

Preaching God Demands

Michael Hatcher, Editor

1996 Bellview Lectures

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Twenty-First Annual
Bellview Lectures

Pensacola, Florida

June 8-12, 1996

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DEDICATION



Bobby and Joan Liddell

This book containing the lectures delivered in the Twenty-first Annual Bellview Lectures June 8-12, 1996, Pensacola, Florida, is gratefully dedicated to Bobby and Joan Liddell.

This congregation has been greatly blessed and was very well served while Bobby was the minister from May 1988 through July 1994. With Joan by his side and three growing children at his feet, the Lord's cause went forward in total harmony here at Bellview. His preaching and teaching were true to the Bible and his example in personal life was above reproach. He encouraged and taught young men to preach. He conducted gospel meetings and lectures in several states as well as mission work in Southeast Asia and Latvia.

Bobby and Joan were raised in Birmingham, Alabama and attended school in Adamsville, Alabama. Bobby's advanced schooling was at

Walker College, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama; Memphis School of Preaching, Memphis, Tennessee; and Southern Christian University. He was converted from Methodism at the age of 19 years. Bobby and Joan were married in 1972. To this union were born Anthony, Nathan, and Keri. Anthony is now attending college here in Pensacola, Florida.

Bobby did congregational work as minister at the following churches of Christ: Central Church of Christ, Winfield, Alabama; Parrish Church of Christ, Parrish, Alabama; Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida; and is now working with the Merton Street Church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee.

He is presently a teacher and serves as Dean of Admissions at the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee. He is currently involved in raising funds for the new Memphis School of Preaching building.

We at Bellview greatly appreciate brother and sister Liddell and their work in the Lord's kingdom.

*Paul Brantley
Bill Gallaher
Fred Stancliff
Bellview Church of Christ*

PREFACE

It has been correctly stated that the Father had only one “only begotten Son” and He made Him a preacher. By this we learn the importance of preachers and preaching. Paul quotes Isaiah saying that the feet of those who preach are beautiful (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15). The reason they are beautiful is because of the message which they bring. They bring the message of salvation. Paul describes man’s condition as being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). God, before He created the world, established a plan to save sinful man (Rom. 8:29-34; Eph. 1:4-5; 3:9-11; 1 Pet. 1:2). It is the preacher’s privilege to proclaim this message of salvation. The faithful preacher realizes that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Through the Bible, God gives instruction relative to the work of preaching and the message of the preacher.

The men speaking on our lectureship have distinguished themselves as being men of the book. They have proclaimed that message of salvation, and lived the message they preached. We are indebted to them for the invaluable work they have made for this book and lectureship. We could never repay the time and effort they have put into making this lectureship a success.

We also express our gratitude to the Bellview elders: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancliff. These men oversee the work of this congregation, including this lectureship. Without the work and support of these men, this lectureship and book would not continue. Also, the members of this congregation are to be highly commended. They have faithfully supported the elders in the work which they have outlined. They love preachers and sound gospel preaching. Without their priceless and untiring work, mainly behind the scene, this lectureship would have ended years ago.

We send forth this book with the prayer that it will aid preachers in the great work which they are endeavoring to perform. We also hope that it will help elders, deacons and every member of the Lord’s church to understand the important work of preaching the matchless glories of God and the Bible.

Michael Hatcher, Director
March 30, 1996

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Exposition Of 2 Timothy 4:1-5	
Gary G. Colley, Sr.	1
1, 2 Timothy, Titus	
Wayne Coats	11
Exposition Of Jerimiah 1:4-10	
Dub McClish	41
The Honor Of Preaching	
Winfred Clark	61
The Work Of A Preacher	
David P. Brown	69
We Must Be Willing To Be Hated By The World And The Brethren	
Ira Y. Rice, Jr.	85
The Preacher's Message	
Noah A. Hackworth	95
God Demands Logical Preaching	
Bob Berard	107
The Preaching That Turned The World Upside Down	
Garry Barnes	121
Woe To Me If I Preach Not The Gospel	
Harrell Davidson	131
The Preaching Of Today	
Garland Elkins	143
The Changeless Message	
Marvin L. Weir	155
Preaching The Old Paths	
Curtis A. Cates	167
Preaching On The Grace Of God	
Guss Eoff	183
Preaching On The Church Of Christ	
Ronnie Hayes	195
Preaching On The Plan Of Salvation	
Michael Hatcher	207
Preaching On The Worship Of The Church	
Stanley R. Ryan	223
Preaching On The Work Of The Church	
Tim Smith	233
Preaching On The Christian Life	
Shan Jackson	243
Preaching On Heaven And Hell	
Mel Futrell	251

Jesus Christ, The Master Preacher	
Paul Sain	269
Peter As A Preacher	
Harold Bigham	279
Paul As A Preacher	
Lindell Mitchell	289
Stephen As A Preacher	
H. A. "Buster" Dobbs	301
Philip As A Preacher	
Bobby Liddell	311
John The Baptist As A Preacher	
Tommy J. Hicks	321
Micaiah As A Preacher	
Clifford Newell, Jr.	333
Amos As A Preacher	
Eddie Whitten	343

EXPOSITION OF 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

Gary G. Colley, Sr.



Gary Colley was born in Vernon, Texas, in 1934. He and his wife, Maggie, have three children and six grandchildren. All are members of the Lord's church.

Gary began preaching the gospel in 1954. He is presently working with the Southwest Church of Christ in Austin, Texas. He speaks at numerous meetings and lectureships every year and has also done radio and T.V. work on a regular basis. Gary has also taught in preacher schools for some twenty years in Oklahoma and Tennessee.

He has written for many brotherhood publications and is a staff writer for **Firm Foundation** and is the editor of the **Christian Worker**. Gary has written a book, **Bible Class Notes on the Ideal Home**, a tract, **New Translations: "What Is Wrong With Them?"**, and has published his father's book, **Fundamentals of Christianity**. He is the director of the Southwest Lectures and is editor of the book that is published.

INTRODUCTION

The theme for this year, "Preaching God Demands," is of utmost importance to our world, since "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Because of Satan's influence, Gospel preaching has always seemed to the worldly to be foolishness and has been down-played in the world. And in the last few years, the preaching of many has not been distinctively biblical, especially from those who want to change the Lord's church into a denominational body. Too many in our time are ready to tickle the ears of the worldly with stories, flattery and amusement for their audiences, but refuse to point out and reprove the favorite sins of the people! They are unwilling it seems to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. 58:1). This, of course, does not meet God's approval, since it is a direct rejection and disobedience of the commandments given by Christ to the apostles, and by Paul to Timothy, as well as to all faithful preachers today to preach the Word (Mat. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).

THE FAITHFUL MUST PREACH THE WORD

Not all have fallen into the trappings of liberalism and modernism, and for this we are thankful! We are still convinced that faithful Gospel preachers, and preaching after the New Testament order, will strengthen, build up, and stabilize the church that Jesus built (Mat. 16:18-19). The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom, upon which the kingdom was built, and upon which it depends today for its spread (Luke 8:11). Seed always contains life (Gen. 1). Preaching the Word is God's means of writing into the hearts of men His Will and Way! (cf., Heb. 8:8-12). It is the only way given by God for the church to grow! Many schemes and programs have been invented by worldly wise men today for "church growth," some even sinful in nature. God demands that action of preaching, which the world calls "foolish." God's way works! As it made the church to increase in the first century under the inspired apostles, so it will do in our present day! (cf., 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:16).

THE WORD, IMPORTANT AND POWERFUL

The Word of God is not a dead letter, as some today are heard to accuse! Rather, the Word is the powerful medium for salvation for all men who will obey it (Rom. 1:16-17; 6:16-18). It is today the only means by which God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit operate in and upon the hearts of men for conviction, conversion, and sanctification (cf., John 16:8; 17:17)! The clear exhortation and warning for the apostatizing Hebrews to remember was,

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

It is also well able to be used by elders who are commanded to "convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). The "gainsayers" are those who, because of greed in their hearts, see gain as godliness (1 Tim. 6:3-10). These would destroy, in order to serve their own lust, the Lord's precious blood-purchased body, the church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-26).

THE PREACHER IS IMPORTANT AND POWERFUL

It is an exalted privilege to preach the Gospel of Christ! Those who have fought "the good fight of the faith" in preaching the Gospel for many years (1 Tim. 6:12), would not exchange their rewarding experi-

ences for a thousand extra days anywhere else! They feel much like the Psalmist in his words of longing:

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield: Jehovah will give grace and glory; No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Jehovah of hosts, Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee (Psa. 84:10-12).

These rather state with Paul, when they consider their work and message, “I thank him that enabled me, *even* Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to *his* service” (1 Tim. 1:12).

God’s preacher must be willing to invest many hours in study to prepare himself to handle aright the precious Word (2 Tim. 2:15). He knows, if honest, that there will be no “small still voice” enabling him to preach, nor the Holy Spirit putting words in his mouth today! In this day when miracles have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8), only a dreamer would think that he can teach or preach something he does not know by study (Jam. 1:25). Timothy had to study, and so do we (2 Tim. 2:15). No man has ever sustained any measure of success in proclaiming with power the powerful Gospel of God (Rom. 1:16) without putting many hours into reading, studying, committing to memory, and meditating upon until being governed by, the New Testament of Christ (1 Tim. 4:13; Psa. 1:1-3; Mat. 26:28). There is no other way acceptable to God except for us to “hold fast the form [or pattern] of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). Even then, without many hours of “effectual fervent prayer,” this man will not avail much in his work of preaching (Jam. 5:16; 1 The. 5:17; Phi. 4:6-7). He must continually ask for wisdom to dispense correctly the knowledge which he gains (Jam. 1:15). Surely no one should be turned loose with a sword who does not know how to use it effectively and correctly (Eph. 6:17)! He could do more harm than good! The Gospel is the powerful means appointed by God for the salvation of all whose hearts are cut by the Word to believe and embrace it (Acts 2:37; Rom. 1:16)!

PAUL’S LOVE FOR TIMOTHY

Paul’s great concern and interest in the young man Timothy is very impressive. The aged, war-weary, veteran apostle, addressed two letters to Timothy, of the four personal letters (Titus, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Philemon) from his prison cell in Rome. Paul no doubt knew that

his life and work could not continue much longer. He evidently saw in Timothy his great God-given talent, a good mind to think, a knowledge of the sacred Scriptures from youth, a deep interest in lost souls, which Paul also possessed, and a strong sincerity for the welfare of the brethren in the Lord (Phi. 2:19-23).

To more fully appreciate the charge given to Timothy by the peerless apostle Paul, we need first to understand fully his great interest in Timothy. Paul considered him as his “own child in the faith,” meaning that he had assisted him in obeying the Gospel. Timothy was richly blessed however, before meeting Paul. He was blessed with a godly mother and grandmother who had instructed him from a babe in the sacred Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). This invaluable training prepared him for the obedience to the Gospel and for his subsequent work of the kingdom.

A LESSON FOR PARENTS

Paul with especial interest in Timothy, certainly wanted the best for this outstanding young man! Most parents want the best for their children, and rightly so. But, too few parents today are encouraging their sons to prepare themselves to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ! Even fewer, perhaps, are encouraging young men, and young ladies who will marry them, to prepare for being good elders, deacons, and Bible class teachers in the church! Most parents today want their sons to be doctors, jewelers, or lawyers, but not preachers of the Word! Though these are honorable professions in life, supplying all of the financial needs in this world, many parents consider preaching as a way of life is too hard! It seems that some are more interested in teaching our young how to make a living, than how to make a life that will best benefit mankind and help them go to Heaven! This sad condition must be turned around for the welfare of our children and the church of our Lord! It has been well stated, that “God had only one Son; and He made Him a preacher!”

A VESSEL UNTO HONOR

Because of Timothy’s extensive training and his devotion to God, Paul saw in him the abilities of one who was “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20-21). Paul even determined to make him a traveling assistant, which continued through Paul’s last journey to the

churches of Asia. What a wonderful honor and privilege for Timothy! It was from a Roman prison that Paul, probably one year before his death while Timothy was still in Ephesus working, wrote with impassioned words the two letters of First and Second Timothy.

EXPOSITION OF 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

The Charge

Many charges were given by Paul to benefit the influence of Timothy's good work of preaching (1 Tim. 1:3; 5:7, 21; 6:13, 17; 2 Tim. 2:14). However, never has there been such a solemn, serious, and important "charge of all charges" than is given in Second Timothy 4:1-5! The word "charge" means, **to tell or testify thoroughly**. Paul, more profoundly than any civil judge charging a jury, certainly did most forcefully tell plainly and testify thoroughly the most serious charge to Timothy! "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

In what more solemn way could a charge be invoked than to appeal to the names of God and Christ! These would testify to Timothy's honor if he succeeded, and against him in condemnation if he failed! And, at the same time, he reminds him of the fact that Jesus would be the Judge of all at the close of time, including both Timothy and his hearers! (1 Tim. 4:16). The Judgment Day will come for all following Christ's second coming, when Jesus shall return to take the ransomed home, and to deliver the kingdom back to God the Father (Heb. 9:27-28; 1 Cor. 15:24).

"Preach the Word"

The charge finds its mark in this three syllable command! Any way that one may read it, any changing of the inflection of the words or voice with which one may read, does not change this simple but profoundly important charge! It still reads and means just the same! "Preach the word." Paul emphasizes this thought by saying to Timothy that the church is the "pillar and the ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). A pillar is a prop or column to support and sustain against assaults! The ground here referred to has reference to a foundation or basis on which something stands securely. The church of Christ is the only institution in the world given such a worthy and magnanimous charge, to preach the Word of Truth to the world (Mark 16:15-16)!

What it Does Not Mean

Since the Bible deals in negatives as well as positives, we often learn by first clearing out what a subject does not mean, and then giving what it does mean. “Preach the word” does not mean, preach an illustration, preach a song, preach sentiment, preach jokes, preach flattery, preach an experience, or any other number of things men sometimes preach. The church of Christ is certainly not the “pillar and ground” of every shifting political theory (Mat. 22:20-21)! Neither is it to uphold the ever shifting philosophies of men, which have no fixed values and are largely in the realm of guesswork (Heb. 13:8; Col. 2:4-8). Paul did not instruct us to preach science! Though, judging from the modern pulpit, one might so think this to be the case! The church is not an institution for the development of sociology, biology, physiology, or any other kind of “ology.”

What it Does Mean

“Preach the word” does mean for us to preach and support the Gospel, revealed in the New Testament as the supreme system of Truth, containing Christ’s commands and promises (John 1:17; 17:17; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-3). In preserving the Truth, the church must: hold fast the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13), keep faithfully the ordinances of Christ (Mat. 28:18-20; 2 Pet. 3:18), speak only the things which befit sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1), and exemplify the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our conduct (Gal. 5:16-17,22-24; Mat. 5:16).

The Great Commission

Since preaching directly has to do with the working components of the Great Commission, which our Lord pronounced just following His death, burial, and resurrection, it deals with the salvation so needed for man’s hope (Heb. 11:1). This charge covers the mission of the church. Preaching of the Word is so connected with the eternal welfare of man, that its charge to all is recorded by all four accounts of the Gospel (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:20-22). For these and other reasons, which we mark in this lesson, its interest in our lives is paramount. It is of unparalleled importance for us to understand the connection of the Word to our duty in the church and our salvation (Jam. 1:18-25). To carry out our mission, it is also necessary to learn the working of God’s method of preaching

for delivering His message to the lost. This should help all to have a greater interest in the important work of preaching, and to seek and find the highest goals in life. One of the greatest reasons of our existence here is to strive to find our place in God's scheme, and to carry out God's aims and purposes in our lives (Eph. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:21).

Divine Illustration

God's wonderful revelation—the Bible—often gives us not only the command to do a certain thing, but also an illustration of how it is to be done! Acts eight gives the account of “a great persecution against the church” and the stoning of one of its outstanding preachers of the Word, Stephen. The disciples were scattered away from their homes, and to their honor they “went everywhere **preaching the word**” (Acts 8:4). “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ** unto them” (Acts 8:5). He preached “**the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ,**” and he preached **baptism** to which Simon, as well as other men and women submitted themselves in obedience (Acts 8:12-13). Hence, to sum up what “preach the word” means, we appeal to what was preached according to this divine illustration! We note that “preach the word” means; therefore, preaching Christ, preaching the church or kingdom of God, preaching the name of Jesus Christ, and preaching baptism! What a host of fine sermon material is here found!

Do Not Slight the Charge!

No man should for any reason slight this great charge to preach the Word! In fact, if one does preach something other than the Gospel, he should be counted under judgment, be rejected, and abhorred by all good people (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 John 9-11). Paul spoke of the “Woe” (misery, pain, wretched condition) of one who would not preach the whole council of God (1 Cor. 9:16; Acts 20:26-27). Not keeping and preaching only the Word with respect and reverence, is tragically the foundation of all division and infidelity! (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:3-5). We should preach, in season and out, the only pathway to Heaven, clearly, kindly, simply, and with fervor! As we have noticed, it is the only hope of lost man in the world! Therefore, it should be done without apology, alteration, fear, or favor. Since man is incapable of directing his own steps to Heaven and must depend on another to guide him (Mat. 5:3; Jer. 10:23; Pro. 14:12), he is not

called upon by God to take a single step that God's Word does not direct! Therefore, let us who have the Word, take courage, aim, and renewed determination to "preach the word!" (cf., 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17).

Let Us Not Fail in Our Mission

The mission of the church of Christ is clearly to "preach the word," which includes upholding, preserving, and transmitting the Word to the future. We must never forget the seven essentials of Truth, given through Paul by divine revelation and legislation, which include: one body, one hope, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father (Eph. 4:4-6). There are no non-essentials in the Truth given by Jesus Christ! The church must take its stand on the essentials of truth, settled for all time, and stand there even though all hell moves to drive her from this sure foundation (2 Tim. 2:19). We need not be intolerant of anything save sin and error!

The Narrow Way

This exclusiveness of Christianity made it so powerful in the early times that it even sent the Saviour to the cross and caused great suffering to the apostles! (cf., 2 Cor. 11). When the Word is faithfully proclaimed now, it can be just that powerful in the good and honest heart today (Luke 8:11-15). Remember the dogmatic, uncompromising, Christ or nothing approach our Lord brought! Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). This does not say, "I am merely a way," "I am one of the ways," nor "I am a little better way!" But He says, "I am the only way back to the Father!" How very important is our task in the church today of sustaining, extending and perpetuating the saving knowledge of divine Truth among men! We must not fail! Can God depend on us?

"For the Time Will Come..."

Paul, by inspiration of God, made the prediction of the time when men would make pretense of following the Lord, but of them he said, they "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They turned their ears away from the Truth because it condemned them! The preacher of Truth must "reprove, rebuke,

exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” the sin of the world (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul demonstrates this thought in referring to his own former faithful co-laborer Demas. In verse ten he said, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” He had already spoken of the perilous times coming in the last days, where he described these men as being:

lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

How destructively sad today that there are those who will turn their backs on Christ and His Word for the “fables” of the world! But there are many now who will not endure the sound, healthy doctrine of Christ. That they will not “endure it” expresses the liberal attitude of their thinking and their ill-treatment of God’s Word! Today, some have returned to the world! (cf., 2 Pet. 2:20-22). They show this by wanting to make the church of Christ just another denomination, adopting a “New Hermeneutic,” saying they have a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, having instrumental music, women in leadership, teaching grace alone, and claiming that the kingdom has not come! All these things they do, even in the face of such passages as Ephesians 5:11, Second John 9-11, and Revelation 22:18-19!

Isaiah spoke of the vanity of relying on the world, and leaving the directives of God’s Will for our lives. Of this people he said,

For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isa. 30:9-11).

Liberalism is not a becoming life-style for those who want Heaven to be their home.

But, Those on the Lord’s Side...

It is time, yea past time in many places, for “Soldiers of Christ,” those on the Lord’s side, to arise to the call of duty! Because many choose the broad way that leads to destruction does not mean that the faithful cannot and should not remain faithful and travel the narrow way which leads to life eternal! (Mat. 7:13-14). Paul made this very

clear to Timothy, in spite of what others may do: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5). For the faithful, who are keeping their eyes on the Captain of our salvation, no price is too high to pay, no persecution is too great, no compromise is acceptable to keep us out of Heaven!

We will watch against sin in our lives, “preach the Word” as we “reprove and rebuke” sin, and do all of this without fear or favor wherever we may find opportunity. As servants and messengers of the Lord, we dare not fail in the work of preaching the Word! We will “make full proof” of our work by fulfilling our duty in preaching the Word of Christ to a lost and dying world!

THE CHOICE IS OURS

We must individually determine our own character and destiny as we choose to live or choose not to live in harmony with the Lord’s Will (Mat. 7:21-24). Shall we choose to preach the Word in obedience to our Master’s command, and hear Christ say in the last Great Day, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34), or, will we hear the words of the Judge of the Universe say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41). The choice is ours!

1, 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS

Wayne Coats



W. Wayne Coats was born and reared in Mississippi. After finishing high school, he enrolled in Freed-Hardeman College. He has graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, David Lipscomb College, Middle Tennessee State University, and the Divinity School of Vanderbilt.

He met Elaine Wright while both were students at Freed-Hardeman. After a few years of courtship, they married. Their home has been blessed with four children. Wayne and Elaine now reside in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, where they own and operate Mt. Juliet Funeral Home, Mt. Juliet Memorial Gardens and Mt. Juliet Pet Cemetery.

Wayne is the author of numerous books and is active in writing and preaching and teaching at the local level and in meetings and lectures across the brotherhood.

PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

Over fifty years ago during the “Special Courses for Preachers” at Freed-Hardeman College, brother H. Leo Boles taught a class each day on Paul’s letters to Timothy. I remember how the sainted brother urged every preacher to read those two books at least once each week. How completely different the sermons of preachers would be if the great principles which Paul gave to Timothy were followed.

As we review the relationship of Paul and Timothy we are impressed with the warm bond which began early and lasted until the death of the aged apostle.

The close relationship of these two great preachers was preceded by another relationship which began with a little boy sitting on his mother’s lap, or standing by her knee as she carefully tutored him in the same principles which she had been taught by her mother. Of this blessed event Paul wrote, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). The lessons learned by Timothy would be invaluable to him in later years as he faced severe opposition while preaching the Word.

We know that the mother and grandmother of Timothy were faithful in that they demonstrated an “unhypocritical” faith. They did not use faith as a mask like a stage actor. The same kind and degree of genuine faith which mother and grandmother possessed was passed along by teaching, to the young offspring.

According to Acts 16:1, we learn that Timothy’s mother was a Jewess who believed but his father was a Greek. Here is a sharp contrast made between mother and father. The indication is that the father was not a believer. He must have been well known, “for they knew all that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:3).

Timothy lived in Lystra and was able to know something of the wickedness which existed there. The depths of sin and savagery which prevailed in the city is attested to by Luke, the inspired historian, who informs us that the people of Lystra, “stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead” (Acts 14:19). We have no way of knowing whether Timothy witnessed the stoning of Paul. We do know that the disciples stood round about Paul thinking that he was dead.

Whether Timothy was actually converted by Paul is questionable and indeed there is divergent opinions relative to the matter. Paul did not introduce Timothy to the “unhypocritical faith,” since that came from his grandmother and mother. What part, if any, Paul may have performed in Timothy’s conversion will forever remain unanswered.

When Paul began his second missionary journey, Timothy accompanied him to Berea (Acts 17:13-14). Paul went to Athens and sent for Silas and Timothy to come to him (Acts 17:15). Leaving Athens, Paul went to Corinth where he was joined by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1,5). When Paul visited Ephesus on his third missionary tour, Timothy was sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). He later joined Paul and accompanied him to Asia (Acts 20:4).

Paul addressed the first letter to Timothy and refers to him as his “own son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2). In Second Timothy 1:2 he refers to Timothy as, “dearly beloved son.” The import of the passages suggest that Timothy was, “a genuine child in the sphere of faith.” This relates to Timothy being a real, genuine child of God and not an illegitimate mistake. In the great work which Timothy would engage, he could prove his legitimacy as a son of God to those who might be disposed to question his credentials.

Timothy not only had real character, but he also had a flawless reputation. He was, “well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:2). It isn’t any wonder that Paul would choose such an one to “go forth with him.” Timothy would be an asset instead of a liability. How different he would be from John Mark who turned back and went not to the work (Acts 15:38).

Every preacher needs to guard his reputation and be blameless in character. All preachers should strive to be the kind of person who would make an ideal companion for Paul if he were among us and needed to select someone to accompany him in his missionary journeys. Too many preaching brethren have obnoxious habits that hinder their being as effective as they could otherwise be.

Someone has well remarked that too many of our preachers are well reported of among the sportsmen of an area, but are completely unknown among faithful brethren. Such brethren are of little benefit to the cause of Christ.

Timothy did not develop his good reputation by being overly flirtatious with young sisters. There seems to be an ever increasing number of brethren—and sisters—who are bringing reproach upon the family of God. Why will we be so careless in conduct?

It is a fact that a good report or a bad report will go before a preacher and will also follow him from place to place. This is true of the brother who refuses to be honest, becomes a cheat and will not pay his debts. Why not live so as to have a good report from among the brethren?

The pressures of materialism mount up and with easy credit, no money down and pay later, a preacher and his wife may over-extend themselves. Problems arise, stress develops and the home is destroyed. Such people know what is right but are too weak to resist temptations.

A preacher recently asked, “How do I get my wife to stop spending all we get? We stay heels over head in debt.” It is good to be well reported of among the brethren.

A Charge to Disturbers of the Faith

It is interesting that Paul gave some serious charges to Timothy, two of which were to be given to others whereas some were to be kept for self. Since Timothy was in Ephesus when he received the first letter

from Paul, we can certainly understand the need for such a solemn charge as Paul gave in chapter 1:3.

The apostle had already spoken about the matter orally but now he puts it on paper. Read carefully where Paul said,

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge **some** that they **teach** no other **doctrine**, Neither give heed to **fables** and endless **genealogies**, which minister questions, rather **than godly edifying** which is in faith: *so do* (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

In later charges, Paul draws Timothy “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 4:1).

The harm and hurt of false teachers will spread as a cancer if such is not contained. Paul had undoubtedly heard of “certain ones” who were dabbling in various errors. He doesn’t name those false teachers but leaves that to Timothy. It is certain that those characters were known. They were not hypothetical spirits. Those “certain ones” were to be dealt with as per Paul’s charge. Do you wonder why Paul did not travel to Ephesus and face those “certain ones” before he condemned their errors? The truth is, that Paul was not so full of fermented ignorance as some of our false brethren who seek some sort of weak crutch upon which to lean.

There are occasions when “certain ones” must become “specified ones.” We have an entire Bible which is filled with the names of false teachers. We know that Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Did Paul do wrong when he named those two reprobates? Paul states that Phygellus and Hermogenes turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). We know that Demas had forsaken Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). Alexander the coppersmith did Paul much evil (2 Tim. 4:14). With these examples which are so plain and specific, a person must be incredulously naive to reject the printed words of the Holy Spirit who identified false brethren.

In no other realm in the entire world will people act so completely insane when similar circumstances obtain. Since there is such a thing as “other doctrine,” which must not be tolerated, how can any man flaunt the will of God and support false doctrine? In the field of medicine a quack is exposed, identified and often punished. In jurisprudence one who operates contrary to the legal system is disbarred. This principle holds true in so very many areas; but when some brother begins to prattle error, there are those who try to tell us that

we must not say anything about their error until we see the brother who is teaching error. This is sheer nonsense.

We have now reached the impasse where “certain ones” are so ignorant as to object to doctrine being taught. A middle Tennessee elder informed the preacher a few weeks ago that he should not include any more doctrine in his sermons. Heaven help us! No wonder the church in so many places is in such a disgraceful condition. Are we so dense as to not know that doctrine simply means teaching or that which is taught? Imagine some bishop polishing his badge and telling the preacher, “We do not want any more teaching while you are teaching.”

To teach “no other doctrine” means exactly what the Holy Spirit said. No other teaching is ever allowed under the mandate of heaven. Some upstart presumes to teach whatever he pleases especially when the people are pleased. The present excuse is to work within the framework of something called, “Unity in Diversity.” This is a silly notion borrowed from the sects and is as false as it can be. The only effort I have seen to prop up such foolishness is for some liberal to hatch up whatever illustration he can find from the natural realm. It has to be a flimsy excuse for a preacher when he can do no better than rely on a concocted illustration.

Timothy was to charge some “not to teach differently.” To teach another doctrine would be the same as teaching another gospel. Paul warned the Galatians against embracing another gospel. There were those who would pervert the gospel of Christ. The apostle wrote, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

To add to the absurdity, we are now told that only in matters of core belief must we be united. The core belief must focus in the deity of Jesus Christ. All other matters are irrelevant insofar as unity is concerned. If that is the case, why did Paul specify exactly and explicitly what needed to be stopped upon the part of false teachers? The Holy Spirit is not playing games, like some false brethren are wanting to do.

Paul forbade the promulgation of fables, endless genealogies and vain jangling. Do you wonder what that has to do with the deity of Jesus? Absolutely nothing! Foolish teachers are fond of foolish fables

but Paul said, “Stop.” Myths and fables have no place in the plan of God to save lost souls. It isn’t the “core” or deity of Jesus which causes problems but it is the high-handed, bigoted, arrogant, liberal attitude toward the entire Word of God which wrecks havoc among brethren. We continue to wonder where the fellow is who is so smart as to be able to compile the commands of God into two groups, one of which is essential and one of which is not. Yes indeed, we have brethren who presume to be that brilliant. They can usually be found among those who make the brazen claim that doctrine is not important.

Paul said, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17). We are in a crazy mixed up world when an elder forbids a preacher to use doctrine in his sermons, albeit the elder is to labour in the word and doctrine. May we preach that elders should not labour in the word and in doctrine? Would it be pleasing to God for elders to teach another word and another doctrine?

The importance of doctrine is seen when we consider that Paul wrote, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of **good doctrine**, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:6). These “things” used to be an important part of preaching but soup, soap, and silliness has become the norm in too many places. There was a time when a preacher desired to be “a good minister of Jesus Christ,” but professionalism has moved into many pulpits and Jesus Christ no longer has any room among such derelicts.

Preachers used to be concerned about being “nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine,” but now we are hearing that doctrine is no longer important. The horror of such foolishness is seen in the acceptance of such inane ideas by so many gullible people.

Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus, and what a task the young man faced. Ephesus had the largest theater in the Hellenistic world. The temple had a large statue of Diana in the middle of it. Amidst such paganism, Timothy was admonished, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**” (1 Tim. 4:13). The definite article suggests that Timothy was to be attentive to the teaching. Some of the false teachers might want to move in with their fanatical fables, but such could not supplant “the teaching.” If “the teaching” or doc-

trine is not important why would Paul tell Timothy to attend to such trivia?

In keeping with the above importance shown regarding doctrine, Paul admonished Timothy to, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the **doctrine**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). It would be interesting to hear someone try to explain how one can be saved without doctrine. What would a person say about the above passage? How can one save others without doctrine? At what point is a preacher to discontinue preaching doctrine? Does that happen when an elder tells him to quit preaching on doctrinal matters? Do we seek to please men or God?

The text is set forth with a present imperative which denotes that Timothy was to keep on giving heed to doctrine as he had been doing. This was essential in order to save self and others.

But one remonstrates that it is God who saves and man does not, and that there is not one whit that man can do or add to the matter. Of course God saves, but He saves through means of teaching. Incidentally, we must realize that “doing this” is durative and denotes that in following Paul’s instructions, Timothy “will be saving—on and on as an extended act.”

Happy is the preacher who has enough sense to teach so as to save himself and those who hear him. Cursed be the man who refuses to take heed to doctrine.

In a time when slavery was a common practice, Christians were under certain obligations which would set them apart from those in the world. Their first responsibility was to the Master above. Pagan Rome was accustomed to slavery and those miserable beings were often treated with unimaginable brutality.

To those slaves who were Christians and who had pagan masters, Paul wrote, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1). The next verse makes a contrast with those who have “believing masters,” and states that masters and slaves “are brethren.”

If one is to be so obtuse, demented and rebellious as to belittle, “**the name of God,**” then one would feel at ease in belittling, “**the doctrine of God.**” Thank God there are still those who are not so

high and mighty, but in humility they can reverence the Holy Name of God and His Doctrine.

Patience is a wonderful virtue, but I must confess that I have long since run out of patience with a certain segment of brethren who have no respect for the doctrine of God or the name of God. It is sad that pagan masters have not been the only bloaks to blaspheme the doctrine of God. They now have many helpers.

As we continue our quest in search of the importance of doctrine, we must be impressed with the firm warning which the Holy Spirit gives with respect to deviating from the doctrine of God. Paul wrote, “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is...destitute of the truth” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Paul begins the divine mandate with a singular noun. Any man, regardless of his cloth, is to be rejected if he teaches error. Brethren must not tolerate or show preference to certain persons even if they are known as dignitaries or Christian Scholars. Have we been altogether guiltless in this respect? How many gullible brethren will swallow false doctrines simply because a man utters them?

There have always been people who delight in calling God to account. They revel in questioning God’s Word and go about to declare their own foolishness. And what of such people? They are proud, puffed up, conceited, and bloated with a sense of their own greatness.

I am asked many times over how some of our brethren can get so far out into cultism, sectism, and modernistic errors. The answer is given in the above passage. When some brother starts out as a young preacher and he hears all sorts of praises, compliments, glowing tributes, and accolades; certain personality types are not able to handle such remarks. They very quickly become obsessed with the “big-head.” The older they get the more pronounced the ego becomes. Eventually they become completely bloated with a sense of their own greatness and such preachers, professors, and pilferers could be exchanged for the Goodyear Blimp—if enough money could be raised with which to pay Goodyear the difference.

No man has the right or authority to “**indoctrinate otherwise.**” Anything different, divergent, or of the nature of diversity is surely condemned. No man is allowed to teach, “**otherwise.**” Since “any

man,” all men and every man was prohibited to teach otherwise, will someone please inform us when such divine restrictions were lifted? Give us the date at which time man was set free to teach, “otherwise.” If brethren are allowed to teach false doctrines, then we are in exactly the same situation as any and all denominational teachers. This will please those brethren who are of a carnal mind.

There are “**wholesome words**” to be taught, but the proud ones have little use for these. If I use “**wholesome words**,” I am using “**healthy words**.” Have you heard of some liberals who have decided that we need to stop using many of the Bible words because they do not “connect with the unchurched?” How sensible is it for a man to desire wholesome food but prefer unwholesome doctrine? Why drink from a pure stream but accept impure doctrine?

What are healthy words? They are, “*even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). These words are not those spoken about our Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy was to teach the words spoken by Christ which are contained within and which comprises the gospel of Christ. The words have to do with salvation, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*” (Heb. 2:3). These words will judge us. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). How can an honest man presume to call forth unhealthy, unwholesome, words of diversity?

If there is a “doctrine according to godliness” and there is, there is also a doctrine according to ungodliness. Timothy is not to waste his time and energy, nor tolerate others who demonstrate an ungodly attitude toward the right doctrine.

We note in First Timothy 4:7 where Paul told Timothy to “exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness.” This godliness has “promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). The concept of “doctrine according to godliness” is linked with that godliness which gives a double promise, one for this life and one for that life which is to come. Whenever some dimwit eliminates doctrine, then I will eliminate all promises for here and hereafter.

Some time after Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, he penned a second letter to the young preacher. His great concern for doctrinal purity had not decreased at all. Paul wrote,

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If there is a God in heaven and if He has given Scripture, then it is inspired. If there is no God, then there can be no inspiration from God. Since there is a God and since the Word is God-breathed, then that inspired Word is profitable for doctrine (teaching). Do sinful people need to be taught? When we are able to dispense with Scripture, with inspiration, and with teaching, then we can demonstrate our ignorance and eliminate doctrine. If indeed the inspired Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, I have very little respect for any man who thinks the preacher could do away with doctrine while preaching.

Having drawn attention to the final appearance of Christ the King who will come as judge, Paul admonishes Timothy to be urgent in **doctrine**. This would be done in the act of preaching the word (1 Tim. 4:1-2). How do we separate doctrine and preaching the Word? Oh yes, we are hearing a steady dripping from people who do not want to hear doctrine preached.

Why spend so much time and space dealing with doctrinal matters? The greatest reason is due to the fact that the Bible has so much to say on the subject and especially is this so when we consider all that Paul wrote about the subject to Timothy.

Furthermore, a firm, faithful, adherence to doctrine was so very important because some had “turned aside unto vain jangling” (1 Tim. 1:6). Some had made shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19). In latter times some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). Some were already turned aside after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15). There were those who had “erred concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:21).

The specifics which Paul described in the above passages seem as modern as today’s rain drops. The wayward, weak, and wobbling professors have missed the mark. Those false teachers missed the mark because they aimed wrongfully. The church is plagued with a new breed who have not been very careful in taking aim. A reverent

spirit toward the inspired Word would resolve such disgraceful problems.

PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS

In many respects the books of First Timothy and Titus are very similar in contents. Timothy was to work in Ephesus whereas Titus was left in Crete in order to help in matters that were wanting (Tit. 1:5). Paul had worked in Crete but had not completed all the work which needed to be done so a dependable, trustworthy helper was found in Titus.

At the close of the letter, Paul asked Titus to join him in Nicopolis where he had planned to spend the winter. He would send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete as a replacement for Timothy.

It is a blessing to be able to have faithful preachers to carry on the work, to walk in the footsteps of others who have labored in the vineyard of Christ. It is sad when a faithful gospel preacher cannot be found who will continue to herald the gospel of Christ.

When Titus was left in Crete, he did not presume to show off his credentials or join in with the change agents who deceived people. Unlike so many young preachers of our time, Titus was not concerned in building a thick résumé with which to impress a gang of carnally minded bishops.

Just as Paul had referred to Timothy as a genuine child in the faith, he also refers to Titus in the same fashion (Tit. 1:4). We can get an idea of the kind of person Titus was by looking at the Scripture references which describe the young man.

Eight times in Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle refers to Titus. He wrote, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (2 Cor. 2:12-13). Although brother Titus was not at Troas, Paul declared later that with all the troubles he experienced in Macedonia, "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Cor. 7:6). Paul also commended Corinth and Titus by saying,

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as

we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth (2 Cor. 7:13-14).

In the matter of benevolence, Paul mentioned the fact that Titus had helped in such matters. He said, “Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also” (2 Cor. 8:6). Again we read, “But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you” (2 Cor. 8:16).

What a marvelous compliment Paul bestowed upon Titus when he wrote, “Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 8:23). When answering some of the foolish accusations against him, Paul stated, “I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps” (2 Cor. 12:18)?

When Paul wrote the Galatian letter he informs us, “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also” (Gal. 2:1).

Just before the final curtain closed and the great apostle bade farewell to all earthly ties, he informs us that Titus had gone to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

With all the corruption, dishonesty, lying and deception which prevailed among the Cretans, Paul lays great emphasis upon being sound or healthy in various matters. It would be unthinkable for brethren to crave tainted or rotten meat. Who would prefer to feast upon sickly, diseased, and smelly animals? Probably no one would be so careless, yet men actually prefer doctrines which are unsound or unhealthy.

In Paul’s letters to Titus and Timothy, he refers to unhealthy teaching some **nine** times. Why the repetition of such things? The problem was so prevalent and like all the false teaching from false brethren in our time, the trouble will not go away.

In our study of First Timothy we gave particular attention to the matter of doctrine. In this lesson we will stress sound teaching. Time will be well spent in reviewing those Scriptures for indeed the lessons they present are sorely needed in every place. When we turn to First Timothy 1:10, we learn that law is for “any other thing that is contrary to **sound doctrine**.” There is that which circumscribes unsound or

unhealthy doctrine. That thing is referred to as “law,” and it is the thing which the shallow, liberal, mind desires to deprecate. The old digressives were at their best—which was tantamount with being at one’s worst—when they touted sound brethren with being “legalists.” This term was borrowed from the old German Nationalists and some of our liberal Johnnies-come-lately have no better sense than to prattle such borrowed nonsense. Oh, how they like to call those who insist on abiding in sound doctrine, by such opprobrious terms as “legalists.” They must think they have some special law, rule, standard, or principle by which to designate some brethren as “legalists.” How many eons would it take to get some of our modern Cretans to explain why we should not observe law? How could we be sound by following unhealthy doctrine? How can we be commended when we walk contrary to healthy doctrine?

In our study of First Timothy we discussed at length the importance of “doctrine” and we showed the utter foolishness of trying to eliminate doctrinal matters in our preaching. The Bible not only stresses doctrine but Paul very emphatically stated that doctrine must be sound or healthy. There would come a time when men “will not endure **sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). I am more than positive that the reason some brethren have so little use for doctrine is due to the fact that it is connected with convicting the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). When a man is so very ignorant in doctrinal matters and is too cowardly, he better shun all the gainsayers. Of course many brethren elect to do this very thing.

Paul told Titus to “speak thou the things which become **sound doctrine**” (Tit. 2:1). The young preacher had been doing this very thing as the present imperative would indicate, but he is told to keep on setting forth the pure, healthy teaching. The Cretan culture was best known for the liars who peddled their carrion. I do not think Titus was encouraged to connect with the Cretans. It is beyond the absurd when brethren accept the silly sayings of the liberals that we need to connect with culture if the church is to survive.

Paul connected sound doctrine with soundness of faith. Titus was to continue the matter of teaching and he was specifically told to teach that which was healthy with regards to the **faith**. It is not, “**in the**

faith,” as seen in Titus 1:3, but only by healthy teaching can one have healthy faith.

This is how the kingdom of Christ has been able to spread abroad. It has not been by the fanciful fables of reckless actors prancing from pillar to post with an entertainment crew. With respect to the faith, there must be sound teaching for all. Old men should demand that every man must be healthy in teaching.

In continuing with the concept of soundness or being healthy, Paul enjoins Titus to show himself a pattern of good works and demonstrate “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:8). In deed, as well as word, the young preacher was to be a pattern model, or example.

Not one thing is more crucial than for a preacher to proclaim the Word of God and live by its precepts. There was a time in the past, well remembered by older people, when all of our brethren who preached were highly respected, honored, esteemed in love for their works sake. There are still faithful, sound, preachers who will refuse to join in with Satan’s forces and will choose death before they resort to unhealthy teaching and living.

We continue to be saddened, disturbed, ashamed and hurt when newspapers make public the episodes of wayward preachers who turn aside from the faith. This old world needs men like Titus who can resist all the carnal overtures which are offered.

Sound speech never becomes an option for preachers. What was true in the first century is true today relative to that which is spoken. It is an index that Satan is still active when men begin to clamor for a change of speech, a renewal in vocabulary, an abandonment of certain Bible words in favor of a more modern speech which connects and makes sense to the unchurched.

Healthy speech must be traded off in today’s modern market. The unbelieving world cares not one whit about the inspired words of Holy Writ. Jumping, jerky, Judas Iscariot-types of liberal preachers care even less.

When young Johnny Markam (who is the youth minister of the College Street Society Church in Lebanon, TN) delivered his Jubilee jargon in Nashville, he deplored the words in the Bible which need to be changed so young people can understand better. He ridiculed the

concept of using old words and being afflicted with what he called, “Christianese” methodology. Young Markam borrowed the term from those who have absolutely no respect for that book known as the “Bible.” We would sincerely ask how many of the followers of Markam know the meaning of the word “**Bible,**” which has been on the lips of people for long generations?

Now comes a book written by Lynn Anderson titled, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, and the author brazenly presents his fool-hearty program for updating the vocabulary which is being used. He wants us to change to a vocabulary that connects, that makes sense to the un-churched.

When we act like zombies and allow the liberals to select the words to be used in all our preaching we might as well join the Moslem nation. I find it difficult to imagine any man being so arrogant, autocratic, conceited, egotistical, highminded, lordly, and uncivilized as to call forth the changing of the very words of God.

To all such libertines, it matters not that the Holy Spirit directed Timothy to “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). There was something which needed guarding with the utmost care. There was a form, a mold, or pattern which Timothy knew, having received it of Paul. A similar word is used in Romans 6:17 with reference to the form or mold of doctrine.

As Paul used certain forms of expression to convey the will of God, so was Timothy to follow the model. In this way healthy words would be presented. Instead of trying to impress a church full of ignoramuses by trying to get away from sound words, it seems to me that men of good sense would try to stay as close to biblical language as possible. Is this not what Paul is writing about?

It would be well to make a brief excursion back to First Corinthians chapter two and note carefully the source of words which Paul proclaimed. These words would serve as a perfect model for all time to come.

Paul begins the chapter by declaring that he did not come to Corinth with excellency of speech or wisdom. That which he preached was not made up from man’s inspired sources. Man’s wisdom had no place in God’s scheme of affairs, therefore Paul spoke “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4). Had Paul been a mod-

ernist or liberal he would have vaunted himself and stuck out his chest like some of our bloated liberal brethren.

Paul spoke of the wisdom of God which had been ordained before the world began. Such unknown wisdom was kept hidden as a mystery. Eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them that love Him. “But **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**” (1 Cor. 2:10). “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13).

Vain man presumes to improve upon the words which God has given. Man, in his foolishness, pretends to be wiser than God. He knows which words are better and he knows how to use them better than God. Words which the Holy Spirit teacheth are so much inferior to the great words which men who are superior can use.

If a man is shown the simple outline of a simple box and he is told to trace the lines of the box with kindergartners pencil, I presume about all preachers could perform the task without too much assistance. However, when we are given a form, mold, outline of sound words to follow; some preachers and writers act like they have lost all their brains.

It is most fitting to be reminded that, “God hath not given us the spirit of **fear**; but of **power**, and of **love**, and of a **sound mind**” (2 Tim. 1:7).

A sensible, sound or healthy mind is needed in times of compromise when hirelings are ashamed to take a stand for the truth. Could Titus measure up to that degree of soundness required of faithful preachers while he labored in Crete? Paul certainly went to the trouble to write to Titus and gave him needed instructions and we have these instructions within the inspired Word.

Soundness is required with respect to “the faith” (Tit. 1:13). Here “**the faith**” refers to that system of truth which comprises the great scheme of redemption. The faith, the truth, the Word of God is here contrasted with Jewish fables and the commandments of men. These man-made fancies result in people turning away from the truth.

Those false teachers would creep into houses which would open doors to them. They would subvert those houses. After they gained a toe-hold, they could then begin their dirty work among congregations.

The devil doesn't need a new plan. The one he used in Crete which proved so successful, is the same plan which the liberal element is using in our day.

Unsound teachers knew that they were con-artists, frauds and religious racketeers. Their motive was filthy lucre and the result was that their lazy bellies got filled.

We will remember the unscrupulous, dishonorable, and wicked schemes of the Crossroads, Boston Cult as it subverted whole houses and split congregations all over the country. The gurus would sneak in and wait until they could get enough resisters and then their devilish division would begin.

That is exactly the way the schools have been stolen by the liberals. It is also the way congregations are being infiltrated at a rapid rate. Soundness is actually scorned and ridiculed by the liberal thieves. "The faith," to the liberal begins with filthy lucre and progresses in whatever direction a group of semi-illiterate bishops will allow.

It is significant that "the faith" is that for which we must earnestly contend (Jude 3). The faith was that from which Elymas sought to turn the deputy (Acts 13:8). The faith was what Paul declared to Felix (Acts 24:24). Paul at one time sought to destroy the faith (Gal. 1:23). People can depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). They can deny the faith (1 Tim. 5:8). One can err from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10). Of course one can keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

Soundness not only refers to the teaching, the system of doctrine, but the word also refers to the teaching of people. They must hold fast the faithful Word (Tit. 1:9). They must be sound, healthy, in the faith (Tit. 1:13).

What disposition must the faithful child of God have with respect to the unsound teacher? Is one at liberty to condone, support or commend a heretic?

The church is filling and running over with unruly, vain talking, deceiving professionals who are making a mockery of our Lord's prayer for unity (John 17:20ff). Instead of doing what Paul told Titus to do, many brethren are doing the very opposite. Titus was told to stop the mouths of those false teachers (Tit. 1:11). The idea is to gag their mouths. How could such be done? No false teacher can withstand the sword of the Spirit when it is used correctly. The use of the faithful Word—sound doctrine—would root out the gainsayer, the

heretics and stop their mouths. The best procedure would be to shut the door of houses into which the unruly would enter. This would be an effective way of putting a gag over the mouth of the false teacher.

Today? When the heretic opens his mouth wide many elders, preachers, and members act as if their mouths are glued shut. Tacit approval, support, commendations, and fellowship is tendered to every stripe and ilk that can climb up on a soap box. Brethren even provide the boxes.

Our civil government is operated by a system which takes care of the subversions, traitors, spies, and destructive agents. Brethren actually invite in those who “subvert,” and “teaching things they ought not” (Tit. 1:11). The hot places in hell should be reserved for brethren who allow false teachers to come in and destroy the church of Christ.

Instead of coddling the subversive, lying, deceptive, empty babblers, Paul told Titus to “rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:13). How does this fit in with the all positive approach of so many of our effeminate, sissy, twisting, young pastors who have to run to the beauty shop for perms before they get into the pulpit? Hyperbole? After a fashion! Some of the preachers in the county where I live could exchange pulpits with any Presbyterian pastor and the brethren would never know the difference—and if they did many would not care. Conviction is something which is alright so long as it is only found on a page in the dictionary. If there is the faintest intimation of a bare possibility that a slight echo of conviction might be detected in some pulpits, the preacher might just be called on the carpet. He can recant, crayfish, slip and slide, or move on. Sometimes it is very difficult to move and a lot easier to curb one’s convictions and become a man and woman pleaser.

Conviction, truth, certitude, confidence, absolute, unflinching, determinate, trusting, unwavering, are some characteristics needed by the preacher preaching in Crete. Who is sufficient for such things among so many fakers? Insecure, unstable, unreliable, doubt, vague, foggy, haziness, obscure, changeable, uncertain, floundering, wavering, confused, bewildered, indeterminate, ambiguous; all these are the things which defile a man and describe his efforts when he has no conviction about that which is truth.

When brethren are determined to remain unsound, they need to be rebuked. Some must think that means to reimburse a false brother. It might be that we need to see if we actually believe the Bible. If we do not, we will overlook what the Bible teaches whenever we want to. Furthermore, we need to decide whether or not we understand the meaning of Paul's statement to Titus. What does it mean to rebuke? In the case of false teaching, it means to respond, to react, to repulse, to rebuff, push back, repel, deny, repudiate, protest, disclaim, refuse, spurn, renounce, denounce, and oppose.

Error needs to be answered, critiqued, negated, disputed, rejected, controverted, and abhorred. Error cannot prosper when subjected to the battering ram of truth.

I suppose all who claim to believe the Bible would admit that God has never required us to do the impossible, nor has He demanded that we do that which is wrong. As Paul wrote by inspiration he declared, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). He also told Timothy to "rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Our Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). There is a time and a place for rebuking and when I am the recipient, I want it to be done with "all longsuffering and doctrine."

The nature and extent of the crime should determine the instrument used with which to administer punishment. What is the horrendous act which calls forth sharp rebukes? It is the flagrant proliferation of false doctrine. The answer is not one to be given with tongue in cheek, sputtering, lisping, stammering, apologizing and shifting from one foot to another.

When the Holy Spirit used the word "sharply," the idea is akin to taking an ax which is extremely sharp and putting it at the root of a tree in such fashion as to fell the tree. The rebuking is to be decisive, explicit, definitive, and purposeful. Sharply does not denote a haggling, long-drawn-out, pecking affair but as if by one swift, sharp, compelling blow administered to the tree which produces poison fruit. The instrument needed and which is available is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). When used lovingly and properly it will help us to remain sound in the faith. As difficult as the task might be and with all the repercussions which would result therefrom, Paul said to Titus,

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Tit. 2:15).

“These things” were to be repeated just as Titus had been doing. He had authority to do what he was doing. In speaking, exhorting, and rebuking, Titus would not let his opponents disregard, think around or look with disdain upon him and his teaching.

