

*A Stop by Quiet Waters*  
by  
Dick Germaine

**Give It All You've Got!**

*"If we're going to see greater harmony between religious groups in our country Christians are going to have to play down Jesus Christ."* The guest being interviewed on the NPR program was the author of a book urging a constitutional convention to bring the US Constitution up to date with the demands of life in a global community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He said the authors of our constitution drafted a document that fit life and world politics in the eighteenth century, but they could not have envisioned what life would be like today. His contention was that the same thing was true of Christianity, it needed to be brought up to date with today's world.

This sort of thinking is not new.

The apostles Peter and John met it in Acts 4: *"The ruler and elders... charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."*

Paul and Silas encountered it in Philippi: *"These men advocate customs that are not lawful for us to accept... and when they had inflicted many blows on them they threw them into prison."*

People in Ephesus were putting great pressure on Timothy to tone down his preaching about Jesus, so Paul wrote to him: *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling."*

We live with the same pressures on us today. I discovered as a young Christian that people did not take offense if I spoke in general terms about God, but as soon as I brought Jesus Christ into the conversation attitudes changed. It made no difference whether I was in the family circle or in public. If the Holy Spirit was at work in a person there was a desire to hear more, but if not I was cut off or tuned out. Nowhere did I experience this more powerfully than in my early years as pastor of the First Congregational Church, Hopkinton. Some people were offended by the gospel and tried to force me out. One man walked out of a service swearing and saying, *"What is this \*@#\*^## preaching about the blood of Jesus Christ all the time!"* A group of Sunday School teachers boycotted the worship services. Another group let it be known they were withholding their pledges. But those in whom the Holy Spirit was at work kept coming to Christ and the kingdom of God was growing.

Pastor, the Christmas season is on us and you have a great opportunity to declare the gospel. As you do so you will greatly encourage the believers in your congregation and you will challenge unbelievers to acknowledge their sin and surrender their lives to the Lord Jesus. Remember, the power of the gospel is in the gospel not in the one who proclaims it, so put the whole gospel out there for all to see.

We should never offend by our conduct or attitudes, but let's never try to remove the offense of the gospel, thinking that in this way people will be more likely to receive it. The characteristics of a true preacher of the gospel are: earnestness – accuracy – clarity – truthfulness – boldness – love – compassion.

Paul defined his preaching this way: “*But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*” (1 Cor. 1:23-24) Peter explained the gospel this way: “*A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* (1 Peter 2:8-9)

Sally Leighton prayed for her husband, Bob, for nine years, but to all appearances he seemed uninterested, resistant. Then one Christmas eve he agreed to attend our Candlelight Communion service with her. As I was preaching the gospel he came under conviction and surrendered his life to Christ during the service. They shared this with me in tears and great joy after the service. These are the experiences that lift a pastor's heart and expose the foolishness of toning down the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whether you're a pastor or layperson, give it all you've got while you have the opportunity to do so, and you will please our great God who will use you and prosper your work for him.

Peace and joy in Christ,  
Dick Germaine