

# Grace Notes

## A Critical Spirit

1.13.10



***Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.  
(Zechariah 3:1)***

The 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher, E.M Bounds, is most known for his books on prayer. In his classic, *"Power Through Prayer,"* he wrote this priceless piece of advice to pastors, *"The preacher's sharpest and strongest preaching should be to himself."*

The Pharisees were the "preachers" of Jesus' time. They made "criticizing others" a full-time job - all in the name of "serving God." (It's no wonder Jesus' words on this particular topic were almost always directed their way. In addition, the book of Jude is a stinging indictment on religious leaders who tend to be *"grumblers and fault-finders."* vs 16)

Well, this isn't just about preachers. Bounds' advice is good for us all. A critical/fault-finding spirit is just as alive & well in modern church life as it was in the first century. Criticizing others makes us feel better about ourselves. Heck, it's easier fixing someone else's problems rather than addressing my own messed up life. Right?

As made clear in the Zechariah passage cited above, Satan - the "great accuser" - was the original "fault-finder" i.e. the original *Critical Spirit*. And when we look down on others, casting our "self-righteous stones", believing somehow our "righteous deeds" put us on a higher level than others, we look and smell just like the original *Critical Spirit*.

Jesus made it clear where our critical eye should fix its gaze—our own heart. He said, *"...Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:2-4)*

Eugene Peterson's *The Message Bible* renders part of the passage this way: *"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults— unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own....Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor."*

Ouch.

***Soli Deo Gloria, Nick***