Have you noticed the arrogant assertions of some of our brethren who have been able to sit at the feet of infidel professors? After they have read a few books, that qualifies them to look askance, despise, think around and look down upon Titus and other preachers who are committed to sound doctrine.

Paul speaks of subverters (Tit. 1:11) and he also writes about the subverted (Tit. 3:11). This is the harm which is spread by a heretic. He is able to produce other heretics. Like cancer eating cells, such destruction spreads.

When Paul made his defense before Felix, he denied that he was a heretic (Acts 24:14). He appealed to the Word of Jehovah. When a person forsakes the Word of God and presents his own opinions instead, the man is a heretic and his opinions are heresies. The man and his opinions are to be rejected. Do not forget, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Tit. 3:10-11).

If the heretic refuses to be admonished, then there is no reason to bother with such a person. Someone had perverted the truth and had taught heresy. The heresy had been accepted by some. They had been subverted, turned aside. The heresy teacher was promoting sectarian views and was to be rejected. Titus was not the sectarian culprit when he rejected the heretic.

One of the sugar-sticks used so very frequently by the liberals is to refer to sound brethren as, “sectarian.” No, it is the fellow who becomes a vain talker, a dispenser of the commandments of men who is the real sectarian. The only remedy and recourse with respect to the heretic is to reject him.

When heresy, heretics, false doctrine, and apostasy mounts up as if on eagles wings, what should be the attitude of faithful saints? Paul uses a word which should characterize God’s children at all times and in all situations.

A Christian must be sober minded. We should note that one of the attributes to be seen in elders is that they are to be sober-minded (Tit. 1:8). This conveys the much needed quality of being temperate in one's thinking. Someone has compared the sober-minded shepherd to a rudder on a ship. Truly the elder is to be reasonable, judicious, gentle, calm, peaceful, fair, cool, unruffled, tranquil, clear-headed, patient, and balanced in his thinking.

The older men are to be sober-minded (Tit. 2:2). Few things are more obnoxious than an old man trying to be a teenager. Someone has decreed that, "There is no fool, like an old fool." Older brethren need to act their age.

It is a part of sound doctrine that the aged women teach the younger women to be sober (Tit. 2:5). With sober minds, the older women are to assist the younger women to be sober minded. Brother Marshal Keeble declared that there was not anything more sickening than to see some old, decrepit woman stick her finger in her mouth where teeth used to be, and start mumbling about her, "boy friend." Truly such sisters have lost their balance. Young women can save themselves many heartaches and tears if they will be sober-minded. Much teaching needs to be done in this area.

The young men are not left out when it comes to being sober-minded. Paul wrote, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded" (Tit. 2:6). The troubles in the church would all but subside if young men would resist the temptation to be copy-cats of some of our older brethren who are a disgrace to the cause of Christ.

The Bible teaches each one to live, "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:12).

The great emphasis given to sound teaching in the book of Titus should keep us from being derelict, giddy-headed and frivolous with reference to the sacred text. There is much room for improvement in the way the Scriptures are being treated. The judgment will recompense man for certain.

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

The writer of this marvelous letter lingered in a Roman prison and without doubt endured extreme suffering. The recipient of the letter in Ephesus likewise suffered hardships coupled with great anguish of heart.

Persecution had been unleashed against the church. Christianity had been declared illegal. Times were difficult and the faith of Christians was being put to the test. In view of this, we consider Paul's letter a final farewell and an encouragement to young Timothy.

Before Paul went to Rome he wrote the church a letter and declared, "I am not ashamed" (Rom. 1:16). Why on earth would Paul feel disposed to tell the brethren that he was not ashamed? Undoubtedly there were those who were fearful, timid, ashamed and who refused to face the hardships imposed by the enemies of truth.

The heart of Timothy was tender, filled with grief and anxiety. He could shed tears when he and Paul separated (2 Tim 1:4). We know that Paul worked in Ephesus and tears flowed freely night and day (Acts 20:19,31). At his parting from the elders, they wept bitterly (Acts 20:37). It is not an index of weakness to love our brethren to the extent that we can weep with them (Rom. 12:15). When Paul wrote to Corinth, he wrote with many tears (2 Cor. 2:4). The condition of the congregation was deplorable.

Our blessed Lord could shed tears as he prayed (Heb. 12:17). Seeing the sorrow of others, Jesus wept (John 11:35).

When Paul sat in the lonely prison cell, he managed to write to the church in Philippi. As he brooded over the unfaithfulness, backsliding, digressive brethren, he no doubt sobbed his weary frame to sleep (Phi. 3:18).

When church members can once again become dedicated, consecrated, and convicted to the extent that we realize the world is lost and headed for hell and destruction, there might be less fun and frolic and a few more tears flowing. "Joining the Church" (which of course is impossible) means no more to many people than joining the local Christmas Club.

It was a time for sacrifice and weeping and thus Paul said, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8). The weaklings and fearful had forsaken Paul in Rome and the desertions were widespread even to Asia. Paul wrote, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (2 Tim. 1:15). When the fires of persecution began to spread, the wood, hay, stubble and church trash were caught up onto the winds of

compromise and found safety. This would be easier than huddling together with Christians deep within the catacombs, or being thrown to the wild beasts.

We know that one man was true to Paul the prisoner. The apostle wrote, “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim. 1:16).

Fair weather friends and brethren can be bought with two mites, but the gold in Fort Knox is not sufficient to purchase deep conviction. This is true because conviction, soundness of faith, loyalty to Christ, is not a marketable commodity.

Not only was Paul incarcerated in prison but he also wore chains as if he was some kind of incorrigible outlaw. For a fact, the cause of Jesus Christ had been declared, *religio illicita*. Those who were ashamed would not uphold, nor defend “the testimony of our Lord.” This testimony was that which faithful preachers would proclaim even in the face of death. Gospel preachers are not afraid to preach about our Lord. Since the text is objective genitive, all of that body of truth **about** Jesus Christ was to be proclaimed. Paul is not telling Timothy to stand up and be telling what Jesus **said**.

Paul said, “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9). The preaching of truth and the suffering servant should be no cause for shame. The real test of faith would come in suffering. Thus, Paul directs Timothy to be a joint partaker in the sufferings which would result from laboring in the gospel. The entire plan of God would be banned, but “God hath not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 2:7).

The great power of God which saved us and called us has not lost its power as one tries to remain faithful. God does not save us then later call us, as the Calvinists proclaim. Before God created the world, He had a purpose in mind to save and call men. This purpose was according to His grace and a holy calling in connection with Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:9).

I suppose not even the Calvinists would contend that they existed with God before the world began and thus contributed to the great plan and purpose of Jehovah for saving lost sinners. If man had been able to set forth some of his own plans, he could be saved according to his own works, devised in conjunction with God’s purpose. Such

was not the case. God did not need help from man who had not been created.

The purpose of God was given in Christ Jesus before the world began. To the church at Ephesus Paul wrote:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by **the church the manifold wisdom of God**, According to the **eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).

The purpose of God was eternal. Salvation was a part of the eternal purpose of God. The holy calling was a part of God's purpose before the world began. The church of Christ was in the eternal purpose of God. The appearing of our Saviour was in the purpose of God from all eternity. When we view the church, we see the great wisdom of God as it unfolded. The divine nature of the church is perfect. One certainly could not look at some of the scoundrels who claim to be members of the church and see God's multifaceted wisdom.

The eternal purpose of God "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). As man had nothing to do with the purpose of God before the world began, likewise man had nothing to do with the grace of God which was given us in Christ before the world began.

Is there some difference in the grace of God before man existed and the grace of God after Christ appeared? After the coming of Christ into the world, He had to die on the cross. But was salvation by grace not in God's mind from eternity? Indeed it was, but did Christ have to do anything in order to affect that great purpose of God? Was the crucifixion necessary? Was it essential to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel? Did man help God plan the gospel which brings life? Of course not! Our works had nothing to do with God's plan which was given in Christ before the world began.

We cannot possibly fathom the extent to which more and more of our brethren are being enamored with Calvinism. The idea of salvation by grace alone is nothing new. It is puzzling how brethren, who should know better, can wander so far afield. The church which shows God's wisdom is not entered by being a pacifist. Man must act in some fashion or else every human would be a church member.

The gospel of Christ brings life and immortality. If man has no obligation toward the gospel, then why are not all men recipients of

life and assured of immortality? Why give the gospel to man if man cannot add one whit to what has been done? Compromising brethren who attempt to present a garbled version of Calvinism do not even make good nonsense.

Paul was no longer free to go from place to place and preach the gospel. Culture was changing at a rapid rate. Regulations were being imposed, but we do not hear Paul telling Timothy to act like a chameleon and change as the wind changes. The inspired mandate was, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). The gospel is as unchanging as God. Men can be as fickle as the Gauls, but no new gospel will suffice to meet the needs of man.

Like a deposit to be made in a bank, not one token is to be filched. Timothy had heard Paul preach and he was well acquainted with the truth. He was to deposit “the things heard,” “the same things,” and he wasn’t at liberty to change, twist, pervert or add something new. When would this rule be revoked? When can men change “the things,” “the same things” into other things? This is the crux of the problem in the Lord’s church. The difference in faithful men and unfaithful is simple. Faithful men will receive the truth committed to them and will teach the same truth to others. The important thing is not to find a chain of men all the way back to Paul and Timothy but to find and teach the truth even unto the end of the world.

The picture is presented as a soldier in the army of the Lord. Timothy has enlisted and just as he is not to be ashamed of the Lord, he is not to be a cowardly traitor. Others may fail to endure the rigors of warfare, but as a good soldier Timothy would keep marching onward with the noble purpose of pleasing Him who is the commander.

There is no ulterior motive in stating that one must finish the contest lawfully, if one is to be crowned. Common sense would dictate that one must go by the rules in order to compete in any contest.

It seems odd that soldiers, athletes, and every other human being on earth must operate law—fully. That is within the fulness of the law. Which soldier or competitor in the games will make a fool of himself by declaring that he is not to function by laws? That sort of foolishness would only be found among some addled preachers. Must one strive lawfully: must one finish the event lawfully?

To whom is the crown given? Is it to the law-abiding or the outlaw? If, as the liberal brethren palaver that we are under grace and not under law, then let them tell us what Paul means.

Moving to the example of a farmer, Paul explains that one toils diligently and is blessed first with enjoying the fruits of his labor. There are others who will rejoice as a result of the hard work expended by the farmer. The analogy certainly holds true if Timothy will be a faithful, steadfast plowman until set of sun.

Not many farmers would think that they could succeed if they only plowed fifty feet on a series of rows which reached five hundred feet. No worker in the vineyard of Christ can succeed who works a few hours and then finds an easy chair in which to sit. As a worthy example Paul said, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12). What an incentive to keep pressing on the upward way.

It was a disgraceful thing to be arrested and thrown into the dungeon. Hardness, trouble, and disgrace are all presented as problems by the apostle. Instead of halting, vacillating, and being reticent as some might be under adverse conditions, Timothy is to be diligent, active, vigilant, lively, ardent, spirited, prompt, alert, zealous and busy.

Who is willing, eager and anxious to present arms before Jehovah God for an inspection? It is not a man or a group of men before whom we come for approval, but it is the all-wise God. Men in their ignorance or prejudice may approve of anything that calls itself a preacher. Also, the most faithful, godly, sound, sacrificing preacher on earth would likely be spurned by the masses.

One must work with the realization that God is the owner of the vineyard. The work must be performed in such fashion as to not be rejected and ashamed. Whatever the work, when inspection comes one certainly does not desire to present a crooked, crazy-quilt pattern of confusion with respect to the Word of God.

Notice that "the truth" is of supreme importance, albeit some of the liberal wackos have now gone so far as to declare that we cannot really know the truth. If such be the case, we need not be concerned with Second Timothy 2:15. The truth is to be "rightly divided." The

picture is beautiful indeed when we consider that Paul is telling Timothy to be “ever cutting straight the word of truth.”

No doubt Paul, Aquilla and Priscilla had spent many long hours in rightly dividing the skins which were used in making tents. They cut straight or held a straight course as they worked with such valuable supplies. Of how much more value is the Word of truth. When put into the hands of reckless imposters who cut and slash it as if it were sawdust, great harm results.

A man has no business trying to do that which he simply cannot do. Preachers often mutilate the Word of God due to crass ignorance. Some are as ill-equipped as a moron would be in attempting to pilot a four-engine jet airplane. The tragedy is worse when so many are willing to climb on board with such charlatans. Let us cut a straight course with all the Word of truth and then there will be no occasion to be ashamed.

By use of a metaphor, Paul teaches a needed lesson on the importance of being genuine, of the very best quality, and being fit for the martyrs' use (2 Tim. 2:20-21). In a house there are vessels of gold and silver which are vessels of honour. There are also vessels of wood and earth which are vessels of dishonour. The metaphor cannot be taken too far and draw conclusions outside the context. Timothy is to be a vessel of honour set apart and prepared unto every good work.

Today, when one visits Ephesus the remains of a voluptuous life style which existed long centuries ago is still in evidence. With all the harlots which plied their trade, a pure Christian would need to be ever “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Timothy had been actively engaged in fleeing youthful lusts, and Paul exhorts to keep on fleeing those destructive forces and to keep on following after righteousness, faith, charity, and peace.

Paul had written Timothy concerning the folly of profane and old wives fables, and endless genealogies. Here he mentions that foolish and unlearned questions are to be avoided. There has never been a time when so much silly nonsense has been proclaimed by so many who claim to be scholarly theologians.

Almost every week some brother spouts forth some fool notion which he has copied from someone else who copied the sleazy rot from others. The result is seen in strife, battles, and discord among brethren. To insist that liberal digressives are interested in following

after peace is pure poppycock. Open warfare would be introduced into every congregation on earth if the liberal scholar (??) had his way. The formentors of strife will surely meet their reward.

For Paul to foretell what would happen in the twentieth century would have little relevance to a young preacher working in the environs of Ephesus. When Paul discussed those “grievous times,” he explained that they would be “in the last days.” Timothy needed to be aware of those horrible conditions (2 Tim. 3:1-7). A description of those seasons of grievous times which would come, would certainly indicate that Timothy and Paul were experiencing those hard times. In First Timothy 4:1-6, Paul had written that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” Notice that Paul told Timothy to “put the brethren in remembrance of these things” (1 Tim. 4:6). The last days or latter times began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:17).

Grievous times would indicate that Christians would suffer unduly. Paul and Timothy were living amidst such times. Life becomes exceedingly painful for many innocent souls due to the lawlessness of others. What hardships, troubles, weariness, heartache, and distractions are borne by meek and lowly children of God because of the boasters, traitors, heady, and high-minded who love pleasure more than God. Some eighteen descriptive expressions are used by the apostle to explain the nature of the degenerates.

Timothy was instructed to turn away from these disgraceful characters. That would be hard for him to do if Paul was describing the terrible conditions which would exist in the twentieth century. In any century when sneaks work their way into places where they can captivate silly people, the truly intelligent person will turn away from the corrupters. How different is the practice in vogue of inviting into affluent churches those who have a mere form of godliness.

If Timothy needed further encouragement, he could reflect upon the proven example of Paul. Timothy had been aware of Paul’s teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, longsuffering, persecutions, and sufferings. Young men need the good examples of older men.

Paul endured or bore up under his trials and whatever trials came to Timothy in Ephesus, he would be able to find deliverance through Christ the Lord.

No study of Paul's letters to Timothy would begin to be adequate without considering the solemn, serious charges from the apostle. Some of the charges were given to Timothy for his own benefit, whereas others were given to be passed along.

Paul states that he left Timothy at Ephesus "that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). The city was filled with false teachers, but "no other doctrine" would be acceptable. A man is not thinking properly if he presumes to make a case for all sorts of doctrines. "No other doctrine" is just as binding as "no other gods."

Sundry duties are enjoined upon various ones, and specifically the care of widows is discussed. Paul said, "And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless" (1 Tim. 5:7).

Since doctrine was so very important, Paul declared, "Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers" (2 Tim. 2:14).

Another group to be charged, who would probably resent any interference in their affairs, were the rich. Paul said, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

There were some charges which were applicable to Timothy and which would help him in his work. For example, Paul wrote, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18).

A very serious charge is given to Timothy when Paul wrote:

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

This would suggest that preaching is not a mere worldly profession.

Again Paul wrote, "I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21).

The final charge is given when Paul wrote:

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:13-14).

There are some things that cannot be neglected nor erased with time. The commands of God must be kept until the King of kings and Lord of lords shall make His final appearance.

Paul's closing words are full of pathos as he views the approaching end. He views himself as a drink offering being poured out (2 Tim. 4:6). Paul's departure is compared to taking down a tent and getting ready to move, or pulling up an anchor and taking a voyage.

Paul is now involved in finishing all that was given him to do. He had run lawfully, braved the battles, and guarded the faith. The crown awaits the old soldier. The crown is life (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). It is a crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4). It is an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25) and it is an unfading crown (1 Pet. 5:4). Life and glory is a rich reward to be received in exchange for death and suffering.

EXPOSITION OF JEREMIAH 1:4-10

Dub McClish



Dub McClish is the son of a Gospel preacher, grandson of an elder, father of a Gospel preacher and son-in-law of a Gospel preacher. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and received a B.A. degree from Abilene Christian College. He has done local work in Idaho, Texas, Alabama, Kentucky and New Mexico. Dub is a well known author, editor, debater, publisher and speaker who has preached the Gospel in several states, Jamaica, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. He has conducted lectures at Southwest School of Bible Studies, Houston College of the Bible, Southern Sumatra Bible College (Indonesia), and Brown Trail Preacher Training School. He is on the advisory staff of **Firm Foundation** and has contributed numerous articles in various brotherhood publications as well as hundreds of bulletin articles and chapters in over seventy-five books. He has extensive radio preaching experience.

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Dub is married to the former Lavonne James and they have three children: Bronwen, Hal and Andy, and five grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

The time was about 1500 B.C. The chilling words of warning from Jehovah to Israel through Moses were these:

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee...Jehovah will bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, that shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young, and shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy ground, until thou be destroyed; that also shall not leave thee grain, new wine, or oil, the increase of thy cattle, or the young of thy flock, until they have caused thee to perish. And they shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fortified walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land; and they shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which Jehovah thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daugh-

ters, whom Jehovah thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the distress wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee (Deu. 28:15, 49-53).

Move now some nine centuries later. Israel, Judah's sister nation to the north, had already paid her terrible price of rejection of Jehovah, having been destroyed by Assyria a century before. Still, Judah seemed to have learned nothing from seeing Israel perish for her corruption. It was time for God to make one last desperate attempt to effect repentance in Judah so He would not have to pour out His wrath on them. If she would not renounce her evils upon this appeal, He would bear with her no longer. The instrument through whom He would appeal to them would be a prophet—the stubborn, adamant-willed, unshushable, unbreakable Jeremiah.

Ironically, Jeremiah, the priest of Anathoth, received his call of God in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (cir. 627 B.C.), the most righteous of all of the kings of Judah, including David himself (2 Kin. 23:25). In his reformatory zeal, this young king had already made great progress in destroying idolatry in both Judah and Israel by the time God commissioned Jeremiah for his work (2 Chr. 34:3-7). To the casual observer, it might have appeared that the reforms of Josiah had turned God's people back to Him. Where, then, was the need for a clarion voice to cry out against idolatry and apostasy? Had not Josiah driven it from their borders? Yes, perhaps from the borders of their land, but God knew that it had not been driven from their hearts!

The wickedness that consumed the people had first filled the hearts of judges, kings, princes, and priests, which already many generations before had filtered all the way down to the slave's hovel. Nations do not escape such long-standing thought and behavioral patterns easily or quickly. Not merely the hands, but more basically, the hearts of Judah had to be converted! Josiah was well on the way to doing the former by the time of Jeremiah's call. It would be Jeremiah's task to do the latter, for without this accomplishment, the former would be very short-lived, which history reveals it was.

To learn the essence of God's definition of faithful preachers and preaching we need to return repeatedly to the prophets as our models. There is no greater model than Jeremiah, both in that which God commissioned him to do and in the way he responded to it. In God's commission to Jeremiah one can see the significance of the work to which he was called and the great responsibility which God placed upon

him. When one reads Jeremiah's two books one is struck with the degree to which he comprehended both of these elements of his work. Surely, it is not too much to say that no mere man ever surpassed his faithfulness in discharging his assigned task and none ever did so under greater duress, opposition, and suffering. The key to the incomparable work and life of Jeremiah is found in the call he received from God and his response to it.

GOD'S EMPLOYMENT OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 1:4-5

Jeremiah makes it clear from the beginning that he will not be speaking independently from henceforth. The "word of Jehovah" would hereafter direct and instruct him concerning his words and his works. Note now the elements of God's employment of Jeremiah.

The Time of It

In his foreknowledge, God "knew" Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother's womb. Before Jeremiah came forth in birth God had "sanctified" him. We do not pretend to understand all of the mysteries of the deep subject of God's foreknowledge. However, the Bible unmistakably teaches that God foresees the future, not just in general, but even as it pertains to individuals. What God said to Jeremiah about knowing and selecting him, the Bible also says of David (Psa. 139:13-16), Isaiah (Isa. 49:1,5), John the Baptizer (Luke 1:15), and Paul (Gal. 1:15).

Whatever is involved in God's election of certain individuals to serve Him in special ways, such predestination does not interfere with the exercise of their own free will, nor does it determine their eternal destiny (Mat. 11:28-30; John 3:16; Rev. 22:7; et al.). In spite of Paul's selection "from his mother's womb," he persecuted the Lord and His body in the early part of his life. Had he never turned from this rebellion against God he would have been lost eternally in spite of God's selection of him. Jeremiah could have utterly rebelled against God's call, in spite of the fact that God desired him to be His spokesman to Judah and to other nations. It was not force beyond his ability to resist, but humility and reverence toward God, that caused Jeremiah to respond to His commission.

The Substance of It

God first told Jeremiah he “knew” him before he was formed. This term is likely intended to convey to Jeremiah that God had chosen, selected, or approved him for the task to which he was being called. God also told Jeremiah He had “sanctified” him before he was born. This means God had dedicated Jeremiah or set him apart for the holy commission He was now announcing. Furthermore, God had “appointed” Jeremiah to be His spokesman to the nations. The prophetic work of Jeremiah was not assumed by self-appointment. Indeed, we shall shortly see that he shrank from it in his feeling of inadequacy (Jer. 1:6). He had a mandate from God, and this must have given strength and courage to the prophet when he had to stand alone as he executed his Divine commission.

Some Practical Applications

It was God, not some man, Who called and commissioned Jeremiah and Who sent him forth with His message to the people. The various men (such as Jeremiah) whom God commissioned spoke and wrote words that could not have come from men. They often foretold events in great detail that could be known only by One who can see the future as easily and as certainly as if it were the past. There is no explanation for this ability apart from God. The Bible was written by men to whom God gave His message. This is why it is “not...the word of men, but...in truth, the word of God” (1 The. 2:13).

The least-observant reader cannot miss the implications of God’s statements about Jeremiah before he was formed and born in relation to the unspeakable tragedy of abortion. Perhaps the favorite ploy of the pro-death advocates is to confuse the issue by arguing that one cannot know when life actually begins in the gestation period. They most certainly argue that it does not begin till sometime after conception. Thereby they attempt to rationalize their bloody work and escape responsibility for their campaign of infanticide. For the Bible-believer there can be neither question nor equivocation. It is clear from His statements to Jeremiah that in the mind of God Jeremiah existed in his mother’s womb from the time of conception—**before his body actually began to take its form!** We should all do all within our power (in keeping with Christian principles) to oppose this incredible barbarism. We should especially take care to use the power of the ballot box to turn those in favor of this indescribable catastrophe out of

office and replace them with representatives who will work to ban it. The 1,500,000 voices of our innocent and defenseless offspring, though silenced by the heartless abortionists' vacuum machines, scream at us to rise in their protection. If there were no other evidence to advertise the malignancy of the religion of evolution, the fact that it has brought a once-civilized and generally God-fearing nation to the point of slaying its own young out of sheer convenience should be sufficient!

God no longer miraculously calls or commissions men to serve Him, notwithstanding the claims of some. However, He does call us to service according to our abilities, through His Word (Mat. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:5-10; 1 Pet. 1:17; et al.). We have the same responsibility and accountability to use our God-given and personally-cultivated abilities (in harmony with God's restrictions) as did those who were called in a miraculous way.

JEREMIAH'S EXCUSE TO GOD

JEREMIAH 1:6

Jeremiah Responds to God's Call

At first, Jeremiah appears to be overwhelmed with the task God has laid upon him. He seems to be both alarmed and amazed that God would call such a one as himself for the awful work of being His mouthpiece to the nations. He remonstrates that he is not skilled as a speaker. He does not have the training or native capacity to stand before princes and multitudes and speak fluently as God's message deserves to be spoken. Bible students are immediately reminded of Moses' great reserve and similar excuse when God called him from the burning bush at Sinai (Exo. 3:10-4:12).

The reason Jeremiah gives for his inability to speak well is that he is but "a child." This, some suppose, means that he is still a very young man. His long prophetic career (over forty years) would certainly harmonize with his beginning at a young age. However, it may mean that, compared to the task and the abilities he knew the work would require, he saw himself as no more qualified than a child.

Some Practical Applications

Rather than criticizing Jeremiah for his reticence, we should praise him for his humility and modesty. He was not so much trying to avoid

doing what God commanded, as he was wondering aloud how, knowing his own limitations, he would ever be able to accomplish it.

There is hardly any character trait that so becomes the personality as humility. This is especially so in preachers. Paul tells us that there were self-centered, ego-maniac preachers in the first century (Phi. 1:15); and, unfortunately, they have not become extinct. Pride is a temptation of special severity to preachers because people often ask them questions, seek their counsel, and publicly praise them. If he does not take care, a preacher can begin to believe all of those nice things people may write or say about him. (Of course, his wife and his elders may help keep him down to earth!)

Few things are more disgusting to right-thinking people than to see a preacher who is puffed up with his own ability, education, influence, or importance. I am convinced that pride is what has led some to abandon the Truth and adopt the liberal slop of theological pluralism. I am also convinced that some have adopted and continue to propagate strange, quirky heresies in order to feed a bloated ego that craves extra attention. Some among us who have attained advanced degrees (many of whom are on the faculties of our schools) look down their “ivory tower” noses at the “unscholarly” fellows who have no more sense than to study and preach the Bible. These self-proclaimed “scholars” are for the most part the leaders in the determined effort to cast the church of our Lord in the denominational mold. In their pride they cannot stand for their denominational academic fellows to accuse them of being “narrow” in their concepts of fellowship, the conditions of pardon, worship, and like subjects.

However, one does not have to be a doctrinal fruitcake, a theological liberal, or someone educated beyond his intelligence to fall prey to pride. Those who are sticklers for the Truth can also succumb to this deadly sin. It seems that some are not content to let “cream rise to the top.” Some, in their youth, allow ambition to drive them as they openly seek position and prominence that have come to others only through decades of faithful and difficult work. I know one young preacher (admittedly, an extreme case) who has an almost unbounded ambition that cannot stand to be bested, even in a table game. Whenever corrected, he has some excuse or rationalization. He plays up to those through whom he hopes to gain some advantage, while treating with rudeness and/or ridicule those he considers to be his inferiors

(especially children and women). He craves attention and makes himself obnoxious in seeking it. He knows all of the answers. He goes out of his way to impress people (in pulpit and classroom and on a personal level) with what he considers to be his superior knowledge (though he has no graduate degree). He is pushy, selfish, and impudent, frequently touting his own talents (of which he admittedly has many). There is no chance he would ever recognize himself in the above description—he is far too self-promoting to do so. Solomon's advice in Proverbs 27:2 is especially valuable for all who preach, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; A stranger, and not thine own lips."

A few years ago a preacher I know reportedly asked some fellow preachers how one went about getting an invitation to speak on one of those lectureships, for he would surely like to be on one! As a lectureship director, several men over the years have recommended themselves and offered their services as speakers or writers, but I have almost always thanked them politely and not invited them. Such brethren remind me of a twelve-year old fledgling song leader who tries to lead "The New Song" or of a new convert wanting to begin an immediate study of Revelation!

Though they may not have a string of degrees after their names or be the greatest orators, those men who preach God's Truth in humility and at great sacrifice because they would rather die than compromise it are nonetheless great in the eyes of God. "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mat. 23:12). Jeremiah was just such a man. The proud man asks, when charged with great responsibility, "I thought you would never call." The humble servant, as Jeremiah, asks, "How can one of such mean ability possibly be equal to the tasks?" No suit of clothes ever looked better on a Gospel preacher than the suit of humility! Let us cultivate the beautiful and commendable trait advocated in Romans 12:3:

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.

An unknown poet wrote:

How ready is the man to go,
Whom God hath never sent!
How timorous, diffident, and slow,
God's chosen instrument!

GOD'S ENCOURAGEMENT OF JEREMIAH JEREMIAH 1:7-8

God Rejects Jeremiah's Excuse

When God told Jeremiah what to do, no excuse was sufficient to avoid the task. What if he were but young and inexperienced? Was this or any other imagined handicap a problem to the Creator of man and His universe? Yet, God does not severely rebuke the fledgling prophet. Perhaps this indicates that God understood that Jeremiah's excuse did not arise from faithlessness, but from meekness, modesty, and understandable fear. What if he were but a "child"? God would still send him to whomever needed to hear him and with whatever message He would give him. He would not have to be concerned about the words, for God would supply them.

A century before Jeremiah, Isaiah described the digression of the leaders of God's people and its terrible consequences, "For they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed" (Isa 9:16). The attitude of the people in general was one of defiance which would not tolerate God's faithful message and messengers:

For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isa. 30:9-11).

In his explanation of why Jerusalem and Judah had to be destroyed, the inspired writer of Second Chronicles described their determination to walk in their own obstinate ways in spite of God's longsuffering attempts to alert them to their peril:

Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy (2 Chr. 36:14-16).

It was because of this very human proclivity that God sent Jeremiah to Judah, as the last in a long line of prophets, in a final attempt to rescue her from national suicide. The religious leaders of God's people contemporary with Jeremiah were corrupt, and the people rejoiced in their corruption, "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31).

God Promises Deliverance to Jeremiah

God's promise to deliver Jeremiah implies that he would meet severe opposition. Part of Jeremiah's reluctance may have sprung from his contemplation of the awful treatment to which one who spoke what Judah and the nations needed to hear might be subjected. He had every reason to be fearful for his life, even before his specific message was given him. God encouraged him by telling him not to fear, for He would be with him and deliver him. Jeremiah must have relied upon God's promised protection often as he faced cruel and shameful treatment repeatedly because of his message. God gave an almost identical message of assurance to Paul about six and one-half centuries later when he faced difficult and discouraging circumstances in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10). God's words of encouragement were His way of removing every excuse from Jeremiah's mind. It was not for Jeremiah to question his qualifications nor his ability to stand before great men with a message they would not appreciate; it was his place to obey and let God take care of the details.

Practical Applications

The essence of God's commission to His uninspired preachers of the Gospel is found in His words to Jeremiah, "But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. 1:7). God's spokesmen must go wherever and to whomever He sends us. Since the Savior did His redemptive work and ascended to His heavenly throne, He has sent His devotees to make disciples of all the nations and to take the saving Gospel into all the world and to the whole creation (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15). This commission will not cease as long as the world stands (Mat. 28:20). We must never flag in our zeal to go with the Gospel.

The prophet of God (whether inspired or uninspired) will speak only and all of what God commands (authorizes) him to speak. If he does not, he is not God's spokesman, whatever he may claim. The majority of men have never been content very long to speak the message of God, even as the people have not been willing to hear it.

We see much of the same condition among the people of God now that existed in Jeremiah's time. God's spiritual Israel is cursed with its prophets who prophesy falsely. What began as a whisper thirty years ago from certain radical voices who began labeling the Lord's people as merely another denomination has now grown into a great shout from men of vast influence. These liberal, fellowship-everyone (except those who are set for the defense of the Gospel), denominationally-minded men can be seen and heard all over the world. Some of them occupy seats on the boards, offices in the administration, and stand behind lecterns in the classrooms of our schools. They have already poisoned a couple of generations of young people entrusted to them by overly-trusting and sometimes naive parents. They occupy editorial chairs and staffs of such papers as *Image Magazine*, *Wineskins*, and *The Christian Chronicle*.

These religious secessionists serve as elders and occupy the pulpits of some of the largest congregations. In fact, the number of congregations with four hundred members or more that does not have this kind of elders and preachers is few indeed. (It is doubtful that any of these congregations can be turned back from their apostasy.) They are the planners of and speakers on the largest annual gatherings of brethren such as the misnamed Tulsa International Soul-Winning Workshop, the Nashville Jubilee, and several of the university lectureships. Some of these same men have produced a veritable flood of books over the past ten years, all promoting approximately the same cultic mantra: (1) We are under grace and therefore not under law, (2) to preach obedience to God constitutes legalism, (3) to claim to be the exclusive people of God is Pharisaical and sectarian, (4) we should admit that the church of Christ is only one among the hundreds of denominations, and (5) we should likewise therefore freely extend fellowship to them as sister entities in the real "church of Christ at large." One of the greatest tragedies that those of us who have made a few trips overseas have seen is that these unscrupulous servants of Satan have not hesitated to export their heresies to faraway places with strange-

sounding names. Their effects can be seen in Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Russia, Europe, and likely everywhere the Gospel has gone.

While there have always been some who were not content with speaking what the Lord commanded, such men could not have come to places of prominence and power in the church but for two factors. First, God's people in general did not rise up in righteous indignation, but sat idly by and allowed this tragedy to happen. This apathy has been partly due to widespread ignorance of God's Word. As it was with Israel, so it has been with us, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Many have not recognized the advocacy of even the most grievous errors because they knew so little of the Truth with which to contrast it. (If one knows not the Truth he is hardly in a position to detect error!)

This apathy has also sprung from the almost hypnotic influence of the godless humanistic philosophies which brethren have absorbed, urging tolerance toward almost every doctrine and/or practice, whether in morals or religion. Brethren have lost the power and the will to judge. Some can hardly bring themselves to label anything as "sin" or "error." Even now, when God's faithful ones raise the cry of alarm, such cannot be moved. As Jeremiah asked his people concerning the tragedy that had befallen old Jerusalem, we ask our brethren who are even yet nonchalant and unconcerned about the siege of the liberals against the new Jerusalem, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by" (Lam. 1:12)? Of course, some in the pews have been more than merely apathetic toward liberal teaching and practice; they have recognized, embraced, and encouraged it. They have delighted in having someone twist the Scriptures so as to justify their worldly and immoral lives and their desire to see the church flow into the polluted stream of denominationalism.

Second, the very men God has charged to spiritually feed, oversee, and protect each flock, respectively—its shepherds, pastors—have failed on a grand scale. Although I have never served as an elder, as a local preacher I have worked intimately with elders for almost forty years. I appreciate the fact that no group of men on earth has a weightier responsibility than do these men who must account to the Judge of all men for the souls under their care (Heb. 13:17). When preachers,

professors, and publications began spouting an ever-increasing flow of liberalism several years ago, these men, more than any others, were in a position to put a stop to it. Some were equal to the task and every faithful saint admires them. But unfortunately, many were not. Instead of protecting the flock from the ravening wolves, they have opened the door and protected the wolves while they fed on the flock! They have provided a platform for the promotion of error and bread for the table of propagators of apostasy. In some cases, elders were and are eager promoters of liberalism. In other cases, elders have been so ignorant they did not recognize it in their very midst until the church had been stolen from them. In yet other cases, elders recognized the error, but were too spineless to deal with it in the face of threats from congregational bullies. The result has been the same, regardless of the reason—hundreds of churches have been so corrupted that there is no hope for them.

Elders could still isolate and stamp out much of the liberalism that is fast overwhelming the church, and here are the measures that would do it: (1) Get rid of their liberal preachers and other “staff” members and replace them with men who know and love the Truth, who will teach and preach what the Lord commands without compromise. (2) Get rid of all of the Bible class material that teaches error. (Much of it sold by our brethren is actually denominational material, carelessly edited—if edited at all, with new covers slapped on it. Sweet, 20th Century Christian, and Gospel Advocate have been doing this for years.) Replace it with material that teaches the Truth (e.g., Firm Foundation, Sain Pub., Lambert Pub.). (3) Gather up all of the modern speech versions of the Bible from the classrooms and pews and throw them away. Replace them with KJV, ASV, or NKJV and allow only these versions to be used in preaching, teaching, and public reading. (4) Warn the church about liberal periodicals and subscribe to sound periodicals for each family. Also, warn the church about liberal authors and books and encourage them to buy books written by men and women who are sound in the faith. (5) Warn the church about “Christian” universities that are set on apostasy and discourage members from sending their children or their money to them. Write the presidents and boards of these schools telling them you will continue to issue such warnings till they repent. (6) Invite only men whom you know to be sound in the faith to preach in Gospel meetings and to

speaking on lecture programs. (7) Assign the preacher some sermons that will expose the false doctrines and apostasies that are destroying churches on every hand, including the identifying of sources and the naming of names so that the church may be alert to and aware of such matters.

I realize that the suggestions listed above will sound almost as radical to liberal elders and preachers as Jeremiah's message did to the ungodly priests and false prophets of Judah. Alas, I will not hold my breath till elderships begin following this advice (any more than Jeremiah did till Judah repented)! Admittedly, to do such would result in a furor in any congregation that has been slipping down the slimy slope of error for some time. Those who have for so long rejoiced over the comfort they have been made to feel in their liberalism and error would register extreme displeasure. No doubt, it would cause church splits all over the land, but they would be divisions that not only would please the Lord, but that are demanded by Him (Luke 12:51-53).

Those in today's very permissive and irrational climate who dare to speak what God commands are not going to win any popularity contests, even as Jeremiah did not. They are going to be mistreated by the very ones who should be upholding their hands and encouraging them, even as Jeremiah was. However, even when sin and error have temporarily triumphed, true servants of God will not compromise the message of God to avoid persecution, even as Jeremiah did not.

GOD'S ENDOWMENT OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 1: 9

God Promises To Provide His Words for Jeremiah's Mouth

God had already told Jeremiah that he was to speak whatever He would command him to speak (Jer. 1:7). Now He endows Jeremiah with the very words which he is to proclaim. Jeremiah's first reaction to God's commission was, "I know not how to speak" (Jer 1:6). When Moses offered a similar excuse, God gave him his brother Aaron as his spokesman (Exo. 3:14-16). To help Jeremiah, God said, "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1:9). A century before Jeremiah, God spoke to Isaiah in almost identical terms, "And I have put my words in thy mouth" (Isa. 51:16). God would later do the same with Jeremiah's younger contemporary, Ezekiel. God set a scroll before him which contained the message he was to speak (Eze. 2:8-

10). God then commanded the prophet of the Exile to eat the scroll and to “go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them” (Eze. 3:1-4).

In Jeremiah we see an instance of that to which the Hebrews writer referred, “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners” (Heb. 1:1). Peter declared the same truth, “For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). The Old Testament prophets of God did not speak their own message, but the words God gave them. Thus, when they spoke, God was speaking to the people. By this means God also gave us the Old Testament in written form.

Practical Applications

While God spoke to His people in previous ages by the voices of His prophets, “when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). God sent the Eternal Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth as His last messenger to mankind: God “hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son” (Heb. 1:2). As with Jeremiah, Jesus’ message was not His own, but that which the Father sent Him to declare, “For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49; cf., 7:16; 8:26; 14:24). Christ chose, endowed, and sent out His apostles to declare His Gospel to all mankind (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-49; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4). Thus, when they spoke and wrote, it was by Christ’s authority (John 13:20) and by Heaven’s mandate (Mat. 18:18). It is by this means that “**ALL** scripture [NT as well as OT (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15-16)] *is* given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Holy Scriptures are not the words of men, but the Word of God!

The measure of the message God gave Jeremiah was not in mere broad thoughts or themes: God put His **words** in the prophet’s mouth. This passage powerfully advocates verbal inspiration! The New Testament echoes this Truth loudly: Among other things the Lord promised His apostles was that when they were arrested they would not have to be “anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Mat. 10:19-20). Paul

claimed, “we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). I am not moved (except to indignation!) by the calumny of the critics, skeptics, modernists, and liberals who say that the doctrine of verbal inspiration constitutes “mechanical dictation” by which the inspired men are rendered mere “stenographers.” Let them call it what they may, the Bible teaches that God gave to the inspired men the very **words** He wanted them to speak and write! This is the only way the Scriptures can claim plenary (full, complete in every part) inspiration, which they do (Psa. 119:160; 139:17; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; et al.). The only way men can fully and faithfully receive and deliver the message of God is to do it in His own words.

Every saint needs to be aware that there are now some among us who have snuggled up to the most sneering and blasphemous modernists in their open rejection of the Bible doctrine of verbal inspiration. I cite the following examples, among others:

1. Harold Hazelip, President of David Lipscomb University, made the following assessment of the Bible in a Herald of Truth television sermon several years ago:

We are assuming that it [the Bible] is the inspired word of God, though this certainly is also an area in which we should be open to whatever facts are pertinent. Any observer of religion is aware that our problem is a legitimate one.¹

2. John T. Willis, teacher in the religion department of Abilene Christian University, affirms that “the Bible **contains** the word of God, but not ordinarily or absolutely as it is ordinarily read.”² He further opines, “There is **no way to prove or disprove this claim** [i.e., inspiration] absolutely, although arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue [emph. DM].”³

3. According to Rubel Shelly, Luke wrote his Gospel account from information he gathered after interviews with the Lord’s associates and visits to various historical sites, from Mark’s book, from an imaginary document called “Q,” from preaching he heard, and from scraps.⁴ Modernistic critics of the Bible have long taught just such infidelity. Did you know that the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7) is also a compilation of “scraps”?⁵

4. Carroll D. Osburn of the religion faculty of Abilene Christian University ridicules the idea of verbal, plenary inspiration as “naive” and “fundamentalism.” He seems amused that any would advance the

view that truth in the Bible extends to scientific, historical, and geographical teachings as well as those on morals and religion. Amazingly, he then has the audacity to deceptively label himself a “conservative” in spite of his denial of the Scriptures’ claims for themselves. He debunks the idea that one can really understand the Bible by studying the KJV.⁶ Osburn believes the origin of Jude’s letter lies shrouded in obscurity, but that it relies heavily upon several books of the “Jewish apocalyptic” in the Apocrypha.⁷

Such men are agnostics and doubters who should be ashamed to pretend to teach the Word of God. They do not even believe the Bible **is** the Word of God in the sense that it claims to be!

It is amazing almost beyond comprehension that men go on portraying themselves as “Gospel preachers” when they no longer: (1) accept God’s Word as being from Him, (2) will preach it and it alone to lost men, and (3) believe there is only one body, one faith, and one baptism. When men who profess to preach and teach the Bible as God’s Very Word lose their faith, they should either repent or quit. Simple honesty demands that they quit destroying faith while supposedly engaging in the work of building it up! Rubel Shelly, one of the most serious offenders in this respect for over a decade now, wrote (in his rational early years) a powerful article entitled, “Oh, for an Honest False Teacher.” His comments in this article on the false teachers who left the church (per 1 John 2:19) are words he needs to apply to himself. He wrote so truly, as follows:

Can anything good be said about such apostates as these? Yes! They were honest....Surely we can have more respect for a man who is honest and open about his convictions (or lack of them) than for a man who no longer believes the basic doctrines of the gospel but seeks to stay within the body of believers as a subversive. Such a person is not only a heretic Christian, he is a dishonest man....Let them [college professors, preachers, Bible class teachers, et al.] be honest enough to break with us openly and quit their unmanly treason.⁸

How this man (and those like him who have lost their faith) can look at himself in the mirror every morning and live with himself after writing the statement above is more than I can understand! I recommend that he change his name to **Rebel** Shelly, for this is what he has been in relation to sound doctrine for more than a dozen years.

Jeremiah stands as a model for Gospel preachers, in that he was content to preach only the words which God gave him, and he did so

faithfully in spite of the almost universal rejection of his message and terrible opposition and persecution. Each generation has the obligation to receive only the Word of God, to obey it, and to pass it and it alone on to the next generation so it can do the same thing all over again, till the Lord comes (2 Tim. 2:2).

GOD'S EMPOWERMENT OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 1:10

The Authority God Gave Jeremiah

While Jeremiah was primarily sent to Judah and Jerusalem and did almost all of his prophetic work there, his prophecies would relate to other kingdoms and nations as well. In fact, he delivered God's message of doom to at least ten other nations (Jer. 43-51). God said He had set Jeremiah over nations and kingdoms, but this humble priest of Anathoth would not rule by the power of sword or throne. Rather, he would be "over" the nations to which his prophecies would be addressed by the power of the Word of God. He would have advance knowledge of their respective fates and futures. This knowledge would be a form of great power and authority, which even the kings of those nations did not possess.

The Plan for Exercising His Authority

In executing his commission and exercising his authority, he was first to do the work of demolition. This is expressed in four terms: "to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow." We are not to understand this to be literal or physical destruction, although God was well-pleased with just such behavior in the righteous King Josiah relating to idolatry and all of its evil trappings (2 Kin. 22-23; 2 Chr. 34-35). The demolition to be wrought by Jeremiah was to be through his delivering the message of God's judgment against all wickedness. It would be a bold exposure of the evil and thoroughly corrupt practices of rebellious Jews and Gentiles as well. The Word God gave Jeremiah was like fire, and "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29). Jeremiah was to do his best to level the bastions and strongholds of immorality, idolatry, and every form of apostasy by speaking the words God had placed in his mouth.

However, his work of destruction was not an end in itself. It was rather preparatory work for the next stage of his assignment—to build and to plant. But evil must be rooted out before virtue can take root.

The land on which one would plant crops or build a house has to be cleared of trees, stumps, rocks, and other undesirable items before the works of planting or building can be accomplished. The rebuke of wickedness in the absence of repentance was to be followed by the promise of mercy and blessing if the people turned back to God.

Practical Applications

God's empowerment of Jeremiah is instructive concerning the nature of the preaching He wants His preachers to do. For several years now we have been hearing outcries from some brethren against "negative preaching." By this they mean preaching that opposes, exposes, rebukes, reproves, condemns, judges, or corrects. It is somewhat humorous that they see no inconsistency in their own negative preaching against "negative preaching"! I suppose that if they had their way no preacher would ever stoop so low as to identify any specific sin or error. To them it is next to blasphemy to dare call the name of a false teacher and expose his false doctrine. One thing is certain—they would not tolerate Jeremiah in their pulpits more than once.

In emphasizing the need for and place of the negative element in preaching, we do not want to lose sight of the need for "positive preaching." Jeremiah was to do this kind of preaching, also. To be fair, there are some that do not seem comfortable with anything but a strong "negative" sermon every time. (This is an extreme as erroneous as the former, but it seems that the criticism of negative preaching is far more prevalent than its opposite.) We not only need to hear sin and error exposed. We also need to hear preaching from the Word of God that encourages, enlightens, and edifies our hearts and spirits. This is the "building" and "planting" Jeremiah was to do and that preachers today still need to do. If one preaches only a negative message all of the time, his preaching is unbalanced. However, the trend among preachers in the Lord's church over the past several years seems definitely to favor a "positive only" approach. With this approach has come a corresponding rate of apostasy due to liberalism.

It was surely not accidental that God used four "negative" terms, but only two "positive" terms to describe the preaching Jeremiah was to do. It is somewhat remarkable in my judgment that Paul used the same ratio of "negative" and "positive" terms to describe the kind of preaching Gospel preachers are to do: "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering

and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). Is God trying to tell preachers that they need to spend twice as much time uprooting evil as planting Truth, or that exposing sin and error is twice as important as imparting the Gospel, or something besides these? Perhaps we will never know for sure. However, what we can most certainly learn is that the namby-pamby, soft-soap, toothless preaching that some brethren want exclusively is not what God wants!

Where did anyone ever come up with the ideas of “negative” and “positive” preaching in the first place? It certainly was not in the Bible! When we hear a man preach it should never cross our minds to judge the lesson as “negative” or “positive.” There is only one question that deserves any consideration at all—is it biblical, scriptural? If so, why should anyone care whether it fits someone’s imagined definitions of “negative” or “positive”? As a matter of fact, any sermon that expounds the Truth on any subject will be both “negative” and “positive.” In the process of setting forth what the Bible teaches, there is implicit condemnation and exposure of teachings of men that contradict the biblical message. Likewise, when it is necessary to devote a sermon to exposing some given sin or error, there is the positive effect of making us stronger in the Truth and helping prevent us from falling into some error or sin.

The sad fact is that the church at the close of the twentieth century contains a large and growing number of congregations that does not want and will not long tolerate a preacher who preaches what the Bible plainly says on a host of subjects and who takes longer than twenty minutes to do so. By their own foolish and carnal requirements they would not knowingly let Jeremiah (to say nothing of John the Baptizer, Paul, Stephen, or even the Lord Himself) within ten miles of their pulpits! The super-sweet, ooey-goey, touchy-feely, pasted-smile, story-telling, stage-prancing, after-dinner-speaker type “preachers” are much in demand nowadays. They are being supported, rewarded, and promoted by congregations that languish in biblical beriberi and spiritual scurvy, so ignorant they are incapable of seeing their woeful condition. At the same time, good men who love the Lord and His Truth more than life and who, as Jeremiah did, will preach it regardless of the cost or persecution, are encountering more and more difficulty in finding congregations that desire or will long endure their services.

CONCLUSION

Let us summarize and reemphasize some major points: God is “pro-life” concerning infants in the womb—and we had better be! Jeremiah’s reticence to respond to God’s commission is an attractive sign of humility. The arrogant seek to push themselves into places of prominence. The humble attempt to do God’s bidding, all the while thinking themselves unworthy. God’s preachers must go where He sends and speak only and all of what He bids them speak. Those who do otherwise are not God’s preachers, regardless of how many academic degrees, how much popularity, how prestigious a position, or how handsome a salary they may possess or command. God’s preachers must not fear what men will do unto them. If they do, they will not long be God’s preachers (Gal. 1:10). We must serve God faithfully and trust Him to deliver us from evil men. Jehovah has put His words in our “mouths” by giving us His completed revelation, and we dare preach nothing more or less than this. God sends His preachers to upbraid evil and error wherever it is found, whether in university presidents, elders, deacons, the families of elders or deacons, those who are financially or politically powerful in the church, or those immoral segments of society who might threaten us with bodily harm for rebuking them. God also sends His preachers to sow the kingdom’s seed so that new growth and strengthening of old growth may occur.

ENDNOTES

¹Harold Hazelip, Herald of Truth TV Sermon No. 986 (“The Search for Truth”), as quoted in “Highland Report,” *Contending for the Faith*, ed. Ira Y. Rice, Jr., (Nov. 1973), p. 7.

²John T. Willis, “Men Spoke from God (3)” in *The Firm Foundation*, ed. Reuel Lemmons (Dec. 16, 1980), p. 807.

³John T. Willis, ed., *The World and Literature of the Old Testament* (Austin, TX: Sweet Pub. Co, 1979), p. 11.

⁴Rubel Shelly, quoted from tape recordings of a series of lectures on “The Church in the 90s: The Challenge of Change,” presented at Richland Hills Church of Christ, Fort Worth, TX, February 3-4, 1990.

⁵Curtis A Cates, *The “Core/Bull’s Eye Gospel” Concept Refuted* (Memphis, TN: Cates Pub., 1994), p. 28.

⁶Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), pp. 58, 62-63.

⁷Ibid., pp. 94, 107-113.

⁸Rubel Shelly, “Oh, for an Honest False Teacher,” in *The Gospel Advocate*, ed. B. C. Goodpasture (May 6, 1971), pp. 283-284.

