

write the script and give the narration), Dr. MacRae thanked me with characteristic self-possession, and I remarked that I was glad we had been able to honor him in this fashion. He replied, "Well, you have enough bricks thrown at you during your life. It's nice to receive a few roses."

Sometimes what seems to be negative criticism is not intended to be harmful or destructive. Let me illustrate. Shortly after I began teaching at Faith Seminary, I became interim pastor at a church in West Philadelphia. One Sunday evening I gave a meditation on Christ's sufferings; and I had our pianist play some soft background music appropriate to the content. After the service, as I was shaking hands at the door, a professor of mathematics at University of Pennsylvania came by and said, "I thought that message was absolutely worthless!" After catching my breath, I told him I was sorry that he felt that way. His wife and he then explained that he had a hearing difficulty, and that the piano music, although soft, produced such a jangling of discordant noise in his hearing aid that he was hardly able to understand one word I uttered! At that I was greatly relieved, for on other occasions he thought my messages were very helpful!

The moral is: Don't let yourself be puffed up with pride or dashed to despair by excessive praise or harsh criticism. Seek your praise from the Lord and try to benefit from criticism. Follow Christ's example. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, by kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Pet. 2:23). We need to learn to accept both favorable and unfavorable criticism with composure.

My third suggestion is this:

3. If we wish to have success, we must try to avoid crucial mistakes in life's important decisions.