

# Destructive Complexes

By: Don Martin

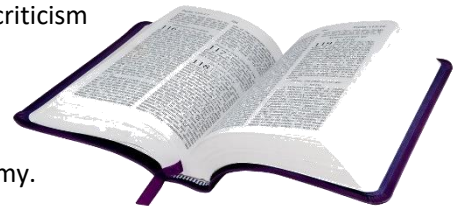
If the devil can get someone headed in the wrong direction, I imagine his next move is to insulate that person from any calls to turn back. Some common deceptions that harden us against the truth:

- 1) "Anyone who criticizes me is a 'hater.'" Instead of hearing what they have to say, I'll just assume they are bitter, jealous, etc.
- 2) "Those who rebuke me are hypocrites." This dismisses any rebuke because of flaws (real or imagined) in the rebuker.
- 3) "Admonitions are attacks!" Those who criticize are seen as the enemy, and their words are personal attacks. I must shield myself from their hurtful words (and any truth they might contain).
- 4) "Only God can judge me." Who do these people think they are, trying to correct me? They should focus on themselves and leave me alone.
- 5) "True friends are those who support me." I will choose to focus on the opinions of those who agree with me

If someone adopts these attitudes toward admonitions, they will be impervious to correction. Isn't that exactly what the devil would want?

Here are five truths from God regarding criticism (quotations from the ESV):

- 1) "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy" (**Prov. 27:6**). Someone who agrees all the time might not be our friend. A true friend says what we need to hear, even if it hurts.
- 2) "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (**1 Thess 2:13**). If a criticism is founded in God's word, we should accept it regardless of who the messenger is.
- 3) "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (**Gal. 4:16**). Just because someone says something we don't want to hear does not make them an enemy. The important question is: are they speaking the truth?
- 4) "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (**2 Tim. 4:2**). Preaching the word includes not only encouragement but also reproof and rebukes.
- 5) "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death" (**James 5:19-20**). We are our brothers' keeper.



It could be that someone who is criticizing me is indeed just an enemy, attacking me with hateful, false words. But it may also be that the very one I think is my enemy is being a true friend, reaching out with the truth to turn me from heading in the wrong direction. How can I know? By listening to their words and then evaluating myself based on God's word to see if the criticism is valid or not. It may just be that God is using that person to help me.