THE HONOR OF PREACHING

Winfred Clark



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INTRODUCTION

With the word “preaching” comes various reactions on the part of people. Such is seen by some as that which is done by one who is lazy and will not work, or who cannot succeed otherwise. Others see preaching as that which places a man on a pedestal. Such would be seen as that which would feed his ego. The fact of the matter is that neither of these could be justified. If one looks at the place of preaching in God’s scheme of things such will clear away many misconceptions concerning the matter. For one thing, he will find that the emphasis is upon the thing preached and not upon the man who is preaching. Many of us have heard some good brother in a prayer before a sermon to say, “help the preacher to hide himself behind the cross and preach Christ and him crucified.” This is exactly the sentiment that ought to guide all preachers. Brother Hugo McCord tells of a visit to preach in a Tennessee church. While he was seated behind the pulpit, before being introduced to speak, he saw a sign that only he and the preacher could see, which said, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” This was the sentiments of the Greeks who came to Philip and said, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21). So, we need to keep in mind that we must not seek to have people see us but Jesus.

We need to focus on the honor or privilege of preaching. This was surely true of Paul the apostle. Note what he has to say. “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16). Yes, he preached the gospel but such was not seen as something that gave him great credit. He had been commanded to do so and such was a privilege. Again:

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim. 1:11-13).

One will have no problem in seeing this good man’s estimate of the privilege he enjoyed. But this is not all.

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:7-8).

Again, Paul saw the matter of preaching as a wonderful privilege provided by the grace and goodness of God. With such an attitude one can see preaching would never be a burden but a blessing.

Surely we can see the great privilege provided in the opportunity to declare to a lost world the undying message of God’s love. We would thus do well to pause and look at some of the many things which show preaching to be an honorable and noble thing. The list of things we will discuss will not exhaust the reasons.

IT IS AN HONOR TO DO WHAT OUR LORD DID ON EARTH

One can affirm Jesus came to do a number of things, one of which would be to preach. In fact, the Old Testament foresaw this very thing.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified (Isa. 61:1-3).

You will recall this passage being read in the synagogue of Nazareth by Jesus and showing that such pertained to Himself (Luke 4:21).

Not only do we find the Old Testament affirming the fact that He was to preach, we find the New Testament confirming the fact that He did preach. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Mat. 4:23). Notice that He went about "preaching." This is not the only time He was found preaching. "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Mat. 9:35). Again, we find the fact that He preached. Surely, we can see the great privilege we have to do something similar to that which our Lord did. He did not consider it to be below His dignity, nor did He see it as something that was worthless.

Not only did Jesus preach, He also commanded others to do the same. The very fact that He would command such would show us the place and importance of such. Remember the limited commission. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 10:7). This is also true of the "great commission." "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

IT IS AN HONOR TO SAY WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID

No, this is not an affirmation that we are inspired. However, it is an affirmation that we have an inspired book from which we get our message. When we preach what is revealed such words are inspired words. Were not written words still the Words of the Spirit? When the letters were written to the seven churches we find statements such as, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). When we declare these words, they are the Words of the Spirit of our God. This is the reason we take to hear the admonition of Peter:

If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

We must be **careful** as to the “what” we say. We must be sure to say what the Spirit said concerning baptism. We would not honor His Word by misrepresenting what He had to say. We have no right to attribute to the Holy Spirit those things which He has not said. We can be **confident** as we speak what we find revealed in God’s Book. Yes, it is an honor to be able to speak words that are true and inspired of God.

IT IS AN HONOR TO PREACH TRUTH THE PROPHETS WANTED TO SEE

Listen to what Jesus had to say about the matter:

But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them* (Mat. 13:16-17).

What a tremendous privilege is ours! Here we learn that we are able to see and hear things that these men would loved to have seen and heard. Peter would also reaffirm this very thing. “Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you” (1 Pet. 1:9-10). The apostle will refer to the fact that these prophets “enquired and searched diligently.” This means they would carefully search as an animal would seek its prey. This means they would search as one would seek for gold. It means they would earnestly desire to know fully what those prophecies would mean.

Take a moment to think of what all of this could mean. Suppose Isaiah were alive today after prophesying of the virgin birth of Jesus. Suppose you had the opportunity to talk to him about the matter and say: “Did you ever wonder about what you were saying when you said, ‘Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel’” (Isaiah 7:14)? You can imagine what he might say. Surely he would say, “I would love to know what that means.” Would it not be an honor to point him to the record of the birth of our Lord? You would be able to read of such in Matthew and Luke. What a thrill this would be to learn this had been fulfilled. But he also had something to say about the establishment of the church (Isa. 2:1-4). He makes reference to the fact that such would be done in the last days. Suppose

he were alive and you could talk to him about the matter. You could show him a local congregation of the Lord's people and say this represents a part of that which you talked about long ago. But again, you could remind him of the fact that he spoke of the name; how such would be given by God to those in His house. He could remember how such was to be a new name which the mouth of the Lord would name (Isa. 62:1-4). You would be able to read the following:

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26).

He would then be able to see the new name. What an honor to be able to speak of these things.

IT IS AN HONOR TO HAVE A PART IN THE SALVATION OF OTHERS

No, I know we are not the saviours. However, there are numerous passages which show that we can have a part in saving others through preaching or teaching. If this is not the case, then how would we account some passages? Note: "The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise" (Pro. 11:30). Surely we can see that one can have a part in the winning of a soul. But this does not exhaust the matter. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?" (1 Cor. 7:16). Here is the plea of an apostle for the Christian to remain with the unbeliever with the hope of saving the partner. Surely this would involve the matter of teaching and of Christian influence. But note again: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Note that Timothy is told to take heed to himself and the doctrine. Would this not involve the matter of preaching or teaching? If not, what part would doctrine of teaching play? But, if he is careful about the way he lives and what he teaches he will be able to save others. Not that he would be the one who died for them to save them, but he would be the one who taught them, so the Savior would save them because of their obedience to the Lord's will.

James, a half brother of the Lord, had some things to say about this matter. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert

him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jam. 5:19-20). It is obvious that one can have a part in the conversion of another by teaching and in so doing he can have a part in saving that soul from death. If this is not the case then James would have left the wrong impression and we know this was not the case.

IT IS AN HONOR TO BRING COMFORT TO OTHERS

How many times have we been called upon to try to speak a word of solace and comfort to troubled hearts? Many of us have taken the journey time and again to the open grave with grieving families. What are we able to do in those dark hours? There is much that can be done. As we take the Word of the Lord we can find that which will strengthen.

Is this not what we find in Paul’s letter to the church at Thessalonica?

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 The. 4:13-18).

There can be no doubt about the words of comfort found in these verses. How do I know? I have the word of an apostle about the matter. He said, “wherefore comfort one another with these words.” I thus know there is comfort in such. Take a moment to look at these verses and one can see a number of things which would offer comfort. For one thing these words will remove man’s ignorance concerning the state of the faithful dead. Paul would let these good folks know that these might be dead but they are still in Jesus (1 The. 4:13). For another thing, we can see the great good of our faith. Note that he would say “if we believe.” This could well be, since we believe that Jesus died and rose again. But tied to that kind of faith is the assurance that the Lord will return someday. Related to that coming is the fact that those who are dead in Christ will come with Him. So that means they do not cease to exist at death. We can see in these pas-

sages a great deal of assurance that Christ will return, He will bring loved ones with Him, He will raise the dead bodies and all these good folks will be able to live together with the Lord forever and ever. What a comforting thought all of this really is!

CONCLUSION

Yes, we can conclude that preaching is a great honor and privilege and such should not be taken lightly. Paul did not, nor would he encourage any other to do so. Notice his closing remarks about the topic.

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

How would he have Timothy preach? Such should be done with God in mind and in view of the judgment. When this occurs we can see preaching being taken seriously.

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THE WORK OF A PREACHER

David P. Brown



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David has been preaching for twenty-nine years and is active in Gospel meeting work and lectureships in and out of the United States. He has written for several religious journals and for seven years, served as Associate Editor for the **Christian Worker**.

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INTRODUCTION

Of necessity some of the things involved in this chapter will overlap the material written by brother Noah Hackworth regarding "The Preacher's Message." However, I trust that the things discussed in this part of the book will emphasize the personal life of the preacher in discharging his duties as he works with people in and out of the church.

Some people (certain brethren included) do not believe that a preacher has any kind of work to do. They would rather believe that preachers are a shiftless and worthless lot, existing on the free hand-outs of the brethren. Of course, some preachers encourage this specious kind of thinking because they are lazy and dishonest (will not pay their debts, etc.). Others have compounded the problem with immoral living. In general such characters are hypocrites who make merchandise of the church. In brief they help make the honest gospel preacher's work much more difficult. On the other hand, others think that the preacher has a great amount of work to do. However, their

concept of his work does not touch top, side or bottom of what the New Testament teaches the genuine work of the preacher is.

ALL WICKED PREACHERS ARE NOT TOTALLY APOSTATE

Before noting some erroneous views of the preacher's work, we should understand that these wrong concepts do not belong **only** to those brethren who have completely apostatized. In conditioning a church to apostatize one of the primary and fundamental approaches of Satan's preachers is to preach the truth but never be specific or call names. These pseudo gospel preachers never make application of the truth they preach to any specific persons and places. They picture all those who are opposed to anything as negative, unloving, uncaring, and unmerciful. They employ "snarl" words when referring to preachers like me and "purr" words when referring to the Rubel Shelly types. They seek to create an atmosphere that opposes nothing except those brethren who oppose error and call it by name. They promote the fun and games that this generation craves. They are always there to help the "hurting person" (whatever that means). It usually means that if someone is in an adulterous marriage or other sins of like nature, they will seek to justify the continued practice by the "hurting ones" of the very sins that created and sustains "the hurt." This is done by teaching the "hurting ones" that God understands their plight so well that He will overlook their sins. These fake gospel preachers "look the other way" when it comes to dealing with specific sins and those who commit them. These weak and foolish preachers do and preach those things that make sinners think that God's love and grace will save them **in their sins**.

The aforementioned things and others of like error **must** precede the outright and bold teaching of rank false doctrine. A foundation and an environment **must** be created before error and those who propagate it can get a foothold, put down roots, grow, and flourish. Hence, false views of the preacher and his work **must** be "sold" to the brethren (elders especially) before other steps into apostasy can be taken.

Given the biblical truth that the elders of a church are ultimately responsible for the preacher and his work, ungodly elders are the primary reason for ungodly preachers remaining in the pulpits. Thus, the wicked preacher problem is really a bad elder problem.

SOME FALSE VIEWS OF A PREACHER'S WORK

Why do elders seek out such preacher's as previously described? Simply put, there are those ignorant (sometimes willfully ignorant) brethren (not a few elders) who think that the work of a preacher is that of a denominational pastor/"social worker." Hence, come their warped concept that a preacher's work consists **primarily** of being available for weddings, funerals, "counseling," socials, and "hospital visitation." Furthermore, he is to be good at smiling, hugging, hand holding, chauffeuring, "handyman," and telling cute jokes; overall he is thought of as a "good humor man." Moreover, he is sometimes thought of as the "CEO of church activities" who works under the "corporate board of the elders."

As stated earlier the aforementioned erroneous and "nutty" views of the preacher's work helps cultivate the idea that the preacher is to be a person of "love sweet love." This kind of love is foreign to the biblical definition of any of the Greek words translated by our English word "love." Whether it's our love for God, Christ, the Bible, the gospel, alien sinners, the church of Christ (faithful or apostate members), family, friends, or whomever; **biblical love (*agapao*) will always lead one to obey God.** The other kinds of love are subservient to the supreme love, *agapao* (*agape*). Furthermore, this false concept of love is nothing more or less than a syrupy, sticky, subjective, romantic, sick sentimentalism. It blesses saint and sinner alike and thereby blurs or completely destroys the sharp differentiating distinction between the two. As already pointed out this corrupted view of love never censures anyone for anything, for this would be "judgmental" and "unloving." Indeed, these "pastor-social worker- preachers" and their followers are so blinded that they cannot see their inconsistency. They have no compunction of conscience in practicing on brethren like me the very things they think they see in me and are determined to condemn. Such action is proof of their hypocrisy.

The aforementioned false views demand that a preacher be something between a pseudo-psychiatrist and an administrator with the false face of a clown. Moreover, these crazy views of the preacher's work mean that he is to deliver sermons(?) that never upset any one regarding his or her unholy manner of life. Such views of a preacher call for an accomplished politician in the worst sense of the word. Hence, he knows how to say much without saying anything. Again,

the only people such a preacher is allowed to upset are those who want him to live and preach clearly **only** what the New Testament authorizes. These “preacheretts” are best described by the putrid slime that oozes out of a decomposing body. What these servants of Satan do and teach lead souls to a devil’s hell; hence, they are deserving of the strong labels their ungodliness demands.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO TEACH THE GOSPEL

Multiplied millions enter eternity every year. This means that several thousand die every hour. The ultimate and eternal sadness is that the vast majority of them die lost in their sins. Hence, at death they enter into torment, the place of lost departed spirits. Unredeemed, they will appear before the judgment bar of God to be sentenced to eternal damnation.

While all men have the responsibility of using their lives to find and obey God, it is the church of Christ that is obligated to God to see that the gospel of Christ is preached to lost persons everywhere (Acts 17:27; Mat. 7:7; Mark. 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2).

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFUL GOSPEL PREACHERS

With these points in mind we are caused to see the importance of faithful gospel preachers in the divine scheme of things. Furthermore, the flawless example of a gospel preacher is the Christ Himself. As has been said of the Christ, “God had one ‘only begotten Son,’ and He made Him a preacher.”

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:14-15)!

Following the example of our Lord the great apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian elders what he had done while he was with them. “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). Truly, the gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). All of it, therefore, must be preached. Thus, Paul’s love for God, Christ, the church, the gospel, and the lost was well manifested in his life and work. Indeed, the work of faithful

gospel preachers takes second place to nothing in its importance before God; so should it be in the church.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREACHER'S WORK

For some years now it has seemed to me that a sense of urgency has vanished from the lives of many who preach. Moreover, many churches have lost the burning and pressing interest that the Bible places on the importance of gospel preaching. This is not only true among the worldly, liberal churches where one would expect this kind of conduct, but also in churches that have not apostatized. Does the gospel remain God's only power to save (Rom. 1:16)? Is the church still God's instrument to carry the gospel to a world lost in sin (Mark 16:15; Eph. 3:10)? Of course the biblical answer to both of these questions is yes. One major problem in the church is that preachers specifically and the church in general are not as concerned about saving souls as some in the church of yesteryear were. Yea, verily, I seriously doubt that the church was ever as urgent in gospel preaching as the Bible teaches it should be.

PREACHERS MUST DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

How much thinking really goes into preparing a gospel sermon? Why are the various and sundry enemies of the gospel not challenged by the church any longer? From the heart does the church (even preachers) really believe that men are lost without the gospel? Do we truly understand that only faithful members of the church of Christ are the only ones who will preach the whole council of God? Do brethren fully realize that the fervent desire to preach the gospel must grow out of one's deep abiding faith in Christ and the Christian system? To preach for any other reason is to preach with a wrong motive.

Please note the following foundation of Paul's charge to the young preacher Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Paul declares that gospel preachers are to labor with the understanding that: (1) Their work is done "before God and of Christ Jesus," (2) God "will judge the quick (living) and the dead," and (3) God's judgment will take place "at his appearing and his kingdom."

Surely we can see the vital link that preaching occupies in God's chain of salvation. When one engages in only a cursory reading of the book of Acts, he sees in the accounts of conversions recorded

therein the indispensable relationship of gospel preaching to the salvation of souls. Hence, Paul declared to the Roman brethren:

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:15 - 17).

To the Corinthians he wrote, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Again, the tremendous importance of the gospel preacher is seen in Paul's directive to Timothy. He wrote, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).

Before there can be a birth of water and the Spirit there must be a begattal (John 3:3,5; Luke 8:11,15). But, there can be no begattal without the gospel (1 John 5:1; Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Rom. 10:13-14; Rom. 10:17). No other message has begattal power, other messages have only the power to damn souls (Mat. 7:21-23; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; 2 The. 2:10-12). Of his responsibility to preach the gospel, Paul summed the seriousness of his work when he declared "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

GOD EXPECTS THE PREACHER TO BE A DILIGENT, PRAYERFUL STUDENT OF THE BIBLE

Some preachers never accumulate much knowledge of God's Word nor anything else involved in discharging their obligation to God. Others are students for a while, but in time they cease to study. In reality, they give up the "practice" of being a gospel preacher. No one desires to use a physician, an attorney, or a dentist who no longer studies or uses the tools of his profession. However, if a preacher of the Gospel is to be true to himself, God, and the church, he must continue to study and remain cognizant of the events in the world and the church that has to do with his work. If he is not willing to put forth the necessary study and meditation demanded in preparing weekly sermons, weekly Bible classes, understanding various religious doctrines, understanding "issues" within the church, meeting the attacks of skeptics on religion, church history, biblical languages and logic, he should cease to burden the church with his support.

THE PREACHER'S LIBRARY

Because the preacher must stay informed he must have a good library. However, much money can be wasted if one does not learn what books to buy. Try to learn from experienced preachers who, through the years, have proven themselves in their work to be knowledgeable of good books for the preacher. In good books one has the scholarship and wisdom of hundreds of years of sage scholarship. However, never allow man's books to take the place of your own study of the Bible.

Never purchase books haphazardly. Learn the books that are helpful and that fulfill certain needs, then make a book list that will serve as a guideline to one's book buying. Try to have an allowance for book buying and put it into your budget just as one should do everything else. As long as you live you will never be satisfied with your library. You must continue to remove books that did not prove to be helpful and replace them with better books. This is a lifelong pursuit. Much more could be said about the books to acquire for your library, but space forbids such here.

In this electronic age we would urge the young preacher to be sure to prepare himself to use computers. The information age has made Bible study much faster through all manner of Bible and Bible-related software.

WHAT THE PREACHER MUST NOT PREACH

The preacher sins if he preaches: (1) Profane and vain babblings (1 Tim. 6:20), (2) old wives tales (1 Tim. 4:7), (3) words of man's wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18-25), (4) traditions of men (Mat. 15:1ff), (5) just what people desire to hear (2 Tim. 4:1-5), (6) the doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-5). When the preacher studies these things and understands what they mean he will be able to identify their modern day counterparts. I assure you that the subheadings that can be developed under each of these six points are many. What is so sad is when one takes the time to note just what all the six points exclude and, then, how many preachers are preaching exactly what Paul told Timothy not to teach.

WHAT THE PREACHER MUST PREACH

He is to preach without fear or favor the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27). This is the only way that he can know that he has

discharged his obligation to God. Again, he cannot preach what he does not know. Therefore, he cannot preach the whole counsel of God unless he is a persistent and steadfast student of the Bible. The whole counsel of God is referred to as: (1) "The Gospel" (Rom. 1:15-17; Gal. 1:6-9), (2) "The word of the Lord" (Acts 16:30-34), (3) "Jesus" (Acts 8:26-40), (4) "The faith" (Jude 3), (5) "Sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:1-5), and (6) "Doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9-11). Over the years it has amazed me at the number of brethren who did not know that these terms all applied to the same body of truth (John 8:31-32). Men have divided the church because they taught that the word "gospel" meant one thing and the word "doctrine" meant something else. In reality, both words refer to the same thing.

In order that men might be saved by his preaching, the preacher must speak forthrightly and plainly. If the preacher does not believe that accountable men are lost in sin unless they both believe and obey the Gospel, he has no business in the pulpit. He must understand the church of Christ's relationship to man's salvation. He must know and preach that all of the saved are in the church of Christ and none are out of it. He must know and preach the biblical identifying marks of the church. He must understand that denominationalism is not Christianity. If the preacher does not know and preach these things, he is not even a faithful Christian, much less a faithful gospel preacher. This should tell us something of why some preachers preach as they do today.

The preacher should learn from the Old Testament prophets: John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Stephen, and Paul **how** to speak plainly (Mat. 3:1-11; Mat. 23:1-36; Acts 2,7; 9:20; 13:9-10; also see 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 3:12). He, like them, must also plead for the people to make a decision (Jos. 24; Acts 2:39-41).

He must not only preach plainly, but with compassion. To be compassionate **does not** mean that the truth is left unspoken, or part of the truth is left out. It **does not** mean that one does not expose and refute false doctrine. **Neither does it mean** that sin must be left unexposed and uncondemned. Furthermore, it **does not mean** that the message is to be delivered in such an ambiguous manner that no one understands the sermon.

To preach with compassion means that preaching is done with gentleness, meekness, fear, grace, seasoned with salt, and in the

spirit of gentleness (1 The. 2:7; 1 Pet. 3:5; Col. 4:6; Gal. 6:1). This attitude demands that the preacher capture the spirit of Christ when He denounced and condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and yet wept over their lost condition (Mat. 23; Luke 19:41). We see exhibited in the apostle Paul the spirit of Christ in dealing with his brethren in the flesh, the Jews (Rom. 10:1-4; 9:3).

In his lifetime the faithful gospel preacher desires to reach as many people with the truth as he can. Thus, he strives to employ wholesome means to get the truth to every person in every part of the world. The early church challenged the unbelieving Jews as well as the Greek philosophers with the gospel of Christ. The church took the saving gospel to every creature under heaven without most of the modern day methods that we think we must have to do what they did. Yet, with all the advantages we have, we are not doing in our time what they did in theirs (Col. 1:6,23)

The preacher must strive to enable himself to defend the faith. Regardless of the criticisms made by ignorant brethren who work to be at peace with the forces of Satan, faithful preachers must “hate every false way” and seek to expose and refute the false doctrine and teacher (Psa. 119:104). Hence, the faithful preacher must care more for the approval of God than that of men (John 12:42-43). Please study the following passages of Scripture to see that defending the faith is desirable and necessary—Ephesians. 6:11; 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3.

Furthermore, when we defend the faith we follow and uphold the example of Jesus. Our Lord debated the scribes in the presence of great crowds of people (Mark 9:14). He debated with the Sadducees on the Resurrection (Mat. 22:23-33). Jesus debated the Pharisees regarding whose son Christ is (Mat. 22:41-46).

Following the example of his Lord, Paul declared that he was set for the defense of the Gospel (Phi. 1:7,16). He debated against the Grecians, stirred up trouble, and his opponents went about to kill him (Acts 9:29). Debating was customary of Paul (Acts 17:1-2,17; 18:19).

How can preachers today claim that they are following in the footsteps of our Lord and the peerless apostle Paul and not be involved in defending the faith; yes, indeed, to be known as a debater. The only way to meet the Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, Catholics, liberal

and conservative Protestants, the Cults, and in the church those who condemn what God allows, who allow what God condemns as well as various kinds of modernism **is to meet them head on with the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”** (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

Hence, the preacher must be a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3). Yes, the Lord’s army is His church. We have a proper uniform to wear (Gal. 3:26-27). It is imperative that we be correctly trained to properly employ the weapon supplied by the Lord (Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). At all costs we must obey our commander, Jesus Christ, the Lord (Mat. 28:19). There must be a willingness to engage the enemy in battle and suffer the hardship such entails. If need be we must be willing to die for the Lord in the course of fighting for His cause (Rev. 2:10; Luke. 14:26-33).

Everything we have studied thus far demands that the preacher exhort, reprove, and rebuke his hearers (2 Tim. 4:1-5). The evangelist is to preach with all authority (Tit. 2:15). This does not mean that he has the authority to preach whatever he chooses. It does mean that he is to preach the word of God—and no man nor group of men has God’s authority to forbid or hinder him from doing so.

WORKING WITH THE CHURCH

In the work of the church the preacher is to labor in “word and doctrine” under the “oversight” (superintendency) of faithful elders (1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7,17). Besides regular preaching and Bible class teaching, the preacher will be involved in training leaders, exhorting the church to greater service, helping to develop “personal workers,” and exerting his personal influence for the gospel, as he contacts people in and out of the church. He must remember that he is a specialist in the sense that he has made a special study and has special training. If he has not done these things he should have. Also, he is available to devote full time to his work.

WALKING CIRCUMSPECTLY IN THE CHURCH

In order for the preacher to work well with the congregation he must know them and they must know him. The happy medium that all of us need as preachers is somewhere between never saying anything for fear you will say the wrong thing or too much and saying everything as fast as possible. Some need to speak up more, others

need to shut up more. All of us need to remember Matthew 12:36-37.

One should be exceedingly slow as to whom he takes into his confidence. It is easy to misjudge the honesty of men. Many people will appear to be your best friend only to use your shortcomings in the accomplishing of their own evil deeds. Mark it down young people—most of the human race is capricious and wishy-washy. If you have learned anything from the Old Testament you have learned just how fickle most men are. Beware of the person who, not ever having met you, acts as if he or she has known you all your life and has always been your best friend. It is not normal for honest people to have that kind of approach to a stranger. Remember, “A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways” (Jam. 1:8). Before one says anything he better be sure that it will not hurt anything if it becomes public property.

Just here it would be good to emphasize that one should never take sides in a personal dispute. As a rule of thumb, take a very long time in making your evaluation of a given situation. Do not allow yourself to be used. The circumstance under which questions are asked of the preacher can be the signal that someone wants to quote you on their side of an argument of which you are totally unaware. Do your best not to be taken in. Some questions are asked just to get back at someone else.

WOMEN

Besides the misuse of time and money, women have been the plague of many a preacher. Throughout the years many preachers (some of them quite well known; and I could call names) have fallen into immorality because of designing women. Some of the women have not been the “designing” kind, they are just silly and foolish. Of course there are silly and foolish preachers around too.

As a much younger preacher, I listened to an older preacher when he told me to never let a woman’s tears sway you. He wisely pointed out that a woman can turn tears on and off as she desires. Another godly preacher warned me never to allow myself to get caught in a private setting with women. In one town while visiting with a brother in his place of business his wife telephoned him to come give her a ride home from the hair dresser. Being busy he asked me to be her chauffeur. When I respectfully declined, he became mildly

upset with me. However, when I pointed out that I did not think that he wanted his wife's preacher all by himself to be seen by the tight lipped patrons of a beauty shop in a small town giving his wife a ride, he quickly saw the light and changed his attitude.

We must learn to treat the elder women as mothers and the younger as sisters (1 Tim. 5:2). If you must meet with a woman do so with your wife. If you do not have a wife then take a mature faithful person with you. If the meeting is so private that the woman does not want any one at all with you, respectfully decline the meeting and explain why you cannot meet alone with her. Brethren, you cannot be too careful.

In this day and age of the neglected, neurotic woman who is in need of counseling (a sympathetic shoulder to cry on), one finds a ready made time-bomb just looking for a place to go off. Along comes the "counseling preacher" who has a subjective syrupy concept of love and is quite sold on himself as the problem solver of the world. He has taken a number of nutty psychology courses and decides to help this poor deprived woman with her problems. He, therefore, schedules his counseling sessions for eight o'clock at night at her home while her husband is at work. Well, stupid is as stupid does. Situations akin to this one have happened over and over again. The Bible teaches us to flee fornication, not create an environment that cultivates it.

In one of these "hugging churches," we know of a situation where one older man routinely hugged the younger women, but was an "anti" when it came to hugging the aged women. I do not believe his hug was holy. I like the response given by the late gospel preacher Rue Porter concerning keeping one's distance from women. Brother Porter loved onions. When asked if he did not think that his "onion breath" would be offensive to his brethren, he replied with, "The men don't care, and the women don't have any business being that close." A good case of "onion or garlic breath" or halitosis would really test the faith and love of some who think that the "holy kiss" was actually a "holy squeeze and smooch."

THE PREACHER'S FAMILY

How a preacher is able to accomplish his task is dependent to a great extent on his family. Right or wrong all eyes are on the

preacher and his family. This is facing reality. Many preachers are made and broken by their wives and families.

Consider the following points regarding the preacher's wife. She simply must be a Christian. I have in mind here a fully supported gospel preacher. How can he be effective in doing the work of an evangelist located with and supported by a church when the preacher's wife is not a Christian? Paul asked, "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer?" (1 Cor. 9:5). Can anyone imagine Paul or any of the apostles doing their work while married to non-Christians? This does not mean that a Christian man cannot win souls to the Lord. It does mean that he may not be able to fit into every place that a man with a Christian wife can.

The preacher's wife must be completely supportive of her husband's work as a preacher. I know of a preacher's wife who with regularity made it clear that she did not marry a preacher and that he became a preacher over her protests. Such a wife will depress the preacher and stifle his effectiveness. In time this unsupportive attitude will be felt in the church where her husband preaches. This particular wife begrudged every penny spent for books for her husband's library. Simply put she hated being a preacher's wife. Of course he is dead now and she no longer has to worry about that occupation.

She must not be dominating. The aforementioned preacher's wife constantly sought to badger her husband. He, therefore, sought to keep as much from her as possible. Where he should have found solace and understanding he continued to have to be on his toes and wary as to what he did and said lest he upset his beloved.

The preacher's wife must have a "zipped mouth." One of the greatest blessings a preacher can have is a wife who is very slow to speak and who does not have to be in every woman's aid society before she is happy. This does not mean that she cannot be a good teacher and visitor. It does mean that she knows when to speak and when not to as well as how much and to whom.

If the preacher's wife is not a good house keeper, she is open to all manner of criticism. Every other member's house may be in a mess, but the preacher's house had best be kept as well as possible. She should be determined to live within the preacher's salary, if at all possible. Her dress should always be modest. She should be casually

friendly and cheerful with everyone and not too close with anyone. Though I have applied the above conduct to the preacher's wife, in conduct and demeanor the same would apply to the preacher.

Regarding the conduct of the preacher's children, first of all they should be orderly in their general conduct. This would of course cover their conduct in Bible classes, worship and other such activities. When the preacher's children do conduct themselves badly, the preacher and his wife should not try to condone their actions.

Elder's, deacon's and preacher's children are constantly under the scrutiny of the congregation. Right or wrong the average member of the church thinks that if it is okay for the leader's children to do thus and so, then it is permissible for their children to engage in the same thing, or worse. Whether we preachers like it or not, or whether it is fair or not, some in the congregation will point to the preacher's children even above that of the elder's and deacon's children as justification for their own children's conduct.

Of course all of this is very difficult to explain to your own children. They usually do not see mother and daddy in the same light as the congregation does. Thus, extreme caution must be exercised by the preacher and his spouse as to how they teach, train, and correct their own children regarding these matters.

No greater double standard has ever existed than the way some church members view what ought to be the conduct of the preacher and his family and what ought to be the conduct for their own family. But, if you are going to live the life of most preachers you will never completely be free of such inconsistency until heaven is your home. Brethren, the eternal reward far outweighs the aggravation and botheration that comes from such chicanery in certain brethren.

THE PREACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS FAMILY

While the preacher must be concerned with his family's conduct before God and the church, he must never forget his obligation to his own family. There is a fine line to be walked between deserting and ignoring one's family and one keeping a certain amount of independence that he might not be hindered in doing the work of an evangelist. The wife needs the help of her husband in the day-to-day home duties. Especially is this so when the children are still in the home, and more especially the smaller they are. Moderation in all things covers the responsibility of the preacher in his work of preaching the

Word as well as it does the electrician, attorney, or carpenter when it comes to not allowing one's work to hinder the discharge of his domestic responsibilities. We need to remember to apply the following verses to ourselves as well as to the brethren (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:9; Eph. 5:25,28-29; Mat. 7:12).

CONCLUSION

So much more of a practical nature could be given in this kind of study. But, space forbids these comments. While there is no greater work than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, one must take time to learn the members of the church where he is located. It takes time to learn the faithful workers in the Vineyard of the Lord. This is not accomplished overnight. It also takes time for the members to get to know you.

Pitfalls abound for the unwary preacher. He must "walk the chalk line" of gospel truth with much wisdom if he is to be a success as God defines success. However, if he has a correct faith in God, Christ, the Bible, and the Christian system, God will see him through to the end (1 Cor. 15:58). With Paul, the faithful preacher of the gospel can confidently declare, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Never forget that our ultimate, final, and eternal reward is not on earth but in heaven. To that end may we fervently labor.

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WE MUST BE WILLING TO BE HATED BY THE WORLD AND THE BRETHREN

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



Born August 3, 1917 at Franklin, Texas, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., is the son of Ira Y. Rice Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. Baptized at the age of twelve by A. R. Holton, at Norman, Oklahoma, Rice began preaching while yet a boy, in 1932. After ministries at Noble and Paul's Valley, Oklahoma; Edcouch and Mercedes, Texas; Paso Robles, San Rafael, Richmond and San Francisco, California; and, Seattle, Washington, he went, in 1955, to plant the churches of Christ in Singapore, Malaysia and Southeast Asia where he spent several years in mission work.

Having now been preaching for over sixty years, Rice is the Editor of two monthly periodicals, **Contending For The Faith** and **The Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter**. He is also the author of several books. He is a co-founder and President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, in Singapore, and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968. He has been a missionary to the Far East under the oversight of the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida, since 1978. He has preached the Gospel in over sixty countries around the world and recently helped to establish the church of Christ in Latvia.

INTRODUCTION

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Pet. 4:12-16).

Of the many strange things that distinguish Christianity from other religions, perhaps the strangest of all has to be the attitude of Christians toward the hatred of others both within the church as well as without.

Jesus hardly had started His earthly ministry until, in His magnificent Sermon on the Mount, He set forth this doctrine, saying,

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mat. 5:11-12).

In the gospel according to Luke, this same passage reads:

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).

CHRISTIANS RENDER GOOD FOR EVIL

Rather than rendering evil for evil, later on in that same chapter of Matthew, He taught exactly to the contrary, saying,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Mat. 5:38-48; cf., Luke 6:17-36).

When Jesus sent His twelve apostles on their limited commission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” He did not promise them a bed of roses. Rather, He said,

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles...And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Mat.10:16-19,21-22).

CHRISTIANS CONFESS CHRIST IN FACE OF DANGER

Often, in setting forth the gospel plan of salvation, we hear brethren quote Matthew 10:32-33. (And we should be the last to say that we should NOT confess Christ before men, for such is taught in other passages, as well.) However, if we study the context immediately prior to **this** passage, the confession here involved much more than usually is suggested. Going back up to verse 24 and reading down, we find these words:

The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Mat.10:24-33).

To grasp the full import of verses 32-33, we need to bear in mind what Jesus had just said. It was under the condition that to confess Jesus before men could cost His disciples their very lives. Jesus knew that He Himself would be hated to the extent of being called Beelzebub, i.e., prince of demons. He indicated that His disciples would be treated even worse.

It would have been easy for them to fear those thus persecuting them. However, Jesus said NOT to fear **them**; for they could only kill the body. Rather, they should fear **God**—who could destroy both body and soul in hell! Whosoever rose above the fear of men enough to confess Christ “before men,” He would confess also “before my Father which is in heaven.” However, anyone succumbing to the fear of men enough to deny Him before men, Jesus also would deny before the Father.

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PROMISED PEACE BUT A SWORD

Continuing His warning to His apostles how different life would be for His followers, Jesus said:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Mat. 10:34-39).

How astonishing it is that many of our own brethren have an entirely different concept of Christianity than is here taught by Jesus Christ Himself. Many seem to think that if one is genuinely Christian, things always will be peaceful. As far as this world is concerned, the Lord never taught that—just the opposite. He told His apostles not even to **think** it—that He came not to send peace but a sword!

One should think that at least his **own household** would not become his enemy. But Jesus said, because of Him, a man would be against his own father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

It is only natural that we should love our own fathers and mothers as well as our own sons and daughters. However, Christians must love Jesus **even more!** Jesus said if we love them more than we love Him, we are not worthy of Him.

Sometimes, when members of our own household turn against us because of our belief in and contending for the faith, the cross does indeed seem heavy to bear. Some rationalize that “blood is thicker than water” and allow beloved kinfolks to pull them away. However, Jesus taught that we must take up our cross and follow Him anyway.

Certain lifestyles here on earth can be attractive indeed. However, Jesus taught that His disciples must make a choice: if we choose life here we lose it there. However, if we are willing to lose our life here, we'll find it yonder. Only those willing to lose their lives in the cause of Christ have any hope of the more abundant life later on that Jesus promised those who follow Him.

SOME FIND IT HARD TO CHOOSE CHRIST'S WAY

Even during Jesus' lifetime, many found some of His sayings so hard they turned away. For example, think how the Pharisees reacted to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 15:11. It was just after the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem had chided Jesus that His disciples trans-

gressed the elders' tradition by eating bread without washing their hands.

After correcting those accusers rather sternly, Jesus called the multitude. He further clarified His doctrine, saying, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

His disciples later queried, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" Rather than compromise his teaching, Jesus replied, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Mat. 15:12-14).

In Matthew chapter 16, Simon Peter himself could not believe what he was hearing. It reads as follows:

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Mat. 16:21-23).

Again, in Matthew 19, the rich young ruler evidently thought he wanted to be Christ's disciple—until he realized how much it would cost him! When he asked, "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: **what lack I yet?**" Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me." When the young man heard that he must give up his great possessions, rather than follow Jesus, "he went away sorrowful" (Mat. 19:16-22).

After hearing the difficult things of Jesus' teaching in John 6, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). Jesus then asked of the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). Simon Peter replied, "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Still later, after instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus said to the twelve, "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the

sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Mat. 26:31) Peter objected, saying, “Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended” (Mat. 26:33).

But Jesus knew better. He said unto Peter, “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended” (Mat. 26:33). Peter still insisted, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Mat. 26:34-35). We all know what happened.

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE ON THE CROSS

Even though falsely accused by His enemies, betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter, Jesus did not refuse to be crucified for the sins of all mankind on Calvary.

Rather than being vindictive over being thus mistreated, Jesus’ first words from the cross were for His enemies: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Although His flesh could suffer pain the same as ours, Jesus was willing to die for our transgressions that all might have hope beyond the grave.

HATRED, PERSECUTION MULTIPLIED AFTER PENTECOST

Even though he had denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion, after Christ’s death, burial, resurrection and ascension, Peter became as bold as a lion, willing to suffer no matter what for his Lord and Savior.

On Pentecost, he charged the Jews in Jerusalem with having “taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain [Jesus Christ]: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:23-24). Later, at Solomon’s Porch, he declared, “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:14-15).

All this talk of their wickedness and murder, as well as the apostles’ preaching through Jesus the resurrection from the dead so incensed the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees, that they arrested Peter and John and had them thrown in jail.

When they and others confronted Peter and John the next day, they could not say anything against their healing of the lame man; however, they decided to threaten them and command them not to speak or teach any more in the name of Jesus.

Peter and John knew, of course, that to go contrary to these rulers would jeopardize their own safety. However, showing their willingness to be hated, they replied, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Being let go, after further threatening, Peter and John went to their own company and reported everything that had happened. In the prayer that followed, rather than asking deliverance, they prayed, “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (Acts 4:29). Instead of being intimidated, even knowing the probable consequences, “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

Rather than remaining silent or speaking quietly in some inconspicuous place, they were all with one accord openly in Solomon’s porch, the outer corridor on the east side of the temple—about as public a venue as they could find (Acts 5:12)! This so filled the high priest and the sect of the Sadducees with indignation, that they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison (Acts 5:17-18).

During the night, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out and said, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:19-20). Not holding back, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught (Acts 5:21).

Someone came and told the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, saying, “Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people” (Acts 5:25). Whereupon the captain with the officers then went to the temple, brought the apostles and set them before the council (Acts 5:26-27).

The high priest upbraided the apostles, asking them, “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us” (Acts 5:27-28). It was then that Peter and the other apostles answered and said:

We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is also* the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him (Acts 5:28-32).

Having heard their strong, bold, courageous condemnation, the high priest and those with him were “cut to the heart” and took counsel to slay the apostles (Acts 5:33). However, Gamaliel, a Pharisee doctor of the law, counseled caution, saying, “Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:38-39).

Gamaliel’s counsel carried the day; so their adversaries, after beating the apostles and commanding them not to speak in Jesus’ name, let them go (Acts 5:40). The apostles, however, rather than feeling chastened, departing from the presence of the council “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). Instead of keeping silent, “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

STEPHEN’S WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER HATRED COST HIS LIFE

Not until Stephen’s defense before the council in Acts 7, did all the hatred and persecution stirred up against those early Christians reach its hiatus. When certain of the synagogue of the Libertines, together with Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and of Cilicia and Asia could not withstand the wisdom and spirit by which Stephen spoke; they suborned men, bringing false charges against him and stirring up the people. The elders and scribes caught him and brought him before the council to be tried (read Acts 6:9-15).

When the high priest asked if the charges were so, Stephen’s face shining as the face of an angel, he launched into his defense covering almost the entire 7th chapter of Acts, closing with these words:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it* (Acts 7:51-53).

Rather than being persuaded by the masterful sermon that Stephen had just delivered, they were cut to the heart and gnashed on him with their teeth. When he further said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,” they refused to hear him any more. Crying with a loud voice and stopping their ears, they cast Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death, laying their clothes at a young man’s feet whose name was Saul (Acts 7:54-58).

Stephen was willing to suffer their hatred rather than recant. Just before dying, he called upon God, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then, kneeling down, emulating Jesus Christ on the cross, he cried, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:59-60). Having thus spoken, he died.

SAUL’S WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER FOR JESUS’ NAME

By far the greatest example of a Christian’s willingness to suffer hatred both by the world as well as by some of his own brethren just has to be that of Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul the apostle.

Having been present at the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Saul, no doubt, was impressed with the willingness he had seen thus demonstrated. This did not prevent him from “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1).

Securing letters from the high priest to the synagogues, he was en route to Damascus to bind and bring to Jerusalem any he found “of this way,” when Jesus appeared and spoke to him out of a great light. Saul lost his sight and had to be led by the hand into Damascus (Acts 9:2-8).

When, three days later, the Lord appeared unto a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias instructing him concerning Saul, Ananias demurred, saying, “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name” (Acts 9:9-14).

But the Lord persisted, saying, “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

And did Saul (Paul) ever suffer for the name of Christ! From Acts 9:20 through 30, almost from the beginning, it was one thing right after another. The Jews in Damascus took counsel to kill him, so he had to be let down the city wall in a basket in order to escape. Once in Jerusalem, his own brethren were afraid of him not believing that he

really was a disciple. When he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Grecians went about to slay him.

Beginning with Acts, chapters 13 through 28, the second part of Acts is largely an account of the sufferings for the name of Christ of this great man of God. In Second Corinthians 11:21-28, he catalogs sufferings almost beyond measure, some caused by hatred by the world, some by hatred by his own false brethren. When he wrote, in First Corinthians 11:1, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ,” his sufferings for the name of Christ have to be included.

WE, TOO, MUST BE WILLING TO BE HATED

Not only was it necessary for those discussed earlier in this chapter to be willing to be hated for the name of Christ, but we, too, must be willing to suffer the same as they.

Rather than fiery trials to be considered strange when they come upon us, we must rejoice that we can thus be partakers of Christ’s sufferings. Instead of fainting when we are reproached for the name of Christ, Peter wrote, “happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14). Rather than being “ashamed,” if any man suffer as a Christian, let him “glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet 4:16).

It is not just the passage of time to which Jesus referred in Revelation 2:10, when He said, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” He had just been exhorting, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation.” In other words, He concluded, if we remain faithful even at the cost of our lives, he will give us a “crown of life.” “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

THE PREACHER'S MESSAGE

Noah A. Hackworth



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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade it has been said more than a few times that the church that has existed in the past has been lost forever. If this is the case, how did it happen? When did it happen? Why did it happen? Such questions as these can perhaps best be answered by recognizing (1) the changes that have occurred in the contents of the preacher's message, (2) the introduction of a new hermeneutic, (3) the interpretation of the Bible in terms of cultural factors, (3) the decline of qualified leadership, and (4) a marked deterioration of membership dedication (cf., 2 Tim. 2:2). Bible subject-matter has not changed and is not subject to negotiation. The only preaching that can be done, therefore, is that which is authorized by the Lord Himself. The instructions God gave the prophet Jonah are still applicable: "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (3:2). If this rule is not followed the result will be human opinion in exchange for divine revelation.

THE PREACHING THAT SHOULD BE DONE

It would be beneficial to us all to pause long enough to ascertain where we have been and where we are going with our preaching. Is it our intent to develop and perpetuate new "schools of thought," or is it our task to lead the minds of people back to Jerusalem where the greatest events of religious history began to unfold?

The living, vital roots of Christianity were planted deep upon the day of Pentecost. Its great outstanding facts were unfolded by the Spirit of God upon that history making day. Upon this day a new era and epoch had their beginning in the annals of time. The facts of Pentecost should be planted in the heart of every Christian and in the hearts of all men, as to that matter. To forget them or even by-pass them is fatal to any Christian. When we become indifferent to such essential truths we become lukewarm in promoting them. The more greatly imbued we are with them the more zeal we show in making them known to others. Like a mighty ship that has broken away from its mooring and drifts helplessly upon the angry waves of the ocean, so have men broken away from this great historical landmark, the focal point of Christianity's beginning in the world. Ignorant of these bed-rock principles men become hapless victims tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Eph. 4:14).¹

The things that began on Pentecost need to be preached again and again to this present generation if we expect the identity of the church to be preserved. We will, otherwise, become another denomination. Acts 2 furnishes us with strategic information which must be preached to the world.

The Revelation Of The Mystery

In Ephesians 3, God's eternal purpose for mankind is said to constitute a "mystery," a word which translates the term *musterion*, which means "a thing not yet revealed." There was a plan in the mind of God which no one knew about until He was ready to reveal it. It was a carefully laid plan which provided for the salvation of all mankind. It represented God's eternal purpose. It was so important that even the angels desired to "look into" it (1 Pet. 1:12). Paul refers to it in Romans 16:25 as something kept in silence through times eternal. He further develops it in Ephesians 1:10 when he says, "made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." This wonderful, carefully conceived, tremendously important plan was made known to Paul by revelation (Eph. 3:10). To generations antecedent to the coming of Christ it (the plan) was not made known. The Jews and Gentiles (all mankind) would be the beneficiaries (Eph. 3:6) of a plan which had been for ages hid in God (Eph. 3:9). This plan had to be "made known." This was done by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. The present world must know of God's eternal purpose (the plan), and the instrument designed to effect this is the

New Testament church. It becomes the “instructor,” through (*dia*) which the world learns about the mystery. The church becomes a “theatre” where the divine works are displayed. It (the church) must “make all men see” (understand) the nature of God’s wonderful plan.

The Establishment Of The Church

Beautifully situated in the very heart of God’s eternal purpose is the New Testament church of which Christ is the Builder (Mat. 16:18); Saviour (Eph. 5:23); Head (Col. 1:18), and for which He (Christ) shed His blood (Mat. 26:28; Heb. 9:22; Acts 20:28). What a shame it will be if at the end of time the world does not know about the church of Christ. But how can this be effected unless the message is proclaimed by gospel preachers and teachers (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 8:4)? Isaiah spoke of the church (Isa. 2:2-4); Daniel described it (Dan. 2:44); Jesus built it (Mat. 16:18), and all men can become members of it (Acts 2:47). The church for which Christ died came into existence on the day of Pentecost, the record of which is found in Acts 2. It has survived attempts to discredit and extinguish it. It lives, as Philip Schaff says, “in unfading freshness and vigor of eternal youth.”

The Goodness And Severity Of God

God’s goodness and severity permeate the Sacred Pages. It all began in the garden of Eden subsequent to the sin of Adam and Eve. God placed, at the east of the garden, the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). The flame of the sword may well represent the justice of God, while the Cherubim represents the mercy of God. Should this be the case, the flame of the sword would indicate God’s severity, while the Cherubim could represent His goodness. In Romans 11:22, Paul says, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” The emphasis of this passage is the acceptance or rejection of the Jew and Gentile, the good olive tree and the wild olive tree respectively. The Jews, because of their unbelief, were cut off; the Gentiles, due to their obedience, were “grafted into the good olive tree” hence becoming a partaker of God’s blessings. All men need to know that the time is coming when

they shall feel the severity or bask in the goodness of God Almighty, depending upon their attitudes toward the gospel of Christ.

The Law Of The Spirit Of Life

Paul said, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The "law of the Spirit" is the gospel. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit who, through the gospel, "convict[s] the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Men cannot be saved apart from the gospel (Rom. 1:16), for "therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. 1:17). Hence "go ye into all the world" literally means, "you must go." Every case of conversion in the Acts of the Apostles involved the preaching of the gospel. The salvation of the people on Pentecost (Acts 2); the Eunuch (Acts 8); the Samaritans (Acts 8); Cornelius (Acts 10); Lydia (Acts 16); the Philippian jailor (Acts 16), the Corinthians (Acts 18), and the Ephesians (Acts 19) depended upon the hearing, believing and obeying the gospel of Christ. The basic, primary reason for the existence of the church is to "preach the gospel." The people of God tend to forget that the gospel is universal, that all men are amenable to it, and by it all men will be judged. No man can be saved without faith (Heb. 11:6); repentance (Luke 13:3); confession (Rom. 10:10); and baptism (Acts 2:38). However, the people of God have forgotten "how" they were once purged from their sins (2 Pet. 1:9). The world must know that there is something to be believed and something to be obeyed if its sins are to be remitted. "Obey the gospel" is an almost forgotten term in the minds of many, yet obedience is the thing that frees one from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). The Bible teaches that there is a "form," "pattern," or "plan," which must be obeyed from the heart, the seat of understanding. The battle that raged over the "man or the plan" a few years ago was no more senseless than the battle that we are now engaged in over "Pattern Theology." Was there a "plan"? Yes! Is there a "pattern"? Yes! And men must know what it is so they can obey it.

Christians Only And The Only Christians

Belief of and obedience to the Word of God is the difference between the church of Christ and the denominational world. Since the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28) is not a denomination, and since God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), and since all the

saved are in the church, which is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:21-23), it is correct to say, "We are Christians only, and the only Christians." This claim is neither bigoted nor prejudicial. It is, on the other hand, respectful of truth (John 8:32). To imply that we are not the only Christians is to imply that there are Christians in all churches. To believe this, one would have to believe that one church is as good as another; and to believe this, one would have to deny that the Lord has only one church. Children of God who have obeyed the gospel, but have apostatized and joined a denomination, must "come out from among them, and be ye separate" (cf., 2 Cor. 6:17). The only Christians are those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), and "Christians only" means that we are not a part of the denominational world with its names, creeds, and doctrines. How pathetic and shameful it is to have members of the body of Christ who are afraid to speak the truth, to tell people that there is no need to ever be a part of a denomination, that one needs only to be a member of the church for which Christ died (Acts 2:47). Relative to a situation of this kind, Moses E. Lard wrote (*Campbellism Examined*) a lengthy refutation of Baptist doctrine.

The term "church" is employed in two different senses, one a more, the other a less, comprehensive sense. When used in the former sense, it comprehends the whole body of Christians since the commencement of Christ's reign to the present. But, in the latter, it applies only to a particular congregation composed of a limited number of these Christians meeting at some stated place for worship. Now, the "sophism" consisted in this; Mr. Campbell left his audience to infer that he and his brethren exhaust the meaning of the term in its largest sense, i.e., that they alone constitute the body of Christ. The following is Mr. Jeter's language: "He" [Mr. Campbell] "did not inform us, however, what body is the body of Christ. He trusted in the intelligence and candor of his hearers to infer that the body of Christ is the body that embraces the 'ancient gospel,' and that has restored the 'ancient order of things'....That he may have denied that the Methodist church, or the Presbyterian church, or even the Baptist church, as such, constitutes the church of Christ, either in whole or in part, is what we are ready to believe....The term "church," as already stated, has but two, acceptations, in the Bible. In the one, it included the whole family of the elect since Christ to the present time....In the other, it denotes a particular congregation, composed of those who have entered the kingdom....But in neither acceptation will the term apply to any one nor even to all the denominations just named. They are neither collectively the church in the one sense, nor singly a church in the other; nor as denominations are they even a part of the church of Christ in any sense....A Baptist church of Christ

is as unreal a thing as a Roman Catholic church of Christ, and there is as much authority in the Bible for the one as for the other...If the term Baptist denotes not something essential to a Christian as a Christian, neither something essential to a church of Christ as such, then it denotes something which is not Christian....And hence it would follow, since the Bible sanctions only a church of Christ, that it does not sanction a Baptist church of Christ.²

GREAT BIBLICAL THEMES

The Generations Of Men

The term "generation" is derived from *genea* meaning age; *genesis* meaning origin, lineage, or birth; *gennema* meaning offspring; and *genos* meaning kind. Concerning *genea*, W. E. Vine says:

Connected with *ginomai*, to become, primarily signifies a begetting, or birth; then, that which has been begotten, a family; or successive members of a genealogy, Matt. 1:17, or of a race of people, possessed of similar characteristics, pursuits, etc., (of a bad character) Matt. 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41; 16:8; Acts 2:40; or of the whole multitude of men living at the same time, Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 1:48; 21:32; Phil. 2:15, and especially of those of the Jewish race living at the same period, Matt. 11:16, etc. Transferred from people to the time in which they lived, the world came to mean an age, i.e., a period ordinarily occupied by each successive, generation, say, of thirty or forty years.³

In Genesis 5:1 we read of the generations of Adam, including Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, and Enoch. In this generation it is said that, "And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). In Genesis 10 we read of the generations of Noah, including Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their sons. In Genesis 11 there are the generations of Shem, including Arpachad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah and Abraham. We, therefore, see that a generation is the average time limit between the birth of parents and their children, with each generation marked by particular characteristics.

