

“FOR MY SAKE”

by Tom Wacaster

Bobby Key tells of a little dog that President Theodore Roosevelt owned, which was always getting into fights. The little fellow always took a beating. One day he tackled a mangy cur and took a real whipping. A man standing near by said, "Mr. Roosevelt, your dog isn't much of a fighter." Teddy replied, "He is a good fighter, but he is a poor judge of dogs." When I was growing up it was my intention to remain aloof of the little scuffles that may have arisen in school. I despised a fight! Partly because of my size, but mostly because mom and dad taught us to avoid such things. But good intentions never won an argument, and as hard as I tried, I still managed to get into my share of trouble. When I was in Junior high, attending John B. Hood school in a northern suburb of Dallas, there was this tall, rather husky fellow who liked to demonstrate his brute strength. In short, he loved to pick a fight with those smaller than himself (which would encompass the whole of the P.E. class). As I recall, we were sitting in the bleachers, listening to one of those long winded coaches deliver a lecture. Unknown to me, this overgrown social misfit decided he would tie my shoe laces around one of the metal brackets on the bleacher. When the lecture was over, and we got up to leave, I fell flat on my face, snapped the laces off at the shoe, and suffered injury to my body, and my pride. Honor was at stake here! Somehow I managed to open my mouth, and things would be settled after school that afternoon. I'll not tell you how things turned out, but I determined from that day forward that I would learn to be a peace maker. I have never enjoyed controversy. I don't suppose any of us do. But there are times when we must stand for that which is right, face the enemy square in the eyes, and let come what may. Our Lord was a controversialist. He did not run from confrontation, nor did He ever allow the truth to suffer at the hands of the enemy. Beloved, the very nature of truth is controversial. And if our Lord suffered reproach, ridicule, and rejection from His own, what makes us think that we will escape the same? So when do we fight, and when do we turn and walk away? Our Lord provided the key: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, FOR MY SAKE" (Matthew 5:11). If at any time the truth is at stake, or the honor of the Lord is threatened, then it is time to stand in the gap and let courage prevail. Sometimes wisdom dictates that we simply walk away from an argument and let the fool be known by his folly. When our personal feelings are at stake, or when pride is threatened, it might be good to be a peace maker. Too many congregations have been divided over petty differences. Matters of opinion often are treated as matters of doctrine. Though sometimes it is difficult to determine what constitutes opinion vs. doctrine, it is essential that we recognize the difference - even if it means withholding judgment until we are certain it truly IS a matter of doctrine. But when the truth is at stake - when the clear teaching of God's word is threatened - then we must, like our Savior, draw the sword and march into battle. Fear must give way to faith, and courage must prevail. We must be willing to face the enemy with the full thrust of God's word, holding back nothing, pitying none, and loving God and His word above all else. The late J.W. McGarvey noted, "Where the hottest fire of the enemy is, thither the return fire must be directed" (J.W. McGarvey). Let us encourage those who are determined to preach the truth, and let us determine that we will do all within our power to let our lives demonstrate a courage that is willing to die "for His sake." We'll close with the following poem

The World Needs Men

The world needs men who love the truth
And hold ideals others spurn;
Who work to conquer social ills
And make mankind their great concern.
It pleads for men whose thoughts are right,
Who give the pure and noble wings;
For they alone can lift the race
From baser thoughts to which it clings.

The world needs men-- men unafraid
To face the marching hordes of might;
With well-trained mind and ready voice
To speak courageously for right.
It calls for men who walk with God;
Who make the cause of Christ their own,
And in this flippant, careless age,
All other lifeless gods, disown.

--George W. Wiseman
(in Doran's Ministers Manual, 1945)