

Watchdogs Or Hushpuppies?

Often those who find themselves in indefensible positions resort to "invective" for justification. One of the more popular invectives for those who speak out against error and criticize false teaching is "watchdog." The usual criticism of "watchdogs" is that they are not kind in the way they deal with problems. But "watchdog" is intended as invective, not a kind or descriptive way of putting things at all. Those who use it must make an effort not to sound bitter or superior. And it wreaks positively of what it is intended to criticize. What does God say? *"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me"* (Ezekiel 3:17). God commends the function of "watchdogs," but uses a more functional and less abusive term -- "watchman."

Was Paul being a "watchdog" when he told the brethren to reprove those who work darkness (Ephesians 5:11)? Notice Galatians 2:11-14: *"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"* When error is publicly proclaimed or endorsed, it needs to be publicly exposed. To do less is to neglect Paul's example and God's will.

The best watchdogs are the ones who make the most noise. The false teacher cannot abide in the noise of exposure and contradiction. It is the dog that doesn't bark -- the "hushpuppy" -- that is condemned in scripture. *"His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber"* (Isaiah 56:10). Faithful servants are watchful (Mark 13:37).

Adapted From David Baker