The Degeneration Of Men

Degeneration refers to deterioration or decay. Paul the apostle spoke of this process when he said to Timothy: "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). To this Moses adds, "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with

violence. And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth...The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them” (Gen. 6:11-13). Matthew Henry remarks:

The wickedness of that generation is here again spoken of. 1. All kinds of sin was found among them, for it is said (v. 11) that the earth was also filled with violence and injustice towards men. Wickedness, as it is the shame of human nature, so it is the ruin of human society. Take away conscience and the fear of God, and man becomes beasts and devils to one another. Sin fills the earth with violence, and so turns the world into a wilderness, into a cock-pit. 2. The proof and evidence of it were undeniable; for God looked upon the earth, and was himself an eye-witness of the corruption that was in it. 3. What aggravated the matter was the universal spreading of the contagion. All flesh had corrupted his way. When wickedness has become general then universal ruin is not far off; while there is a remnant of praying people in a nation, to empty the measure as it fills judgments may be kept off a great while.⁴

The Regeneration Of Men

The term “regeneration” occurs only two times in the Sacred Text (Mat. 19:28; Tit. 3:5). The word translates *palingenesia*, (*palin*, again, *genesis*, birth). Hence the word refers to a new state of things. In Matthew’s reference the word refers to a new state of things. It began when Christ took His seat on the throne of His glory. This had occurred when Peter, on Pentecost, said, “Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Furthermore, the apostles would be sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel during the same period of time Christ was sitting on His throne. The apostles began their judging when they began to preach the gospel. In Titus’ reference, the word “regeneration” refers to the new birth which is accomplished through baptism. “Not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (3:5). In this reference it is a case of “not by,” “but by.” Not by works which we did, but by His mercy and the washing of regeneration (baptism) He saved us. Alexander Campbell remarked:

This process may consist of numerous distinct acts; but it is in accordance with the general usage to give to the beginning or consummating act the name of the whole process. For the most part, however, the name of the whole process is given to the consummating act, because the process is

always supposed incomplete until that act is preformed...We have already seen that the consummation of the process of generation or creation is in the birth of the creature formed. So it is in the moral generation, or in the great process of regeneration. There is a state of existence from which he that is born passes; and there is a state of existence into which he enters after birth. This is true of the whole animal creation whether oviparous or viviparous. Now the manner of existence is wholly changed; and he is, in reference to the former state, dead, and to the new state, alive, so in moral generation. The subject of this great change, before his new birth, existed in one state; but after it he exists in another. He stands in a new relation to God, angels and men.⁵

Judgment

Another great biblical theme is judgment. The Bible records the judgment of nations. Babylon (Isa. 13); Moab (Isa. 15); Damascus (Isa. 17); Egypt (Isa. 19); Tyre (Isa. 23); Several times in the book of Daniel (4:17,25,32) God made it unmistakably clear that the “most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:25). Babylon, for example, had been a “golden cup in Jehovah’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed” (Jer. 51:7-8). God has emphatically stated that He will “punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity” (Isa. 13:11). “The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17; NKJV). In the New Testament the judgment of God upon all nations is made crystal clear. Matthew 25 has been falsely labeled “a kingdom scene.” It isn’t! It is a judgment scene! The Lord Almighty is not coming to set up his kingdom, He is coming to judge all nations and receive the faithful.

GREAT CHARACTERS FROM WHOM WE LEARN

Jeremiah

All those who preach the Word must love and appreciate the indomitable spirit of Jeremiah. His voice could not be silenced. The Word of God had penetrated the very depths of his soul; so much so that he cried, “My anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart; my heart is disquieted in me; I cannot hold my peace; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war” (Jer. 4:19). Matthew Henry comments:

The prophet is here in agony, and cries out like one upon the rack of pain. The expressions are pathetic enough to melt a heart of stone. My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart. A good man, in such a bad world

as this is, cannot but be a man of sorrows. My heart makes a noise in me, through the tumult of my spirits, and I cannot hold my peace. It is not for himself, or any affliction in his family that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his people's case that he lays to heart thus.⁶

Jeremiah acknowledges that there was in his heart as it were “a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot *contain*” (20:9). Within the breast of every gospel preacher should be a spirit that cannot be contained, a never ending desire to preach the Word under every conceivable circumstance. A desire, not to please men (cf., Gal. 1:10), but to “please him who enrolled him as a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:4).

When I preach there are some who say
 That they could listen to me all day.
 Others think I preach too long;
 And some think I go about it all wrong
 Some say my sermons are too deep
 To others so shallow, they fall to sleep
 Some report I hold them “spell-bound”
 While others squirm and look around.
 Some seem to think that I'm too bold,
 Others smirk and say I'm cold.
 They used to think I was too young
 Now they claim my spring has sprung
 Some folks tell me I've reached success
 Others think my life's a mess.
 None seem to think my pay's too low,
 In fact they think I move too slow.
 A precious few think I've climbed the peak
 Others shout, “He works only one day a week.”
 From all this it's plain to see
 That as a preacher I'm up a tree
 Condemned if I do, condemned if I don't
 Criticized when I will, even when I won't
 I can't please men of such accord,
 So I'll just try to please the Lord.⁷

Peter And John

In the New Testament account of apostolic activity, as recorded by the Holy Spirit, two names which first emerge are Peter and John. Although all the apostles of Christ received the keys of the kingdom (Mat. 18:18), Peter was the first to use them to open the doors of the kingdom (Mat. 16:19) on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It was Peter and John who went to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1). It was Peter and

John who first aroused the anger of the Sadducees by preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 4:1). It was Peter and John who fearlessly, daringly, and courageously withstood the council which tried to curb their activities through threats, insults and intimidation (Acts 4:13-20). It was Peter who withstood Ananias and Sapphira in their attempts to deceive the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). It was Peter and John, along with the rest of the apostles of Christ, who led and directed the activities of the New Testament church subsequent to its establishment on Pentecost (Acts 5:12-13; 6:1-2). Much of the energy, enthusiasm, courage, determination, and conviction needed by every gospel preacher comes from Peter and John. If we were bestowing credits on the apostles for their service to Christ, a great deal would have to be given to Peter for his efforts among the Jews, and to John, the "apostle of love," for his supportive role in the preaching of the gospel in the early days of Christianity.

Paul

Subsequent to the murder of Stephen (Acts 7), a young, arrogant, enthusiastic Pharisee named Saul, thought by some to be a member of the Sanhedrin Court (Acts 26:10), whose zeal by far exceeded his knowledge, continued his assault against the followers of Christ by "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). Following an appearance by the Lord to Saul (Acts 9:3-9), but before his birth into the kingdom of God (Acts 9:18), a certain disciple named Ananias, who had heard of the evil Saul had perpetrated against the Lord's people, was visited by the Lord (Acts 9:10). The Lord said to him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). What a debt every Christian, especially gospel preachers, owes to Paul. He will surely enjoy the highest degree of heaven's blessings and reward (cf., Luke 12:47-48). British scholar, Sir William Ramsey, correctly suggested that without Paul we would know little or nothing about Greek and Roman civilization. But more importantly, without Paul how much would we know about heaven? How much would we know about the church? Without the efforts of Paul we would be missing thirteen or fourteen New Testament books that instruct in Christian living.

Peter And Paul

Peter and Paul were beloved brethren in the Lord (2 Pet. 3:15). They never were competitors. They were co-laborers in the spread of the gospel. Paul had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (Gal. 2:7), but there never was but one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). The difference was in the people to whom they preached, not in the message. It was F. C. Baur, founder of the Tubingen school of criticism, who promulgated the theory that the New Testament “writings were the surviving echoes of partisan strife between Judaistic and Gentile Christians as championed respectively by Peter and Paul.”⁸ The unprejudiced reader of the epistles of Peter and Paul will regard as self-evident “two different hearers of the same gospel.”⁹ The “Gospel of the circumcision,” and the “Gospel of the uncircumcision” denotes a difference in the sphere in which the gospel was to be preached, not in the type of gospel.¹⁰ The distinction between the two phrases is not one of content, but of persons. From these two brethren we who are gospel preachers learn what it means to be brethren in the Lord, co-workers in the spread of the gospel of Christ, and faithfulness to the Cause of Christ until we have “Crossed The Bar” (cf., 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 2 Pet. 1:14-15).

PREACHING THAT MEETS OUR NEEDS

Every sermon we preach that is doctrinally sound and lovingly presented will do our hearers good. However, the relevance of all biblical teaching to the present age, especially that of the New Testament, must not be ignored or forgotten. Only wisdom and discretion can determine which lesson is appropriate for teaching. For example, we can all see the possible difficulty of possessing a correct “mind-set” for participating in the Lord’s Supper after we have studied the works of the flesh for 45 minutes, or singing “O Why Not Tonight” as an invitation song on Sunday morning. The writers of New Testament books dealt with the needs of the people to whom they wrote (cf., 1 Cor. 5:3-4; Heb. 5:12-14). Consider the contents of the First Corinthian Letter. It certainly was not by accident that Paul discussed the subjects that appear in each chapter. How did Paul learn of the needs of the Corinthians? Some information relative to this was supplied by the house of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). Some was supplied by Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10-11); some by Apollos (1 Cor 16:12); some by

Titus (2 Cor. 8:23). That Paul met the needs of the people to whom he wrote on every occasion admits of no doubt to the careful Bible student. Most importantly, however, is the fact that the New Testament writers recognized the need for additional instruction in matters pertaining to Christian living (cf., 2 Pet. 3:16; 1 John 2:1,7,12; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phi. 1:1).

CONCLUSION

The Bible remains unchanged. For two thousand years men have been privileged to preach only what is authorized by God Himself. There is no authorization to add to, subtract from, or modify the Word of God. Anyone, man or angel, who attempts to do this has the anathema of God upon him (Gal. 1:8-9). The Word of God is as powerful and authoritative today as it was when it first came from the pens of the inspired writers of the Divine Volume (cf., Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:11). The words of Paul to the Thessalonians will perpetually apply to all men for all time to come:

And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

ENDNOTES

¹J. W. Brents, *The Great Day of Pentecost* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Pub. Co.), p. 17.

²Moses E. Lard, *Campbellism Examined* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1955), pp. 28-30.

³W. E. Vine, *An Expositor Dictionary of New Testament Words* (New Jersey, Revell), 3:267.

⁴Matthew Henry, *The Matthew Henry Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 17.

⁵Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1970), pp. 229, 232.

⁶Henry, p. 944.

⁷*Ridgedale Bulletin*, Chattanooga, TN.

⁸Merrill C. Tenney, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1969), pp. 15-16.

⁹John Peter Lange, *Lang's Commentary On The Holy Scriptures*, Galatians-Colossians (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 38.

¹⁰Hackworth, "Answering False Doctrines Relating To Galatians, No. II" *Studies In Galatians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1986). p. 349.

GOD DEMANDS LOGICAL PREACHING

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INTRODUCTION

Beliefs and practices that are at variance with God's truth are as the stars in number and range in their appeal, insofar as most men perceive them, from the inviting to the repugnant. In the case of repugnant sin (not to say that any sin is less than repugnant to God), minimal thought is required for a morally sensitive person to identify and promptly shun Satan's invitation; however, studious deliberation is often required to discern and avoid the cleverly disguised tidbits of the arch-deceiver (Jam. 1:13-15; Rev. 12:9). On the one hand, even those ignorant of most of the Bible's requirements are able to recognize the wrong of acts like murder or lying; but, on the other hand, the very elect, brimming with good intentions, may for a time align with the devil's side of an issue like the missionary society (Rom. 2:14-15).

Whether the matter be easily discerned or one "hard to be understood," logic (correct reasoning) is essential in properly distinguishing between truth and error and proving the one way which is right for man to follow (2 Pet. 3:16; 1 The. 5:21-22; Mat. 7:13-14). Logical thinking employs what men have called the law of rationality, that is, the insistence that one accept only those conclusions that are warranted by the evidence. This law is consistent with and demanded by the Bible.

God has expressed His will that man use logic in learning and applying spiritual truth. He **commands** men to be logical (1 The. 5:21; 1 John 4:1). He **commends** men for being logical (Acts 17:11). He **condemns** men for being illogical (Rom. 1:20).

Though logic can never replace or bypass the Bible in discerning Heaven's plan for man's salvation, logic is nevertheless indispensable in consistently ascertaining and employing the truth of that Revelation (Jer. 10:23; 1 The. 5:21). Though one may occasionally stumble upon a true conclusion while circumventing some logical rule, he must be logical in order to insure a correct conclusion and to properly present proof of that conclusion to others (Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Fallible man will surely err at times, but the fact that he is rational insures his capacity for understanding correctly what God has revealed, the claims of "new hermeneutikers" notwithstanding (Deu. 29:29; Eph. 3:3-4; Luke 8:15). Essential to such success is man's persistent application of care, honesty, and logical study to God's flawlessly logical Word (Luke 13:24; 8:15; 2 Tim. 2:15). May we all be cautioned by the words, "No man turns on reason (logic) until reason (logic) turns on him."¹ May we be further cautioned, in consideration of God's insistence on logic, that one who turns on logic turns against God (John 12:48; 2 The. 2:10-11).

In view of the clear-cut necessity of logic as an integral part of learning and obeying God's Word, and in view of man's undeniable obligation to propagate the gospel (all of Christ's New Testament) by preaching, it is evident that God demands logical preaching (1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Tim. 4:1ff). The remainder of this chapter further explains and emphasizes this imperative in discussing three major considerations about the logical preaching which God demands.

GOD DEMANDS LOGICAL PREACHING TO PROVE THAT PREACHED CONCLUSIONS ARE TRUE

Preaching, no matter how bold, eloquent, powerful, or persuasive, will hinder the gospel if it is illogical. Sadly such preaching at times freely rolls from the mouths of misguided faithful men as well as from those of false teachers. Thus, warnings concerning illogic are needed (Tit. 3:10; 2 Tim. 4:2). Consider a few such warnings regarding conclusions, wrong and right, which may be associated with illogical thinking.

Beware—Illogic Often Has Fatally False Conclusions

A conspicuous hindrance to the gospel occurs when illogical preaching proclaims conclusions that are contrary to Divine obligations (1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23; Mat. 7:21). Though all false conclusions about the Bible are undesirable, there is a significant difference between those which do not countenance alteration of scriptural mandates and those which do.

For instance, one falsely concluding that Cornelius was in a lost condition when he sent for Peter for the purpose of hearing words which would save him, might not, based on that conclusion, explicitly advocate doing or not doing anything contrary to God's requirements for men today (Acts 11:14).² Nonetheless, logical study of the matter, which includes: (1) study of immediate and remote contexts, (2) gathering all the relevant evidence, and (3) drawing only the warranted conclusions, will lead one to the knowledge that Cornelius was in a right relationship with God as a Gentile before he obeyed the gospel.³ Many have illogically concluded that Cornelius was lost, but still rightly insisted that Cornelius and every accountable person since the first century is a person amenable to the gospel, all of the gospel (Acts 20:26-27).

In pointed contrast to the above non-fatal error, the illogically derived conclusion that some accountable persons living today are not amenable to all of the gospel denies the truth of the Bible and advocates lawlessness which will lead to the destruction of souls (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:34-35; 17:30; 20:26-27; Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:8; Jam. 1:14-15). This alleged non-amenability is often claimed in trying to justify violations of God's marriage law for those who divorced and remarried without scriptural grounds prior to becoming Christians.⁴

Numerous other God-forbidden divisions among brethren using (or misusing) the same Bible are in some way rooted in illogic (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:15). Hence, the mournful consequence of illogic is fatal error which separates man from both God and from those who insist on reasoning correctly with the Bible, all the Bible, and only the Bible as their guide (Mat. 4:4; Acts 20:26-27; 1 The. 5:21; Gal. 1:6ff; 2 The. 3:6).

Beware—Illogic May Have True Conclusions

The preaching of true conclusions alone does not insure God-pleasing or truth-furthering preaching. In spite of the correctness of the

conclusion, the illogical process employed can be detrimental to both the preacher and his auditors. In the first place, the conclusion claimed as the product of incorrect thinking (illogic) leaves the hearers ill-equipped to defend the truth. Such defense must be correct in its reasoning or it will not provide the “answer” (*apologia*—a reasoned statement or argument) required by God and helpful to man (1 Pet. 3:15).

Furthermore, the preacher using illogic and those who accept and repeat his illogic are open to attack by the enemies of truth who recognize the illogic and expose it as such. The exposure of a fallacy in one’s argument, though the conclusion be true, helps the devil’s troops bring the truth into question; thereby, some may be convinced to reject the truth with the illogic alleged to support it. Of course, men are justified in rejecting illogical arguments, but they are not justified in rejecting a true conclusion since all men are charged to seek and find the truth regardless of the misdirection of other men (Mat. 7:7-8; Gal. 1:8). Those preachers who misguide others by illogical preaching do themselves and others a serious disservice (1 The. 5:21; Mat. 18:7).

A true story about a preaching student illustrates the possibility of being illogical while advocating a true conclusion. A young preacher student once affirmed that a particular conclusion should be believed because, as he said, “that’s what the Bible says.” When asked why one should believe what the Bible says, the student responded with the defense, “because the Bible contains the Holy Spirit’s (God’s) Words.” When asked how he knew that the Bible contains the Holy Spirit’s Words, the reply was again, “because that’s what the Bible says.” In short form, the student was claiming to know that the Bible is right because it has God’s Words and also claiming to know that the Bible has God’s Words because the Bible is right. His reasoning was circular; therefore, even though his conclusion was true, he failed to prove it so. The fallacy committed is called “begging the question,” which is a way of “stacking the deck” since it involves only an appearance of proof.⁵ This fallacy assumes the very thing needful of proof. Since a premise was assumed by the student to be true (which premise is also the conclusion of the argument) the conclusion was merely asserted to be true. Since adequate evidence was not provided by the premises, the proponent begs rather than answers the question and thereby “stacks the deck” or claims unwarranted support for the conclusion he favors.

When a premise and a conclusion are equivalent in meaning but are worded differently, the fallacy of begging the question can be challenging to detect. In any event, the example cited demonstrates one means whereby true conclusions are at times associated with illogic. Such illogic, despite the true conclusion, undermines the Christian apologist's efforts. God demands that we preach the proof of the conclusions we preach, and such proof can only be provided in logical preaching (1 The. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:15).

GOD DEMANDS LOGICAL PREACHING TO EXPOSE AND REFUTE ERROR

Although it is unpopular in our “tolerate-anything-but-intolerance” society, and becoming increasingly unpopular in many “we-wanna-be-like-our-religious-neighbors” congregations (just like Israel did and as Paul foretold the church would do—1 Sam. 8:5ff; 2 Tim. 2:3-4), God demands the exposure and refutation of soul-damning error and its proponents (1 John 4:1; Jude 3; Rom. 16:17-18).

The use of illogical preaching, as shown in the preceding section, can be counterproductive even if accompanied by correct conclusions. Similarly, attempting to expose a false doctrine by the use of illogic may convince some of the doctrine's falsity, but their conviction on illogical grounds is as unstable as the Samaritans' confidence in the sorcerer, Simon (Acts 8:9-10). False teachers “exposed” and “refuted” by illogical argumentation may be given a boost instead of a blast since the illogic employed to bolster the otherwise proper charges against their heresy can be logically exposed and refuted. False teachers are not absolved from their guilt because of others' failure to use logic, but they are able to make a more plausible defense of their lies because of the illogic employed by would-be defenders of the truth.

Illogical Interpretation/Application of Scripture to False Doctrine

A somewhat humorous but true example of an attempted exposure and refutation of error clarifies the need for logic in one's approach to ascertaining the meaning and application of Scripture. A good brother, well-meaning in his effort to oppose a sinful practice, based his opposition to mechanical instruments of music in worship on the Lord's Words, “do not sound a trumpet before thee” (Mat. 6:2). Well, his reference did say what he claimed, and the passage did mention a

prohibition which involves a mechanical instrument of music; however, his conclusion (inference) about exactly what action the cited verse condemns was unwarranted. The error made, at least in part, involved inattention to the hermeneutical principle regarding proper consideration of the context of a Bible statement. Nevertheless, illogic was still the culprit since hermeneutics, “the science of interpretation,” is itself a product of logical thought.⁶ The original Bible languages, grammars and lexicons of the Bible and the English language, and hermeneutical principles are all products of logical thought and must be utilized in logical ways if true conclusions are to be assured. Logic must permeate every effort to ascertain the meaning and application of the Scriptures.⁷

Illogic of Using an Incomplete Argument

Though less conspicuous than the preceding example, an example of illogic occurs when faithful brethren attempt to show the sinfulness of the use of the mechanical instrument of music in worship by claiming that such conclusion is demanded by the teaching of Ephesians 5:19 or Colossians 3:16. A typical statement goes something like this, “Instrumental music is sinful because the Bible, in the noted passages, **specifies** singing as the kind of music which is pleasing to God; therefore, every kind of music in worship other than singing is sinful.” The argument might be set out as follows:

Major Premise: All actions in the same class as but distinct from a divinely-commanded specific action are prohibited actions.

Minor Premise: Making mechanical instrumental music in worship is an action in the same class as but distinct from a divinely-commanded specific action (i.e., singing—Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19).

Conclusion: Making mechanical instrumental music in worship is a prohibited action.

The conclusion above is true, but the major premise is not true (even though it may sound right—Pro.14:12). God’s commandment to do a specific kind of action does not, **in and of itself**, imply the prohibition of other actions in the same class. In fact, such **specification** does not, **by itself**, prohibit anything! God’s commandment to perform a specific kind of action (say A) authorizes and obligates those so commanded to perform action A. Although it may be the case that no other kind of

action (B, C, D...Z) in the same class as A is authorized by God, that lack of authorization for B, C, D...Z cannot be assumed simply because there is a God-commanded specification of action A.

Mechanical instrumental music is prohibited in worship, not simply because singing is a specific kind of music commanded by God, but because the New Testament in its totality of teaching about music in worship, does not authorize: mechanical instrumental music, human voice imitations of mechanical instrumental music, humming, whistling, clapping, or other man-made sounds to substitute for or accompany the one kind of authorized worship music—singing (Col. 3:17). A sound argument (valid form with true premises) proving that the instrument is prohibited follows:

Major Premise: All actions for which there is no Bible authority are actions which are prohibited by God (proven by Col. 3:17).

Minor Premise: The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is an action for which there is no Bible authority (proven by totality of the New Testament).

Conclusion: Therefore, the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is an action which is prohibited by God.

For those with lingering doubts about the above, notice the following argument which is parallel to one earlier noted as having a false major premise:

Major Premise: All actions in the same class as but distinct from a divinely-commanded specific action are prohibited actions.

Minor Premise: Teaching by preaching is an action in the same class as but distinct from a divinely-commanded specific action (i.e. teaching by singing—Col. 3:16).

Conclusion: Teaching by preaching is a prohibited action.

The conclusion is palpably false given the numerous passages clearly authorizing teaching by preaching and by other non-singing means (2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 18:26; Mat. 5-7; 4:4; John 17:17). The conclusion being false, there is undoubtedly something wrong with the argument. Checking the argument for validity (the proper form or construction and arrangement of the propositions used as premises and conclusion),

nothing amiss is found.⁸ Remember also that this argument has the same form as that used above by well-meaning brethren in their efforts to prove mechanical instrumental music in worship as sinful. Since the validity of the argument and the truth of the premises are the only two requirements for a sound argument (an argument which always establishes the truth of its conclusion), the mistake must lie in the premises.⁹ Since the minor premise is undoubtedly true, given the clear passage cited in its support, the major premise must be false. Manifestly then, Bible authorization of a specific kind of action **by itself** is not a prohibition of anything else.

Illogic In One's Fundamental Approach to Bible Interpretation

The fact that illogic must be met with logic is especially apparent when attempting to expose and refute fundamental illogic used in attempts to ascertain biblical authority or obligations.

One widespread illogical view of how to determine biblical obligations is the ridiculous notion that God's Word binds only by its explicit teaching. In other words, this irrational position alleges that the Bible does not bind those matters which are taught by implication. Recently, such illogic was revealed in a brother's bulletin. He wrote,

I do personally believe that the old 3-legged hermeneutic, (method of interpretation) based on command, pattern, and inference, is shaky on 2 of its legs; pattern and inference. Those 2 parts of the hermeneutic are where nearly all disagreements arise, and from which nearly all division results.¹⁰

In other words, to be on solid instead of shaky ground, one should base his interpretations of the Bible on commands or explicit statements **only!** This view has frightful consequences because it undermines logical interpretation of the Bible. First, it invites inconsistency since the rule itself cannot be consistently followed in interpreting the Bible. This is so because the rule is self-contradictory. Second, the rule eliminates the Bible as a divinely-mandated guide for anyone living today. Proof of these claims follows, but first a brief discussion of implication is provided to facilitate that later discussion.

An **explicit** proposition sets out an affirmation in just so many words. For example, the Bible **explicitly** teaches that teachers of doctrines other than that taught by Paul (the gospel) are accursed. Galatians 1:8 says, "though we, or an angel from heaven, **preach any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, **let him be accursed.**" Though the Bible does not explicitly teach that Joseph

Smith (founder of Mormonism and teacher of many doctrines contrary to those taught by Paul) is accursed, it does teach that very thing **implicitly!**¹¹ An implicit proposition is not set out in just so many words, but its affirmation of something as being or not being the case is just as certainly stated and just as authoritative as an explicit proposition. An implicit proposition, though not stated in so many words, follows as a certain consequence of an explicit statement(s). The term “implicit” is employed in logic in a special sense then, a sense unlike its familiar uses to mean something which one merely hints as being the case, or suggests, or supposes, or thinks is possible, likely, or even probable. An implication, in its strict logical sense is a statement which must be the case if the explicit statement from which it follows is the case. This is so because the implied statement is inherent in the explicit statement(s) which imply it. Now consider the illogic of the “command only” or “explicit only” doctrine of ascertaining biblical obligations.

First, the view that the Bible is to be interpreted **only** by its **explicit** teaching is self-contradictory because this view is **not explicitly taught** in the Bible. Its proponents say they want to interpret the Bible only by its commands or explicit statements and yet they have no Bible command or explicit statement saying, “Thou shalt interpret the Bible **only by command**” or “The Bible should be interpreted **only by explicit statements.**” The doctrine is not taught either explicitly or implicitly by the Bible, therefore the doctrine is a doctrine of men and a false doctrine (Col. 3:17; Mat. 15:9). If the proponents of the view cannot follow their own view in proving how the Bible is to be interpreted or how biblical obligations are to be ascertained, they surely cannot follow it consistently to show any other biblical obligation.

Second, the contested illogical view negates, by implication, the use of the Bible as a mandatory guide for anyone living today. This conclusion logically follows because the basic view of interpreting only by command, or even by the broader notion of explicit statements, leaves one lacking any Bible doctrine which identifies a single living person as one who must be governed by Bible teaching. That is to say, if the Bible is to be interpreted by its commands or explicit statements **only** and yet it has no command or explicit statement wherein you, I, or others living are named, then we are left to **infer** (the very thing the dumb doctrine claims you cannot do) that particular point. Of course,

those espousing the illogical “command-only” or “explicit-only” interpretation view, conveniently dodge the above points through ignorance, arrogance, or both, and selectively apply their man-made rule of interpretation to deny doctrines which the Bible teaches by implication.

Section Conclusion

The exposure and refutation of error involves more than stating one’s opposition to a false doctrine and giving an “explanation” which seems to him to support that opposition. Lest we be guilty of some of the same irrationality as our sectarian neighbors and our apostate brethren, we must demand adequate evidence handled correctly so as to arrive at certain conclusions regarding the truth or falsity of doctrines. Engaging the false teacher and his false doctrine in spiritual battle involves using the spiritual sword and proper use of that sword always requires logic from beginning to end (Eph. 6:10-18; 1 The. 5:21-22).

GOD DEMANDS LOGICAL PREACHING TO AVOID FUTURE ERROR

To the extent to which men require some sort of explanation (rational or irrational, so long as it’s plausible to them) regarding their decisions, the devil’s minions are more than willing to supply illogical arguments to lead them astray. Assuredly the god of this world will continue to use what has worked so well for him for so long (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Our future failures to do anything less than earnestly and logically contend for the faith will insure the devil’s broader success in subverting individual souls and splitting churches. God’s people must be determined to be rational and remain rational. We must keep on logically declaring God’s Word in fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). We must neither give up the fight nor give in to the use of any tactic other than those which are scriptural and logical. Consider the words of Paul in this regard,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

If we personally are to gain the victory which the Lord and the faithful church will assuredly win (1 John 5:4; Rev. 17:14), the enemy must not be allowed to persuade us to: (1) let the ship of Zion drift beyond the range of her scriptural ties—liberalism, (2) tie up the good ship with restraints more restrictive than those of the gospel—anti-ism, or (3) simply jump overboard and paddle off into the stormy seas of secularism. We must hold fast to God’s Revelation as understood and applied through right reasoning and we must **warn, warn, warn** others of the looming threats to their salvation! That is what Paul did day and night with tears and he did it with flawless logic.

We Must Continue Logically Preaching Warnings About Liberalism

Given the teaching of Paul in Colossians 3:17, and that of Jesus in Matthew 4:4, it follows that God expects all of man’s life to be directed by all of the Bible. Liberalism relaxes the restraints of Bible teaching by treating the prohibited as permissible or the commanded as optional. Liberalism is sin. Liberalism is popular. Liberalism cannot be logically defended, though multitudes attempt to do so. We must continue to meet the practice and its defenders (inside or outside of our own congregation and regardless of who they are) with bold, plain, and logical preaching so as to expose and refute their error.

The most fundamental and detrimental liberal practice among God’s people is the failure to withdraw fellowship from those who walk disorderly. The emphatic teaching of Second Thessalonians 3:6 could hardly be more plainly stated or more easily understood and yet (to my observation) it could hardly be more avoided or completely ignored by most churches today, including many which have not swallowed the whole of the devil’s liberal lie. Is it any wonder that multitudes of brethren can mollify their consciences in the “little bit of sin” they practice in skipping services for Super Bowls and the like, when their elders and preachers rarely mention or preach on and often steer completely clear of implementing this apostolic command? Where do elders and other members get their authority to simply remove the names (every year or two) of the persistently rebellious (“walking disorderly”) member from the church directory, if they do that much? Do eldership’s really think they are thereby removing themselves from giving account (Heb. 13:17)? If so, they are mistaken!! Why can we not learn from God’s endorsement or intervention in the maximum

discipline given Achan or Ananias and Sapphira? Why do we not **LOVE** the rebellious member **enough to do ALL the Book says do** about restoring his soul (Mat. 22:39; Gal. 6:1; 1 John 5:3; 2 The. 3:14-15)? Why is there any less guilt for rejection of this command, than for rejecting the command to take the Lord's Supper (Mat. 7:21)? God will by no means clear the guilty (Exo. 34:7).

The current swelling liberal digression surely started by a trickle through a crack in the dike and that crack involved a lack of discipline in the churches. The trickle became a steady stream and the stream a surging tide for the same reason. Liberalism is not halted in any church, nor will it be, until that church determines to practice the difficult obligations like withdrawing fellowship along with the ones we find pleasing, convenient, and consistent with those of brethren we admire.

In contrast to the gloomy future of such liberalism, the future is bright for those individuals, families, and congregations which believe, preach, and practice a "thus saith the Lord" in discipline (Rev. 2:10). This follows from the fact that the full measure of New Testament discipline encompasses the necessary instruction of all members and the correction of all those who depart from the doctrine of Christ (up to and including putting them out from among us—1 Cor. 5:7; 2 The. 3:6; Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 John 8-9; Eph. 5:11).

We Must Continue Warning About an Anti-ism Reaction to Liberalism

In the current digression, some are setting themselves to oppose not only unauthorized loosing, they also oppose some lawful actions which to them seem to be unauthorized. Certainly the press of the battle with liberalism is intense; nevertheless, the overreaction of anti-doctrines is not the answer. Some of our brethren have overreacted to the problem posed by heretical versions of the Bible, but are going too far in becoming anti-all versions other than the KJV. Others have overreacted to the liberals' defiance of Bible restrictions on the woman's role and have enlarged Bible restraints by forbidding every use of a woman translator in church assemblies.¹²

The Bible is not silent on the subject of anti-ism and neither should our preaching be. The anti has nothing but an attempted defense of his man-made doctrines and illogic permeates that effort (1 Tim. 4:1ff; Gal. 2:3-4; Acts 15:1-2). Though the anti's avowed loyalty to the Scriptures and his many efforts consistent with that vow make him less offensive

than the law-defying liberal, our efforts to logically preach against his error should not languish, for by his insistence on his doctrine, God-abhorred division will come (Pro. 6:19).

We Must Provide Proper Training for All and Especially for those Who Will Preach

Training (providing instructive discipline) brethren, especially gospel preachers, must include instruction in logic (right reasoning) if we are to avoid the mistakes of our predecessors. It is a genuine shame to see conscientious men make great sacrifices to attend a preacher training school, and then graduate without being impressed with the need for thinking logically for themselves (Acts 17:11). It is a tremendous blessing that such men can spend long hours sitting at the feet of faithful and experienced preachers who know the Book well and can impart that knowledge in abundance to others. Yet, no matter how much is learned, the preacher who can only recite what he has learned and cannot think through a matter logically is less prepared than he ought to be for such important work as preaching the gospel.

CONCLUSION

God, the master Logician, created us as rational creatures and gave us a flawlessly logical book, the Bible. He charges us to reason correctly and to preach both the explicit and implicit truths found therein. Our acceptance of this charge will accomplish what God wants accomplished by His preached Word. Those who love the truth will appreciate that logical preaching and employ it themselves to their own good and to the good of others.

Those with a fear of logic or a hatred of logic will either change their attitude or reject the logical preaching of God's counsel and thereby cut themselves off from a knowledge of that which would build them up and give them "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

ENDNOTES

¹Thomas B. Warren, *Logic and the Bible* (Jonesboro, AK: National Christian Press, Inc., 1982), p. 4.

²Cornelius was a Gentile who was in a right relationship with God during the waning moments of Patriarchy; though he did indeed need the gospel to be saved, it was not because he was at that moment lost, but because he soon would be lost under any religious system other than Christianity (John 14:6). Justly, God provided a transitional period during which Christianity (the one and only true religion since the first century)

gradually replaced both Patriarchy and the Mosaic system as the gospel was spread from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 10:1-4; 1:8; Col. 1:23).

³Warren, *Logic and the Bible*, (Jonesboro, AK: National Christian Press, Inc., 1982), p. v. Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), pp. 63-64. This three-fold general approach to studying the Bible should be followed to rightly ascertain God's truth in any passage. Compare the Lord's approach—Matthew 4:6-7.

⁴James D. Bales, *Not Under Bondage* (Searcy, AR: J.D. Bales, 1979), pp. 7-11.

⁵Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), pp. 100-101.

⁶D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AK: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 1. Darrell Conley, "Know the Immediate and Remote Context," *Rightly Dividing The Word—Vol. I* (Fourth Annual Shenandoah Lectures, 1990), edited by Terry Hightower, pp. 357- 370.

⁷Thomas B. Warren, "The Seriousness of the Ridicule, Rejection, and Hatred of Logic," *Rightly Dividing the Word—Vol. I* (Fourth Annual Shenandoah Lectures, 1990), edited by Terry Hightower, pp. 97-103.

⁸Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), pp. 227-231.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰Lanier Stevens, "You're Among Friends," June 11, 1995, bulletin of the North Madison Church of Christ, Madisonville, Texas.

¹¹Thomas B. Warren, *Logic and the Bible* (Jonesboro, AK: National Christian Press, Inc., 1982), p. 31, for a number of other similar examples.

¹²Bob Berard and Robin Haley, *May a Woman Translate to an Audience which Includes Men?* (Spring, TX: Bible Resource Publications, 1995).

THE PREACHING THAT TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

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INTRODUCTION

My assigned topic is “The Preaching That Turned the World Upside Down.” In Acts 17:6 we have the text for our topic: “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” In our study of this topic, I will discuss seven points that made the preaching of Paul and other first century preachers such that would draw this comment. Let us notice the surrounding verses for a brief background for this statement.

In chapter 15 we have the council at Jerusalem dealing with Gentile converts and the keeping of the Mosaic law, and Paul and Bamabas parting company over John Mark. In chapter 16 Timothy joins Paul and Silas, and we see the Macedonian call to preach the gospel. In Philippi we have the uprising by the masters of the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer. From Philippi Paul and Silas pass through Amphipolis and Apolonia, and come to Thessalonica, where an uproar prompts our text. The Jews of the city opposing the teaching of the resurrection cause the uproar in the city. When they cannot find Paul and Silas, they bring Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of

the city, where they make this charge. Upon this background let us consider the seven points about their preaching.

IT MEETS THE ACTUAL NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

We hear much today about the need to preach to “felt needs.” Though determining just what these felt needs are is often hard, overall they deal with problems like loneliness, rejection, sorrow, hurting, single parenting and even hunger. I wholeheartily agree that special needs and problems of people need to be addressed. They must be addressed from the Word of God, in keeping with the whole of God’s will. When the actual needs (realizing they are sinners and lost, the need to be converted, have forgiveness, in faith placing their lives in God’s trust, be edified) are met the so-called “felt needs” will also most often be supplied. We understand that there are struggles and trials, sorrows and hurts in every life, even the lives of Christians. Therefore, there will be occasional need for sermons dealing with these subjects. However, they are not the major lessons needed.

When we examine the preaching of the first century, whether it is the teaching of Jesus in His personal ministry or the preaching of the apostles after the beginning of the church, it is centered in Jesus, His purpose for coming to earth, the lost condition of man, and the saving power of the blood of Jesus. Whether this preaching was done in Jerusalem, Athens or Ephesus, the message was that man without Christ is lost eternally. Their preaching instructed those who heard it in the need to hear and obey the gospel to have the forgiveness of their sin (Acts 2,8,16,17). The preaching that turned the world upside down echoed the statements of Paul in Romans 1:16-17 and Romans 10:13-17—the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. This leads to our second point.

IT BEGAN WHERE THE PEOPLE WERE

“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:20-22). I quote these verses to show Paul and others of the first century realized people were different, that they could

not teach all the same way. Notice, I said they could not teach them the same way, I did **not** say they could not teach them the same truth. They were different in culture, in nationality, in education, and in their religious (spiritual) backgrounds. Again, did this mean that they needed a different message for each? NO! What it did mean was they had to begin in a different place, in a different manner with each, depending on the audience and their particular background. They began at that point and preached Jesus. Let us notice a few examples from the book of Acts. In Acts 2 Peter began with the prophecy of Joel to show the purpose of the coming of miracles, and the prophecy of David to show the resurrection of Christ and to prove Jesus was Lord and Christ. In Acts 8 Philip began with the prophet Esaias and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian. In chapter 10 Peter begins with the truth “God is no respecter of persons” to show Jews and Gentiles, alike, must hear the same gospel of Jesus as Lord. In Chapter 17 Paul begins with the inscription on an altar to an idol, to prove the existence of God and our necessity to obey Him, being His offspring.

In all cases, wherever the beginning point, the lesson finished in Christ and the necessity of obedience to the Word of God to obtain salvation in Christ. Many today assume that all are equal in background and understanding of God and His will. Today, many also fail to bring the focus to Christ and obedience of the gospel. We must try to learn the background of those with whom we study. This enables us to know what error to unteach, or the foundation that we must lay, that we may teach the truth on a firm foundation. We must teach the same gospel to all. The gospel has always been, still is, and will always be, not only suited to the needs of lost man, but is the only message that will fill man’s need for salvation.

WITHOUT RESPECT OF PERSONS

Not only was this preaching done where the people were, they also preached it without respect of persons. No one was too sinful or too morally good to need the gospel. No one was too religious or too pagan to be taught. All were lost sinners, in need of hearing the gospel that they might be saved. The tone of this preaching is set both in the commission given by Jesus (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) and by Peter at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-35). It was to be preached to every creature in all nations, that each one in every nation who would fear God and work righteousness would be accepted of Him. These men

of God in the early church taught the truth without fear or favor. The Jews of Acts 2 were taught that they were murderers and must acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Christ. Those who acknowledged this were told to repent and be baptized. Philip went into hated Samaria preaching Jesus and the kingdom (Acts 8). Those who believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus were baptized. In Acts 5 when the apostles were cast into prison and commanded to teach no more in Jesus' name, they being released from prison, returned to the temple, teaching the people.

Stephen, in Acts 7, used the history of the Jews and the prophecies of the coming of a Savior from the Old Testament to preach to a hostile Jewish crowd that they were without excuse in crucifying Christ. Repeatedly throughout his missionary journeys (Acts 13-23) Paul taught the Jews in their own synagogues. He taught them until they rejected the truth he taught about Jesus and the resurrection. When the Jews rejected the truth and drove Paul from their synagogues, he turned to the Gentiles preaching faith in Jesus and the rejection of idols.

In Acts 14, at Lystra, the people seek to worship Paul and Barnabas for the healing of the impotent man. Later in the chapter, Paul is stoned and left for dead. In Acts 16 it is the healing of the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination that cause Paul and Silas to be cast into prison at Philippi. In Acts 17 he preached to unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica and worshippers of idols in Athens. In chapter 18 it is in Corinth where the Jews oppose themselves and blaspheme because of Paul's preaching. This preaching leads to Paul being brought before Gallio.

In chapter 19 Paul teaches the twelve men who had been taught only the baptism of John. After two years of preaching in Ephesus there arises a time of "no small stir about that way." Demetrius causes an uproar against Paul because of his preaching against the goddess Diana and the other idols of Ephesus.

Wherever men were found the truth needed to be taught. Souls were lost and without hope. To convict men of their error, whether it is the tradition of the Jews, or the immorality of pagan idolatry, the error had to be exposed and destroyed. To accomplish this task the saving message of the gospel had to be taught. Jesus had to be taught and proven to be man's only hope of redemption. The preachers of the first century went forth preaching the truth without respect of person, turning the world upside down.

PREACHED WHERE THE PEOPLE WERE

Earlier in this lesson I made the point that the first century proclaimers of the gospel began teaching the people by beginning where they were in respect to their knowledge and understanding of God and His Word. In this section I want to notice another point—that they went where the people were physically. “And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1c). “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29). “And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man’s house” (Acts 11:12). “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake” (Acts 14:1a). “And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos” (Acts 13:6a). “And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*” (Acts 16:13). “Where was a synagogue of the Jews...in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him...Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill” (Acts 17:1b,17,22a). “And have taught you publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20c).

I could go on, but hopefully by now you have gotten the picture. The preaching that turned the world upside down was not in a comfortable air-conditioned, padded-pew building on main street in Jerusalem! As the apostle Paul once said, I speak foolishly. They preached the preaching that turned the world upside down to the people where they were: in their houses, in the synagogues, on the road to Gaza, in the market places, from the steps of the castle, from prison. They preached it in their local areas and on distant pagan isles.

We build our expensive, comfortable buildings, our gyms, and family-life centers and say, “Here we are, come and let us entertain you. If you don’t come, it is your fault that you are lost.” I am tempted to ask for a show of hands, to see how many have preached outside the confines of a building? How many of us are willing to go into the highways and byways, even in our communities, to preach the unsearchable riches of the glorious gospel of the Son of God? They **went** where the people

were. Is this not what Jesus instructed in His commandment to preach the gospel to all the world?

IT WAS CONTROVERSIAL

The growing attitude in the brotherhood for the past fifteen to twenty years has been to stay away from anything that might ever be considered of a controversial nature. I have had both fellow preachers and members express their feeling against having debates and discussing controversial topics. I know of leaders (?) in local congregations that do not want (even forbid) Bible subjects which might be controversial preached from the pulpit. The emphasis has been on love and grace. There is no argument that the “positive” subjects such as love, grace, mercy, etc., need to be taught. The question is, can the whole counsel of God be taught by teaching these and other subjects only in a “positive” way? Is preaching the whole of God’s Word “negative” preaching? If so, were the early preachers of the church guilty of “negative” preaching? Did their preaching create any controversy? Yes! Did they preach on love and grace? Yes! How do we know the preaching of the first century was controversial? Let us consider the preaching done by the apostles and other evangelists in the book of Acts and see if it created any controversy? I am convinced the answer to this question is found in our text of Acts 17:6. Preaching that would cause those who preached it to be accused of turning the world upside down would have to be labeled controversial. We could add to this the preaching done by Jesus, Himself, in His personal ministry on the earth. It was so controversial it caused His death on the cross. Many sermons preached today could be, and many probably have been, preached in any religious body in the community. Let us then notice six reasons why their preaching was controversial then, and would be considered controversial by most today.

Called Names

It engaged in calling names, when needed. In Acts 2:36 Peter ;aid ye (the Jews in his audience) crucified Jesus. Stephen in Acts 7:51-52 called the Jews to whom he spoke, “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears...betrayers and murderers.” Paul, in Acts 13:10, told Elymas he was “full of all subtilty and all mischief.” Those kinds of statements will get people’s attention.

Debated With False Teachers

It engaged in confrontation (debate) with the false teachers of the day. Listen to part of our text. “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:2-3). The very act of going into others places of worship suggests confrontation.

Pointed Out Specific Sins

The preaching that turned the world upside down was controversial **because it pointed out specific sins** in the lives of those taught. Beginning with the teaching of Jesus in His personal ministry to the close of Revelation, the preaching of the gospel was always specific in naming sins. It was never a shady gray preaching that gave forth uncertain sounds. It was a clear, plain black and white message that said this is sin, and this is righteous, both in doctrine and in morals.

Uncompromising

Their preaching was controversial **because it was uncompromising.** Can one begin to imagine Peter seeking to make a compromise with the Jews on the day of Pentecost? Can you picture Paul compromising with the worshipers of idolatry in Athens or Ephesus? What would have been the result of Stephen softening his message to the Jews in Acts 7? Can you see Paul conceding to the Judaizing teachers in Acts 15 to make the gospel more popular, to conform to the times? These preachers did not give in to the idol worshipers of Corinth or Ephesus because of the “changing culture” of those cities. These men of God preached the truth and let it fall where it would.

They were more concerned with saving souls, than soothing feelings. No, this does not mean they did not observe culture or tradition where it did not conflict with the law of God. Neither did it mean they went forth with an uncaring, self-righteous spirit. We note this fact in Paul’s statement in First Corinthians 9:19-23, when he was “made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

Rebuked Popular Ideals

First century preaching was controversial **because it spoke forcefully against the popular ideals** (religious and cultural) **of that time.** This preaching boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, a risen Savior.

This brought conflict with the Jews, because the Jews for the major part rejected Jesus as the Son of God. The ruling sect of the Jews, the Sadducees, rejected the teaching of a resurrection and life after death. Judaism taught the keeping of the law and circumcision, and the observance of temple worship. Christianity and the gospel spoke against all these. Most of the Gentile world was engaged in idolatry and its accompanying immorality. The preaching that turned the world upside down taught idolatry to be sinful and all involved in idolatry to be in sin (Mat. 6:24; Acts 17; Gal. 5:19-23). These practices of idolatry being sinful had to be forsaken to become a child of God (1 Cor. 5:17). The Roman government required the worship of Caesar (the emperor). The preaching against this false religion cost many Christians their lives. This preaching against the popular ideas of that day was done openly and forcefully.

Demanded Change

The final reason why the first century preaching was controversial was suggested in the previous point. It was controversial, **because it demanded a major change in the lives of most-who heard it preached.** Whether the hearer was Jew or Gentile the message required change in their lives. They called the Jews by this preaching to give up their faith and trust in their national heritage and the traditions of the fathers. This preaching called for them to place their faith and trust not in Abraham, but in Jesus of Nazareth for their salvation. It called for the Jews to leave their synagogue worship for the church for which Christ died. It called for their leaving their annual feast for a weekly memorial of Christ's suffering and resurrection. These were major changes for the Jews who had always placed their trust in being the seed of Abraham and who were looking for another rise to political power and glory of the Jewish nation.

On the other hand, they called the Gentiles to give up their idolatry, immorality, and their trust in material things and human wisdom. They were to replace this with faith in a Jew, who was the Son of God, and to live holy, righteous lives. This, also, was a major change in their lives. In addition, they would face anger and resentment from their former companions who did not obey the gospel (1 Pet. 4:4). When any group begins to lose numbers and support to another group, they are going to respond in some manner. Most respond by fighting against that which is taking away their people. Did not the Jews deliver Jesus to

Pilate for envy (Mat. 27:16-18)? Yes, the preaching that turned the world upside down was very controversial.

IT WAS BIBLICAL

This point should be understood without being stated. It is in deep contrast to much preaching done today. Today, many frown upon book, chapter, and verse preaching. Some ridicule this type of preaching. First century preaching, being biblical, set forth a specific pattern of obedience for one to become a child of God. This pattern was to hear the gospel, believe, repent, confess faith in Jesus as the Son of God and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; 8:10-39; 10:36-48; 17:29-31; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6). It set forth a specific form or pattern of worship for those who obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:19-30; 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19).

It was biblical because not only were the apostles inspired (Acts 2:1-4; Gal. 1:9-11), they also used the Scriptures. Peter in Acts 2 quoted from Joel 2, Psalms 16, 110, 13 and Second Samuel 7, and made other references to David. The major part of Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 is from Old Testament Scriptures concerning Israel and the coming of a Savior. In Acts 17:2 we read, "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." It would be safe in saying that not only Paul, but, all first century preachers of the gospel used Scriptures whenever and wherever they preached.

When the gospel is preached, it is going to get some reaction from those who hear it. The apostle Paul sums up the three basic reactions in First Corinthians 1. In this chapter he speaks of the gospel being either a stumblingblock, foolishness, or the power of God to save (1 Cor. 1:18-24). Upon hearing the gospel man either accepts or rejects it. Those preaching the Word of God have the Scriptures to back them. Those teaching error and the wisdom of men have nothing to support them.

APPLICATION TODAY

The application of this study is two-fold. The first application is "we are not turning the world upside down." The conclusion must be that we are not preaching in the same manner and corresponding places as they did in the first century.

The second application is that if we would preach as they preached, we, too, would encounter strong opposition. Many times today the preaching heard in our pulpits is no different from that heard in many denominational pulpits. When the kind of preaching done in the first century is done today it will cause “an uproar” wherever it is preached. The other side of the picture is also true. First century style and content preaching done today will prick the hearts of men and convert them to a loving Savior in great numbers as it did in the first century (Acts 4:4; 5:11-14; 2:37; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:18-23).

I will close with Paul’s exhortation to Timothy in Second Timothy 4:14, “I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

WOE TO ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL

Harrell Davidson



Harrell Davidson was born in Gibson County, Tennessee. He began leading singing for meetings at twelve years of age and was encouraged to preach the gospel. He attended Freed-Hardeman University, Harding University, and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He preached his first sermon in 1955, and began preaching every Sunday in October 1958. Harrell preaches in several gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He has preached in most of the 50 states and in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He has worked with the church in Obion, Tennessee for the last 15 years.

