in sending Jesus to save us from that horrible destiny. By believing and accepting what Jesus has done we are "set at one again" with the Father.

As we have discussed, Jesus was never afraid to lovingly confront and tell people the truth. This is because as stated in John 8:32, *"...the truth shall make you free."* Free from the bondage of being deceived and pacified into thinking everything is okay when it is not. We all need people in our lives who will lovingly "confront" us when we are headed in the wrong direction. We need pastors and leaders who are not afraid to confront their congregations to change from their ways of compromise or incorrect and unholy lifestyles. The Body of Christ must be lovingly confronted to follow after the lifestyle that the full Bible teaches and that Jesus role modeled. Yes, we need to teach of God's love and grace but we must be careful that we do not get caught into pacifying people by a false Gospel that tells them they are okay yet they are continuing in the same path of rebelliousness (sinful lifestyle choices) and disobedience to His commandments.

There must be a return to the true Word of God – from Genesis to Revelation. There must be a return to the desire for the entirety of scripture. We must refrain from the temptation of yielding to a "pick and choose" menu Gospel. We must resist from becoming overbalanced in one area and neglecting all the others. This may cause many ministries to actually shrink. However, that should never be a deterrent from bringing forth and teaching the truth. The greatest role model for this was Jesus' ministry. He lovingly confronted everyone He came in contact with. They were all sinners. There were none righteous – not one. There were many who rejected the message to repent and change their lives. However, as we know there were many who heard the truth, repented and turned the world upside down.

The Body of Christ needs to be the "salt" and "light" that Jesus called us to be. (Matthew 5:11-13) Salt and light are both "difference makers." Whenever they are in action they both confront and change the environment they interact with. Salt cracks the hardest ice, preserves and seasons food. Light drives away the darkness. I believe that is what many in the world today are truly seeking after.

We must remember that just as we saw with Jesus and the multitudes that heard and followed Him - the truth will either offend or repel people away or it will confront, convict their hearts and draw them to Him. I believe most people who are sincerely seeking truth sincerely desire to be confronted with the truth and not simply pacified, placated and entertained. I pray we can say the same for those of us in the Body of Christ. Hmmm.....