Harrell is married to the former Carrielyn Spurlock and they have four children, three boys and one girl.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this lectureship is very timely. Every generation from Pentecost until now has needed the Gospel in its pure form. Today, as perhaps no other time in history, does so much hinge upon the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

Paul said in First Corinthians 9:16: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” There are many things revealed in this passage of Scripture, some of which, we wish to emphasize. Let us notice that Paul says, “for necessity is laid upon me” (1 Cor 9:16). It is necessary to preach the Gospel in order that men may be saved.

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:14-17).

Without the preaching of the Gospel, salvation would not be made known to mankind. Paul wrote by Inspiration: “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by

the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). The Gospel being preached is God’s way to make known unto the world that man is lost and needs Christ. Paul felt an obligation to preach the Gospel. If he had such a necessity, why don’t we? Our schools of higher learning have failed us. They are turning out fewer preachers of the Gospel than ever before. The stand that most have taken is contrary to the truth. Why? Necessity has not been received into the hearts of men as it was Paul and others that we read about in the New Testament. The whole truth is that the passage shows that each one of us has the responsibility to preach the Word. It does not necessarily mean that each one is to get in the pulpit and deliver a sermon, but there are necessary things that all of us must do that the Gospel might be preached. Paul received some financial help from at least one congregation. Most of the time he made “tents.” By this we mean that he worked literally making tents in order that he might not be chargeable to any one. “I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service” (2 Cor. 11:8). Later, he told the Corinthians that he had done them wrong in this matter, and that they should have supported him in the preaching of the Word. It is highly important that we have those who can support with their prayers and finance the preaching of the Gospel. We, then, should see the necessity to preach the Word and do it or see that it gets done. Every Christian is important and should be involved in the preaching of the Word.

It was necessary for Paul to preach the Gospel. He knew how he had inflicted others with great punishment before his conversion, and now he is continually reminded that he should do all that he possibly could to compensate for the injury he had done in the past. So, he felt that in preaching and suffering all he could for the sake of the Gospel that he would try to undo all the harm that he had caused the body of Christ. He was one with a tender heart and conscience, and his sin was ever before him. “This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). If all of us could see the ugliness of our sins, and realize how sweet and precious it is that we can be saved from those sins through the Gospel, perhaps more of us would be inclined to preach and know that it was necessary for us to do so.

He said, “woe is unto me.” This means a denunciation or it may be understood as one that is marked. Jesus often in Matthew 23 marked the

Scribes, Pharisees and hypocrites. He used the word “woe.” We need to take heed to the matter of preaching the Word of God and realize our individual responsibilities in so doing.

WHAT WAS HE TO PREACH?

The text before us says “the gospel.” Preaching has some limits and we need to understand them. Our primary purpose is not to make people “feel” good. What we have today in Lucado, Cope, Shelly, Finto, Flat and a mighty host of underlings, is a bunch of “feel gooders.” This might have started innocently. It is not up to us to judge the motives of such a matter, but we must judge the action and reaction to this kind of conduct in the pulpit, if they even use one, and in the volumes they write. Why we have God whispering, angel’s wings flying and of all things a trip to Matthew’s house. I now have before me an invitation that was sent out to Nashville, Tennessee, “area pastors” wherein they (we), though I’m no pastor, are invited to gather “for breakfast at the Fellowship Hall of Belmont Church on Music Square to meet one another and hear what God is doing in our area....Several Nashville pastors including Jerry Sutton, Rubel Shelly, and Don Finto have been praying and working together...They want to tell us how God has blessed as they’ve come together.” Just who are these people? Jerry Sutton is a Baptist preacher (pastor), Don Finto is a self appointed apostle over the Belmont church, and Shelly is an apostate preacher for the Woodmont Hills congregation (I refuse to call it the Lord’s church). What have they been doing? They said that they have been getting together praying and working. Finto’s church is the Belmont Church on Music Square of which he is an apostle. Looks to me like all that power could clean up the country music lyrics in some songs in this recording capital of the world! O you misunderstand! This is not what they have been working on. Perhaps it is the “Alpha Farm” that Belmont has or had. We have the actual recording of the preacher in charge of this Alpha Farm, a place for drug addicts to get unhooked, proclaiming how that the Lord told him to go out and see Johnny Cash. The purpose of this vision was for Mr. Cash to make a contribution to the Farm. When the director (preacher) of the Farm got there, Mr. Cash was not at home. The preacher said that he sat down under a tree and said, “God, why did you want me to come out here,” registering his disgust. He said that about that time he heard a jeep coming over the hill and there was Mr. Cash and his son in that jeep, and how God had sent Mr. Cash to him.

Friends, this is liberalism and Pentecostalism to the core. If this is what we are to preach, then I just quit. Why? There is no authorization for the preaching or teaching of this brand or stripe in all the Bible. If there is no authorization then we better not touch it.

But what must we preach? Preach the Word!

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Why preach the Word? It is God's power unto salvation (cf., Rom. 1:16). Furthermore, brother James said this about the Word: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jam. 1:21). The Word is to be preached for it is able to save souls. The problem is that of accountability. This is evidenced in a number of ways in the Scriptures. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1-2). We are "stewards of the mysteries of God." The apostles were inspired by God. Jesus promised in John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." This shows how that apostles received the Word of God. It was given unto them by Divine revelation. Now watch it!

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5).

Again, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). The Gospel was before hidden in a mystery. Now it is made known and being made known, it is no longer a mystery. It is now revealed and this is the gospel that Paul and the other apostles preached. We are not stewards of the "mystery" for it is no longer a mystery, but we are stewards of the Gospel; and, being so, we must be found faithful, it is required of each of us. Every person should demand the unadorned,

true, and faithful Gospel be preached. If your preacher won't preach it, send him away in shame. The writer would be ashamed and afraid to meet my Maker in judgment having not declared the truth in its purity, beauty, and simplicity.

WHAT ABOUT NEGATIVE VS. POSITIVE PREACHING?

We must admit that for many years this was a disturbing charge hurled against us. We really didn't know exactly what was meant, after all, we preached what Christ and the Apostles preached. Were they ever questioned about these matters? Of course, and on many occasions.

When our Lord had performed miracles, we notice this statement: "And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth" (Mat. 9:3). The scribes and Pharisees rejected Christ. It began before Christ in the preaching of another. When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea (Mat. 3:1), his message was one of repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mat. 3:2). Then, notice verse 7: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mat. 3:7). The fact of the matter is that these people had already rejected the prophets. Stephen was rebuked by those in the synagogue in Acts 6 and was accused of blasphemy. His sermon would finally cost him his very life. Notice his question to the accusers: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). He had just called these religious zealots: stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (Acts 7:51). Notice it now, name me one prophet that your fathers did not persecute? That question, dear reader, is one of the most penetrating questions in the Bible. What an indictment! It shows that when John the Baptist called them a generation of vipers, they had already rejected the prophets and thus God. Follow these people as Christ begins His personal ministry, and you will notice that they were dead set against Him and what He preached. How did He respond? It is in this setting, when He had healed many, that the Pharisees made bold decisions against Him. "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him" (Mat. 12:14). It is in this context that Jesus said:

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come (Mat. 12:31-32).

The word “world” is best translated age. Those who, thus, had blasphemed the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, would not have forgiveness in this age, the Jewish age, or the age to come, the Christian dispensation. Notice what Christ called these same people in Matthew 12:34, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” O generation of what? Vipers! What did John the Baptist call them? Vipers! How would the apostles fare against such religious idiots? They would be killed, or as John, die in exile. Now what shall we say about the preachers in the Old Testament (the prophets)? What shall we say about John the Baptist? What shall we say about Christ? What shall we say about the apostles? They were negative to hear my brethren talk. We struggled with this several years from one eldership to another and from one detractor and the other until we finally decided that negative preaching was being positive about any thing! We continue to speak positively against sin in all forms. We continue to uphold the “old Jerusalem” Gospel. This is positive within itself, but watch it, if you preach the pure Gospel you will have to preach repentance, and people do not like that so you will be negative. Mind boggling don’t you think? We must stand and remember “woe if I preach not the Gospel.” Brother John T. Lewis is credited with this comment, “I would rather have thousands to say to me at the judgment, ‘We heard you preach and you hurt our feelings,’ than to have just one lost soul to say, ‘I heard you preach, but you did not tell me the truth.’”

THE PHYSICAL VS. THE SPIRITUAL

We are in a strait of sorts in the church today. There is a battle being waged from within that appeals only to the physical or fleshly appetites. It is evidenced in a number of ways. One congregation had full sized animals on the entire church property during Vacation Bible School. It attracted the whole community. They accomplished what they set out to do. The appeal was to the carnal man. Christ was not preached nor taught in those scenes. We have turned to drama to do our teaching for us. We are having plays and skits, and the people come in great

numbers. We have turned our attention inward and our focus is upon self. Our Lord condemned this attitude in the Sermon on the Mount. We must get our attention upon things other than self. The Gospel is to be preached to the whole world. No one is to be spared the truth. Everyone deserves to hear the Good News about the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord which is the basis of the Gospel. This is not being done according to the pattern set down in Holy Writ.

We have before us a bulletin from a congregation that demonstrates the point that we are making very well. On the front page there is an article entitled "Godly Graffiti." The quotations are from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The version is the New International Version. At the conclusion the preacher doing the writing suggests that according to these passages and a recent lesson that someone presented to this congregation that we all ought to have "God written" all over our homes instead of "Laura Ashley." Then he asks, "Is God written over your house?" You will have to interpret what is meant. I must admit that I might not have all the answers. This much I do know, this is not a Bible doctrine. Under FAMILY NEWS we notice word for word and line by line.

March 30 is Putt-Putt on _____ Avenue. Coach's meeting: March 24, 4:00 p.m. This is mandatory for all coaches wishing to use the Life Center or ball field this spring and summer. You must attend or send a representative in your place. New rules will be discussed and agreement and understanding of rules must be signed at the meeting....Sign up for T-ball, coach, pitch, baseball, and softball are posted on the bulletin board near the elders conference room....John Claypool, a nationally known speaker on issues related to grieving parents will be speaking at St. John's Episcopal Church at _____ on Monday evening, March 18....We will not have Teen Worship on this Sunday Evening March 17 or 24 due to spring break in the county schools and some private schools....There will be a Easter Egg hunt _____....Our 1996 Family Ski Trip has arrived. We have around 80 parents, teens, and children going skiing. Please be praying that we have a safe and enjoyable trip....Divorce Recovery Workshop.

On and on these things are being hurled toward this congregation. They are attracting a lot of attention, but yellow paint will also attract a lot of attention. Not one SPIRITUAL word in this bulletin from week to week, and this is typical with many that we receive. Look over the list again and again. Look at all the entertainment and focus on the congregation. Where is the emphasis? Read it now with me and you will know whereof we speak. Here is the method of determining their attendance on Sunday mornings. Worship 8:00 and 10:45 a.m.

Worship—835. KIDS Worship—23. Prison—60. Total a.m. Worship—918.

The children of Israel made a lot of noise in the wilderness, but they got nowhere. This congregation, only typical of most, is making a lot of noise also. Their true progress is no further than the children of Israel who perished in the wilderness. This congregation, if we read our Bibles correctly, and we think we do, is headed for a certain everlasting separation from God and all that is Holy. They have made the choice here that will effect them eternally. “*Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger” (Lam. 1:12). Is there no one that cares? Where is the Gospel in these cases? We decided to call one such congregation and ask some questions? Where is your authority for a Life Center, baseball and softball fields? Answer: “No one asks that old authority question any more.” What about announcing an event to take place in St. John’s Episcopal Church? Answer: “Why there is nothing wrong with that.” On and on the conversation continued, but we were never able to get through to them.

WE MUST PREACH SOUND DOCTRINE

The preacher who chooses to exercise the option to not preach sound doctrine has exercised an option that he does not have. If the preacher is to be faithful he must proclaim sound doctrine. “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3). Teach what, we ask? Sound doctrine is the command. Upon this the faithful Gospel preacher will hang his “hat” and teach the truth until death overcomes him. Many things are contrary to sound doctrine, as we have already noticed, as trends advance in various liberal congregations. Timothy was not to endorse such activity. “For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). In the very next verse, First Timothy 1:11, Paul recounts that the Gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust. This is precisely what Paul was committing to Timothy in trust.

Do you want to be a good preacher? Then listen to Paul the great encourager to preachers. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of

these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:6). Notice some things with me. “Put the brethren in remembrance of these things.” By doing this Timothy, as well as every faithful Gospel preacher, would/will be a “good minister of Jesus Christ.” Don’t you want to be a good minister? If so, you must be firm and have convictions based upon the Doctrine of Christ. The key to the passage is this, “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.” Brethren this is where the “rub” is. So many filling the pulpits today have not hidden the Word of God in their hearts. They are too busy studying philosophers. They are getting their sermon material straight out of books written by denominational people. We have gone in preachers’ libraries over the years just to notice what is and is not there. It is amazingly amazing what we find. The Bible is found mostly in perverted versions. Few use the King James or the American Standard of 1901. As a result, people in the pew know not whether they are listening to Scripture or Shakespeare. Paul said, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). One must read and study the Bible. There is no substitute for studying the Scriptures. There are no short cuts that one can take. Each of us must study and make the Gospel ring out of our hearts and not just from the mouth. This underscores conviction is the problem. Conviction is a rare commodity these days.

Further, Paul encouraged Timothy to, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). Every preacher needs this encouragement and advice. “Take heed to” self; that is, live the right kind of life that is becoming of the doctrine. “Take heed” to doctrine; that is, make sure you are preaching and studying the Scriptures. The net result is that we will save ourselves and those that hear us. In Second Timothy 1:13, Paul said: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” I have kept a scrapbook over the years of eventful things that happened when my boys and I went hunting together. We like to get it out between seasons and read it and enjoy each entry and each picture. First and Second Timothy and Titus is a precious “scrapbook” to the faithful Gospel preacher. The late brother H. A. Dixon told us young preachers years ago that we need to read these

three books at least “three times” each week. We did not understand fully why he advised us in this matter, but it wasn’t long until we fully understood. It would be extremely hard (impossible) for one to be faithful and leave Timothy and Titus out of our lives. But this is precisely what has happened over our land today. No wonder that we have brethren, unfaithful of course, who hold that men as C. S. Lewis, Charles Swindoll, and James Dobson (to name a few) are our brethren in the Lord.

THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING

We need a refresher course in the book of Acts. There are thousands of sermons preached every week. Counting all the sermons that are heard including the denominations the number would be virtually in the millions of hearers. What is the purpose of this? Many among us seem not to have a clue. If one would use Acts 2 as a model he would find that Luke uses about 25 verses to report brother Peter’s sermon on Pentecost. What better way is there to preach? Is this not a good pattern to follow after? In Acts, Philip began at the “same scripture” in teaching the eunuch (Acts 8:35). Stephen, in Acts 7, tells the story of the Old Testament using Scriptures. There is absolutely too much preaching today without Scripture.

One purpose in preaching is to discuss and explain scriptures. When Peter discussed and explained scriptures in Acts 2, the audience became disturbed (Acts 2:37). Until we disturb men about sin, they are not going to do anything about it. Peter did not preach in such a way to placate his audience. He did not compromise one grain of truth. His preaching was Christ-centered. Our preaching today must also be Christ-centered. When we do this it will produce conviction in the hearts of men. We realize that not everyone will obey. We need to realize that only about three thousand obeyed the Gospel on Pentecost. In all likelihood there were multiplied thousands present. All would not even obey Christ. He did not force them to obey. Thus, it is the preacher’s job to preach the Word and let God give the increase. I must not forget, “woe unto ME” if I preach not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the Gospel is preached some will ask questions. This in turn will produce further Bible studies with this individual and will cause that person to think more soberly about the Word of God. Some will receive it when it is preached while others will reject it. Our purpose is not in the results but in the proclamation of the Word. We must tell

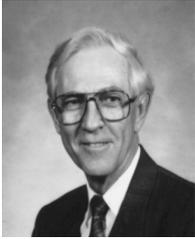
people what to do to be saved. None of this—not extending the invitation—as is happening all over our land. One preacher told his audience, “if you have a commitment to make, please come by my office,” and then he gave his office hours. What would he do with Paul and Silas, with the Philippian jailer? It most assuredly was not office hours for them. It was the same hour of the night. There is a definite contrast between these two instances.

Our preaching is to show men the way to the Lord’s church. Preaching that satisfies men, but leaves Him out of the church is wasted time and effort. This is precisely what causes so many to “join” something.

Our preaching is to produce Christian growth. In Acts 2:42 the people continued in the apostles’ doctrine. It was not just a “shot” in the air. They already knew something about steadfastness because they continued. “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18). Faithful, Scripture quoting or reading will produce Christian growth. This is the kind of preaching that will save men and that will save the church. May God help us all to preach the “whole counsel” of God. Remember, “Woe To ME if I Preach not the Gospel.”

THE PREACHING OF TODAY

Garland Elkins



Garland Elkins, a native of Tennessee, was educated at Freed-Hardeman University, Middle Tennessee University, and the University of Tennessee. He has done local work in Tennessee and Virginia. He has conducted gospel meetings in several states and appears on numerous lectureships throughout the brotherhood each year. He is a member of the faculty of the Memphis School of Preaching. He serves as Co-editor of the journal **Yokefellow** and is in charge of Public Relations for the school. He has written several tracts and many articles for leading publications. He was Associate Editor of the **Spiritual Sword** for fifteen years. In 1981 he was selected Outstanding Alumnus of

Freed-Hardeman University. He appeared on the Phil Donahue show in 1984 defending what the Bible teaches on church discipline. He lives in Memphis and is associated with the Knight Arnold Church of Christ. He is married to the former Corinne Smith and they have three daughters and two grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

One merely needs to open his eyes and look around and he will see both the great need for preaching the gospel, and the need for dedicated preachers to preach the gospel. Paul wrote, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). The apostle also wrote, “But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

The importance of preaching is seen when one considers that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day” (John 6:44). Jesus then informs us as to how one is drawn by the Father to the Christ. He said, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). Thus Jesus informs us that the process of coming to Christ involves teaching, hearing, learning, and coming to the Lord. Therefore, we are not drawn to the Lord by a direct miraculous operation of the

Holy Spirit, nor by an angel but by, being taught, hearing, learning, and coming unto the Lord.

The gospel is for all nations, and even to every creature (Mat. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; and Mark 16:15-16). When Paul wrote to the church in Rome he was addressing brethren with many contrasts. There was poverty in the midst of wealth, and there were both free men and slaves. However, he pointed out that the gospel is God's power to save all. He wrote:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

THE PREACHING OF THE FIRST CENTURY

The preaching of the first century was always done in love (Eph. 4:15; 1 Cor. 13:1-13). However, it was also a very bold and courageous preaching, wholly without compromise; and yet always kind, and gentle, though it was bold and to the point.

Stephen's preaching is a case in point. We have only one of Stephen's sermons recorded. However, it is evident that under the most trying circumstances came one of the most sublime sermons ever to come from the lips of a man. Though his enemies were attacking him, and later that day killed him, it was less a defense of himself than of the truth that Jesus was the Messiah. Stephen cared less for himself than for the cause of Truth. The council, before whom he preached his sermon, became enraged against Stephen. The man that they held as a convict became their accuser! His words stung them like scorpions. They realized that if they accepted the truth that he preached, they would have to repent. Fearlessly, Stephen undertook his defense. Rehearsing the ancient history of Israel, he skillfully showed that God's revelation to His people had been over a period of time. He showed that God had no need of an earthly temple. At first, his hearers were silently attentive; but as they caught the drift of his argument, they displayed signs of anger which Stephen could not have failed to see. When he was permitted to speak he took advantage of what he must have known to be his last opportunity. He gave a marvelous sketch of their ancestors from the call of Abraham to the birth and circumstances of the twelve sons of Jacob—and all without a single word that referred to the charges made against him. In this way, he secured their attention and paved the way

for the great sermon which he preached; one of the greatest and most powerful sermons on record.

Let us briefly examine Stephen as a preacher, and the great sermon that he preached. Stephen believed as did Paul: “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). He could have said with Paul, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). He could have also said, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5).

The inspired record of Stephen, the preacher, and his preaching, reveals many of the characteristics of an ideal preacher. He was of course, an inspired preacher. Let us take note of a few of those characteristics.

First, we note that his sermon was filled with Scriptures. His entire sermon was full of the sacred Scriptures. To be a great preacher one must be full of the Word of God, not given to using cheap substitutes instead of the grand old gospel story. The gimmickry of our day does not constitute sound gospel preaching, but rather it cheapens preaching. There is no substitute for gospel preaching, and there are no illustrations that will equal those that are recorded in the Bible. Clever and sophisticated lectures on the topics of the day—science, literature and philosophy—are but poor substitutes for gospel preaching. We must always remember that the power is in the gospel (Rom. 1:16). If one desires his sermons to be powerful, let him remember to correctly preach the powerful gospel (Acts 18:28).

In the second place Stephen had deep convictions, and he was willing to die for them. He spoke the truth even in the face of death. There are few things that will give more weight to a preacher’s sermon than for him to be sincere and possess deep convictions (2 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 The. 2:1-12).

In the third place, Stephen manifested the proper Christian attitude in his preaching (Eph. 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:15). Much depends upon the manner of presentation. Many otherwise great sermons have been hindered because of the manner in which they are presented. The proper attitude on the part of the preacher is often decisive (Acts 14:1-3).

In the fourth place Stephen did not “Preach the gospel and let others alone,” as some contend that preachers should do. The very

nature of the gospel is such that it makes such a course impossible. No true prophet, neither the Lord Jesus Christ, nor any of His apostles followed this course. Jesus, His apostles, and Stephen, could have lived longer lives if they had followed this course. They all preached things contrary to the belief and practice of other people, even very religious people. They pointed out where people were wrong in their doctrine, practice, and worship. Christ, and His apostles, and other inspired men, pressed upon those who were wrong religiously, that to go to heaven it was necessary to renounce error, and to obey the truth (John 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:22).

The gospel is designed to save men from sin, and all have sinned (Rom. 3:23; Jam. 1:18; Eph. 1:13). It should also be pointed out that the gospel remedy must be applied to the sick, the sinner, whether he be guilty of the sins of immorality or of so-called doctrinal sins (Luke 5:31-32; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). A doctor could not have a successful practice if he attempted to practice medicine and leave the sick alone!

In the fifth place Stephen engaged in negative preaching. He told his audience that they were wrong (Acts 7:51-53). Peter began his great sermon on Pentecost negatively. He said, "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose" (Acts 2:15). Paul commanded Timothy to, "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Tim. 4:2). Jesus did much negative preaching. He said, "Judge not" and "Judge not according to appearance" (Mat. 7:1; John 7:24). He told the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mat. 22:29).

In the sixth place Stephen exposed specific sins. We must, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). Jesus "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9). David wrote, "I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:104).

People do not like to be proved wrong in religion, so the surest way is to silence the preacher. Stephen was silenced, but his message lived on through others who took up his words and kept them ringing in the ears of the people. The Word is living (Mat. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:25; Heb. 4:12); and regardless of how many preachers are silenced in death, it lives on, and by it all are to be judged (John 12:48)!

THE PREACHING OF OUR DAY

Though the "seven thousand have not bowed the knee" and there are many faithful and able gospel preachers; nevertheless, it is a sad fact that there are vast numbers of preachers in the church who no longer

preach sound doctrine. In fact, some have really never learned sound doctrine, therefore they do not preach it. There are numerous others, who, in the past, preached the truth, but now have apostatized; and, therefore, now teach fatal error. Some of these insist that they have not changed, and have either changed the congregations from believing the truth to now believing error; or in some instances, those in the congregations who largely determine the directions of the congregations, are in “smooth and fair speech” gradually “pulling the wool” over the faces of the congregations. Regardless of who or how it is done, such a state of congregations and individuals is sad beyond description. As space permits I call attention to some of the wrong type of preaching of our day.

1. Many preachers of our day do not tell people how to be saved.

This type of preacher will preach sermon after sermon but never tell an audience what to do to be saved. In many instances alien sinners could attend for months, even years, and never hear from such preachers what to do to be saved. Peter, Paul, and other preachers in the first century told alien sinners what to do to be saved (Acts 2:36-38; Acts 16:25-34; Acts 8:26-39).

2. Many preachers will not distinguish and identify the church of our Lord so that denominational friends who are present can see the difference. No preacher is declaring the whole counsel of God unless he is declaring God’s plan for unity, and His hatred of division (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13). The gospel is not being preached when the audience cannot learn that the Lord’s church is essential, and that one cannot be saved in denominationalism.

3. Many preachers of our day will not teach and preach the truth relative to what constitutes true worship to God. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Therefore, for New Testament worship to be acceptable we must: (1) worship God as the object of our worship, (2) we must worship God “in spirit” i.e., with the proper attitude, and (3) we must worship God “in truth.” But what is truth? Jesus tells us that the truth is God’s Word: “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Therefore, true worship must be, and is, regulated by the Word of God. The New Testament teaches us that we must limit our worship to singing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). That is all that is authorized

as musical praise to God in the New Testament. All things offered as worship to God without His authorization are sinful. Mechanical instruments in worship are not authorized. Therefore, mechanical instruments in the worship of the New Testament church is sinful! We read in Colossians 3:17: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Again, this verse teaches, as I have pointed out, that for worship or anything else done in religion, to be accepted by God, it must be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Instrumental music cannot be used “in the name of the Lord Jesus” i.e., by His authority, therefore its use is sinful!

4. There are many preachers among us who are attacking the church, and faithful brethren in general. In the *Nashville Tennessean* newspaper on the front page of the “Today” section of June 13, 1991 there was an article entitled “Conservative Churches may foster incest, panel says.” The article was written by Ray Waddle, Religion News Editor. The article begins:

“Rigidly conservative churches attract power addicted preachers and encourage incest and pornography at home because they too often teach distortions about sex, a church of Christ preacher said yesterday.”

In an unusually frank discussion at David Lipscomb University, four male professionals said Christians should re-examine the biblical action of female submission, which many men use to demote their wives to second-class status or justify domestic violence.

“We so distorted the concept of ‘headship’ and ‘submission’ that we’ve produced a pathological family model,” Gayle Napier, family life minister at Harpeth Hills Church of Christ, told about 200 people at the annual Lipscomb Lectures.

Napier also is quoted as telling the audience: “The more conservative the church the more incest you have in families.” Gayle Napier, Harold Hazelip, the President of Lipscomb University, and the board of Directors owe not only an apology to the church, but also to the public, due to the fact that such an attack was permitted by Lipscomb on the part of Gayle Napier and others during that lectureship. An apology is due to the church for neither did, nor could he prove his accusation. An apology is due the public for the article depicting Napier’s false charges against the brethren received wide publicity. I was at a gospel meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, and while there, I saw the article in a large newspaper in that city.

5. In the “Religion” section of a Tri-Cities Newspaper of Alabama, there appear pictures of a Methodist preacher, Stanley Clark, and a brother listed as Joe Van Dyke, a minister of the Church of Christ, and also a picture of both groups as they engaged in a “joint meeting.” Joe Van Dyke should be withdrawn from by every faithful congregation (2 The. 3:6).

6. Rubel Shelly has, for years, compromised with numerous denominations. In the bulletin entitled “Love Lines,” “the weekly newsletter of the Family of God at Woodmont Hills” in Nashville, Tennessee, where Rubel preaches we read the following:

**Community-Wide Worship
Sunday Evening/April 10, 1994**

IT IS A DATE TO MARK ON YOUR CALENDAR, include in your prayers, and plan to share. At 7 p.m. on Sunday, April 10, **members from at least seven churches in the Green Hills area plan to meet for a community post-Easter worship service.**

It is a small beginning for the sort of thing many of us have dreamed about and prayed to see happen for years. **People from diverse backgrounds will come together to affirm the central elements of Christian faith on which we agree. That, in turn can provide us a framework for understanding and mediating our differences.**

The seven churches involved are Woodmont Baptist, Covenant Presbyterian, St. Paul Southern Methodist, Woodmont Christian, Trinity Presbyterian, Calvary United Methodist, and us.

We will have all our regular services on that day. **Then all who care to participate can assemble in the main auditorium of Woodmont Christian Church for a one-hour assembly. Special music will be provided by children’s choirs and adult groups.** Biblical texts will be read, and prayers will be said. **There will be a sermon dealing with the meaning of the resurrection. I have been asked to present that sermon.**

A Report on the Community- Wide Worship of April 10

If you were not able to attend the special co-hosted assembly last Sunday evening at Woodmont Christian Church, you missed a wonderful experience. At 7 p.m. last Sunday evening, approximately 1,100 people came together for an hour in that church’s sanctuary. It is estimated that another 200 were turned away at the doors, and many others were waved off the parking lot because of the overflow conditions.

People sat in chairs placed in aisles and down hallways, stood in the foyer, and lined the walls. Voices were raised in joyous praise. Smiles were abundant.

All these people were together to affirm the common elements of orthodox Christian faith to which we are committed. In spite of doctrines and traditions that divide us, we were able to join with Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples

of Christ, and Baptists to affirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its meaning.

The evening was a small but significant step in tearing down old walls of prejudice and misunderstanding. Thank God for such a night.

Brother J. E. Choate attended the “union service” on April 10, 1994, to see and hear what Rubel would say and do. He sent copies of Rubel’s bulletins to me and wrote, “As you can read, Rubel was elated over the events, and exulted in every aspect of it including his full participation in the worship.” Brother Choate informed me that both Rubel and Philip Morrison sang with the mechanical instrumental music.

More recently Rubel preached to a Pentecostal denomination in Nashville, during which time he compromised the truth, and as usual for him, he ridiculed the church of Christ. Among other things he said: “Some of you know my tradition, the churches of Christ as a very narrow, legalistic, arrogant, everybody is going to hell but us, kind of tradition.” Some of his attacks on the Lord’s church caused great laughter from the audience, and also much applause. I do not think that he will be laughing about such matters on the day of judgment (Ecc. 12:13-14; John 12:48).

7. In both sermons and articles the Liberals among us ridicule the church, attempting to make it appear that the Church of Christ is a denomination, arrogant, unloving, and composed of hateful bigots. In *Image* magazine, an extremely liberal journal, a brother by the name of Gene Shelburne wrote an article entitled “A Small Heaven.” Among other things he said,

Our conversation began that day on a very friendly, low-key level. Brother Smith talked about his ministry in several areas of the country.

Years ago he and his wife had moved to a small town where there was no Church of Christ, to a state that had hardly heard of us. “In five years,” he said, “we baptized fifty-nine people—Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans.” and then, he said, they moved a thousand miles across the country and did it again. He was obviously quite pleased to be able to report this.

I sat, saying almost nothing, not really wanting to get into a fuss with this good man. But inside I was saying, **How dreadful! How absolutely dreadful! I can’t imagine spending my whole life’s ministry just stealing sheep. Surely we have something more important to do than convincing our religious neighbors that they’re wrong!**

By implication Shelburne would condemn Christ and His apostles for they spent much of their time in an effort to “convince our religious neighbors that they are [were] wrong!”

8. Lynn Anderson charges that the church of Christ is “A Big Sick Denomination.”

Lynn Anderson preached a sermon on a Sunday morning in 1973 to the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, during which he said, “You know the Church of Christ is a big, sick, denomination. And I meant each word, Big, Sick, Denomination.” He still contends that the church of Christ is “a big, sick, denomination.” He then related a conversation that ensued between him and his wife. He said, “The other day Carolyn and I were driving down the road when I turned and frankly said to my wife, ‘you know the church of Christ is a big, sick, denomination.’ Her answer startled me: ‘I have believed that, too, for a long time.’” In a recent article in *Wineskins* edited by Rubel Shelly and Michael Cope, Lynn Anderson wrote an article entitled, “The Big, Sick Denomination Revisited.” In his article in *Wineskins* he states, “The editors of *Wineskins* asked me, ‘what would you say to today’s church Big, Sick Denomination sermon?’ He then wrote, “Frankly, for the most part I would recommend the same course I did in 1973.” He also wrote, “So, what I said then, I repeat with more confidence.” Lynn Anderson believed that the church of Christ was a “Big, Sick Denomination” in 1973. He still believes that the church of Christ is a “Big, Sick Denomination” in 1996! Brother Anderson (he is an erring brother) wrote that after he charged the church of Christ with being a “Big, Sick Denomination that Sunday morning the response was: “At that point, a corporate gasp of shock swept across the congregation.” It should be pointed out that not only was there a “gasp of shock” during his infamous sermon at Fifth and Highland, but that same “gasp of shock” swept the brotherhood.

The church of our Lord as a whole was very strong in the faith in 1973. Therefore on September 10, 1973, perhaps more than two hundred Christians met in Memphis, Tennessee, to discuss Lynn Anderson’s compromise, i.e., his charge that the church of Christ is “A big, sick denomination.” The group of brethren involved in this discussion were for the most part elders and preachers. They came from as far away as California. There were numerous speakers, among them brethren E. R. Harper, Thomas B. Warren, James D. Willeford, Alan Highers, and even Rubel Shelly spoke against the compromising views of Lynn Anderson. Unfortunately he now holds the same unscriptural views as does brother Anderson regarding these matters. It is extremely significant that of the approximately two hundred preachers present, not a single one publicly, and so far as is known privately, spoke in favor of the conduct of the liberal element at Highland, with the exception of the *Herald of Truth* representatives. The brethren requested that I be in charge of the meeting. The meeting continued for ten to thirteen hours. A calm Christian attitude prevailed. Lynn Anderson is wrong, and needs to do repent!

9. Andre Resner, a professor at Abilene Christian University has attacked the Virgin Birth of Christ, in an article entitled “Christmas At Matthew’s House.” The article was printed in *Wineskins*, April 1993. Among other things Andrew Resner wrote:

I'm at Matthew's house for Christmas, and Matthew is sneaky. He's almost too matter-of-fact for me. I need some exclamation marks. Maybe a couple of winds. A raised eyebrow here and there. A gasp. For Matthew it begins in sexual scandal and it ends in political power plays. Before he can tell the scandal of Mary's "immaculate conception" he has to subtly remind us of other scandalous women.

And Ruth—"dear sweet Ruth." Well, just what was she doing out there at the threshing floor at Boaz's feet? And why did he want her to stay there all night, yet leave before daylight, and not let anyone see her? Hmmm.

Though we're still quite surprised by Matthew's covert statement "she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit." Matthew has set us up for it. It's a sort of "Here we go again, folks—." Another sexually questionable woman. And what about Joseph's faith in the face of Mary's story? For it was he, who after a single dream, went ahead and married her. A dream that was real, yes, but still a dream. Could it have been a message from God? Or could, could it have been his own imagination, his wanting to believe her so much that his subconscious produced a nocturnal justification for marrying her, even in the face of such an outlandish excuse? But there's Joseph, crawling into bed with her every night the rest of his life, relying on a dream, believing in her word, that she really hadn't slept with another man and used him to cover her shame.

I have never read a more blasphemous attack against the Virgin Birth of the Lord. Isaiah 7:14 definitely predicts that Christ would be born of a virgin, and in Matthew 1:18-25 we see the fulfillment of that prophecy. Matthew quotes Isaiah and says that it was fulfilled when Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. **Question:** Are Isaiah and Matthew telling the truth, or is Andre Resner? That is just how simple the matter is. Isaiah and Matthew wrote the truth, therefore, Andre Resner needs to repent!

10. In writing relative to another subject the Hebrews writer wrote: "Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum" (Heb. 8:1). In reference to the liberals of our day, there are so many of them that neither time nor space permit a mention of all of them who are known to us. However, in addition to the ones mentioned in this lecture, I conclude by pointing out that such men as: C. Leonard Allen, Richard T. Hughes, Michael Weed, Bill Love, Carroll D. Osburn, Joe Beam, and multitudes of others, appear to be determined to turn the church of Christ into a denomination. However, the "seven thousand" have not "bowed the knee." We must follow Paul's example in opposing error that is taught within the church. Paul wrote:

and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us

into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Gal. 2:4-5).

CONCLUSION

As hope was given to the remnant of Judah, “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (2 Kin. 19:30); even, so with the church, the beautiful bride of Christ, she **“shall yet take root downward, and bear fruit upward.”** May God hasten that day!

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THE CHANGELESS MESSAGE

Marvin L. Weir



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Marvin is married to the former Cathy Holbert and they have two children.

INTRODUCTION

If one purposes to be a mouthpiece of God certain armor must be worn to be successful in doing battle with Satan and his forces. Paul specifically lists truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, God's Word (Eph. 6:13-17). These items comprise "the whole armor of God" and were given to Christians so that they would be able to "stand" against the forces of evil. But wait—could changes that have occurred in our society and culture necessitate a change in the Christian's armor? If so, what has truth become? Instead of the Word of God (Psa. 119:160) has it now become the latest diatribe of the most vocal and polished change agent? Has the "breastplate of righteousness" been replaced with "the breastplate of political correctness?" Has "the gospel of peace" evolved into "a gospel of peace?" Could it be that "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit" worked fine in Paul's day, but are no longer relevant to man's needs? Instead of asking some modern scribe who is the subject of several degrees of blindness in modernistic thinking, why not consult the Word of God? Do you remember the Christian armor being limited to a particular culture? Where was the Christian armor of Ephesians 6 replaced by one more suited for today's society? There was but one

armor needed and one armor given and the student of the Bible knows that God has not authorized such armor to be changed.

A battle is indeed raging, and only the spiritually blind would fail to see that such is true. It is simply false for one to believe that faithful children of God will be loved by everybody. G. C. Brewer was fond of saying, "If you are not being fired at, you are not on the firing line." This saying certainly deserves our attention. There is no way a soldier of the cross can remain neutral. The only way to be at peace is to put on the Christian armor and lift high the sword of the Spirit as one does battle with the forces of evil. Some would have you to believe that war can be avoided, but there will be no victory without the battle. Child of God, wear proudly the gospel armor, and always use the sword of the Spirit in a way that will glorify the Father.

FROM THE BEGINNING—A SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

Evolution has long sought to change God's eternal message regarding the creation of this world. But the fact remains that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Peddlers of false doctrine would have folks believe that societies and cultures introduced the Word of God, and thus, as goes the culture so goes God's Word! The validity of God's Word and His immutability have never been dependent upon what a society does or does not do. Humans are known for changing their minds but God does not change His divine attributes. The book of James reminds all that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jam. 1:17). A classic Old Testament verse that states this great truth says, "God is not a man, that he should lie, Neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and will he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19). The Scriptures thus attest to the unchanging nature of God and it should not seem strange that His message for a particular dispensation also be unchanging.

The Psalmist asks an excellent question, "If the foundations be destroyed, What can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3). If one is to build safely he must build soundly upon the proper foundation. Can man rely upon his own wisdom and build upon a foundation that will not fail him? Absolutely not! The prophet Jeremiah said, "O Jehovah, correct me, but in measure: not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:24). Jesus Himself taught:

Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof (Mat. 7:24-27).

If not Jehovah, then who has the authority to tell mankind **how** and upon **what** spiritual foundation to build? The Holy Spirit correctly stated, “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Psalmist noted that “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas” (Psa. 46:1-2). There is no need to be afraid of changes that occur in this world because the child of God’s faith is in one who changes not (Mal. 3:6). The Psalmist again stated “For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa. 119:89) and such a statement should forever end religious quibbles. A general principle regarding God’s changeless message is seen in the giving of the Old Law to the children of Israel. The law said, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you” (Deu. 4:2). And again, “What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deu. 12:32). At what point in time were the Israelites able to successfully argue that their culture had changed to the point that they were no longer applicable to God’s laws? Even under Solomon’s reign it is clear that God expected His people to honor and obey the law:

And Jehovah appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend, unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and hallowed this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. And as for thee, if thou

wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and mine ordinances; then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house, which is so high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall say, Why hath Jehovah done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them (2 Chr. 7:12-22).

The New Testament book of Revelation proves that God's message for men living in the Christian age was to be lasting and changeless.

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

The testimony of the Scriptures never hint that God's message for a particular age may have changed with the passing of time. It was Solomon who testified by saying,

O Jehovah, the God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keepest covenant and lovingkindness with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart; who hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou didst promise him: yea, thou spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day (1 Kin. 8:23-24).

Thirty-two verses later Solomon again declares, "Blessed be Jehovah, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by Moses his servant" (1 Kin. 8:56). God has never confused mankind with a changing message. As long as the Patriarchal or Mosaic dispensation lasted, God's message during these eras never changed.

MODERN SIGN OF THE TIMES

Who would argue that society has not changed? Morals have changed. Cultures have changed. Denominational churches are ever changing. This present-day mania has afflicted many congregations that

wear the name **church of Christ**, and they are now eager to change. Change agents have never been concerned with “a thus saith the Lord.” They are more concerned with what the world thinks than with what God says! God’s position is clear regarding things divine: “For I, Jehovah, change not” (Mal. 3:6). What about the Savior? “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and to-day, *yea* and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). What about God’s Word? The Psalmist says, “For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa. 119:89). Now pay careful attention—the “change agents” among us are demanding that the **church** change even though neither God, Christ, nor His Word changes! This is the same Christ who is the head of His church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23).

It was unheard of several decades ago. Now it happens more frequently than I care to remember. That which I am speaking of is those of denominational persuasion making the remark that the “great gap” that once existed between the church and denominational bodies has significantly narrowed in recent years. This is meant as a compliment, but should make a faithful child of God sick to his stomach! The church of our Lord is being seduced today by many so-called gospel preachers and scripturally unqualified elders, and an ever-growing number of brethren “love to have it so” (cf., Isa. 30:10). Many congregations who wear the name “church of Christ” have chosen not to “endure the sound doctrine” and have purposely turned their ears away from the Truth (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Games and fun, and frolicking in the sun will not save souls! Neither will preaching that demands we be tolerant and non-judgmental of a person’s sinful actions, but love and fellowship them while depending on God’s grace. Sin is always wrong, and unrepented sin is always deadly! The apostle Paul makes it clear that one cannot continue in sin and expect God’s grace to abound (Rom. 6:1). No one is under Old Testament law today. It was taken out of the way, abolished, nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-15; Eph. 2:15). God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Thus, all men are amenable to the gospel as “it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Those who desire to be God’s children today have commandments to keep (John 14:15) and a “rule” (Gal. 6:16) to follow. This is why Peter issues the inspired edict, “if any man speaketh, *speaking* as it were oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

The reason God can expect people to abide by these and all other verses of Scripture is because His Word does not change.

Light-hearted Faxes

It is disheartening but revealing to learn what many of our apostate brethren are writing about Christianity and the precious church of our Lord. Larry James, former preacher for the Richardson East church of Christ, said in one interview that he believed “far too often Christianity comes across as negative and judgmental...we are a different kind of Church of Christ. In this church, we don’t believe for five seconds that we’re the only ones who are God’s people.”¹ There is no doubt but that this type of thinking is popular with the world, but what does the Word of God say? Has God’s Word changed since it was originally given? How many different kinds of churches of Christ does the Bible reveal? Only one church was promised (Mat. 16:18), only one church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and only one church (body) will be saved (Eph. 5:23). The good news, the gospel, is still God’s only power to save (Rom. 1:16). Has there been a change in the number of gospels available to man? The Bible still says:

I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another *gospel* only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ. For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but *it came to me* through revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6-12).

Again, Paul affirms in Holy Writ, “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all*” (Eph. 4:4-6). Where in God’s Word does it note that there has been a change in this divine arrangement? Is not salvation “in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:10)? Are not all who are members of the Lord’s church “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13)? Is it not true that the Lord adds to His church those who have sincerely submitted to His will and obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:41, 47)? Does God have children **outside** the body of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23)?

What has changed? It is the attitude of Larry James and the Richardson East congregation in that they no longer respect the inspired, authoritative Word of God!

Change of Name

Another newspaper headline read: “Congregation Severs Ties With Church of Christ.” The reporter stated that “a once prestigious south Tulsa church has voted to renounce the Church of Christ doctrine, which, among other things, bans instrumental music in worship and limits church offices to men.”² Brethren, God’s Word has not changed! One still cannot find the command to “play,” but one can find the authority to “sing” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). And, the last time I looked, the Scriptures still demanded that elders and deacons be the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2,12). Again, brethren, the battle being fought is over **authority**—a “thus saith the Lord” for what we believe and practice. The Southern Hills Church in Tulsa has a mindset to have women preachers and instruments of music. It is as the unchanging Word of God says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19).

A Lesson in Line-drawing

As I objected to something doctrinally incorrect at a Christian school(?) the superintendent told me, “I’ve just drawn my line a little farther out than you.” O, really now! Does God’s Word grant His followers the privilege of “drawing lines”? Has the Scripture changed to accommodate such? The Bible teaches that God drew His line the way He wanted it long ago (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Psa. 119:89; 119:160) and all who would be His faithful followers must not be guilty of attempting to move it farther “in” or “out.”

A few months ago a denominational church riled some of its conservative members by endorsing “wholesome dancing.” Is this a first cousin to “wholesome drinking,” “wholesome gambling,” or “wholesome adultery.” In fact, this “wholesome” concept just may give some of our erring brethren who are becoming famous for redrawing God’s lines another idea. “Wholesome sin”—it does have a rather unique ring, doesn’t it?

Has God's Word changed, or has man changed his attitude toward scriptural worship and godly living? One wants a carnival or party atmosphere because it's exciting! Another demands instruments of music to enhance our worship and singing. Others cry for women using their talents and becoming elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers of men. Applause and foot stomping will ensure that no one goes to sleep during the worship service. There will also be tongue-speaking and testimonials! Brethren, who gets to decide what is wholesome? Who gets to draw the line—and where? The truth is that the line in all spiritual matters has been clearly drawn by God, and judgment will reveal that His line never moved “in” or “out” but was forever fixed! It will be just as Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat. 24:35).

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD

Noah and the Flood

The Bible says that “Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). God thus promised Noah, “The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen. 6:13). Noah was then given specific instructions for the building of an ark to provide safety during the flood. The apostle Peter recorded that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). Noah preached for one hundred years and the entire world rejected his message (Gen. 5:32; 7:6), but the message was never changed in any way to accommodate the thinking of the majority. All but eight souls were lost because God's Word was not heeded. It is no wonder that the Bible admonishes, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exo. 23:2).

Nadab and Abihu

The progressive spirited change agents of today have little tolerance for the Bible story of Nadab and Abihu. According to those of modernistic persuasion, there is something terribly wrong if God did what God said He did! They question as to whether or not Nadab and Abihu knew the fire was the wrong fire. It is a horrible indictment against God to suggest that He expects man to comply with His will without knowing what His will was. The Bible still says that sin is “lawless-

ness” or “transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). God’s Word also says that “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15). There was a law regarding the proper fire to be prepared and Nadab and Abihu knew of that law! But they acted just like their modern-day counterparts—they viewed God’s law as unnecessary and opted to do their own thing! The Bible still reads,

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah (Lev. 10:1-2).

The eternal principle is clearly established that God’s Word does not change to accommodate man’s ungodly actions!

Uzzah’s Mistake

And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale-judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, which is called by the Name, even the name of Jehovah of hosts that sitteth *above* the cherubim. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart....And when they came to the threshing-floor of Nacon, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God (2 Sam. 6:2-3,6-7).

The passage of Scripture involving Uzzah is called “obscure” by many who call themselves students of the Bible. One thing these modern scholars are absolutely sure of is that a passage such as the one involving Uzzah “should never be used as a pillar support in developing a theology about God and salvation.”³ These liberals would no doubt rejoice if folks never knew of the specific commands God gave regarding the transportation of the ark (Deu. 31:9). Did God’s law regarding transportation of the ark change because of the influence of Philistine culture, or the sincerity of Uzzah’s action? The death of Uzzah is proof positive that God’s divine laws do not change to fit the actions or thinking of men.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

God’s Plan of Salvation Does Not Change

Salvation is “in” Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:10) and God has an unchanging plan that puts one “into” Christ. All who obey the gospel plan of salvation will believe (Heb. 11:6), repent of their sins (Luke 13:3),

make the confession that Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism is the final act that puts one “into” Christ (Gal. 3:27). The Lord still “adds” those that obey His will to His church (Acts 2:47).

God’s Plan for Christian Living Does Not Change

Tremendous pressure is being applied today to convince folks that the love of God is an “unconditional” love that supersedes any laws He has given. The warnings and instructions given in passages such as Galatians 5:19-21 are ignored because people desire to “feel good” about the lifestyle they have chosen to live. An example of this type of thinking is those who contend that God loves people whether they are “straight or gay.” But has God changed His mind regarding the sin of homosexuality, and, if so, when did such occur? The truth of the matter is that God has always condemned homosexuality. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of this sin (Gen. 19:1-13). It was an abomination and forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev. 19:22; 20:13), and the New Testament declares it to be “contrary to the sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). The apostle Paul said:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27).

Verse 32 forever declares that those who practice such sins are worthy of death! God has not changed His mind that Christian living is necessary if one is going to receive a home in Heaven.

God’s Word in Judgment Will Not Change

Jesus clearly states, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). This one passage of Scripture forever proves that the Word of God does not change. All mankind will be judged by the righteous Word of God! Paul called it the “word of life” (Phi. 2:16) and spoke of “the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16). The Psalmist said, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And thy law is truth...Thy testimonies are righteous for ever” (Psa. 119:142,144).

God's Word Does Not Change Based upon Society, Race, or Nationality

The Bible still teaches that “there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). All men are required to repent (Acts 17:30) and “obey him” to be saved. Paul reminds all who will hear that the message of God is the same for all people.

For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one *man* in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

In a world where societies and cultures constantly change, how refreshing it is to be assured of the fact that we have access to the unchanging Word of God. The promises and blessings of eternity are ours to claim because of God's unchanging truths.

CONCLUSION

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed long ago, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:8). The apostle Peter reminds all that Christians are “begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth” (1 Pet. 1:23). It thus continues to live and abide—nothing has changed! The Hebrews writer assured all that:

the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Because the Word of God is unchanging Jude could say:

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

The writer of Hebrews stresses the permanence of God's covenant by saying:

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, *even* our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

God never sought man's opinion in giving His covenant, and man does not have the liberty of changing it! May we be content to follow

the unchanging “light of the world” (John 8:12) instead of forever changing “blind guides” (Mat. 15:13-14).

ENDNOTES

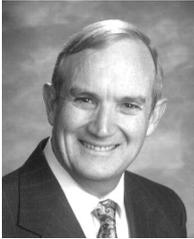
¹Steve Blow, “Light-Hearted Faxes,” *The Dallas Morning News*, June 1, 1994.

²Carolyn Jenkins, “Congregation Severs Ties With Church of Christ,” *The Tulsa World*, July 27, 1995.

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PREACHING THE OLD PATHS

Curtis A. Cates



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INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah, the “Paul” of the Old Testament and often called the “weeping prophet,” enables us to see the tears of Jehovah. He was called by God while still in his minority; “Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.” Though but perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age, Jeremiah was addressed by God thus, “Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go.” Now, notice the mission of a prophet—and a gospel preacher, “and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them [the wicked peoples]; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah” (Jer. 1:5-8).

Jeremiah was raised up as a prophet of God in a very difficult time—the stubborn, impenitent, rebellious, idolatrous nation of Judah. The prophet was shown at the beginning that he would suffer grievously

at the hands of God's own people and the prophet's own nation. In fact, his life would often be at stake. He would experience a very hard life, but God would stand by him. Having shown the prophet a tree, identified by Jeremiah as the "rod of an almond tree" ("wakeful," "watchful"), God observed, "Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11-12). The prophet would constitute one way of God watching His people.

Jeremiah's responsibility would not be easy, for he would have to do some destructive work before the constructive work could begin (in spite of the fact that the destructive work must have been as distasteful and hated by the wicked of that day as it is in our generation). Note Jehovah's charge to His prophet, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:9-10). Dear reader, do you see herein the same negative and positive that are found in Paul's charge to the evangelist Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2-4) and in Christ's letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3)? (It is surpassing strange, is it not, and ironic indeed that so-called "believers" in God abhor His "negative, right-wing, legalistic" warnings because they wish not to reform their ways, whereas the avowed atheists abhor His warnings in hope that they might could accuse Him of being arbitrary and unjust in His punishing the wicked.) The nation of Judah was going to fall—and, they would not be warned. Does that sound familiar?

How urgent was his message? It was so critically needed that Jeremiah was forbidden the bliss of a wife and family. "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters, in this place" (Jer. 16:2). He was, however, spared his wife and children being carried into a foreign land or being killed; for, he was told by God about other families:

They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth (Jer. 16:4).

But someone asks, How came God's people, the Hebrews, to be in such dire straits? "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). They had departed God for idols, for the "new," for more "exciting" places to drink; their

arrogant, self-willed, “scholarly,” self-sufficient attitudes had closed their ears to God’s pleadings.

Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart (Jer. 18:11-12).

Someone else inquires, Well, what about the preachers, the priests? Were they not crying out warning? Oh, no! “The priests said not, Where is Jehovah? and they that handle the law knew me not: the rulers also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit” (Jer. 2:8). What are preachers preaching today, dear reader? Are we reliving those events two and one-half millennia later? What awaits such folly? “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah” (Jer. 17:5). Has man departed from God today? “Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches” (Jer. 9:23).

Many in our generation have “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Rom. 1:25). Even some professed believers have abandoned the ways of God. Yes, man has attempted to run God out of His universe, substituting atheism, skepticism, agnosticism, existentialism, and pluralism. Worship of man (Humanism) has now captivated politics, media, and education. False science and human philosophy have been substituted for divine revelation; an encounter for the divine message of the Holy Spirit; human, speculative creeds of denominationalism for Holy Writ; the “social gospel” for “the faith”; entertainment, “holy wow,” and celebration for reverent worship; and “accepting Jesus” for the obedience of a penitent believer for the remission of sins. How appropriate is the plea of Jeremiah, “Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16)!

THE ANALOGY

The Lord often used illustrations or analogies to teach His will. Christ spoke many things in parables, in which He would move from the **known** (something with which His hearers were very familiar) to the

unknown (some lesson which He wished to teach). He would move from the **concrete** (something perceived by the five senses) to the **abstract** (some spiritual lesson). Here in Jeremiah, God used the illustration of travelers journeying toward a particular destination. As they would progress, they would come upon a place where the road would split into two or more possible ways or paths.

It would be very important to stop, examine, and contemplate the alternative ways, for the decision and the road taken might very well cause them to miss their destination. How helpful—sometimes absolutely necessary in such cases—to have certain signs and/or someone familiar with the ways to set the traveler on the right way leading to the sought destination! Unfortunate indeed would be the case at times that the traveler might choose to reject the critical advice, someone simply too self-willed, stubborn, and/or prejudiced to accept the right kind of advice—often with costly and drastic results.

STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN

The Israelites were at just such a crossroads spiritually. Once faithful to God, they had abandoned His will. However, even in face of the warning of impending destruction, they persisted in their idolatry, their covetousness, their false dealings, and their immorality (Jer. 6:13). The false prophets gave them false assurance and hope, crying out, “Peace, peace: when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). The people were brazen in their rebellion and wickedness, “nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush”; the **only** end for them was destruction (Jer. 6:15). AND YET, the loving Father pleaded for them to return to Him!

Our God is amazingly patient, as seen in our text. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Jonah spoke of His being “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness” (Jon. 4:2). Our God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), thus His pleading for Israel again to seek the old paths. However, His patience eventually runs out, as it did for Judah. “Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it” (Jer. 6:19). We must not forget both “the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22). Let us not forget the warning of Solomon:

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his *days*, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God (Ecc. 8:11-13).

“Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways, and see” (Jer. 6:16). “Stand still,” as Moses commanded the Israelites (Exo. 14:13)—consider! Do not blindly take just any path, but contemplate upon them as would a traveler, which you are—a traveler destined for one of only two eternal destinies, heaven or hell.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it (Mat. 7:13-14).

Take great care to find the right way, for your soul’s eternal welfare depends upon it. If you think you may have missed the way that leads to eternal bliss in heaven, “stand still” and look and inquire to find it! The very fact that one is commanded to “stop, look, and listen” shows that there is the **right** way, and there are **wrong** ways. Paths stretch out on every hand, in every direction. Only a person very foolish would rush onto a way, headlong and heedlessly. And yet, enter a way, everyone must.

The human being, every living and responsible human being is without choice relative to the fact that all shall experience life and death (unless, of course, the Lord returns during his or her lifetime) and shall spend eternity somewhere. On the other hand, each person does make a choice as to whether or not he will travel the way that leads to eternal life with God (Jos. 24:15; Acts 2:40; John 14:6; Mat. 7:21-23; et al.). Man is a free moral being, being created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26). It is **very** critical that a person know how to make wise choices. Each travels in the path of his choice.

As noted above, to choose wrong is not only serious but also fatal. One who finds himself or herself in the wrong way must **immediately** abandon that way of destruction and enter the right way. To do so is not easy or convenient, but it is critically important. And, the traveler in the right way must ever be cognizant of the very real, often very easy possibility of going back into the world (Rom. 8:12-13; Heb. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; et al.). Since “the way of man is not in himself: it is not

in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23), God wishes to lead you on the right path to heaven, dear friend. However, He coerces no one—nor can He! Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to heed His warning and accept His leadership. In spite of God’s abundant and ample provisions for the salvation of all men (Heb. 2:9; John 3:16), most people will be lost. Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews to whom they preached the Word, “Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS

Some have contended that “the old **paths**” (plural) indicates that there are many ways to get to heaven, and that one is permitted to choose which path he will travel, the only criteria being honesty and sincerity. But, notice that the old paths constitute “the good way” (singular). The tried and tested paths are the “way” of truth. There is but one good way to serve God.

Others have contended that “new” is superior to “old.” Those who are clamoring for “change” bemoan the existence of the “old.” They ridicule what they term the “traditions,” the “deep roots” of legalism, the old “theological foundations,” even what it means to be “a church.” The outcry is “a church for our age” and an “up-to-date faith.” We need a new “theology” for a new century. God’s “pattern” must be debunked, in order to come with a more powerful “paradigm.” There must be constant change for a constantly changing culture; there must be a “new way,” a “creative” way. The “old” way, “the old paths, where is the good way” is an irrelevancy; it is **ponderous**, and it is **dead**. This exactly parallels the attitude of the Hebrews of Jeremiah’s time, does it not?

Dear reader, does “old” necessarily mean out-of-date? Do “old” and “ancient” mean something is automatically bad? It did not in Jeremiah’s time, did it? Was the ten commandment law out-of-date, to be discarded, ineffectual? If so, why did Christ hundreds of years later command the rich young ruler to “keep the commandments” (Mat. 19:17)? The ten commandment law was not out-of-date until Christ fulfilled it and nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 3:19-29).

The writer remembers the soap which had this motto: “Duz does it all!” Soon, they marketed the **new, improved** Duz. Have you seen

improvements in such products as automobiles, washing machines, radios and computers, flying machines and spacecraft, medical equipment and treatments? Indeed! Now, **why** did these improvements and changes come about? Would you like to go back to the “good old days” of malaria and polio, of the wash pot and scrub board, of open touring cars and room-size computers, of out-door toilets and no running water? Did not these changes come about because of the need to upgrade, because of their imperfections, because they did not fully meet the requirements? Question: when do you change tires on your automobile; is it not when they dry rot or wear out? Most do not change them just because of their age or for change sake. But, how **different** is the Word of God!!!

The Word of God shall **never** wear out or get out-of-date! It shall **never** become inadequate! It shall **never** need changing! Why not? It is because the Word of God is just as powerful to save as it ever was (Rom. 1:16); just as living, active, sharp, piercing, and discerning as in the first century (Heb. 4:12); just as life-giving and nurturing as when Christ withstood the devil (Mat. 4:4); just as powerful to call man to Christ as when written (2 The. 2:14); just as eternal and indestructible as when revealed (Mat. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:24-25); just as soul-saving as during apostolic times (Jam. 1:2); just as perfect and able to make man perfect as it was two millennia ago (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It persists as the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) and sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Tinker with it, abandon it, substitute for it, add to it, take from it, ridicule it at the cost of your eternal soul; that is the importance of the “old paths,” dear reader.

What about air, bread, and water? They have been around six thousand years; old—yet perpetually young; ancient—yet persistently necessary. Why? Is it not because the human body has not changed; its needs are the same as when Adam was first created flesh and bone, are they not? Do you want, or will you tolerate someone changing the makeup of the air you breathe, corrupting the bread you eat, polluting the water you drink? Not for a moment! These elements were and are absolutely necessary for our survival, and change is out of the question.

The Holy Bible is perfect for the spirit of man—which does not change. “The law of Jehovah is **perfect**, restoring the soul” (Psa. 19:7). “But he that looketh into the **perfect** law, the *law* of liberty, and *so* continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh,

this man shall be blessed in his doing” (Jam. 1:25). If the Bible needs to be changed, why did its omniscient Author forbid changing His Word? “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you” (Deu. 4:2). “Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Pro. 30:5-6).

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

If the Bible can be changed, why shall we be judged by the Bible? Was the Lord unjust and inaccurate when He emphatically stated, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings [words, KJV], hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48)?

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

Beware of the change agents, dear friend, for you will not be judged by the whims of men or by the culture of the day! Do not let them “doctor” on the infallible, divinely-revealed, sacred Revelation! Protect it with your very life (Rev. 2:10).

If the Bible can be changed, why does God demand that **it** be preached, and **it alone**? “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11, KJV). He who preaches another gospel—a perverted one—is accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY

A thing or a way is not necessarily good just because it is old; antiquity does not within itself certify something as good. To inquire for the old paths is to seek out the **good**, the **upright** way. “And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but is shall be for *the redeemed*: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err *therein*” (Isa. 35:8). The good way is the high road of righteousness and purity, and the

worldly shall not accidentally, haphazardly stumble onto it. It is the everlasting way, entered deliberately and purposefully; and, it leads to salvation. Those in rebellion to God do not walk His approved, appointed way. Israel had departed the way of truth; they were called upon to restore their original walk, the **righteous** ways of the ancients. To walk uprightly is ever fresh and refreshing—never out-of-date! Revealed truth is old—yet perpetually young!

The good way is comprised of the inspired traditions. “So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours” (2 The. 2:15). It is the “apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42; Mat. 19:28; John 16:13; Mat. 16:18-19; 18:18; et al.). There are countless religions and practices which are humanly devised and have been anciently practiced; there is **only one** which was revealed by the apostles and which adheres to the written Word. All others shall be rejected (Mat. 15:9,13; 7:21-23). The acceptable “old paths, where is the good way” lies not in “theological” liberalism (atheism), or existentialism, or denominationalism, or Catholicism, et al.; it is able to be traveled only by those who return to “the ancient order of things”—first century Christianity. The old Jerusalem gospel must be sought out, believed, preached, and practiced (Col. 3:17). Like the Hebrews of Jeremiah’s day, many do not like the idea of returning to God’s Word—but we must. “Behold, the word of Jehovah is become unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it” (Jer. 6:10). God speaks today through His Son (Heb. 1:1-3), through His apostles, through the written Word. Sadly, most people are like the Athenians and the sojourners in Athens; being unsatisfied with the old, ancient, proven, tried and true, blessed way of Christ (John 14:6), moderns have “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Like Paul, we plead that “that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

DISCRIMINATE

The “good way” is marked out, it is understandable and recognizable to all who diligently, objectively, and honestly seek to find it (John 8:32; 17:17). As in Micah’s time, we must “Hear, ye peoples, all of you: hearken, O earth, and all that therein is” (Mic. 1:2). God has always demanded mankind to reason, to discriminate. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah” (Isa. 1:18). In other words, one can

know which way is good and acceptable; it is able to be discovered. However, sincere and diligent and intelligent comparison of the various ways is a **must**. “Now these [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Did not Paul command us to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21)?

The command is this: Examine the various religions and systems of morality and ethics in light of the sacred Revelation. Examine them without prejudice and with a critical eye; lay them beside the religion of the New Testament—genuine, true Christianity. Compare them with the church of the New Testament. Compare their time of beginning, their places of origin, their conditions of membership, their organization, their creeds, their acts of worship, their missions, their standards of morality and ethics with the characteristics of the one church you can read about in the New Testament. Realize that all false religions shall be rooted up come judgment day (Mat. 15:13). Realize that the sole authority in religion is the “apostles’ doctrine,” “the faith,” “the gospel of Christ,” the law of Christ (Acts 2:42; Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:21). Woe to those who teach and practice a perverted “gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Mat. 7:21-23; 4:4; et al.)! The very fact that there is the **good** way shows that there are **bad** ways, that lead to destruction. Unfortunately, men are continually devising **new** ways, as was the case in Jeremiah’s day.

So, **you** are at the crossroads, and the path diverges. You shall take one of the ways to your eternal destiny. Which shall it be, friend? Only one leads to the everlasting home in heaven with God. And, believe me, God does “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal. 3:18). One will not be able to hide behind the smokescreen that the way is vague and indiscernible and unknowable!

WALK THEREIN

Simply to “know” about, to recognize the old paths, the good way, is not enough. Very sad but true is the fact that Christ shall at the last day come “rendering vengeance to them that know not God, **and** to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 The. 1:6-9). There must be the practiced result of the honest seeking of the good way. Many can answer all the questions relative to the identity of the righteous road to

heaven; however, they are unwilling to pay the price to walk in that way—separation from the world and from its wicked, soul-damning, destructive, God-rejecting, Satan-obeying schemes and works. To walk in the good way is not just a theoretical question; it **demand**s a reformation of life. For example, just to consent that Christ is the only begotten Son of God gets one to the demon stage (Jam. 2:19), but where is the repentance, the confession of Christ's deity, the contacting of the blood of Christ in baptism for remission of sins (Luke 13:3,5; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; John 19:34; Col. 2:11-13; et al.), the crucifixion of the works of the flesh and the continual walk in the works of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-24; Rev. 2:10)? What good is knowledge, when it does not set you upright, bring about forgiveness of sins, put you on the strait and narrow way, and lead you to the eternal abode of your immortal soul? What good was the rich man's knowledge of God and His will—when he **refused** to practice what he knew (Luke 16:19-31)? Resolve to act—TODAY! Enter the good way; love it, practice it, proceed in it, and persevere in it! NEVER DEPART FROM IT (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Beautiful it is to see people return to the “old paths” of New Testament Christianity. That, dear reader, is the plea of faithful churches of Christ. Congregations of the church the Lord established nearly two thousand years ago plead for a return to the law of Christ, as opposed to the doctrines and commandments of men (Mat. 15:9; Col. 2:8). What could be wrong with the plea to “Speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent”? What is the problem with setting our determination to “Do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names”? Is it not the case that such was the very nature of Jeremiah's command to Israel to “Seek the old paths”? Christ asked, and appropriately so, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Question: If the pure, unadulterated seed of the kingdom, the Word of God (Luke 8:11), is sown today, what will it produce? Does one have to remind you that seed in the animal and plant kingdoms bring forth “after their kind” (Gen. 1)? Indeed not! Since Christ was using the analogy of the seed in the plant kingdom to illustrate the nature of the seed in the spiritual kingdom, would it make sense to have the spiritual Seed (the holy Scriptures) to bring forth other than “after its kind”? Another question: Because it is true that there are hundreds of religious bodies, denomina-

tions, churches today, all teaching contradictory doctrines and carrying on different practices from one another, did the planted Word of God produce all these different, contradictory products? You know, dear reader, that it takes a denomination's teaching to produce that denomination. True, or false? Now, are all those hundreds of denominations' teachings in the New Testament? If so, our God is not a God of order but of confusion (cf., 1 Cor. 14:33). If so, our God is a God of contradiction, for He would have violated His own law that seed produce only after their own kind. NEVER in the history of the world has the gospel of Christ, the Truth, the Word produced even one denomination. In every place where the pure Word is believed, planted, and practiced, it produces the Lord's church, the one about which you can read in the New Testament. Let us return beyond the maze of contradictory doctrines, practices, and churches of men to the one body (Eph. 4:4), the first century church. That is to walk in the **old paths**.

YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Shall the Lord reward the hard work of seeking, asking, discerning, sacrificing and determining to walk in the old paths? My, Yes! We shall be blessed with spiritual peace—rest. Christ's yoke is easy and His burdens light, for God remembers sin against us no more (Mat. 11:28-30; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:12). What would forgiveness of sins mean to you—never having to face those sins again? And, this inward peace and joy is but a foretaste of eternal rest in heaven; our soul's deepest longings are fulfilled! In what other way is this possible, than the **good way**? Think about that hope that is anchored beyond the veil at the mercy seat of God's throne.

And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:11-12; cf., Col. 1:27; 3:4).

At the end of the way, the cost, pains, and sacrifices will seem as nothing. Yes, to see men, women, boys, and girls (who have reached accountable age) walking in New Testament Christianity, teaching others the old Jerusalem gospel, is precious indeed (Mat. 5:13-16).

WE WILL NOT WALK THEREIN

Just think; the nation of Judah was marching headlong into Babylonian Captivity. Countless ones of them would be killed by sword and by famine. The warning was clear, the offer of mercy if they would

return to the ways of God explicit. God's warnings of destruction are always accompanied by offers of mercy if the people will repent and return to Him in loving obedience (See Jonah 4:2). Can you imagine—the Hebrews **refused** God's plea! But, was that an isolated case? No, that seems to be the history of mankind—and even of God's own people. "But they said, we will not walk therein."

The world's only hope is the preaching and the walking in the old paths. However, the good way of Christ and His Word is often spurned and even ridiculed. The atheistic, Humanistic, new age, situation ethics, agnostic, heretical theories of the day have so infiltrated and permeated even so-called "theology" today that God and His way are ridiculed. Adherents thereto are termed "legalists," "right-wingers," "religious terrorists," "cultists," "Bible-bangers," etc., and those who defend the old Jerusalem gospel and "seek the old paths" are accused of having the "Old Paths Mentality." That accusation comes in a snide, condescending, hateful way from a "superior mind," and often from a "Christian **Scholars** Conference." It got so bad for Jeremiah that the enemies of God said, "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah...Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words" (Jer. 18:18). Have you ever seen that attitude in supposedly religious folks?

Friend, wrong has always been wrong, and right, right. There **never** comes a time when sin is not sin, even though times do change, and have changed. God's law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, for example, does not change with culture. What was Jeremiah's attitude toward sin? He preached against it. Was sin still sin in Christ's day? Did He preach against it? What about in Paul's day? What did Paul do? Now, what about today? Is sin still sin? Must we preach against it? What is our attitude toward the preacher, dear friend, when he preaches against sin? Does one criticize the preacher? If so SHAME on HIM! Does he ridicule him for preaching **too much Bible**, too much of what **God** says about sin? Question: Have we any care for the old paths—or, are we just "playing church"? The Israelites were "playing" at religion, and they were destroyed.

The rebellious do not travel the good way; it is they who ridicule the old paths. Sin hardens people against God and His way (compare Pharaoh's rebellion against God's command). The nation of Judah was "backsliding children," and no amount of warning changed their plunge

into destruction (Jer. 3:14). What did the Lord observe about the Jews of His day? “Ye would not” (Mat. 23:37). Sadly, when God’s people **refused** to walk in His way the prophets preached what the people **wanted** to hear. Is that what is happening today? The spirit of rejection of the old paths is alive and well today, even in the Lord’s church. The preachers (as the prophets of Jeremiah’s time) have often imbibed this spirit of rejection (cf., 2 Tim. 4:2-4); the people, “having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.” Very regretfully, countless preachers hold up their dampened finger, test the wind, and go with the winds of change and perversion. They are unlike the preacher Micaiah, who refused to “sell out” at any cost (1 Kin. 22). Even in the face of death, his attitude was, “As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak” (Jer. 22:14). Well, what a contrast—many will “speak smooth things” and scratch “itching ears” for a mess of pottage (a big salary), a little popularity, to be able to maintain friendship with the rebellious and compromising crowd, and to be able to stay with certain congregations. How unlike the apostle Paul, who wrote, “but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts” (1 The. 2:4). “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Question, brother preacher: Whom are you trying to please?

Now, no one who faithfully contends for the faith believes in being mean, vicious, and unloving. There is no room for a vindictive, mean, bitter spirit in servants of Christ, but rather “speaking truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). An unloving spirit will do much more harm than good and is far from the spirit of Christ. Rudeness has no place in a person’s life, much less in the pulpit. However, “contending for the faith once delivered” (Jude 3) and being “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phi. 1:16) does not constitute nor is it tantamount to being unloving, mean, and legalistic, as some automatically charge; such a charge to judge unrighteously and to violate Matthew 7:1-5 and John 7:24. Some of the most irenic spirits (hyper—and super-loving by their own admission) can be some of the most mean and vicious people around. Cross one of these “loving” souls, and learn it first-hand.

When some “turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables,” to which fables might people turn in our day? Such would certainly include error on: (1) the inspiration of the Scriptures, (2) whether one can know the truth (agnosticism), (3) whether we can understand the Bible alike, (4) whether the church can be restored, (5) whether worship must be in God’s prescribed, authorized way, (6) whether God authorized mechanical instrumental music in Christian worship, (7) whether Christians may fellowship the denominations, (8) grace, law, faith, works, love, versus grace alone, (9) baptism for the remission of sins, or not necessary for salvation, (10) whether women can have dominion over the men in the church, (11) whether we can “absolve” each other of sins, (12) whether Christ is now in heaven reigning, or shall reign on earth, (13) changing the mission of the Lord’s church into the “social gospel,” entertainment, and celebration, (14) raising money for the church in unauthorized ways, (15) preachers being called “reverend,” “pastor,” etc., (16) having “encounters” and being “enabled,” led directly by the Holy Spirit separate from the Word, and (17) having ecumenical meetings with the denominations. Other departures from the Word could be added.

Great and good gospel preachers of the past are often ridiculed, with their writings, and students in the graduate schools among us are often chided and their papers rejected when they quote from great men of the past and present in the Lord’s church. It is the sectarians and modernists who are the “scholars.” And, now there is the “Christian **Scholars** Conference,” whose writings and speeches invariably ape the inane, sectarian, modernistic palaver of the “theologians.” May the Lord deliver us from such “scholarship.” With any number of people in the church of Christ content blindly to admire and follow such blind guides, no wonder so many members of the body of Christ are saying, “We will not walk therein.”

CONCLUSION

The Lord had set watchmen (such as Jeremiah) over His people. Notice the next verse after our text, Jeremiah 6:17, “And I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet; but they said, We will not hearken.” Thus, evil would come upon them (Jer. 6:19).

It is a very serious thing not to listen to God, and heed the warnings of faithful gospel preachers, and to reject the message. Destruction came

to Judah “because they have not harkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.”

THE LAST MILE OF THE WAY

Johnson Oatman, Jr.

If I walk in the pathway of duty,
 If I work till the close of the day,
 I shall see the great King in His beauty
 When I've gone the last mile of the way.
 If for Christ I proclaim the glad story,
 If I seek for His sheep gone astray,
 I am sure He will show me His glory
 When I've gone the last mile of the way.
 Here the dearest of ties we must sever,
 Tears of sorrow are seen ev'ry day;
 But no sickness, no sighing forever
 When I've gone the last mile of the way.
 And if here I have earnestly striven
 And have tried all His will to obey,
 'Twill enhance all the rapture of heaven
 When I've gone the last mile of the way.
 When I've gone the last mile of the way,
 I will rest at the close of the day,
 And I know there are joys that await me
 When I've gone the last mile of the way.

PREACHING ON THE GRACE OF GOD

Guss Eoff



Guss Eoff, Jr. was born March 7, 1923, in Fort Worth, Texas. In February of 1942, he married Lia Laline Norris. They have one son, Larry, also a gospel preacher. Guss began preaching in 1942.

Guss attended Pepperdine College in Los Angeles and Southwest State Teachers College in San Marcos, Texas. He has preached for local congregations in California, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina and Missouri. He also has preached in over twenty countries and twenty-four states, serving as a missionary to Hong Kong for two years. He recently spoke at the 10th Annual Asian Lectureship.

He conducted the first television program for churches of Christ in Northern California and has conducted weekly programs in California and Texas. He also conducted daily radio programs as well as weekly programs in California, Oregon, Texas and Louisiana.

In February, 1993, Guss and his wife of fifty-two years, Laline, moved to Mathis, Texas to work with the church there. He speaks on about six lectureships each year.

INTRODUCTION

There is no task greater, none more pleasurable, than preaching the “Grace of God.” How wonderful! How gratifying! The greatest delight in this world is preaching God’s grace! One cannot explain this happiness! It is a joy beyond explanation. Thank God for this great privilege!

WHAT IS GRACE?

What does GRACE mean? The word “grace” comes from the Greek word *charis* (χάρις). I like Vine’s explanation of this word:

Charis has various uses: (a) objective that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favorable regard; (b) subjective (1) on the part of the bestower, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving-kindness, goodwill generally, e.g., Acts 7:10; especially with reference to the Divine favour or grace, e.g., Acts 14:26; in this respect there is stress on its freeness and universality, its spontaneous character, as in the case of God’s redemptive mercy, and the pleasure or joy He designs for the recipient; thus it is set in contrast with debt, Ro-

mans 4:4,16, with works, 11:6, and with law, John 1:17; see also, e.g., Romans 6:14,15; Galatians 5:4.¹

We speak of GRACE as unmerited, or undeserved favor. Man separated himself from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2). There was nothing that man could do to bring himself back in that relationship with God. There was no law that man could devise and obey that would bring him back to God. It was God's grace, or undeserved favor, that made it possible for man to be united with God. The *Dictionary of the Bible* by James Hastings says of grace:

There is little in earlier phraseology to experience supremacy in the New Testament of this specific term: a new experience demanded a new name. Grace designates the principle in God of man's salvation through Jesus Christ. It is God's unmerited, unconstrained love towards sinners, revealed and operative in Christ.²

We notice the use of this *charis* in Luke 2:52, where it is translated "favor." "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). In this word "grace" there is always the idea of "favor," even of unmerited favor. In this lesson I will consider "grace" as it refers to the love of God as that love relates to man's salvation through Jesus Christ.

THE GRACE OF GOD

God, in this case, is the source of grace. It is God's love for man that drove Him to give an "unmerited favor." That unmerited, undeserved favor was salvation. Salvation is only in Christ! Therefore, Christ is God's grace, God's unmerited favor.

Why was this grace needed? Man is separated from God by sin.

Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

The apostle Paul makes clear man's plight. "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Again Paul states, "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The reward, or pay, for sin is death. "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The apostle makes it very plain. All accountable men sin! The pay, or reward, for sin is death. This death is separation from God. When man sins he is separated from God. Man must

be reconciled, brought back to God. The “grace of God” gave Jesus Christ to die for the sins of mankind. By the death of Jesus, man may be reconciled. “And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens” (Col. 1:20). Paul continues to show that through the death of Jesus, man is reconciled to God. “Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and un-reproveable before him” (Col. 1:22).

Why was the “grace of God” needed? The answer is simple—without God’s grace man was forever separated from God. Thank God for His grace! Thank God for the gift of His Son.

WE SEE GOD’S GRACE MANIFEST

“For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Tit. 2:11). Jesus was the grace of God! He appeared bringing salvation.

But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:4-7).

When the kindness of God appeared, when His love toward man appeared, it was in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ! According to His mercy He saved us. It was not by works of righteousness which we do that we are saved, but by the washing of regeneration. It is by being born again, born of the water and the Spirit. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!” (John 3:5). It is by this washing of regeneration that people are made clean from past sins and born into the family of God, the church. Paul stated,

that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious *church*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26-27).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the Jews that crucified Jesus to “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

We see the “grace of God” manifest in Jesus! John said, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Grace, the unmerited favor of God, and truth came through Jesus. This grace and truth will make man free from sin. Jesus promised, “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). It is God’s grace which provides His Word, which is the Truth that makes men free. “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

The apostle Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus that he would commend them to God, and the Word of His grace. “And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Thank God for His grace! Thank God for the Word of His grace!

GOD’S GRACE PROVIDES SALVATION

The unmerited favor of God provides salvation in Christ Jesus. In Christ lost man can be redeemed. Redeemed means, “in strictness deliverance by payment or a price or ransom, hence, metaphorically, at any great cost or sacrifice.”³ Redeemed means to buy back. Jesus paid the ransom for deliverance from sin. It means to regain possession of by payment of a stipulated price; to repurchase. The Old Testament book of Leviticus shows the meaning of redeemed. “And if a man sell a dwelling-house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; for a full year shall he have the right of redemption” (Lev. 25:29). The word redeem means to rescue, reclaim, to buy off, take up, or remove the obligation by payment or stipulated consideration. This **redeem** means to make amends, to offset, to atone for, to compensate. In the religious teachings of the Bible, redeem means to rescue and deliver from the bondage of sin and the penalties of God’s violated law. Paul tells us, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). Here we see that God’s grace paid the price of redemption.

A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED

But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no

distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:21-24).

This righteousness that was manifested was Jesus Christ. We can be sure because Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.”

Thank God! Man is redeemed through Jesus Christ! Jesus shed His innocent blood to redeem man that he might be brought back to God. “In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). How wonderful! Redemption is through the blood of Christ. Man can have his trespasses forgiven according to the richness of God’s grace.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, he emphasized that redemption is the forgiveness of sins in Christ. “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins” (Col. 1:13-14).

The Hebrews writer explains how transgressions were forgiven.

And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

The grace of God sent Jesus, the Son of God, to be the mediator of a new covenant. When Jesus died, redemption from the trespasses of the first covenant was paid to those who have been called. They also may have eternal life, if they continue faithful. Only those in Christ have these blessings. Notice what Paul said to the Corinthian Church: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and the righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:30-31). It is in Christ Jesus that we have redemption.

GOD’S GRACE IS KNOWN BY HIS WORD

When Paul, the apostle, called the Elders of the Church at Ephesus to meet him in Miletus, he gave them strict instructions as to their duties to their flock. He concluded by saying, “And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are sancti-

fied” (Acts 20:32). By the grace of God, He gave us His Word. We have God’s instruction for us revealed in His Word. That Word is Truth (John 8:32). God’s Word reveals His grace. “Long time therefore they tarried *there* speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3). The Word was given by God’s grace and it makes known the grace of God. How wonderful!

The Word of God directs man so he knows what to do to be reconciled to God. The Word of God is called the Word of reconciliation. Hear the apostle Paul as he writes in Second Corinthians 5:19: “to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” This indeed is God’s Word, not the word of men. Listen to Paul again:

And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

This message, even the Word of God, reveals God’s grace. Thank God for His wonderful grace and the privilege we have of preaching it.

ERROR IS TAUGHT CONCERNING GRACE

God’s grace is so wonderful! How sad it is that man has taught error concerning grace! Many are they that teach that man is saved only by the grace of God. Man has nothing to do in the saving of his soul. Jesus made the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, thus God’s grace unconditionally covers all men. This is the doctrine of the universalist. Then there are those who teach that man is saved by grace, through faith alone.

The *Standard Manual For Baptist Churches* by Hiscox says, “We believe the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace.”⁴ Then reference is made to Ephesians 2:5, “even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved).” Then they always refer to Ephesians 2:8-9, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory.” It must be noted that the words of Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “by grace have ye been saved through faith.” This verse does

not say “through faith only” as taught in the *Standard Manual For Baptist Churches*. Let me here quote:

We believe the Scriptures teach that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in Christ; by means of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us by God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.⁵

Notice that this man-made doctrine says that justification includes pardon of sin and the gift of eternal life. That both are bestowed “solely through faith in Christ.” This means that forgiveness of sins and eternal life are received by faith only. Too, it must be noted that special effort is made to say that these marvelous gifts are bestowed “not in consideration of any works of **righteousness which we have done.**”

This doctrine is taught in an effort to do away with Bible teaching of baptism for remission of sins. As we have seen in the *Baptist Manual* mentioned above, they teach, “we believe the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace.” They do not believe baptism is essential to salvation.

Let’s look honestly at Ephesians 2:8-9. Certainly this passage teaches that we are saved by grace through faith. We are not saved of ourselves as it is a gift of God. It was the grace of God that gave the gift! The gift was the atonement in the blood of Christ. It was not of works of man that he should glory. Nothing that man could do could bring about his salvation. It was God’s grace that provided the gift! It is by faith we are redeemed, so man must believe in the grace. He must have faith to be saved, but faith only does not save. James proves the doctrine of “faith only” is a false doctrine. Read carefully his words:

Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from *thy* works, and I by my works will show thee *my* faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto

him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith (Jam. 2:18-24).

There we have it! It was Abraham's works that proved his faith. It was not just Abraham's faith that justified him, but his works, that proved his faith. Demons believe in God, but that faith will not save them!

James says, "that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (Jam. 2:24). How strange are the doctrines of men! To deny that we are saved by works is to deny God's Word. Now there are some works that cannot save! The works of man cannot save as the apostle Paul affirmed in Ephesians 2:8-9. But the works of God are essential to salvation. In fact "faith" itself is a work of God. "They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). To say we are not saved by works is to say we cannot be saved by faith, because faith is a work of God. Likewise repentance is a work, it is something we must do. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (Luke 13:3). Now notice that repentance and baptism are both works of God, and both are demanded in order to have remission of sins. "And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). It must be noticed, Peter did not tell these Jews, who had crucified Christ, to have faith. If faith is the only condition of salvation, why did not Peter tell them to have faith, and they would have remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit?⁶

FAITH IS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing *unto him*; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Man must have faith in God! Faith comes from the Word of God. "Faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17; KJV). Faith is the result of teaching, and acts of obedience are the results of faith in God—thus faith is made perfect, or complete, by obedience. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in

Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

How strange it is that men will devise false doctrines, then they will deny plain Bible teaching to try to uphold their doctrines. In order to deny what the Bible teaches about baptism, men have tried to show baptism is a work of men, and we are not saved by works of men. Baptism is not a work of man, but a work of God. Notice that in Ephesians 2:10 Paul tells us, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Christians are to walk in good works. Then again Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Paul said faith works; and this, of course, agrees with what James says in chapter two. The Bible is very plain in its teaching. The grace of God does not mean that there is no work to be done. The Bible says we are saved by works (Jam. 2:24-25), and that we are not saved by works (Eph. 2:9). Obviously, therefore, there are two kinds of works. There are works which are included, and there are works excluded. The works which are excluded are works of merit, works of human devising, those Paul refers to in Romans 10:3. "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." Likewise, we are no longer under the Old Law. The works which are included are works of obedience. Notice, "through whom [Jesus] we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake" (Rom. 1:5). "Obedience of faith" is the very same as: "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (Jam. 2:24). If all works related to salvation are excluded, then faith itself would be excluded, for faith is a work which men must do as stated in John 6:28-29.

The grace of God does not mean that one can be saved without obedience. The writer of Hebrews says, "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey. Notice again that Paul declares that when the Lord comes again he will render vengeance.

And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, *even* eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 The. 1:7-9).

Whether we like it or not the Bible still teaches; “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

The Ephesian Christians were saved by grace as mentioned in Ephesians 2:8. Now, let’s see what they did to be saved. The first thing they did was to hear the word of truth. “In whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13a). Then they believed what they heard, “In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13b). They received the forgiveness of sins. “In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). They received the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13b). The forgiveness and reception of the Holy Spirit proves the fact that they were baptized. Remember Acts 2:38, “And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The Roman Christians were saved by grace, yet, the apostle Paul said unto them:

But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

We notice that they obeyed from the heart; they did something besides having faith.

WHAT A BLESSING TO PREACH GOD’S GRACE

Thank God for His wonderful grace! That grace sent Jesus to be born of the Virgin Mary. He was protected from Herod when God directed Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. After Herod died Jesus was brought to Nazareth, where He lived with His parents until He was thirty years of age. When Jesus was baptized of John in the River Jordan, God made known that Jesus was His Son. Then Christ

began His ministry which only lasted about three years. He chose His apostles. He gave the greatest teachings ever heard. He performed the greatest miracles that eyes have ever beheld. The Son of God was betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces of silver. He was taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemane. He was taken to Caiaphas, the high priest. Jesus was beaten, abused, lied about, falsely accused, and condemned. He was brought to Pilate, the Governor. He found nothing wrong with the Lord, but had Him beaten. The soldiers stripped Him and beat Him. Then they placed Kingly garments upon Him. They pressed a crown of thorns upon His head. They bowed before Him and said, "Hail Master King of the Jews." Then they rose before Him and spit in His face. He was brought before the mob of Jews that demanded He be crucified. Jesus carried His own cross, and with the help of Simon carried it to "the Skull," Golgotha. Jesus was thrown down upon the cross and nailed to it. The cross was raised and dropped into its socket. There our Master hung from nine o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon. Then He died on the middle cross between two thieves. Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph, but God raised Him from the dead. In His death, Jesus shed His blood. That blood, by the grace of God, will make us free from sin. When a person believes that Jesus is the Son of God; changes his life in repentance; confesses his faith that Jesus is the Son of God; and, as the Bible teaches, is baptized for remission of sins; he is then born again into the family of God! By God's grace, he is redeemed! Thank God for His wonderful grace!

ENDNOTES

¹W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, n.d.), p. 277.

²James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), p. 313.

³*Ibid.*, p. 786.

⁴Edward T. Hiscox, *Standard Manual For Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1951), p. 61.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 786.

⁶Editor's Note: These Jews already believed. They had always believed in God, but they did not believe in Jesus as God's Son. Peter, and the other apostles, instilled a belief in Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 2:36). We see the evidence of their belief when they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Thus, there was no need to tell these Jews to have faith.

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PREACHING ON THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ronnie Hayes



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INTRODUCTION

As more and more attacks occur on the church each year, the importance of this subject is realized. As a young gospel preacher, I heard a former student of brother N. B. Hardeman repeat this statement from him: “Three subjects which I have preached have caused more to be converted: (1) The study of acappella music, (2) Apostasy, and (3) The identity of the church.”¹ Without a doubt, many great lessons have been preached on these vital subjects throughout the annals of time, but now many of our “modern day saviors” would and have given up the truths on these subjects. Instead of the church many want a “social club,” where you pay dues and show up when you want to. Instead of stressing the identifying marks of the church many want to ridicule this ideal. Brother Curtis A. Cates says of Rubel Shelly: “In West Memphis, Arkansas, Shelly ridiculed the sermons preached by the great men of the ages on ‘Marks of the True Church,’ or as I have preached many times on chart, ‘How to Identify the Church of Jesus Christ.’”² Regardless of what Shelly or others might think of the ideal of identifying marks of the church. Paul said, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Let’s look at the identifying marks of the church which can be seen in the Book of

Ephesians. In Chapter one, Paul deals with the **Conditional Blessings** found only in the church. In Chapter two, Paul points out the **Conversion** which it takes for one to be a part of this church. In Chapter three, Paul speaks of the **Comprehensive Nature** of the church. In Chapter four, Paul deals with the **Common Bond** found only in the church. In Chapter five and six, Paul speaks to **Christians** as children, servants, masters, brothers and soldiers. Now let us examine each of these points to see what Paul said is involved in preaching the church.

CONDITIONAL BLESSINGS

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Paul states that all spiritual blessings are in Christ. To be in Christ is to be in the church.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews of Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). One can see that when he is baptized into Christ he is added to the church. “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). These blessings of which Paul speaks are exclusive to those who are in Christ. Let me point out some of the blessings which can be seen in chapter one of Ephesians:

- (1) Christ hath chosen us in Him, we are holy and without blame (v. 4).
- (2) We are Children by Jesus Christ (v. 5).
- (3) We are accepted in the beloved (v. 6).
- (4) Redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins and riches of His grace belongs to those in the church (v.7).
- (5) Christ abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence (v. 8).
- (6) The mystery of His will has been made known unto us (v. 9).
- (7) We are in Christ (v. 10).
- (8) The promise of our inheritance (v. 11).
- (9) We are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise (v. 13).
- (10) We have our eyes of understanding enlightened (v. 18).

- (11) We have the promise of His exceeding great power (v. 19).
- (12) The blessing of having Christ at the right hand of God (v. 20).
- (13) Christ has dominion as the Head of the church (v. 22).
- (14) The blessing of His body which is the church (v. 23).

There is no way that one can write of all of the blessings in the church. The book of Ephesians gives one many of these. It is interesting to note that only those who are members of the body of Christ will be those who receive the benefits of all of these spiritual blessings. Notice Ephesians 2:4-5 where it speaks of God's mercy, love and grace. Certainly God's mercy, love and grace are extended to all, but who will receive the benefits of these great blessings? Only those who are in Christ, which are those who are in the church. Surely no one would be so naive to think that those who refuse God's mercy, love and grace, will receive them anyway! Therefore, one can see that these blessings are conditional. Not everyone will enjoy them.

CONVERSION

“And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The church consists of those who have been made alive! Christ said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly” (John 10:10). It is through the blood of Jesus Christ that each and every one of us might have the opportunity to be reconciled with God. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). It is through this conversion that one becomes a part of the church. “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

As one looks at chapter two of Ephesians, it can be seen what is involved in being quickened. Vines defines quickened as, “to make alive.”³ One can see that through God's mercy, love and grace, plus man's faith, man will be saved. Now, before someone goes wild and accuses me of teaching Calvinism let me explain God's part in salvation and man's part in salvation. It is because of God's love, mercy and grace that man has a plan of salvation. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worlds lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Because of God’s love, mercy and grace, He has made available a plan of salvation. Without God’s mercy, man would be hopeless. “O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). But, because of God’s love, mercy and grace, man is hopeful. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The truth is, without God’s love, mercy and grace, man would be lost!! God wants you to be saved, but after He has made the way available, it is then up to man to decide whether or not he will accept God’s terms. This takes in consideration Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Man’s part is through faith. I did not say **FAITH ONLY!!!** Man is saved through the system of faith which God has provided. The Bible is very clear that this is not a mere acclamation. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heave” (Mat. 7:21). “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). All that one does for salvation should be because of the system of faith which God has given unto man. One might ask, how can I learn of that system of faith? Paul answered that question in Romans 10:17. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” It is from God’s Word that one can learn all one needs to know about the system of faith provided by God. In this system of faith, one has to have his own **faith**. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*.” Mark 16:16 tells us that “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” no one will be saved without faith, nor will one be saved by faith only! So in this system of faith one must have his own faith, his own trust in God, but is this all there is to conversion? Of course not! Christ tells us that one must **repent** of his sins to be saved! “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Peter says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Does faith and repentance constitute all of the system of faith? No!! Christ also tells us that one must **confess** Him before men to be saved. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before

my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 10:32). One can see an example of this in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:37, where the Eunuch said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” At this point many in the religious world want to stop. Surely this is enough for the system of faith, but one who honestly investigates the Scriptures can see that one more action must be done for conversion and that is **baptism**. Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Why would anyone want to ignore the Scriptures in regards to baptism? When one is made alive he is now in Christ. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Notice the terms which are used to show man’s condition before being quickened. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul said they “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” and they were “children of disobedience.” Verse 3 says they were, “by nature the children of wrath.” Down in verse 12, they were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” These are some sad terms, without Christ, no hope and without God. One who is not in Christ is not in the church and in sad shape. Now notice the different terms used for those in Christ or in the church. Ephesians 2:14-16:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

As a result of being quickened, one in the church can now have peace, the middle wall of partition broken down, the enmity abolished and reconciliation. Through conversion one becomes a part of the glorious body of Christ.

COMPREHENSIVE NATURE

In the third chapter, Paul deals with the comprehensive nature of the church. By the comprehensive nature of the church, we are speaking of the church as being universal. The church is for all. In verses 1-5, Paul shows the church was one time **Veiled**, hidden or a mystery. The Jews loved to boast of the fact that they were God’s chosen people, but they

lost sight of the purpose of the Law of Moses. Paul tells us why the law was added, “Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. 3:19). “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). The Jews had two misconceptions of the law which came to be two great mysteries. They did not understand the purpose of the law or the fact that the law was never intended to be permanent. With these two misconceptions, it is no wonder that the Jews had a difficult time accepting the church.

In verses 5-11, Paul **Unveils** the Universality of the church. God wants all saved. “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Paul shows in Ephesians 3:11, that it was God’s “eternal purpose.” As Christ was about to ascend back to heaven, He gives the apostles their marching plans for the Gospel. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Does this plan sound like God was excluding anyone from the Gospel? Certainly not! God does not exclude anyone today. The Gospel is for all. The question still remains, what will you do with what God has made available for you?

In verses 12-21, Paul **Views** the church and the assurances which come from our faith. In verses 12-15 there is boldness and access with confidence. In verse 16 there is strength to be gained. In verse 17 there is stability when one is rooted and grounded in love. In verses 18-21 there are the unfathomable depths of the church.

COMMON BONDS

Endeavouring to keep the unit of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:3-6).

In chapter four Paul speaks to us about the importance of unity. Paul uses the term, *spuidazo*, which is translated endeavor. Vines says endeavor means “to make haste, to be zealous, and hence, to be diligent.”⁴ Isn’t that interesting? We are to be zealous or diligent in keeping the unity of the Spirit! This unity is based on seven pillars of the church.

First, there is one body! The body refers to the church. “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Christ promised only one church.

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Mat. 16:16-18).

Paul as he spoke to the Ephesians only represented the church as one. “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ also warned of man-made institutions. “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:13-14). It is at this point that many ask a sincere question which is, “How can I know this one church?” The Scriptures answer this through Name, Organization and Worship! It can be easily remembered through the word “NOW.” If one is a part of a religious group which is not described by God’s inspired Word, then they must be a part of some man-made institution.

Secondly, Paul speaks of one Spirit. There is but one Comforter which is the Holy Spirit. “But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). The task of this Spirit can be seen in revelation and confirmation.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:3-4).

There is only one Spirit which accomplishes all required of him.

Thirdly, Paul talks of one hope. Death will be the great equalizer among the great and small. In death only one thing will matter and that is hope!! “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath both hope in his death” (Pro. 14:32). “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). “For the hope which is lard up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5).

In the fourth place, Paul speaks of one Lord. Peter speaks of Christ as the one Lord whom the Jews crucified. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:26). Paul firmly believed there was one Lord. “But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him” (1 Cor. 8:6). “Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

In the fifth place, Paul looks at the one faith. There can be only one faith or belief if the Bible is true.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

Paul warns of others which would try to pervert that faith which is the gospel.

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Some would like to make the one faith into their own personal belief and a mere acclamation that they believe in God. Christ points out that this could not be so. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

In the sixth place, Paul addresses the subject of one baptism. The baptism of Christ is now in effect, since Pentecost. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Other baptisms have been valid such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, John’s baptism, but now only one serves as valid. This was evidently the problem of those in Acts 19 who had been baptized unto John’s baptism after Christ’s baptism had come in effect. There is only one baptism for anyone today and that is the one authorized by Christ.

In the seventh place, Paul speaks of the one God and Father. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God.” The fact of one God was taught from the earliest of ages to Hebrew children. “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God *is* one LORD” (Deu. 6:4). “Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Sam. 7:22). “For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone” (Psa. 86:10). The Bible would be nothing more than folly if there were more than one God. The religious world as a whole tries its best to have smorgasbord religion, but without several god’s to offer several ideals it would be impossible. In a world of many faiths, worships and theologies, the Bible still affirms one God!

If one wants to destroy the church, then do away with these seven pillars. Isn’t this exactly what many are doing? I have a statement pinned up in my office that I took down from a student of N. B. Hardeman. He said that brother Hardeman stated in class that there were three subjects which he preached which caused more to be converted than any other subjects and they were: (1) Instrumental music, (2) Apostasy, and (3) The identity of the church. Now, we have once faithful preachers who say that we have embarrassed the Lord’s body for teaching these things. These so called “saviors” of the church are the very one’s who are trying to do away with the church. Beware, Brethren!!

CHRISTIANS

As Paul comes to the close of his epistle to the Ephesians, he turns his attention to the manner of life which should be evident to those who

are a part of this great church. Paul speaks to Christians as: Children, Servants, Masters, Brethren and Soldiers.

As we come to chapter five, one can see that Paul speaks to the church “as dear children” (Eph. 5:1). As children Paul speaks of their **walk**, he **warns** of dangers, he addresses the subject of **worship** and then he deals with our **will**. Paul points out to the church at Ephesus that they should walk: (1) in love and sacrificially, verse 2; (2) as children of light, verse 8; and (3) circumspectly, verse 15. Paul then turns his attention toward warning the saints of: (1) impurities, verses 3-5; (2) being deceived, verse 6; (3) being partakers of evil, verse 7; and (4) having no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, verse 11. As Paul addresses the subject of worship, he speaks of singing and prayer, verses 19-20. In the last verses of chapter five, Paul looks at our will. Our will should be submissive, verses 21-24 and loving, verses 25-31. What a wonderful fatherly concern Paul had for the brethren at Ephesus. It sounds like something my Daddy would have told me concerning my life. This is exactly what Christianity is—a life. It makes a vast difference how we live it and what we do with it. Those who are in the church have a responsibility to show forth Christ. You can’t be a Christian without Christ. As a matter of fact, take Christ out of Christian and you have “ian” which stands for “I ain’t nothing.” Paul understood that one can not speak of the church without speaking of the way its members are to present themselves.

As one comes to chapter six of this great book of Ephesians, Paul addresses many facets of the Christian life, as a child, a parent, a servant, as master, brethren and soldiers.

As Children in Ephesians 6:1-3, Paul shows that we are to be pleasing. Children naturally want to please. It is not until we as adults ruin them that they become self-centered brats. “Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Pro. 22:15). Parents will not do their children any favors by allowing them to do or say anything they want. In Romans 1:30, Paul lists the sin of “disobedient to parents.” Why in such a black list of sins is this seemingly unimportant sin mentioned? And according to many in our society today, “disobedient to parents” would even be questioned as a sin. The fact is unless children learn a basic respect for authority at home, it will be impossible to teach them to surrender to the authority of God!

Paul speaks to us as Parents. We are responsible for bringing up our children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). It appears that many parents want to be friends with, or buddies to their children and not parents. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6). God still places the responsibility of training on the Parents!

Paul now turns his attention to Servants, Ephesians 6:5-8. Servants are to be obedient to their master. This is one point which many find difficult. As Americans we have a mentality about servitude. It is really an attitude about being submissive. Children find it had to obey parents, teachers, policemen and ultimately God. This attitude is so prevalent that in our marriage vows women no longer what to say love, honor and obey. Many will vehemently object to the term “obey.” Unless one can come to grips with the ideal of obeying they will never submit to God. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (Jam. 4:11). We are all servants, whether we want to admit it or not. The only choice we have is whose servant we will be. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:4). The wise person will submit to God.

In Ephesians 6:10, Paul talks about Masters. The emphasis seems to be on “respect of persons.” Everyone is the “Master” of their mind. As a master, to harbor prejudice would be a miscarriage of my power. To allow someone’s social status, financial situation or color of their skin to dictate if one would approach the saving of their soul is horrible! How could one claim to be Christ-like and think in such a manner? God is not a respecter of persons. “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). How could one be a respecter of person and be a Christian?

Paul tells the brethren to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10). Paul gives an insight to our strength. It is in Christ. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:13). As a brother in Christ, one will want to draw from the strength and power which can be found in Christ. Brethren, above all, should be aware of this fact. Yet, let some problem arise at a local congregation and many, who should never be willing to give up the source of our strength, will cut themselves off from the body of Christ. Christ said in

Matthew 28:20 that He would be with us always. Now why would a Christian give up on that strength?

In Ephesians 6:11-24, Paul deals with the subject of us as soldiers. The first and foremost obligation of a soldier is to fight. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air" (1 Cor. 9:26). "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). It is unfortunate that many soldiers of the cross are too squeamish to fight! Therefore, they will run from doctrines which kindle skirmishes. This is why many who were once faithful can now be seen trying to give the church away. To these yellow bellied cowards who don't want to fight false teachers, but are willing to draw the sword on faithful sound preachers, draw the sword and get ready to fight because Christian are willing to give up every thing for the church. There are many other things which are involved in "Preaching On The Church," but the things which Paul points out in the book of Ephesians show many essentials of the church.

ENDNOTES

¹Sermon delivered by Kerry Knight, Marvel, Arkansas, 1980.

²Curtis A. A. Cates, *The Second Incarnation—A Pattern for Apostasy* (Memphis, TN: A. Cates Publications, 1992), p. 31.

³W. E. Vines, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 2:241.

⁴*Ibid.*, 2:28.

PREACHING ON THE PLAN OF SALVATION

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INTRODUCTION

As is evidenced from the contents of this lecture book and other books on this subject, preaching is important. The Bible affirms the importance of preaching. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Part of the wisdom of God is preaching. The purpose of preaching is the salvation of souls. If through the “foolishness of preaching” God is going to save, then there must be a plan instituted by God to save those who believe. Thus we see the need to preach God’s plan of salvation to man.

THE NEED

Our omniscient God knew that man would sin. As such, He also knew that man would need to be saved from his sins. Thus, before

the foundation of the world God planned a way to save sinful mankind.

And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9-11).

That eternal purpose was the salvation of man through Jesus Christ in the church (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Pet. 1:2).

God must then reveal to man the plan or scheme by which He is going to save sinful mankind.

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:25-28; See also Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:7-16; Eph. 1:9-11).

This plan to save sinful mankind is known as the gospel, the good news of salvation that comes through Christ.

Paul describes man's condition in Ephesians 2:1 as being "dead in trespasses and sins." That death is a spiritual separation from God. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). As such, man's greatest need is reconciliation to God. That reconciliation takes place through Jesus Christ. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). The way God planned to reconcile man to Himself must be proclaimed to man. "And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). Thus, for the salvation of man from his sins and the hope of an eternal life with God in heaven we must faithfully preach God's plan of salvation.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

There are two parts to God's plan of salvation. First, there is God's part. God is the only source of our salvation. It is only because of God's grace that man is saved. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are

saved)” (Eph. 2:5). While God is the only source of our salvation, we are not saved by grace alone. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Faith is man’s part. Since there is another lesson dealing with the subject of grace, I will leave that discussion for that lesson. Thus, we will center our minds upon man’s part of salvation which Paul sums up as faith. Faith as Paul uses it in Ephesians 2 deals with the whole of man’s part or response to God’s grace.

Man Must Hear

The basis of our need to preach the gospel of Christ is the need of man to hear. As we will notice, without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The only way man comes to faith is through hearing the Word of God. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Notice that within the context Paul is discussing salvation and the need of man to hear. However, man cannot hear without a preacher being sent who will declare the gospel (glad tidings).

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:13-17).

Ultimately, Christianity is a teaching religion which involves the emotions. Jesus taught that for one to come to the Father, he must be taught.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, *cometh* unto me (John 6:44-45).

No wonder this is why in giving the great commission Jesus instructed us to teach or preach the gospel.

Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of - ASV] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:19-20).

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15). To be made a disciple (to be saved) it takes teaching all things that Jesus commanded (preaching the gospel).

As is stressed in all the passages above it is a hearing of the **Word of God**. Today, in the modern pulpit, there is much “preaching” that does not touch God’s Word. There is the preaching of philosophy, science, social agendas, emotional stories, etc. These things will not aid in the salvation of man. He must hear, but that which he hears must be God’s Word. No doubt that is why Jesus warns, “Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given” (Mark 4:23).

This also answers a question many Christians have concerning those who never hear the gospel. What is the state of the person who never has the opportunity of hearing God’s Word? Allow Paul to answer the question. “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 The. 1:8-9). Those who never hear do not come to a knowledge of God, thus they do not have eternal life (John 17:3); they will be lost. Thus, we should realize the importance of our taking the gospel into the whole world.

Man Must Have Faith

As we observed earlier, we must believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him if we are to please God (Heb. 11:6). There are a multitude of New Testament Scriptures that establish the need for man to believe. Notice some of those usually called upon to show the necessity of faith. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). No one who reads the Word

of God would deny the essentiality of faith. However, we are still faced with some questions.

The Origin Of Faith

We must determine the origin of faith. Some contend that faith comes directly from God. They will turn to Ephesians 2:8 and twist the passage to say that the gift of God is faith.

Commentators are not agreed about the exact reference of the words “and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Do they refer expressly to faith, or more generally to salvation? It is true in either case, that could never exercise saving faith did not the Holy Spirit “persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel” (to quote the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.)...many of his [John Calvin’s] followers have preferred to take faith itself as the gift of God here.¹

However, when one studies the words involved he comes to the realization that the gift of God here is not faith, it is salvation.

The word rendered *that*—τοῦτο—is in the neuter gender, and the word *faith*—πίστις—is in the feminine. The word “that,” therefore, does not refer particularly to faith, as being the gift of God, but to *the salvation by grace* of which he had been speaking.²

Faith comes by hearing God’s Word. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). One of the reasons the Bible was written is to produce faith.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

Thus, there is the need to preach the gospel so men will come to believe. “Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Those in Berea studied the Bible to come to faith.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:11-12; See also Acts 15:7; 18:8).

Understanding the origin of faith helps us understand what faith is.

The Definition of Faith

Sadly in our day the definition of faith has become, at least for many, nothing more than a guess or hope so. Some preachers have bought into this false idea.² J. D. Thomas quoted Roy F. Osborne saying, “However, faith of any sort is based on probability.”³ Brother Thomas goes on to say,

All persons live their lives by proceeding on faith, which amounts to what they consider as a high degree of probability....As indicated earlier, there is not enough evidence anywhere to absolutely prove God, but there is adequate evidence to justify the assumption or the faith that God exists.”⁴

Thus, this makes faith nothing more than probability or assumption. This is the existentialists’ “leap of faith” that denominationalists accepted years ago. They made a dichotomy between faith and knowledge. This dichotomy is not justified. This is evident from the events of “doubting” Thomas in John 20. Jesus tells Thomas to see and feel His hands and side and “be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). Upon examining the empirical evidence, Thomas believed. Thomas’ faith was dependent upon his knowledge that Jesus had been raised.

Biblical faith is not probability or assumption. The Hebrews writer denotes of faith, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith is built upon the proper evidence. This is the study of how faith comes. The proper evidence is given (the Word of God—Rom. 10:17) by which a person comes to the proper conclusions. Without evidence, a proper knowledge, a person cannot have Biblical faith. Then, there is the placing of one’s trust or confidence in that which he believes. This leads him to act in accordance with that revelation he has received (obey the Word of God). Notice how this is brought about in Hebrews 11. In verse three faith is shown to be rational that depends upon the revelation of God according to verses 5, 7, and 8. We see this leads the person to trust in God and His revelation and the promises He has made in verses 7 and 8. They, upon this trust, act according to what God instructs, for a faith that does not act or obey is a dead faith (see Jam. 2:14-26).

Are We Saved by Faith Only?

The answer to this question is **NO**. We are not saved by any one thing to the exclusion of another (the meaning of only). Paul

describes our salvation being by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Faith describes God's part of salvation while faith describes man's part. With a proper understanding of faith, as used in the Bible, we could say that all of man's part of salvation is faith. However, to say we are saved by faith only is still wrong, and in view of denominational teaching gives the wrong impression.

Denominational teaching is that we are saved by faith only. While some mean one thing and some another, they all deny the essentiality of baptism in the salvation process. Some state we are saved when we say the "sinner's prayer." Others speak of being saved at the point of one's acceptance of Jesus as his "personal" Savior. This is not when we are saved, although there must be a faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. Although, this type of faith, without any additional works of obedience is a dead faith (Jam. 2). James adds that the devils also believe—have a knowledge that Jesus is God and Savior (Jam. 2:19; cf. Mat. 8:29; Mark 1:24; Acts 16:16-17; 19:13-15). However the devils do not obey the commands of God, thus they are lost. A study of the following points in the plan of salvation shows that we are not saved by faith only as denominationalists teach.

Man Must Repent Of Sins⁵

Once there is a realization of God and His nature and will for man, there will also be a recognition of man's transgression of His law (1 John 3:4; Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22). Through hearing God's Word and coming to a faith in God and His Word, it should produce in us a desire to live according to the Bible. This is repentance. Jesus taught the necessity of repentance when He said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3 and repeated in verse 5). When Paul spoke on Mars' hill recorded in Acts 17, he established the one true God. He summed up his lesson by stating the need for man to repent and giving the reason why.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

In Luke's account of the great commission, he shows the importance of repentance.

And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

We can come to greater understanding of Jesus' teaching by observing what took place at Jerusalem, since it was to begin there. Those events are recorded in Acts 2. Peter preaches the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2:14-36). The Jews come to belief in Jesus as God's Son as is evidenced by their question of Acts 2:37. Peter's response, as given by inspiration of God and corresponding to what Jesus taught, included repentance. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Through these passages and others which we could add, we learn the necessity of repentance for salvation.

The great question is, what is repentance? Brother Roy Deaver had an excellent study of this in the August 1982 issue of *Biblical Notes*. He made the points that repentance is honestly, fervently and sincerely seeking the favor of God. This is done by turning to God in God's appointed way having turned from a sinful way of life. That turning from and turning to is based upon a sincere desire and determination to do right and to be right and to have godly sorrow. This godly sorrow is produced by first, a deep realization of guilt and condemnation. Second, a knowledge of God's law. Then, an abiding faith and love for God and His will with a deep and sincere sense of personal responsibility. Then, repentance demands making restitution, as far as is possible. Lastly, he mentions there must be the getting out of any and every sinful situation.

While many define repentance as change, we can see that that definition is not sufficient. It is a change that begins in the heart or mind. That change is a turning from sin and a turning to God. This leads to a change in the way the person lives. He no longer lives according to the lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life. He now lives according to the will of God in his life. He then will make restitution if at all possible, in whatever righteous way possible.

We, generally, recognize these principles of repentance. We know that if a person is a thief, to repent he must turn from his stealing and turn to God. He must quit stealing and live according to God's Will. If he stole a watch from me, we recognize he cannot keep the watch,

he must return the watch to me. Practically everyone recognizes this principle when it comes to just about every area. However, when we come to the question of divorce and remarriage, people lose sight of this principle. Mainly for emotional reasons people say a person can get an unscriptural divorce, remarry, then stay in this “marriage.” They have changed repentance into simply saying, “I’m sorry” and possibly, “I will not do it again.” This way a man could steal my watch and have to return it, and “steal” my wife and keep her. Repentance demands that one get out of an unscriptural situation including an unscriptural “marriage.”

Man Must Confess His Faith

Paul wrote:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

The word “confess” is from the Greek word *homologeo*. Two words make up this word; *homo* meaning “same,” and *logos* meaning “word.” Thus, the word literally means “same word,” or “to say the same thing as another.” The same word that we say is to be what God said. Therefore we must find out what the Father said.

In Matthew 3, Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptized of him. While John initially declined, he finally baptized Jesus. When Jesus came out of the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:17). On this occasion the Father said that Jesus was His Son. Later, Jesus took Peter, James and John into a mountain and was transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah appeared, speaking with Jesus concerning His death. Peter, awakening out of his sleep, asked Jesus if they could make three tabernacles, one each for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5). Again, we have the Father making the statement that Jesus is His Son.

In confession we have a word together with God. The Father says, Jesus is my Son. We say the same thing as the Father, that Jesus is

the Son of God. We see evidence of the necessity of making a confession and as this being the confession we make in Acts 8. The Spirit instructs Philip to join himself with the Ethiopian. Philip preaches Jesus to him (Acts 8:35). As they traveled they came to a certain water where the Ethiopian asked what hindered him from being baptized. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).⁶ We see additional evidence in the confession made by Peter at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked His disciples whom they thought He was. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:16). Thus, for man to be saved by God he must confess his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, for a faith not worth confessing is not worth having.

Man Must Be Baptized

Possibly the greatest controversy concerning salvation rests with the act of baptism. Baptism is a burial or an immersion in water by the believer for the remission of sins. We want to look at each of these points in our study for each are important.

Baptism is a burial or an immersion

Sometimes this discussion is under the heading of the "mode" of baptism. This is a misnomer as we shall explain. However, because of the way in which man baptizes, we use this terminology. When we look for the definition of a word we generally go to a dictionary. Please understand dictionaries are useful, but not always for finding the definition; they give the modern usage of words. One of the definitions Webster gives for "baptize" is "to dip (a person) into or sprinkle with water..."⁷ I do not deny that is how people use baptism today. I do deny that is what the Bible has reference to when it speaks of baptism. The word baptize (or any of its forms) means to immerse, or to dip or plunge. A notice of some of the scholars shows this to be the meaning. Arndt and Gingrich say, "dip, immerse."⁸ Vine says, "consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, 'to dip')."⁹ Little Kittel's says, "'to dip in or under,' 'to dye,' 'to immerse,' 'to sink,' 'to drown,' 'to bathe,' 'wash.'"¹⁰ Thayer says, "to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge."¹¹ Others would say the same basic thing.

If the New Testament writers wanted to express the idea of sprinkling or pouring they had words to express those ideas. To express the idea of sprinkling they could use the word *rhantizo*. Then for pouring they had the words *ballo* or the more common word for pour, *cheo*.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear what baptism is by its descriptions. Baptism takes “much water” (John 3:23). It takes a going down into and a coming up out of the water (Acts 8:38-39). These descriptions do not fit the act of sprinkling or pouring. However, these descriptions do fit immersion. The Bible also uses the term burial. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). When a burial takes place, the body is placed completely under the ground. “We don’t bury people by sprinkling or pouring a little dirt on them.”¹² Thus, the act of baptism is immersion or submersion. The element one is submerged in is water (John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39; See also 1 Pet. 3:20-21).

Baptism is for the penitent believer

Some religious organizations “baptize” infants. Thus, it is necessary to study the question: who are the subjects of baptism? As we have studied in this lesson, teaching and learning precedes baptism (John 6:44-45). Upon hearing and learning, the proper subject for baptism must believe (Heb. 11:6; John 14:1). Then, a person desiring baptism must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38) and confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10). All these actions precede baptism, yet infants cannot do these things. Infants do not have the capability of reasoning correctly concerning the facts of Christianity and placing their trust in God, Christ and the gospel. Infants cannot make the good confession of their faith in Christ as God’s Son; they cannot talk yet.

Infants cannot repent for they have no sin of which to repent. Then, the act of baptism is for the remission of sins (as we will study). Babies are born innocent or free of sin, thus there is no need

to repent or be baptized. The Bible states that babies are innocent and free from sin. Jesus teaches to enter the kingdom of heaven one must become as an infant, and that the kingdom of heaven consists of infants or little children (Mat. 18:3; 19:13-15). If babies are born depraved sinners, then to enter the kingdom of heaven and to remain a member we must become depraved sinners and remain depraved sinners. How ridiculous! Instead, we must be pure and innocent. Study also Ecclesiastes 7:29; Psalms 106:37-38; and Ezekiel 28:15. We also know that babies are born free of sin because of the origin of man's spirit. God is the origin of man's spirit (Ecc. 12:7; Zec. 12:1; Heb. 12:9). God does not give something depraved and sinful, but He gives that which is good (Jam. 1:17). Thus, infant and babies are born free of sin and do not need to repent or be baptized.

Last, there is no example of an infant being baptized. No one can turn to any Bible verse and show where a baby is being baptized, or implied in the text. What they are limited to is the times in which the Bible speaks of the baptism of a household (Acts 16:14-15; Acts 16:30-34; 1 Cor. 1:16). To argue for infant baptism upon this basis one must make certain assumptions. He must first assume that the person was married (a bachelor could have a household consisting of slaves). He must then assume that they had children. They, then, must assume that the children were infants. And last, they must make the assumption that those infants were baptized. What a fragile house to build a doctrine upon, especially when that doctrine is contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.

Baptism is for the remission of sins

When one allows the Bible to speak for itself, then it is hard to understand why this becomes a problem. Let us notice a few Scriptures that teach the purpose of baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). To be saved one must believe **and** (a conjunction that joins two items of equal importance) he must be baptized. If we have a sentence such as "He that goeth to the courthouse and registers shall receive one-thousand dollars," no one will misunderstand. Both actions (going to the courthouse and registering) are necessary to receive the money. Both actions (believe and baptism) are necessary to receive salvation. Some have argued that since baptism is not mentioned in the latter part of the verse, baptism is not necessary.

However, this does not follow. One cannot be scripturally baptized if he does not believe, thus, there is no reason to mention baptism. If one does not believe he will be damned; however, if he wants to be saved he must both believe and be baptized.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). A simple reading of the passage shows baptism is for the remission of sins. However, because of denominational false doctrines, people muddy the water. Some have claimed that the word “for” as is used here means “because of.” An illustration of this teaching is found in the electronic version of Strong’s Concordance (quoted from *Logos Bible Software*, but I understand it is in others as well, however, not in the written version).

“For” (as used in Acts 2:38 “for the forgiveness...”) could have two meanings. If you saw a poster saying “Jesse James wanted for robbery”, “for” could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one. So too in this passage, the word “for” signifies an action in the past. Otherwise, it would violate the entire tenor of the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.

However, this goes against the meaning of “for.” The Greek word *eis* is not retrospective (“an action in the past”), it is prospective (looking forward). Additionally, whatever the “for” means in relation to baptism, it also means in relation to repentance. Thus, if baptism is because they have the remission of sins, they repent because they have the remission of sins. This is something even they refuse to accept. Also, the Greek and English construction of “for the remission of sins” in Matthew 26:28 and Acts 2:38 are the same. If Acts 2:38 means because your sins have been remitted, then did not Jesus shed His blood because we already have the remission of sins?

When Saul traveled to Damascus, a blinding light struck him. Jesus revealed Himself to Saul as the one he was persecuting. Saul asked Jesus what he must do. Jesus told Saul to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. Jesus then appears to Ananias and tells him to go tell Saul what he must do. Ananias tells Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Saul was

told, as a penitent believer, to be baptized. In that baptism he would wash away his sins. Some hold that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus. If Saul was saved on the road to Damascus, then he was saved while he was in his sins. Saul's sins were not taken away, washed away, until he was baptized. When he was baptized he then was saved.

Peter clearly tells us that baptism saves us. "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). Yet, the denominational world argues that baptism doth also not now save us. They do exactly what Satan did in the Garden of Eden to Eve in adding the word "not" to what God said (see Gen. 3:4).

Briefly notice these other passages. Baptism places one into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) where salvation is (2 Tim. 2:10). Baptism places one into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), and there is only one (Eph. 4:4). Jesus said he would save the body (Eph. 5:23). It is by baptism we are born again (John 3:3,5; Tit. 3:5) where we become a child of God (2 Cor. 5:17) and heirs of God (Rom. 8:17). It is also by this new birth, baptism, that we enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5). We are baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3-4) where Jesus shed His blood to forgive us our sins (Mat. 26:28; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). The gospel saves man (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-2) and those who do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 The. 1:6-9). The gospel consists of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). We must obey a form of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:17-18) which is found in the act of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). Anyway one looks at baptism it always comes out as it being for our salvation.

An additional question that we face today is: Must one know why he is being baptized or can he be baptized simply to obey God? While we realize that man does not have to have total understanding concerning baptism, he must understand that baptism is what saves man. The design or purpose of baptism must be understood by the recipient of baptism for that baptism to be biblical baptism. Paul discusses the institution of the Lord's Supper in First Corinthians 11. He recounts how Jesus said to partake of this Supper "in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25). The word "in" is the same

Greek word as “for” is in Acts 2:38. If one cannot partake of the Lord’s Supper simply to obey God and not understand the purpose (in memory of Christ’s death), then why should we think that one can be baptized simply to obey God without understanding its purpose (salvation, or the remission of sins)? No one can accidentally obey God. Everyone who is “baptized” whether immersed or sprinkled or whether he is doing it to show he has been saved or to be saved, he is doing it in a general sense to obey God. Baptism has a specific purpose and one must understand that purpose for his baptism to be valid. It takes the right act based on the right belief to constitute Bible baptism.

Man Must Remain Faithful To The End

After becoming a Christian, we must live according to the principles set forth within the pages of the New Testament. We must develop the proper attitudes, becoming a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4; Phi. 4:8). Then, we must apply that attitude in life (Rom. 12:1-2). If we are going to receive the promise of eternal life, we must continue to the end (Mat. 10:22; Rev. 2:10). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CONCLUSION

There is still a great need to preach the plan of salvation to man today. We live in the midst of a lost world (cf., Isa. 6:5). The only hope that man has is in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). We must proclaim the message of salvation and what man must do to obey God for the salvation of his soul. We end as we began, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Let us be actively engaged in that great work of preaching the plan of salvation to those lost, so no one will be able to say to us at the last day, “you never mentioned him to me.”

ENDNOTES

¹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering & Inglis LTD., 1961), p. 51-52.

²See Mac Deaver, “The Meaning Of Biblical Faith,” *Studies in 2 Corinthians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1989), pp. 462-475.

³J. D. Thomas, *Facts and Faith* (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1965), p. 262.

⁴Ibid., p. 262- 263.

⁵There are two Hebrew words and two Greek words that are translated repent. The first Hebrew word is *nacham* which means repent but only carries the idea of being sorry, regret, lament or grieve. The second Hebrew word is *shub* which means to turn back or change directions. The two Greek words are *metamelomai* and *metanoeo*. *Metamelomai* means regret or remorse and is equivalent to *nacham*. *Metanoeo* is the change of one's mind with regard to sin that leads to a change in action, equivalent to the Hebrew *shub*. *Metanoeo* and *shub* are the words we are discussing in this section.

⁶Some might object to the inclusion of this verse. While I recognize my limitations concerning textual criticism, I believe that this verse is a part of the original text as opposed to an interpolation. For further study see; Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions* (Fort Worth, TX: Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publications, 1973), pp. 397-398. William Woodson, "The Problem of Interpolation: Should Mark 16:9-20, Acts 8:37, and 1 John 5:7,8 be in our Bibles?," *Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained*, ed. Wendell Winkler (Hurst, TX: Winkler Publications, 1981), pp. 40-46. David Lipscomb and E. G. Sewell, *Questions Answered* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1921), pp. 133-136. T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1973), pp. 250-254.

⁷*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, College Edition (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), p. 116.

⁸William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 131.

⁹W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., nd.), p. 98.

¹⁰Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), p. 92.

¹¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 94.

¹²Jerry Moffitt, "The Obligation Not To Live in Licentiousness," *The Book of Romans*, ed. Garland Elkins and Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR.: National Christian Press, 1983), p. 99.

PREACHING ON THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The subject, “PREACHING THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH” is vitally important. When members of the church want a “sermonette” and the Lord’s supper “to go” claiming a shortage of time, they illustrate their lack of appreciation and understanding of New Testament worship. Therefore, let every eldership, every preacher and every member “study” (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16), “grow” (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18) and “continued steadfastly” (Acts 2:42) as “true worshippers” (John 4:23-24). Let us all expose vain worship (Mat. 15:9), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23) and “will worship” (Col. 2:18-23) as false worship. Let us all “cleanse the temple” of the corrupting influences of entertainment, show business, social merchandising, carnal emotionalism (hand clapping and foot stomping) and worldliness. Let us all with fervent hearts, ardently worship the Father “in spirit and in truth.”

BIBLE PREACHING IS NEEDED

Preaching (*kerusso*) is to herald or proclaim the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2). Thayer defines this word as meaning,

To be a herald; to officiate as herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with the suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed; a. univ. to publish, proclaim openly:... b. spec. used

of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters pertaining to it...(Mark 16:15)... by public proclamation to exhort to repentance and promise the pardon of sins, Luke 24:47.¹

Preaching (*euangelizo*) is defined by Thayer, “to bring good news, to announce glad tidings”² (Acts 13:32; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 4:2). Thayer says of the preacher or evangelist, “a bringer of good tidings, an evangelist”³ (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5). He defines *kerux* as, “In the N.T. God’s ambassador, and the herald or proclaimer of the divine word.”⁴ Thus, a preacher of the Word of God is one who proclaims, declares, announces, publishes, exhorts, warns, instructs, reprove, and rebukes (reprimand with authority) with all longsuffering and doctrine. He must proclaim and defend the whole council of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim.4:2; Jude 3). Preachers are needed today who will lovingly proclaim the avenues, actions and attitudes of scriptural worship (John 4:23-24). We also need preachers who will expose, reprove, and rebuke denominational error and human traditions that would make worship “vain” (Mat. 15:9; Mark 7:7-9). Within the church we need members who are “grounded” in the Word of God and alert to keep out human innovations. We need elders who require sound preaching and scriptural worship.

PREACHING SHOULD DEFINE WORSHIP

In the Old Testament, the word *shachah* literally indicates “a bowing down,” “to prostrate oneself” expressing the humble servants respect for God. Notice these passages, “when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth” (Gen. 24:52). “And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD” (2 Chr. 7:3). “And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped” (2 Chr. 29:29). These passages illustrate the humble respect (godly fear) and reverence of body and soul expressed in worship.

In the New Testament there are several Greek words which are translated “worship.” (1) *Proskuneo* is translated sixty times as “worship.” Jesus said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou” (Mat. 4:10). Thayer defines this word as meaning, “to kiss the hand, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as

an expression of profound reverence.”⁵ Thus, worship is an act of reverence, adoration and homage expressed by man to God. The profound reverence from within man’s heart expresses itself mentally and physically unto God. Worshipers humbly approach God with sincere respect, offering submissive praise in recognition of His superiority and greatness. Man offers worship unto God, he does not receive worship. (2) *Sebomai* is defined by Thayer as “To revere, to worship.”⁶ Bagster says, “to stand in awe, to venerate, to reverence, to worship, adore.” This word is used in Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Acts 16:14. (3) *Latreuo* is translated seventeen times as “serve” and four times as “worship.” Thayer says concerning this word, “render religious service or homage, to worship;...to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for His worship”⁷ (Phi. 3:3; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 22:3). Worship is not just a mental attitude without expression. Adoration is not “worship” until it is “expressed,” nor is “homage” worship until it is “paid.” We are not an audience of spectators, we are the participants expressing and offering worship unto God. Brethren, we must teach more forcefully that true worship is a giving experience rather than a totally receiving experience. Therefore, if one does not “get anything out of worship” it is because they have failed to express true worship unto God by which we are blessed (Acts 20:35). Let every member offer worship unto the Father.

PREACHING WHY WE WORSHIP GOD

There are many understood obligations and blessings derived from scriptural worship. (1) To please God, who seeks and desires our worship (John 4:23; Exo. 20:1-4; Mat. 4:10; Deu. 6:13-15). (2) God commands, regulates, and expects our worship, “must” (Mat. 4:10; John 4:23-24). (3) We enhance our spiritual appetites by worship (Mat. 5:4; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; Psa. 42:1-2; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). (4) We give, offer, express praise to God and are blessed (Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:5). (5) We demonstrate submission, humility and love in worship (John 14:15; Mat. 22:37; Heb. 12:28; Jam. 4:7-10; 1 John 5:2-3). (6) We recognize the avenues provided by Christ our Saviour, High Priest, Mediator and Advocate in worship (John 14:6; Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 10:22-23; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Col. 3:17). (7) We grow in the divine nature in worship (Psa. 135:15-18; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:3-11). (8) We recognize God’s greatness as creator and sustainer in worship (Gen. 1:27; Acts 17:24;

John 1:1-3; Acts 14:17; Mat. 5:45; Heb. 1:3). (9) We recognize our feebleness in addressing adversity and death (Heb. 9:27; Psa. 23; Jam. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 2:10). (10) We find comfort, courage, strength, and hope in worship (1 Pet. 5:7; 1 Cor. 15:55-58; 1 The. 4:18; 2 Cor. 1:3; Psa. 23:4; Heb. 4:16; John 5:28-29). (11) We offer praise and thanksgiving for life, breath, and all spiritual blessings in worship (Acts 17:25; Jam. 1:17; Eph. 1:3). (12) We cultivate fellowship with God and our brethren in worship (Mat. 18:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3). (13) We get a foretaste of heaven in worship (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14; 7:9-12; Heb. 12:22-23; Eph. 1:3). (14) We worship God to avoid eternal punishment (Mat. 6:24; 7:13-14; 21-23; Acts 17:31; Mat. 25:46; John 9:31). When we worship God, we are blessed one hundred fold now and in the world to come we will have everlasting life.

PREACHING EXPOSES PERVERTED WORSHIP

Some contend that “anything sincerely” offered to God will be acceptable worship. However, if a thing is unauthorized it matters not how sincerely it is given, it will be rejected. There are many examples where God refused to accept man’s perverted (unauthorized) offerings. God had no respect for Cain and his presumptuous, unauthorized offering (Gen. 4:5). When Aaron fashioned the golden calf (idolatry) for Israel, God said, “that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them” (Gen. 32:10). Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not...and they died before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1-2). God rejected Jeroboam’s false worship saying, “the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that *are* upon it shall be poured out” (1 Kin. 13:3). Amos rebuked Israel’s perverted worship pronouncing God’s woe upon them, “Woe unto you” (Amos 5:18; 6:1). Malachi, condemned the “polluted” worship stating that the Lord, will not “accept an offering at your hand” (Mal. 1:7-11). Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees’ life and worship, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). God can and does refuse to accept unauthorized and perverted worship regardless of the “sincerity” by which it is offered.

Man often departs so far from truth that he worships objects and things rather than God. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile, vegetation, cattle, and the sun god. The Greeks of Lystra had their mythical gods, Jupiter and Mercurius (Acts 14:11-15). The Ephesians had their goddess Diana (Acts 19:28). The Athenians were given to idolatry even

worshipping “THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:23). The Romans deified Caesar as god. Jesus had warned against putting things above God, such as: houses or lands (Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; Col. 3:5; Mat. 6:24); family members, such as children, parents, or mates (Luke 14:26); their own lives (Mat. 16:24). We are not to worship Satan (Mat. 4:9-10) or angels (Rev. 22:8-9). Man must renounce and abandon anything that would dethrone God (Rom. 1:21-25; Acts 17:22-30; Phi. 3:19). John warned, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). Paul called on the Athenians to repent of ignorant worship (Acts 17:22-30). We are to seek to know the true God revealed in the Scriptures and obey His revealed will (2 The. 1:7-9). Also, Paul rebuked “will worship” (Col. 2:23) which is self-devised and self-serving rather than based on obedient faith. God’s Word warns us to avoid the errors of false worship.

PREACHING THE TRUE GOD DESERVES OUR WORSHIP

God our Creator (Gen. 1:1,26-27; Heb. 12:9) deserves our worship. Inspiration says, “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker” (Psa. 95:6). He is the great “I am” (Exo. 3:14), the self-existent, eternal, all-powerful Being; thus, He commanded, “I *am* the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:2-3). “For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised” (Psa. 96:4). “Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth” (Psa. 96:8-9). “Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy” (Psa. 99:9). “Know ye that the LORD he *is* God... Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name” (Psa. 100:3-4). Jesus teaches us to worship the Father, “true worshippers shall worship the Father” (John 4:23). We are only to worship the Lord God, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat. 4:10). All of every nation are to worship God (Acts 10:34-35).

PREACHING WORSHIP IN SPIRIT

Not only must we direct our worship to “the Father” but we must “worship *him* in spirit” (John 4:23-24). The word “spirit” has reference to the right attitude (disposition of heart) actively expressed from a heart filled with gladness, reverence, adoration, gratitude, praise, joy, and

supplication (Psa. 42:1-4; 116:1,12,14; 17:1-2; 148:12-13). The emotions of the soul are poured out in worship, “I pour out my soul in me” (Psa. 42:4). “I will praise thee with my whole heart” (Psa. 138:1). We offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5) “with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:22). Our worship is rendered with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Jesus warned, “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Mat. 15:7-9). Let us all attune our hearts to worship God, “in spirit.”

PREACHING WORSHIP IN TRUTH

The word “truth” mandates the authority or standard of Christian worship. It requires that we recognize the authority of God’s Word as the “truth” (John 1:17; 8:32; 17:17). Everything we do in worship is an act of faith regulated by God’s Word (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6; 2 Cor. 5:7). Our lives and worship must be offered to God “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17; Mat. 18:20). This means by His authority as revealed in the New Testament (Mat. 26:28; 28:18-20; Col. 1:18; Heb. 8:6; 1 Pet. 4:11). We must not only have the right “spirit,” but we must also offer worship by authorized acts revealed in “truth.” No one acceptably worships God accidentally, all must be taught to worship God scripturally.

It is therefore necessary to examine both the acts of worship in which we express praise and the condition of the heart while we worship. Worship may be: (1) in truth without spirit, (2) in spirit without truth, and (3) in spirit and in truth. Let us realize that scriptural worship can be corrupted by: (a) adding acts of worship without scriptural authority (instrumental music, choirs, solos, lighting candles, foot washing), (b) omitting acts of worship God has authorized (Lord’s supper), or (c) observing the acts God authorizes but in the wrong spirit (irreverently, flippantly).

PREACHING CORPORATE WORSHIP

By this we refer to individuals coming together “into a unified body,”⁸ an assembly (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18; 14:23) for the purpose of unison worship. Every child of God needs to take seriously their priestly (1 Pet. 2:5,9) duties, obligations, and privileges in the

worship assembly. The writer of Hebrews says, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting one *another*. and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25). The phrase “assembling of ourselves” is a noun (accusative, singular feminine) of which Thayer writes: “b. (the religious) *assembly* (of Christians).”⁹ Regarding *sunagoge* Thayer wrote: “the name is transferred to an assembly of Christians formally gathered for religious purposes.”¹⁰ No Christian has permission to “forsake,” “abandon, desert, leave in straights, leave helpless”¹¹ the local worship assembly. Every Christian is obligated to assemble and worship when possible. One is not forsaking the assembly when ill or infirmities restrict.

The Apostle Paul refers to congregational worship when he writes, “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place” (1 Cor. 14:23). Thayer says concerning this verse “the whole church was accustomed to assemble in one and the same place.”¹² Also, under the heading *ekklesia*: “4, in the Christian sense, a. an assembly of Christians gathered for worship; *en ekklesia*, in the religious meeting.”¹³ Paul also refers to the worship assembly, “when ye come together in the church” and, “when ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord’s supper” (1 Cor. 11:18,20). The context shows Paul was correcting abuses that took place when the local church assembled for congregational worship. Every member needs to learn that when and if worship is corrupted it can be corrected by returning to the New Testament pattern.

PREACHING THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

By designating “the first *day* of the week” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2) as the specific time for congregational worship God binds the day (first) and frequency as weekly. Thayer says, “the first day of the week” means “the first day after the sabbath....on the first day of every week”¹⁴ and cites Acts 20:7 and First Corinthians 16:2 as examples. All recognize, in other areas, that a regular event designated as happening on a certain day of the month is monthly (light bill due on the tenth of the month). Everyone is aware that birthdays and holidays (July Fourth) come yearly, therefore, when a certain day of a certain month is designated we understand the frequency. People need to just apply a little common sense when studying the Bible. God specified a certain day, “the first

day of the week,” thus making it weekly (every Sunday we assemble for worship).

PREACHING THE FIVE AVENUES OF WORSHIP AND ABUSES

Prayer is a vital source of strength in a Christian’s life and worship (1 Tim. 2:1-10; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15). Only men (*aner* means male) are authorized to lead (1 Tim. 2:8-10) the mixed assembly when men and women are present. A brother leads the prayer while the rest follow in silence, praying together. This avoids noise and confusion as we reverently approach the throne of grace. Our prayers are to be “in faith” and according to God’s will (Mat. 7:7-11; 21:22; 1 John 3:18; 5:14). We are to be reverent, penitent, forgiving, humble, honest, sincere, and thankful (Mat. 5:43-45; 6:5-15; Luke 18:14; 1 John 2:1-5; 1 The. 5:17). We pray to the Father through Jesus Christ our mediator (Mat. 6:9; John 15:16; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16). Abuses exist when: (1) Women lead over men; (2) Vain repetition is used; (3) Irreverent address, “big daddy”; (4) To be seen of men; (5) Prayer without faith; (6) Not in the name of Christ; and (7) Praying for salvation, “praying through” rather than obeying the gospel.

We are to give as God has prospered us, with liberality and joy (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7). It is a free-will offering which expresses our faith and love for the Lord (2 Cor. 8:8-9), and supports the work of the church. Giving is a grace we are to abound in (2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:6; Acts 20:35). To fail to give as prospered is to rob God (Mal. 3:8-10). To lay up treasures on Earth is poor stewardship (Mat. 6:19-21; 16:26; 2 Cor. 9:6-9; 1 Tim. 6:7,10; Jam. 5:1-5). Abuses exist when: (1) Tithing is taught, (2) When one does not give as prospered, (3) By restraint, (4) Grudgingly; (5) Necessity, and (6) Secular fund raising schemes (church yard sales, auctions, bingo, etc.).

When singing all members are to take an active part in blending our voices together in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:15). The purpose of singing is to praise God, to teach and admonish one another. Singing that comes from the heart (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) is a spiritual expression of great joy (Jam. 5:13). Since the command to sing is specific and addressed to every individual, we do not add mechanical instruments. Singing is the only music authorized in the New Testament church. Religious historians are in agreement that congregational singing (a cappella) was

the practice of the early church. The major Protestant scholars like Calvin, Wesley, and Clark all objected to the use of instrumental music as unscriptural human innovations. Abuses exist when: (1) Instrumental music is used; (2) Humming; (3) Special singers “demonstrate their talent,” “minister,” solos for others to listen, choruses; (4) Unscriptural songs; (5) Imitating instruments with the voice, “be bop;” (6) Listening rather than singing.

Weekly communion “upon the first *day* of the week” (Acts 20:7) is a simple memorial, “in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24), of the body and blood of Jesus (Mat. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-29). The Lord’s supper is authorized only for those who are citizens in the “kingdom” (Mat. 26:29; Luke 22:30), members of the Lord’s church (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18,20,22-33). Each individual is to penitently and prayerfully “examine himself” (1 Cor. 11:28) before he partakes of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (grape juice). Our minds are centered on the events of the cross “discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:29). We make personal application, and proclaim the glorious return of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26). When observed in a worthy manner the Christian enjoys renewed spiritual strength. Abuses exist when: (1) The frequency is changed (monthly, quarterly, Thursday night, never), (2) The elements are changed (water, hot dog buns, ritz crackers), (3) Not examining ones self, (4) Not discerning the Lord’s body, and (5) Transubstantiation.

Preaching in the assembly (Acts 20:7) consists of a lesson from the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2). The message must be the gospel of Christ to exert God’s power to save souls from sin (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17-18; 2:1,13; 15:1-4). Scriptural references (book, chapter and verse) should be given so each one can “search the scriptures” (John 5:39; Acts 17:11) to make sure the truth is taught. When the whole counsel of God is taught, error will be refuted and the faith will be defended (Jude 3; Acts 20:26-30; 2 Tim. 4:2). The examples of conversions in the book of Acts faithfully answers the question “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 2:36-42; 8:12,35-39; 9:6,18; 10:48; 16:30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5; 22:16). Every preacher should encourage personal study and application of the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15; John 5:39; Rom. 6:3-4,17; Gal.3:26-27; Jam. 1:21-22; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). The Lord’s invitation is extended (Mat. 11:28-30; Luke 9:23; Acts 2:41; Rom. 6:16-18; 10:15-16; Rev. 22:17) and sinners are exhorted to obey

the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). The erring are encouraged to be restored (Gal. 6:1; Acts 8:22-24; Jam. 5:19-20). Every faithful member is edified when their minds are stirred to remember the hope of everlasting life and challenged to “abstain from the appearance of evil.” Abuses exist when: (1) God’s Word is not preached; (2) Speaker refuses to call men to repentance (deal with issues); (3) Fail to expose religious error; (4) Omit contending for the faith; (5) Extend no invitation (don’t tell sinners how to be saved); and (6) When getting a laugh is more important than converting a soul.

CONCLUSION

Scriptural worship calls for a complete submission of body and soul as we address God. It is the most fulfilling, God-glorifying, self-satisfying, and edifying practice in which man can engage. Let every preacher proclaim the joy of scriptural worship. Let every member offer sacrificial offerings in spirit and truth. Let us all worship the Father with gladness.

ENDNOTES

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 346.

²Ibid., p. 256.

³Ibid., p. 257.

⁴Ibid., p. 346.

⁵Ibid., p. 548.

⁶Ibid., p. 572.

⁷Ibid., p. 372-373.

⁸*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1990), p. 292.

⁹Thayer, p. 244.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 600.

¹¹Ibid., p. 166.

¹²Ibid., p. 196.

¹³Ibid., p. 196.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 566.

PREACHING ON THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The work of the church is a three-fold endeavor. It involves preaching to those who are lost (Mat. 28:18-20; Jam. 5:19-20), edifying the saved (Rom. 14:19), and engaging in benevolent endeavors (Jam. 1:27). It shall be our purpose to examine each of these works in a practical sense and demonstrate what they are and are not.

PREACHING TO THE LOST

In what we call the “Great Commission” Jesus said:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:18-20).

That this is to be done through the church is seen in Paul’s first letter to the church at Thessalonica. We learn in verse 1 that he was speaking to the church and he said to them, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need

not to speak any thing” (1 The. 1:8). Therefore, one work of the church is to preach to the lost.

What Does Preaching To The Lost Involve?

In preaching to the lost we need to preach the need for a Savior. Many have desired to make salvation and church membership separate issues. When we approach the world it must be with the message that they are lost and in need of a Savior. Hear what Paul told the Romans, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...the wages of sin *is* death” (Rom. 3:10,23; 6:23). He did not try to sugar-coat the truth, he merely told them the truth. Unless we first convince the world of their need for salvation, they cannot come to salvation. When Peter preached on Pentecost, did he not indict the people of their sin and then instruct them in the way to be forgiven for it (Acts 2:14-38)? Would any argue that he could have gotten more converts if he only would have told the people that they were saved in their present condition but needed to change churches because his offered more for them to do? It is sometimes objected that one can draw more flies with honey than vinegar, and that is so; but, we are not in the fly drawing business. We cannot approach the world as though they were already saved; we must teach them the truth in all points.

We must teach the world the importance of obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must stress the importance of believing the truth. The writer of Hebrews said, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek” (Heb. 11:6). We must have faith to please him; but, where do we get faith? “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Is it enough to believe a religious message? We remember the words of Jesus, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Some of our brethren need to learn that the Baptists and the Methodists and the like do not teach their converts the truth. Therefore, they do not possess salvation.

We must stress the importance of repenting of sin. Jesus said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). John said, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat. 3:8). Since practicing the error of using the mechanical

instrument of music in worship is sin, and teaching salvation from some other source and way than the source and way of God is sin, and in general practicing religious error is sin; can one be said to have repented who has never stopped walking in sin? Repentance involves a change of the will and of the way. We needn't tell the world that they can be saved if they have never repented, and since those in religious denominations have never repented, salvation is not had in their ranks.

We must stress the importance of confession. We do not read of one in Bible times confessing that "God for Christ's sake has forgiven my sins," but we do read of one saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). We further read of those refusing to do so being lost (John 12:42-43). We see in the sectarian world that the confessions made, if any, are usually unscriptural. Therefore, we must stress the importance of the right confession.

We must stress the importance of scriptural immersion. Jesus commanded baptism and linked it with salvation in the "Great Commission" (Mark 16:16). The first time the gospel was preached in the name of the risen Savior baptism was put forth as the medium or receiving point of the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Saul was told that in baptism his sins could be washed away (Acts 22:16). Peter said, "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). This baptism is not an "outward sign of an inner experience," as some contend. It is not to join a denomination of men, as some contend. It is not to demonstrate that salvation was obtained at some prior point. It is immersion in water for (unto) the remission of sins. There is no formula required or attached to it, as the UPC teaches. Since this is so, we must teach those presently out of Christ the necessity of being properly baptized, insisting that no sectarian denomination preaches or practices such. Even if a denomination could be found which teaches scriptural (?) baptism, we know that salvation cannot be found in it, for we have already seen that a saved person not only has been baptized, but also heard and believed the truth (not religious error), repented of sins (not continued to walk in them), and confessed his faith in Christ. If a "denomination" taught the truth on these things they would not be a denomination, but would be the Lord's church.

We must stress the importance of the church in preaching to the lost. There is one church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). It was built by Christ (Mat. 16:18). It was purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28). It is headed by Christ (Col. 1:18). We are granted membership in that church when we are properly baptized (1 Cor. 12:13). Many in the world think that the church is not necessary to salvation, and so thinking, they certainly do not think that it is important to find the right church. We must teach them differently.

PREACHING TO THE SAVED

In Romans 14:19 we read, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." To edify is to build up, to instruct for the improvement of the one instructed. There are many areas wherein we may edify the saved. Let us consider but a few.

What Should We Preach To The Saved?

We should preach to the saved the importance of faithfulness in all areas. Jesus said, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). The key to understanding this phrase is the word "unto." It does not mean merely "until," but "even to the point of." We are to be faithful even if it costs us our lives. Many of our brethren will not even attend the services of the church, and some of those who do attend sleep or grope through them. Others will attend but not participate. How can they be faithful enough to die for Him if they will not even live for Him?

We should edify the saved concerning the permanence of marriage. Many people are being brought into the assemblies of the saints and even immersed who have never repented of the sin of adultery. Many, even of our own children (and other relatives), are divorcing and re-marrying for reasons not allowed in the Word of God and are finding a "hiding place" in the church. We must stress the fact that Jesus allowed only one reason for divorce and re-marriage, and that reason is fornication. Fornication allows the party who was "cheated against" to marry again with the approval of God and forever forbids the "guilty party" from so doing (Mat. 19:1-9). It is past time that some of us begin to preach this to the saved. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

We should edify the saved concerning the proper role of discipline in the church with respect to personal offences. Many of our day think that discipline is somewhat like the covered wagons of yesteryear, it played its role but has duly passed away. Such is not the case. We know that when one person sins against another, the offended person is to go to him and tell him his fault to try to win him back. If this does not work he is to take one or two with him. If this fails he is to tell the church. If this fails the offender is to be unto the church “as an heathen man and a publican” (Mat. 18:15-17). Because of a failure to preach on this, many become offended and end up leaving the fellowship.

We should edify the saved concerning the proper role of discipline in the church with respect to moral offenses. Paul discussed this matter with the brethren at Corinth, who harbored a fornicator in their midst. They, like many today, were boasting of their open-mindedness concerning this sinner being allowed in their midst. They were wrong in doing so (so are we, if we do the same thing today). He instructed them “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). Another instance of discipline being practiced for a moral offense is cited in Second Thessalonians 3. Herein a man would not work to support his family and Paul said, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother” (2 The. 3:6,14-15). How many do we have “in our midst” who have been unfaithful for years and have had no discipline administered to them? How many have we lost to the world and never even see any more who have slipped away without so much as a visit from an elder? This needs to be stressed. One of the best arguments for Christianity is faithful Christian living, and one of the best arguments against it is unfaithfulness.

We need to stress to the saved the importance of discipline with respect to false teachers. Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such

serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18). The disciple whom Jesus loved wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that bid-deth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11). These verses tell us that false teachers should be marked and avoided, not received or encouraged. They do not tell us they should merely be left alone, but marked! A false teacher should carry so much weight (reputation wise) as to make it impossible for him to get a job. Many of our people are standing on the sidelines watching the hereticks of our day spread damnable doctrines. They think how nice it would be to have great numbers present at the assembly and wonder if, maybe, these false teachers might not have something. Whose fault is it? It is the fault of every elder who will not practice discipline concerning false teaching. We need to stress this to our people.

We need to edify the saved concerning proper worship. Worship that is authorized and approved by God includes singing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). We are nowhere told that it is acceptable to do anything more than singing. We are not authorized to add the mechanical instrument to the singing. This would be going beyond and adding to the scriptures which is forbidden (Rev. 22:18-19). We are told that our singing is to “teach and admonish.” This would forbid us from humming, whistling, clapping, or grunting into a microphone, as one cannot tell whether another is humming a spiritual song or a secular one by the noises given. The more I live and travel the more I see the need to stress this to people who claim to be Christians but have never left the denominational concept of worship. With respect to singing, we also need to stress the concept of “teaching and admonishing” that which is true. Sing nothing that could not be preached! Could I preach the following: Jesus is coming soon, He is coming to this earth, and we need to have just a little talk with Him to prepare for that day? I think not. We need to stress the importance of Gospel preaching in the worship to the saved. Many of our day use what is called “drama” in an effort to evoke the emotions of the audience.

They place people around the audience to stand and give stirring speeches, testimonials, and the like. These presentations usually include “solos” which are sung as a part of the act. Many times they include the use of females in leadership roles (singing solos or giving speeches and the like). The simple truth is that we are to preach the gospel, not put on a play or program. The purpose of the preaching is to convert, not to entertain. “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We need to stress the importance of the Lord’s Supper to the saved. It is a time (each week) when God’s children remember the death of Christ, and look forward to His final advent. Fruit of the vine and unleavened bread (not coke and saltines) are to be used in the feast. It is to be taken on the first day of the week, and only then (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30). We need to stress to the saved the importance of the contribution. We give to the Lord a portion of what we have received of Him (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). We are not giving money to the preacher, elders or anyone else but the Lord. This is done on Sunday also, and is a part of the worship. We need to stress the importance of proper prayer. It is addressed to the Father (Mat. 6:9) and it is through the Son (1 Tim. 2:5). We do not pray to Jesus.

We need also to stress to the saved the concept of assembling in one place. It is wrong and sinful for brethren to divide the assembly. Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians in which he addressed the following: Wives—Ephesians 5:22, Husbands—Ephesians 5:25, and Children—Ephesians 6:1. This assembly would include all people. He did not feel inclined to write letters to every possible class of people separately, for all people were in one assembly. It may be objected that children cannot learn from lessons directed to adults. If that is so, why did God not address a special Bible to children?

We need to preach to the saved concerning who is to be used to lead singing, lead prayer, teach and preach to the assembly. The Pentecostals have for years used women to do these things, and of late the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and others have joined them. What is so sad is that some of our brethren have jumped on the bandwagon of late also. Paul said, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Again we read, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not

permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34). If a woman cannot teach or usurp authority or speak, how can she lead singing, lead prayer, preach and the like? I was most distressed recently to hear a statement something like this, “My wife could read my sermon from a manuscript in the public assembly if I wanted her to....” This is true, but she could not do it with the approval of God.

MEN SHOULD ENGAGE IN BENEVOLENT ACTIVITIES

James wrote, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). The word “visit” here means to “meet the needs of.” Paul wrote, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). In these two verses we are told what to do, but not how to do it. In fact, we are told nowhere how to do it, just what to do. We may help the poor with cash, with food, with services, personally or collectively. We may choose to help the orphans through an orphans home, or we may choose to bring them into our homes. The important thing is that we do something to help them.

SOME THINGS THAT ARE NOT WITHIN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

It is not the work of the church to provide for the recreation and physical exercise of the members. Many have built what they call “Office Complexes” (with the world’s largest restrooms) or “Family Life Centers”—which are nothing more than recreational facilities—in an effort to build up the church. Some call them works of evangelism, some call them works of edification; but, not back them up with Scripture. It is simply not something that is authorized for the church to do. Not only that, most of the ones who have and use these things involve themselves in other sins as well, such as participating in “church leagues” and the like. They allow the bride of Christ to be cast along side the “other denominations” and relegated (with her own consent) to their number. This violates the principle of fellowship as set forth by Paul in Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1 and elsewhere. Many of our brethren need to start preaching this aspect of the work of the church before it is too late.

The raising of funds through bake sales, yard sales, raffles and the like is not how the church is to receive its funds. The work of the church is to be supported by the contributions of her members (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). All efforts to support her works through other means go beyond that which is authorized and must be opposed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have sought to discuss in brief some of the things the church is and is not to do. Many other particulars could have been added, but these should serve as a foundation for a good study of this subject. The things suggested have been offered with Scripture to support them, and therefore the author feels safe in suggesting that they are true. Let us “Preach the Word” on these and all subjects.

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PREACHING ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Shan Jackson



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Two particular passages will set the overall tone for this manuscript. The first comes from the pen of the apostle Paul as he writes to his beloved Timothy. He says, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). The other passage is John 10:10, where Jesus says, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.” In preaching the Christian life we preach the abundant life afforded by Jesus. His abundant life message is a message of an overflowing, overwhelming, overcoming life. A life that satisfies, soothes, and sustains. A life that preserves, prepares, and penetrates. The verb Jesus uses here is a verb of progression. In essence He is saying, “I am come that they might keep on having abundant life.” He is promising life now, and a life that will continue. John says of Him, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). In fact, it strongly appears that one of John’s favorite comparisons was Jesus to life. Now, with that in mind, let us consider why it is essential for Christians to preach this life described by Jesus.

Jesus, who cannot lie, promised us an abundant life, however, many are missing out on the pleasure of this life because the pressures of worry and the ache of anxiety are robbing them of this blessing. When they assemble with the saints and hear God's Word read, such as, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mat. 11:28-29), they do not believe. When they sing songs that say, "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus," and "Savior, lead me lest I stray," they still do not comprehend or accept the promise. Many accept the ancient fate of Atlas and attempt to carry the weight of the entire world upon their shoulders, yet Jesus said, "I come that you might have life."

Christ was born to a world setting that was more bleak than any depression any nation has ever endured. His was an age of disease, depression, dismay, and distress. His was an age of limited medical expertise, limited food potential, limited hygiene understanding, limited good water supplies, and limited wealth because of heavy taxation. Yet, He had the courage and conviction to say, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Mat. 6:25). This phrase, "take no thought" is elsewhere rendered "do not be anxious," which seems to further capture His message. Three times in this context He encourages them to not give in to anxiety (Mat. 6:25,31,34). In verse 34 He says, "Take therefore no thought [do not be anxious] for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Jesus is not implying that Christians should not use an intelligent and thoughtful approach concerning the future. The assurance of the future is contained in His message of life. This is the message we must preach. This is the preaching God demands. As support for this claim, please note His parable recorded in Luke 14. Jesus says that a man who does not count the cost is foolish indeed. If a man intends to build a tower, or if we intend to build a lifetime, we must sit down and count the cost. Sincere concern and honest planning are not seen in the same light as doubt and anxiety. This is the message of the Christian life we must preach.

As we preach lessons on the Christian life, we must impress upon our hearers' minds several points. As we now proceed let us con-

sider each of these in turn. First, as we preach lessons on the Christian life we need to impress on our hearers the fact that Christ has promised certain blessings, one of which is His presence. Much speculation and discussion has been made over the generations concerning the presence of Christ in Christians. However, He was quite plain when He said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). Even in the darkest of nights Christ is with us as He has always been with His children. As Paul was surrounded by wickedness in the city of Corinth, Jesus spoke to him "by a vision" saying, "Be not afraid...For I am with" (Acts 18:9-10). The abiding presence of the Savior enabled Paul to cope with the situation and not be broken by it. In a sense, many of our religious friends have attempted to institutionalize Christ into a building or to see Him as an article of clothing to be put on or cast off, however, Christianity is the presence of Christ.

Second, as we preach lessons on the Christian life we also need to impress on our hearers the fact that Christ has promised His pardon. The greatest single cause of anxiety might be unresolved guilt. Our grieving over sin has long been a cause of alarm in the body of Christ. Yet, here is the good news of the gospel: "If we confess *our* sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Furthermore, John adds, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

As a man after God's own heart, David often wrote of his anxious moments brought about by sin. In Psalm 6:6-7, he penned these words, "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief." What David is referencing is that he was drowning in his own guilt. He would later write, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice" (Psa. 51:7-8). And, that is exactly what the Lord did for the king and exactly what He will also do for any repentant Christian.

Third, as we preach lessons on the Christian life we also need to impress on our hearers the fact that Christ has promised His provisions. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and

that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16). The penman of the Hebrew letter adds, “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). My friend, if Jesus made everything by the power of God, if He upholds everything with that self-same power, we must with certainty realize that He can take care of us. If He can hold the earth, moon, and stars in their rightful place, can He not hold our lives together? By faith we know that Christ can supply all needed provisions. Paul says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to *his* riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:19). He never promised luxury, but He always promised provisions. Peter reminds us that He has given us “all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Christ will supply our needs and give us life eternal. He may stop the raging storm around our lives, or He may let the storm rage to calm our lives, but He will provide. This is the preaching God demands. This is preaching the Christian life.

Fourth, as we preach lessons on the Christian life we also need to impress on our hearers the fact that Christ has promised His purpose for us. Paul says, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). My friend, Christians have a purpose. A purpose that is far beyond the normal. Through Christ we know another life and another world, and, we do not live for this time only, but for eternity. We have a purpose, and that purpose is to glorify God. Whatever we do, say, think, or dream, it should bring God glory and our lives purpose.

For many, earthly possessions seem to be all there is. Their purpose is contained in what they put on their back or into their pocket. However, even if one could acquire an abundance of wealth, the Christian knows there is a higher and more noble purpose to life. This is the life Christ promotes. This is the life a Christian seeks. This is the message God demands.

Fifth, as we preach lessons on the Christian life we also need to impress on our hearers the fact that Christ has promised His peace and protection. In John 13 Jesus begins to draw comfort and under-

standing into the hearts of His disciples. He had taught them the lesson of humility that they would all need (John 13:4ff) and revealed the intention of Judas, and then He says, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13:33). Then He powerfully proclaims, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Peter asks, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" (John 13:37), and to comfort Peter Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). From here Jesus continues to draw a mental picture of the comfort He affords His true disciples. When we get to verse 27 we hear Him say, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

There is an ancient truism which seems appropriate here. It states, "The wicked are like a troubled sea which cannot rest." However, our Lord spoke that truth centuries before to His prophet. "***There is*** no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22). Our preaching and our example must show the world that true peace is found only in the Lord and His kingdom. We are simply walking a war-torn pathway outside His protection. Jesus said that we cannot serve God and mammon (Mat. 6:24); in other words, we cannot serve God and self.

I remember attending a county fair as a youth and being most impressed with the side-shows. In one tent there was a display of many of the oddities of life. One such oddity was a two-headed snake. I especially remember when a scrap of meat was thrown into the cage for the snake's dinner. Both heads tried to wrest the meat from the other, not realizing that if one head died so would the other. Many people appear to have assumed the character of a two-headed snake. They fight all the time within themselves. But Paul said Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14) and furthermore he adds (remember the two-headed snake) that Christ has "made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition ***between us.***" Part of the life-message of Christ is that He desires to give us peace and protection. And listen closely to what Paul says in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds

through Christ Jesus.” This is the message we must preach. This is the life Christ affords. This is what God demands.

The critics of the Christian life are quite verbose when they question the true value of Christians on society. Their claim is that since Christians build all their hope on heaven, they are not of use to the world. Well, in a sense we accept their questioning. However, the life which Christ promotes is a life for now and for later. In Matthew 19, we find Jesus promising a blessing in this life as well as a blessing concerning eternity. He says that if we give up things in this life (i.e., houses, brethren, sisters, etc.) we shall receive them back “an hundredfold” (Mat. 19:29). For some it is difficult to understand how a Christian can receive an hundredfold return of brothers and sisters, or fathers and mothers, but the principle of the teaching cannot be missed. Though the critics scoff, Christians realize Christ is making promises concerning this life.

Now, some are wont to say that Christ’s promise includes a wonderful spouse and obedient children, but a Christian can be successful in spiritual things without being married or having children. Others claim that these promises are capsuled into health and wealth, but again, unhealthy or poor Christians can be productive in their Christian endeavors. Therefore, consider these points which will combat those who attack Christ’s promise of the Christian life.

First, Christians have a Father who will never forsake them. There are many children in every generation who grow up without a father. But all Christians have a heavenly Father who watches every step we take and keeps a careful eye on our every move. Because of that we echo the words of Paul, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:14). We are even taught by Christ to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Mat. 6:9). John reminds us of our Father’s love when he writes, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1). Yes, Christians have a Father who will never forsake them.

Second, Christians also have a family that will never disown them. As long as I have a desire to be part of God’s family, the family has a desire to be a part of me. We alluded to Ephesians 3:14 a moment ago. Paul said, “I bow my knees unto the Father.” He continues in

the next verse saying, “Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:15). You see, God has a family. Part of that family has gone on to Paradise, but another part remains in this world waiting for Christ’s return. And at that time there will be a glad reunion and a going home like man has never seen. Paul tells us of this reunion of departed saints and remaining saints in First Thessalonians 4:17. He writes, “Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Third, Christians have forgiveness that knows no limits. Paul is referring to Christ and says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). Throughout the Bible it seems the story is always the same. People sin, seek forgiveness, and are returned to covenant relations with the Father. We, too, have forgiveness available to us through the grace of Jesus Christ. The good news of the gospel is no matter how terribly we sin, we can be forgiven. John says, “If we confess *our* sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). In the next chapter John further tells us that this forgiveness is “for his name’s sake” (1 John 2:12).

Finally, Christians have a future that knows no end. Many people in our world would give everything they have to have a future. Men and women search the world over to find what Christians are afforded in Christ. We are told, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Our future with Christ will be everlasting and without discomfort of any sort. Like Paul says in Philipians 1:23, we are in a “strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” Like Paul, we ought to live as long as we can upon this earth and do as much for the cause of Christ as we can while here, but this world is not our home, we are just passing through. We have a future, a future secured by the precious blood of Jesus and offered by the amazing grace of the Father. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorrup-

tion, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:52-54).

CONCLUSION

My brethren, the reason we preach the Christian life is because this is what God demands. But not only is this demanded by God, it is also the only way to reach the lost with the message of salvation. You see, life is what the Lord wants to supply us with. The life Christ wants to supply us with is not a dream or an illusion. It is not something that is sought but never found. Jesus said that we “shall know the truth” and that the truth “shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Once upon a time a man took his son to the far corner of their farm and there they planted a tree. The father told the son that if in the future he ever needed to think and reflect, that in the shade of this tree would be a good place to do it. Years passed and the young boy grew old. His parents had died, his business had failed, his life seemed in shambles, so he decided to go back to his home place and sit under the shade of that tree and reflect. With eager anticipation he drove back home. With baited breath he ran to the far corner of the old farm place. But to his dismay the tree was not there. No one had cared for it and it had died.

Oh, the illusions of life. We think of how life is going to continue without something to hold it together. Jesus is the binding agent that will hold our lives together. He said, “I come that you might have life.”

Francis Scott Key is the author of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” But Mr. Key also wrote others songs and poems as well. Later he penned these insightful words, “Nothing but Christ can give us the victory. Not ‘til we believe that He is our Lord. None will be safe from evil allurements. Not ‘til we believe and trust on His word.” My friend, please allow these words and Scriptures to fill you with courage and conviction. To preach the Christian life you must be sold on the Christian life. May God richly bless us all in that effort.

PREACHING ON HEAVEN AND HELL

Mel Futrell



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INTRODUCTION

The topics of Heaven and Hell are some of the most misunderstood matters in our society and in the Lord's church. For that reason, if for no other, we are justified in commencing this brief study.

A 1991 survey of teenagers (ages 13-17), by the George Gallup International Institute asked these questions:

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS A HEAVEN WHERE PEOPLE WHO
HAVE LED GOOD LIVES ARE ETERNALLY REWARDED?

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS A HELL WHERE THE WICKED ARE
PUNISHED?¹

The survey revealed that 91% of the respondents expressed a belief in Heaven, while only 76%, of the same group mind you, expressed a belief in Hell.² Interestingly, a November 1990 survey conducted among Americans by *U. S. News & World Report* and the Gallup Organization found that only 78% of Americans say they believe in Heaven and only 60% say they believe in Hell.³ Please note the chart below that breaks down the respondents into categories by gender, age, and religious or non-religious affiliation.

BELIEVERS IN 1990

	Heaven	Hell
Total	78%	60%
Men	74%	59%
Women	81%	61%
Ages 18-29	84%	71%
Ages 30-49	78%	61%
Ages 50 and up	74%	54%
Protestant	84%	66%
Catholic	81%	57%
Evangelical	91%	80%
No religion	46%	36%
Attend church	87%	67%
Nonmembers	62%	48% ⁴

I must admit to being taken back a bit by the results of all this data. However, as intriguing as it may or may not be, our purpose in and for this study propels us forward.

It is important that New Testament Christians have at least a fundamental understanding about preaching Heaven and Hell. To facilitate this, we will briefly consider first, what it means to preach Heaven and Hell. Second, why the need for preaching Heaven and Hell. And third, some abuses concerning Heaven and Hell.

WHAT IT MEANS TO PREACH HEAVEN AND HELL

A statement from the *Baptist Messenger* appearing just a few years ago will serve to introduce our thoughts.

We have raised a generation of sissy preachers. Nobody, it seems, is preaching that the Word of God is the Word of God and that Hell is hot. God has not called us to be ambassadors of good will; he has called us to be ambassadors of God's will.⁵

Although this remark was directed at Baptists from a Baptist, it represents what we also should be saying. If we are to truly be ambassadors of God's will we MUST preach that Hell exists, it awaits the wicked, and that it is HOT! As Christians, we trace our belief in Hell to the Bible. So, what does it mean to preach Hell?

In commencing a study of this sort, it is always best to begin by defining terms. We will start with the word Hell. In this manuscript we are thinking of *Gehenna* when speaking of Hell. The word *Gehenna* occurs twelve times in the Greek New Testament (Mat. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; and Jam. 3:6). *Gehenna* (Hell) took its name after the desolate valley of Hennom, south of Jerusalem, where trash fires burned and where human

sacrifices were performed. “Gehenna became among the Jews the synonym for the place of torment in the future life.”⁶ The late brother David Lipscomb offered this fine comment when responding to a question on the meaning of Hell fire:

The word Gehenna is found 12 times in the Greek Testament, always rendered hell and used to signify future punishment. Gehenna is the name given to a valley near Jerusalem, in which the god Moloch once was worshipped, even among the Jews, in which children were burned alive in sacrifice to this imaginary deity; and this gave the Jews a horrible idea of the place. Afterwards all manner of filth and dead bodies from the city and round about were cast into this valley. And then, to avoid the unhealthful and disagreeable odors arising therefrom, fires were kept always burning to continually destroy this odor and filth. So this word Gehenna, the name of this valley, came to represent the place of future punishment of the wicked.⁷

The biblical facts regarding Hell are these. First, all who have any respect for the Bible know that it speaks of a place called Hell (*Gehenna*), a place of suffering which is reserved for the wicked. Yet, the experience of this life tells us that barely half of the American public believes in Hell, a lake of fire, the second death, or the punishment of the wicked in the world to come. It would appear a “universalists” spirit is abroad. But the Bible, the law of God, says differently. Indeed, the very idea of law implies a penalty for breaking that law. And that ultimate penalty is Hell itself. The fact remains that adequate punishment for the wicked is not inflicted in this life. Thus, “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment” (2 Pet. 2:9; ASV). Again, hear the Scriptures, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7). Now, in summary and to further impress upon you the nature of Hell, consider that Hell is a place of pain, trouble, and sorrow (Psa. 116:3), shame and contempt (Dan. 12:2), affliction (Jon. 2:2), punishment (Mat. 25:46; Heb. 10:29; 2 Pet. 2:9), torment (Luke 16:23-25; Rev. 20:10), and suffering (2 The. 1:9; ASV).⁸

Second, the Scriptures affirm Hell is eternal or everlasting in its duration. Jesus Christ said,

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-44).

The fact that Hell is eternal is demonstrated by the recurring phrase, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-48). Please be reminded that men often object to this biblical aspect of Hell by touting, “can it be possible that the sins committed in a finite state can have an infinite punishment? Or can it be possible that the sins committed in this limited space of time should incur a punishment of unlimited duration?”⁹ Does the time employed in the accomplishment of sin have anything to do with the duration of the punishment? Surely even common sense tells us it does not. And no judge nor jury to my knowledge dwells on the time it takes to perpetuate a crime when determining the length of the sentence. Contrary to this “short-crime, short-time” mentality, the Bible pronounces an eternal, everlasting, forever chronology to the fires of Hell prepared for the wicked. Two verses that best express the eternal nature of Hell are Matthew 25:41 and 46. In verse 41, the Lord calls the fire into which the wicked shall be cast, “everlasting fire.” And in verse 46, He says of the unrighteous, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Of interest here is the fact that the duration of the fire and the punishment is the same as the duration of the life of the righteous—“life eternal” (v. 46). The same Greek word *aionion* is used of the punishment and the reward. The fact that the King James Version, in verse 46, uses two words, everlasting and eternal to translate the same Greek word does not change the argument.

Third, nothing could be clearer in Scripture than the teaching that consignment to Hell means eternal separation from God. That thought alone should be motivation enough to, “lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12). The proof-text of just such a separation is found in Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 which reads:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

What a vivid description and what a horrifying prospect to be banished from the presence of God. Don't let the word destruction in the phrase, “destruction from the presence of the Lord” fool you. The idea of annihilation is not present in the word, but the idea of exclusion is (see the RSV rendering) as evidenced in the context with the expression, “from the presence of the Lord.” It is not only this passage

that teaches us that separation is a feature of punishment but also the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:23 and Matthew 25:41. In Matthew 7:23, Jesus foresees saying, “depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” And in Matthew 25:41 are the familiar words: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

One just cannot preach Hell without stressing the suffering, the separation, and the endlessness it entails. In the following remarks on Heaven, we are not suggesting that there is one way and only one way to preach Heaven. But certainly all would agree that what the Bible has to say about the theme of Heaven should form, and in fact must form, the basis for any and all preaching on this topic.

As with our comments on Hell, here too we begin by defining terms. Our word Heaven, from the Greek word “*ouranos*,” occurs 284 times (94 in the plural) in the New Testament. It is most common in Matthew (84 times) and Revelation (54).¹⁰ W. E. Vine said the word was “probably akin to *ornumi*, to lift, to heave.”¹¹ When speaking of Heaven, naturally we are not speaking of where the birds fly (Mat. 6:26; Luke 9:58), nor where the celestial bodies hang (Psa. 19:1-6), but of the eternal dwelling place of God. Deuteronomy 4:39 reads thusly: “Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the LORD he *is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is* none else.”

Jesus is said of Peter to have, “gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Pet. 3:22). And Jesus while on the earth said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Mat. 6:9).

Brother Wayne Jackson wrote, “Heaven is a topic that people frequently talk and sing about, but there is very little Bible-based discussion on the subject.”¹² Some of the biblical facts regarding Heaven are these. First, Heaven is a place that has been promised and prepared. One writer has asked: “What is heaven? Is heaven a fantasy, a state of mind, a dream, an invention of the clergy? No! Heaven is a real place.”¹³ And so it is, as evidenced by the Scriptures themselves. Brethren, Heaven, the dwelling place of God, is a promised place for a prepared people. In His sermon on the mount our Lord said:

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding

glad: for great *is* your reward in **heaven**: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mat.5:11-12).

The apostle remarked in Colossians 1:5, “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Listen to Peter’s remarkable declaration, “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). Also listen to what are probably the most familiar words regarding Heaven, the language of Jesus in John 14:1-4.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

So Heaven is indeed promised, prepared, and reserved.

Second, Heaven is a place of eternal life. Matthew 25:46 reads, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Just as Hell is eternal and everlasting, so is Heaven. But the former is reserved for the cursed (Mat. 25:41) and the latter for the blessed (Mat. 25:34). If we will allow the never-ending connotation of the word eternal to roll around in our heads a bit, this should be motivation enough to “fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Third, Heaven is a place that is and will be occupied. In other words, brethren, who is there and who is going to be there? God will be there—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mat. 6:9; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rom. 8:26). The faithful angels will be there. In our Lord’s rebuke of the Sadducees in Matthew chapter 22, He said in verses 29 and 30: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” Those who have died safe or innocent will be in Heaven; certainly this includes children. Matthew recorded these words in 19:14. “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And think of the children that will be there because of the sin of abortion! Whose mother’s wombs became tombs and thus, canceled any opportunity those precious ones had for growth and productivity in this life (Psa. 127:3-5). Also, the faithful of all ages will be there, brethren. Jesus said in Matthew 8:11: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,

in the kingdom of heaven.” John was clear when he said those “which die **in the Lord**” will be in heaven (Rev. 14:13). It has been very well stated that, “Heaven is a place for those who have pursued the path of obedience” (Heb. 5:9).¹⁴

Fourth, Heaven will be a place of recognition. Brother Guy N. Woods wrote, “On this theme the Scriptures abound with evidence of the clearest and most convincing character.”¹⁵ Make no mistake about it, our memories will be retained after death, taken with us into eternity. Thus, recognition will be a reality. This is a wonderfully comforting thought to those who have lost a child early on and know the pain of that loss. Hear the words of King David who knew the loss of a seven-day-old child.

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. (2 Sam.12:22-23).

Without a doubt, David believed he would see his child again one day. Further evidence of recognition is available from Luke 16:19-31 and the case of the rich man and Lazarus. In verse 25, Abraham says to the once rich man, “Son, remember.” Consider the souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9-10. “These were: (a) personalities in the death state, (b) they had a consciousness of their surroundings, (c) they knew why they were there, (d) they had been murdered, (e) they were aware of the fact that their murderers had not yet been punished.”¹⁶

We sing, “Heaven will surely be worth it all.” For that reason, what it means to preach Heaven is so important.

WHY THE NEED FOR PREACHING HEAVEN AND HELL

The responsibility of preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) of necessity lays upon us the need to preach Heaven and Hell. When was the last time you preached a sermon or heard a sermon preached on Hell? Would your congregation be stunned to hear a sermon on Hell? I don’t want to over generalize; but, by some accounts, preaching Hell has all but disappeared from our pulpits. Why should we preach Hell? Allow me to suggest a number of reasons.

First, we should preach Hell because many do not believe Hell exists. According to the survey shown below, over the last 40 years at least 40% of the population has always denied the existence of Hell.

PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS WHO SAY THEY BELIEVE IN

	Heaven	Hell
1990	78%	60%
1981	71%	53%
1965	68%	54%
1952	72%	58% ¹⁷

Unfortunately, many well-educated people today view God solely as compassionate and loving to the extent they deny He will punish anyone with eternal damnation. Thus, there could be no place as Hell. But the Bible makes it clear that Hell is real and that God has prepared it for certain ones (Mat. 25:41). In attempting to reach these individuals, one should stress passages such as Romans 11:22, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God”; Second Corinthians 5:11, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men”; and Hebrews 12:29, “For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

Second, one cannot fully appreciate the majesty of Heaven until he has considered its horrifying flipside, Hell. Only the two possibilities exist. Our Lord said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mat. 25:46).

Third, we must preach Hell because salvation demands that we reflect upon that which we have been saved from. Peter spoke of “Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls” (1 Pet. 1:9). Jesus declared, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). It is true Peter spoke of salvation in the eternal sense and Jesus in Mark 16:16 in the sense of salvation from sin. But the latter necessarily leads to the former. Paul said, “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Salvation itself demands the preaching of Hell.

Fourth, if we fail to preach Hell the unrepentant may view continuing in sin as less risky. So there is motivational value in preaching Hell. If we preach Hell just maybe some will review their lives and make efforts to be saved and avoid this place of torment (Luke 16:23). Some would call this “preaching from the fear factor.” Be that as it may, we believe this motivational method to be biblical. Brother Tom Holland expressed it like this:

Granted, some people decry the use of fear as a legitimate motive in salvation. But GOD who created man and who understands the psychology of man has employed the fear motive. When Jesus said “repent or perish” (Luke 13:3) did He not employ the fear technique? When Peter, by

inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declared, “repent or perish” (2 Pet. 3:9), did he not also use the fear motive?¹⁸

I might add that the motivational value of preaching Hell is not limited to the lost. If and when Christians understand that people are lost (John 4:34-35) and headed for Hell, then they should be motivated to preach the gospel to all the world (Mark 16:15). Paul wrote, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11).

Fifth, we should preach Hell because of the false teaching that abounds on the subject. Catholics have their purgatory. Hinduism has its belief in reincarnation, where Hell is just one stage in the career of the soul. And some of our own brethren have reduced the eternal punishment of Hell to nothing more than annihilation. These will be covered in more detail in a later section.

Likewise, there are sound reasons that can be listed establishing the need for preaching Heaven. Consider just a few.

First, Heaven will one day be our home. Jesus Christ speaking to His apostles in John 14:1-4 said,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

He speaks here of His Father’s house having many mansions. And it is these mansions that will one day serve as our home. Robertson wrote concerning the word mansions:

Old word from *meno*, to abide, abiding places, in New Testament only here and verse 23. There are many resting-places in the Father’s house (*oikia*). Christ’s picture of heaven here is the most precious one that we possess. It is our heavenly home with the Father and with Jesus.¹⁹

Brother Guy N. Woods recorded this fine statement,

“Many Mansions” emphasizes the roomy aspect of that future abode. The Greek phrase thus translated signifies many rooms. The meaning is that there will be ample provision for all; not one will be left out who by diligent effort prepares for the heavenly abode.²⁰

What a beautiful picture is painted here by the Lord. And what a tragedy to neglect to share this Heavenly description with others by means of preaching. Truly we sing, “If Heaven’s not my home, then Lord what will I do.” I found it interesting how other English translations and paraphrases rendered the word (*monai*).

mansions—KJV, NKJV, ASV, The Living Oracles

rooms—NIV, RSV, McCord's
 homes—Living Bible Paraphrased
 abiding places—ESB
 dwelling places—NEB

Second, there is a real need for preaching Heaven because of some erroneous views that circulate in religious circles concerning Heaven. Consider the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination (cult) believe only 144,000 will ever inherit Heaven. Within our own ranks, there have arisen some promoting the A.D. 70 theory, which implies we are now in Heaven. Worse yet, the proponents of this heresy actually claim they are presently in Heaven. These two views are indeed matters of fellowship. Other brethren have argued that John 14:2 is not a reference to Heaven but to the church. Still others have held that the spirit of the righteous person passes directly to Heaven upon death. These latter two views have traditionally not been matters of fellowship among us, and will not be discussed herein.

Third, we should preach Heaven because apparently a good block of America does not believe it exists. If you will recall we noted earlier that in a 1990 survey only 78% of the respondents expressed a belief in Heaven. Among those having no religious affiliation, only 46% believe it exists. These figures are sad at best. They impress upon us, especially those of us who preach the Gospel, the real need for preaching Heaven as the home of the soul.

In Bible times, the Jewish group known as the Sadducees denied there would be a bodily resurrection, and angels and spirits (Acts 23:8). This may imply that the Sadducees denied Heaven itself. Brethren, if we fail to preach that Heaven exists as a prepared place for a prepared people, how do you suppose folks will ever gain this eternal knowledge? Surely it would be appropriate to ask, when was the last time you preached a sermon or heard a sermon preached on Heaven?

ABUSES CONCERNING HEAVEN AND HELL

In November 1930, Albert Einstein wrote, "Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death."²¹ This statement represents an abusive attitude toward the biblical declarations about Heaven and Hell. In reality, it is a denial of their existence. It is even more unfortunate when this attitude is manifested in action. Einstein had his "cosmic religious feeling," "which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's

image; so that there can be no church whose central teachings are based on it.”²² But we have the God-breathed (*theopneustos*) Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Abuses relating to Heaven and Hell abound in the “religious world” to such an extent that an entire volume could be devoted to just a review of these alone. Such is not possible or intended here, but in our limited space we will endeavor to touch upon just a few of the many abuses.

In Roman Catholicism, the possibility of hell for the wicked remains on the doctrinal books. But according to modern teachings, few souls are likely to end up there. Since the 1960s, when a spirit of ecumenism took hold of the church at the Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology has emphasized the potential for all souls ultimately to make it to heaven—although many first may have to spend time in purgatory, a temporary lodging where sinners are rehabilitated.²³

“The idea of purgatory—a place separate from hell where sinners unfit for heaven are rehabilitated became part of church teaching in the sixth century.”²⁴ It was in fact Gregory I in A.D. 593, who first expressed this doctrine. The Council of Trent said of this doctrine:

There is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavor that the sound doctrine concerning purgatory, transmitted by the holy fathers and sacred councils, be believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ.²⁵

James Cardinal Gibbons made clear Catholic teaching on this when he wrote:

The Catholic Church teaches that, besides a place of eternal torments for the wicked and of everlasting rest for the righteous, there exists in the next life a middle state of temporary punishment, allotted for those who have died in venial sin, or who have not satisfied the justice of GOD for sins already forgiven.²⁶

Essentially, Catholics do believe in an intermediate state—it just doesn’t happen to correspond with the intermediate state affirmed in Scripture, the Hadean realm (see Acts 2:27; Luke 23:43; 16:19-31; and 2 Pet. 2:4). Purgatory is to the Catholic, a place (some would prefer to call it a “state of being”) where one will “undergo penal and purifying suffering. The only exceptions to this are Catholic saints, the Christian martyrs, and those who die immediately after baptism.”²⁷

Now, what would we say in response to all this? The apostle Peter spoke of being “ready always to *give* an answer [defense]” (1 Pet. 3:15). Consider just a few answers to this old problem: First, contrary

to the claims of the Council of Trent, the doctrine of Purgatory is not a “sound doctrine.” Nowhere do the Scriptures ever speak of Purgatory or anything akin to it. The thief on the cross was not told that he would go to Purgatory, but rather our Lord said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

In May 1952, brother Eldred Stevens powerfully refuted the many errors of Catholicism (including Purgatory) promoted by Dr. Eric Beevers. Just a sample from the debate will suffice to make our point.

The Catholic Church has borrowed superstitions from every body of superstitious belief on earth, and admits such! I'll give you that in just a minute. No agnus dei, no scapulars, no penance, no inquisition, NO PURGATORY, [emph., MF] no lent, no ashes, no mass, no relics, no monasteries, no beads, no images, no tonsure, no confessional, no demand that one must not eat meat on Friday, no lined chalice, no infant baptism, no stamped bread, no archbishops, no sub-deacons, no metropolitans, no modern bishops, no treasury of merit, no blessing of distilleries, no instrumental music, no intercession of “saints,” no fasting before communion, no miraculous medals, no praying to Mary, no consecrated cemeteries, no withholding cup, no parochial system, no clergy or laity, and 1000 other things.

Now then, I want to know—if you were to take these things out of the Roman Catholic Church, what would you have left? You take these out of the Roman Catholic Church and what would you have left? He says that church (pointing at list of Catholic practices), the Catholic Church, is the one established by Jesus. I must deny it! because when I study the church that was established by Jesus, I can see none of these things that constitute all of the distinguishing marks of Roman Catholicism.²⁸

There is simply no authority from the word of GOD for the doctrine of Purgatory. Second, it implies that GOD is not capable of completely forgiving sins (Mark 2:7). Remember that Cardinal Gibbons said Purgatory existed for those “who have not satisfied the justice of GOD for sins already forgiven.” But GOD said, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12). So who are we going to believe—GOD or Gibbons? You know the answer to that. Third, according to Catholicism, Purgatory exists as sort of a second chance arena, where some sins will be forgiven.

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.²⁹

It should be obvious to all that these folks have totally missed the point of our Lord's words in Matthew 12:32. Furthermore, the two ages spoken of there represent the Jewish and Christian dispensations. "Nothing in this passage implies that one may receive forgiveness after death for sins which were not forgiven during life."³⁰

The religious system known as Hinduism has an inherent belief in reincarnation. And in accordance with this, as noted earlier, Hell then is nothing more than "one stage in the career of a soul as it passes from one life to the next."³¹ Unlike the one Hell of the Bible, Hinduism has 21 hells which serve as temporary abodes for bad karma. Under the karma system of Hinduism there is no Judgment day or final abode in *Gehenna* Hell. Standing in stark contrast to this is the teaching of the New Testament, where Hell is not a temporary stop, like one would make on a vacation, but rather a place of permanent punishment. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mat. 25:46). As Christians we trace our belief in Hell to the words of Jesus—not Dante, Luther, Calvin, or Hinduists. And Jesus said "everlasting," not temporary.

As far as abuses of Hell go, maybe the saddest and most disappointing development has been within our own brotherhood. Some within the church (i.e., Edward Fudge and F. LaGard Smith and others) have through their writings and speeches reduced the eternal punishment of Hell to nothing more than annihilation (extinction).³² Perhaps some more information concerning annihilationism would be appropriate here. The current debate over this matter did not originate with us, for several decades now the matter has been disputed among Protestant denominational groups. The two schools of thought are first, those with the biblical view (referred to as the traditional view by the opposite side) who hold that the torment of Hell is everlasting. And second, those that contend that rather than suffering eternally, the disobedient will simply be put out of existence in the "consuming fire" of Hell. So the lines have been drawn and it falls to us to choose the biblical side. Frankly, it amazes me that anyone could accept the annihilationists' position. Its absurdity, contradictory nature, and denial of clear New Testament passages makes it, in my eyes, totally unbelievable. One "theologian" has said, "A God who would do such a thing (that is, punish eternally) is more nearly like Satan than like God."³³ But I'm wondering how one who denies eternal punishment

and a God who would send people there could ever affirm the existence of Satan. It seems to me that with such a position, our “theologian” has thrown everything out the window. There are some problems with this particular abuse.

First, it disregards by several means the plain teaching of Scripture that certain ones will experience eternal punishment. Brother Wayne Jackson has written: “Mind you, Jesus could not have been plainer about the fact that ungodly men will go into ‘eternal punishment’” (Mat. 25:46; cf., 2 The. 1:9).³⁴ Brethren, if human language means anything at all then these verses and many more like them (see Luke 16:23-24; 1 Pet. 4:17-18; Rev. 21 8; etc.), must be accepted at face value. What other language could our Lord have selected to make Himself clearer than He has?

Second, the proponents of annihilationism point to our Lord’s admonition to His disciples in Matthew 10:28 as a proof-text of their position. In this verse Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” It seems to me that there is an apparent misunderstanding on the part of these folks of the word “destroy” as it occurs here. One Christian writer has correctly put it like this:

Destroy is not equivalent to annihilate. Rather than encouraging materialism, this passage teaches that the soul does not die with the body. The devil has the power of death (Heb. 2:14) but rather than being feared is to be resisted (Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9).³⁵

The word “destroy” is from *apollymi* and is defined by the lexicons as to destroy, lose, be lost, perish.³⁶ By implication, these annihilationists are denying the immortality of the soul. But the statement of our Lord, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Mat. 25:46), could hardly be said of those who do not exist. Brethren, to tell the unrepentant that the worst they can expect is annihilation is to water-down Hell and make sinning appear less risky.

Heaven, likewise, suffers abuse from time to time at the hands of some religionists. Please consider a few of the abuses of Heaven. The Jehovah’s Witnesses cult has abused many Scriptures. Ranking high among those abuses is their bold claim that, “the final number of the heavenly church will be 144,000, according to God’s decree.”³⁷ Thus, in one swipe these folks have cemented a literal interpretation upon a highly figurative text. Revelation chapters 7 and 14 contain the only

references to the 144,000 and as just mentioned, the number is employed here in a figurative fashion. We can prove this by simply appealing to the contexts in which this numeral appears. If the 144,000 is to be taken literally, consider what must follow.

First, no Gentile will be in that number for the 144,000 was limited to “the tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev. 7:4). “This would exclude Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who were never of the tribes of Israel. And yet, that conflicts with Jesus’ affirmation that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be in the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 8:11).”³⁸ Second, if taken literally some tribes won’t be represented in Heaven because they are excluded in the listing (such as Ephraim and Dan). Also what about the mention of “the tribe of Joseph” in verse 8? There is no tribe of Joseph mentioned in the Old Testament record. This should highlight to any objective reader the figurative nature of this section of Scripture. Third, those who contend that the 144,000 is a literal number must also literalize the “great multitude” that “stood before the throne, and before the Lamb” of verse 9. What kind of hermeneutic is it that picks the 144,000 and passes over the great multitude who stands with them? This buffet-style of interpretation always leads to erroneous conclusions about particular verses. Fourth, if the 144,000 is to be literally interpreted, what about the tongues, throne, lamb, robes, and hands of verse 9? Fifth, if pressed literally, the 144,000 could only be composed of virgin males according to Revelation 14:4. Sixth, Revelation chapter 14 also alludes to a lamb, Mount Zion, written on foreheads, thunder, harps and harpers, four beasts, elders, mouths, the throne, etc. Again, are all these to be taken literally? If not, why not?

Brethren, Heaven is not, nor will it ever be, confined to a number of 144,000 persons only. To all the faithful is promised an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11).

While on the theme of the abuses of Heaven a few words must be said about those who have arisen in our own ranks promoting the A.D. 70 theory, which implies that we are now in Heaven. Believe it or not, the proponents of this heresy actually claim they are presently in Heaven. A more perverted conclusion could hardly be generated. The “realized eschatology” heresy of Max King and his followers with its “right now in Heaven” conclusion takes absurdity to a new level. In his Spring 1994 debate with A.D. 70 advocate Don Preston, brother Bill

Lockwood continually challenged Preston, “to cite one passage which assures him he will have anything after death different than what he already possesses in this life.”³⁹ Brother Stephen Wiggins in reviewing the debate said,

The reason for such a challenge was to expose the Kingite pretensions they make pertaining to Bible prophecy. They assert that all predictive prophecy is already fulfilled, having culminated in A.D. 70 at the fall of Jerusalem. Their contention is that no one single passage in the Bible predicts anything about the future. Thus, per the Kingite twaddle, the righteous have already entered the portals of heaven.⁴⁰

Now brethren, this is no little matter for if we are now in Heaven, then we have absolutely no hope for anything, whatsoever, after death.

Preston attempted to meet Lockwood’s challenge by quoting Revelation 14:13 which says, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” What Preston either didn’t know or failed to remember was that he was contradicting his mentor Max by appealing to Revelation 14:13.

Lockwood took the passage from him by showing that daddy Max maintains the dying in this passage refers, not to physical death, but to a “Laborious dying” which “represents a period of labor that is consummated in the fall of Babylon” (i.e., the fall of Jerusalem, SW, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ, 604*). Thus per daddy King, Revelation 14 has not a solitary thing to do with rest following physical death.⁴¹

What proof do these advocates of realized eschatology offer for their claim of being in Heaven? Well, according to Lockwood and Wiggins, “Preston repeatedly cited Ephesians 2:6 for proof.”⁴² Ephesians 2:6 says, “And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.” “Lockwood easily answered this hallucination, however, by pointing out that Ephesians was written prior to A.D. 70 when the Lord supposedly returned in his 2nd coming and the righteous entered heaven.”⁴³ Of course, brethren, such an interpretation of Ephesians 2:6 and especially the phrase, “in heavenly places,” that makes this phrase mean Heaven itself, ignores the context and butchers the book. It is true that our citizenship is in Heaven (Phi. 3:20), but we are not now in Heaven. “Heavenly” is used here by Paul in respect to locality and that locality is in Christ, His spiritual body. Brethren, the A.D. 70 theory is eat-up with error, but of all its errors, surely the Heaven argument takes the cake.

CONCLUSION

The above material is just a fraction of what could be said about preaching Heaven and Hell. Nonetheless, they must be preached. The topics of Heaven and Hell are far too important to soft-pedal, abuse, or neglect altogether. Yet sadly, that is exactly what is occurring. To the Christian, and especially the Christian preacher, Heaven and Hell remain as vital components of the preaching God demands.

ENDNOTES

- ¹George Gallup, *The Religious Life of Young Americans* (1992), Appendix 1.
- ²*Ibid.*
- ³Jeffrey L. Sheler, "Hell's Sober Comeback," *U. S. News & World Report*, March 25, 1991, p. 56.
- ⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁵Alan Highers, "Editorial: Who Are We?," *The Spiritual Sword* 26 (October 1994):2.
- ⁶*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2:1371.
- ⁷*Questions Answered*, ed. M. C. Kurfrees (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1974), pp. 306-307.
- ⁸Wayne Jackson, "Changing Attitudes Toward Hell," *Christian Courier*, October 1992, p. 22. This list is a modification of the list which is contained in this article.
- ⁹Ben Franklin, *The Gospel Preacher* (Cincinnati, OH: Franklin and Rice Publishers, 1869), p. 494.
- ¹⁰*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), Abridged in One Volume:739.
- ¹¹W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1981), 2:208.
- ¹²Wayne Jackson, "Heaven: The Eternal Home," *The Restorer*, April 1995, p. 6.
- ¹³John Stacy, *Sermons on Heaven and Hell* (Winona, MS: J. C. Choate Publications, 1977), p. 12.
- ¹⁴Jackson, *Restorer*, p. 6.
- ¹⁵Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers Open Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), p. 327.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹⁷Sheler, p. 56.
- ¹⁸Tom Holland, "The Lost Will Be In Hell," *The Spiritual Sword* 6 (April 1975):32.
- ¹⁹A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 2:248.
- ²⁰Woods, p. 50.
- ²¹Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1994), p. 42.
- ²²*Ibid.*, p. 41.
- ²³Jeffrey L. Sheler, "Revisiting the Abyss," *U. S. News & World Report*, March 25, 1991, p. 60.
- ²⁴"Hell's Roots in the Bible," *U. S. News & World Report*, March 25, 1991, p. 58.

²⁵*The Book of Catholic Quotations*, ed. John Chapin (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), p. 743.

²⁶*The Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy Co., 1895), p. 173.

²⁷Gary Workman, "Marks of Catholicism," *The Spiritual Sword* 23 (July 1992):36.

²⁸*Stevens-Beevers Debate on The New Testament and Roman Catholicism*, (Nashville, TN: Williams Publishing, 1953), pp. 169-170.

²⁹*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ed., The U.S. Catholic Conference (Washington DC: U. S. Catholic Conference, 1994), p. 269.

³⁰Workman, p. 37.

³¹Jeffrey L. Sheler, "Other Faiths, Other Hells," *U. S. News & World Report*, March 25, 1991, p. 64.

³²For a concise and informative refutation of the annihilationist's position see Wayne Jackson, "Changing Attitudes Toward Hell," *Christian Courier*, October 1992, pp. 21-22.

³³Sheler, "Revisiting the Abyss", p. 60.

³⁴Jackson, *Christian Courier*, p. 22.

³⁵Jack Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew Part I, The Living Word Commentary* (Abilene, TX: A. C. U. Press, 1984), p. 154.

³⁶Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Co., 1889), p. 64.

³⁷Wayne Jackson, *Select Studies Prom the Book of Revelation* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications, 1995), p. 45.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

³⁹Stephen Wiggins, "The Spring Debate," *The Panama Proclaimer*, Bulletin of the Panama Street Church of Christ, Montgomery, AL, Vol. 3, August 24, 1994.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

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JESUS CHRIST, THE MASTER PREACHER

Paul Sain



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INTRODUCTION

Christianity is a taught religion. Jesus commanded His disciples to **teach** all nations, baptize, and then the Lord admonished them to further **teach** them to observe the things commanded.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:19-20).

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

If we seek to learn concerning the value of, qualifications of, methods and subjects involved in preaching, then of necessity we must center our thoughts upon the Master Preacher, Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

Let the inspired Scriptures tell us about Jesus Christ: He is the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16); the "true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20); the "beloved Son" of Jehovah God (Mat. 3:17); a "teacher come from God" (John 3:2); the "author and finisher of *our* faith" (Heb. 12:2); "High Priest" (Heb. 3:1); "Holy One" (Acts 2:27); "Lord and Christ"

(Acts 2:36); a sinless person (Heb. 4:15); the “Alpha and Omega” (Rev. 1:8).

Why did the only begotten Son of God come to earth? Why would He leave the glory of heaven to come to this sinful, wicked place? “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat. 1:21). “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Little is known about our Lord’s childhood. We see a glimpse of the excellent guidance of His parents, when at age twelve He went into the temple with the doctors, listening and asking them questions (Luke 2:42-46). Baptized by John the immersed (Mark 1:9-11), He began His earthly ministry at the age of thirty (Luke 3:23).

JESUS CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE QUALITIES OF A PREACHER

In our preacher training schools (or individual courses available) the qualifications of the preacher is emphasized, as well it should. While obviously each person is unique, there are certain qualities that every preacher should possess. May I note a few of the qualities of our Lord:

1. **Sincere love for souls.** The great love of Jehovah God prompted the gift of His Son (John 3:16), and was demonstrated by Jesus in His painful, humiliating death on the cross (John 15:13). He loved the sinner and the saint, the rich and the poor.

2. **World-wide vision.** The Lord’s commission to His disciples was to go teach “every creature” or “all nations” (Mark 16:15; Mat. 28:19). Jesus wanted all men everywhere to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**” (2 Pet. 3:9). “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). He died for all (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

3. **All knowledge.** Jesus Christ had been given all authority in heaven and earth (Mat. 28:18) and thus taught with authority (Mat. 7:29). Never before had anyone spoken as the Lord (John 7:46).

4. **Complete knowledge of mankind.** Having been involved in creation (John 1:1-3,14), the Christ knew His subjects. He was fully aware of their power of choice, the temptations of the world, pressures from peers, etc.

5. **Practiced what He preached.** A vital quality of a preacher/teacher is to be pure and sincere. There cannot be hypocrisy (guile) found in him and be successful. Jesus lived what He preached, Jesus was without guile (1 Pet. 2:22).

JESUS CHRIST PREACHED WHEREVER TO WHOMEVER HE COULD

We are most familiar with the sermon our Lord delivered from the mount (Mat. 5-7). The Scriptures tell us, according to the information we have, He taught wherever He could to whomever He could.

Jesus taught in the temple (Luke 19:47), in the synagogue (Mat. 4:23), in homes of various people (John 3:1-2), at a well side (John 4), while passing through a grain field (Mark 2:23-28). He also taught while He was in a boat (Mat. 8:23) and from a desert place (Luke 9:10-11; Mark 6:34). Whether walking down a road or in temple, the Lord captured every moment to tell anyone and everyone of the way that leads to the heavenly eternal home.

The Master Preacher fervently desired to preach the “good news” everywhere. It was not necessary to plead with Him to preach. He did not require coercive action to get Him to tell of “God’s eternal purpose” to save obedient man. The Lord was intensively determined to declare the “unsearchable riches” (Eph. 3:8) to all with whom He crossed paths. Notice, according to the following passages, how much, where, and to whom He preached: “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done **in Capernaum**, do also here in thy country” (Luke 4:23). “And **he taught daily** in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him” (Luke 19:47).

The obvious lesson we learn from noticing the various places from which our Lord taught is that if we follow His example, we will seize every opportunity to preach, to any and all to whom we have opportunity to tell the old, old saving story of the cross of Christ.

METHODS UTILIZED BY JESUS CHRIST IN PREACHING/TEACHING

Our Lord was a balanced preacher. He was kind, loving and compassionate (Mark 6:34)—but not all the time. In many situations He was compassionate, loving, kind, and so tender. The common people heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37).

Our Lord was also aggressive and militant and thus condemned, denounced and exposed (Mat. 23:1-33)—but not all the time. He clearly emphasized that false teaching must be rooted up (Mat 15:13). He chastised the Jews (John 8:40-44). He rebuked the leading denominations of that day (Mat. 23), calling them hypocrites (seven times), blind guides (twice), fools and blind (twice), and further called them serpents and a generation of vipers.

Jesus Christ always spoke the truth. He possessed great tact (John 4:16-18). Knowing His subjects as He did, He was able to teach as they were able (or willing) to learn (Mark 6:34; John 16:12). He did not deny His students the power of choice. Those who chose to hear, “let him hear” (Rev. 2:7,11).

Jesus Christ preached what the people **needed** to hear. It was not always what they **wanted** to hear. The people of the first century (as well as everyone of our day) desperately needed to hear the truth, the saving powerful gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; Jam. 1:21f). “For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is **the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls**. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But **whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein**, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, **this man shall be blessed** in his deed (Jam. 1:21-25).

When it stepped on their toes, pricked their consciences, pulled at their mind and demanded a change—many may have “heard” what He said, but were unwilling to “listen” and obey.

We understand and accept this in other realms of our lives. **The doctor** may tell us the painful truth—a condition exists that cannot be cured, or maybe such is inoperable. We certainly would not **want** to hear this news, be we doubtless **needed** to know such, in order to receive medicine, treatment, etc. **The mechanic** may inform us of the condition of our automobile. Several hundred dollars may be necessary to repair it and make it roadworthy. Obviously, we did not **want** to hear that news, but we absolutely **needed** to hear it, for the safety of our family, and others on the road. **The lawyer** may counsel us concerning

a flaw in the deed to our house, and of the appropriate action necessary. We would not enjoy or **want** to hear these facts, but we **needed** to hear of this, to take the sensible action.

My father, Harold Sain, was well known for using “charts” (cloth, canvas, etc.) as he preached. It was an effective method of teaching the gospel of Christ. I personally enjoy preaching with the aid of an overhead projector. Some use flannel boards, poster boards, flip charts, slide projectors, etc. We should be constantly seeking ways of conveying the “old Jerusalem gospel” as long as we do not compromise, contaminate, or destroy the message. Whatever method or methods can be utilized (without violating the inspired instruction of God) should be used.

Our Lord was the Master Preacher, in every way, including the methods utilized. Jesus taught in sermons (Mat. 5-7). He frequently used illustrations (Mat. 18:1-3). He would often ask or answer questions of those to whom He was speaking (Mat. 21:23-27). He also lectured (Luke 6:20-49). Christ would tell stories or parables to emphasize the truths He taught (Luke 15:11-24; Mat. 13:34-35), or refer to those things familiar to His audience (Mat. 13:1-4). Our Lord used metaphors (Mat. 16:6,11), irony and satire (Luke 15:7; Mat. 7:6), the hyperbole (Mark 10:25; Mat. 19:24). He would create a problem in discussion with others and seek a solution (Luke 7:40-42). He would teach by referring to contemporary events (Luke 13:1-5) or He would allude to historical facts (Mat. 11:20-24), quoting over two hundred times from the Old Testament (directly or indirectly).

To specifically illustrate the principle method of the Lord’s teaching, notice how He taught the value of our hearing and obeying the Word of God.

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, **he spake by a parable**: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, **he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear**. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. **Now the parable is this**: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the

word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:4-15).

Jesus Christ taught, in a way understood by all, that we should love everyone, even those who are not our closest friends, family members, or even acquaintances. We read about this significant teaching in Luke 10:25-37.

Our Lord admonished everyone to make adequate preparations for an eternity after this life on earth, and not be so foolish as to think this earthly sojourn is the totality of our existence. This clear teaching is found in Luke 16:19-31.

THE NATURE OF THE LORD'S PREACHING

Jesus taught with authority! After delivering the powerful sermon on the mount, the people spoke about Christ with the following: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mat. 7:28-29). The people were amazed, astonished! They had never heard anyone preach/teach as Jesus Christ was preaching/teaching. Not only did the Lord speak with authority, it was not as the scribes (preachers of that day).

Jesus taught without consideration of the values set by man. He was interested **only** in preaching the will of the Father (Mat. 7:21). Without an explanation or apology He taught that which was diametrically opposed to the teachings of man. Man would never teach there is blessedness (happiness) in poverty, hunger, sorrow or persecution, but the Lord so taught (Mat. 5:1-11).

Often today, some preach, speaking words that reflect portions of the Holy Bible, but it is evident there is doubt or question in their minds as to what they are saying. Preachers such as this are not believable. We should not listen to such a one as this, for very long.

Jesus spoke the saving truth! He was not mushy, namby-pampy, all sugar-and-spice! He gave His audience the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He knew it was the truth of the gospel of Christ which could save them from their sins (Rom. 1:16; Jam. 1:21-25).

Brother G. K. Wallace (from an article entitled “Preach The Word,” in *The Beacon*, bulletin of Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL, 1-3-80, but had been written back in the 1930s) stated the following:

There are a lot of priggish, puritanical brethren who are led astray by the assumed piety of certain preachers. What brother Longface preaches is surely the truth because he is such a devout man. They size up what he preached by his piety and not by the book...If our piety is the test of our soundness, then the Pharisees would be orthodox. They were reverent...The real test of one's orthodoxy is not his sincerity nor affected devotion, but whether he is true to the charge to preach the word.

To be saved from our sins, we must be baptized (immersed in water). But obviously we would not take such action until we have heard of baptism, what purpose it has, who has authorized it, etc. We must repent of our sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2:38). But we would have no reason to repent until we have faith, based upon a knowledge of the truth of God. We must have faith in order to be saved (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Mark 16:16), but we cannot have faith until we have heard the gospel (Rom. 10:17). The gospel must be spoken, taught, proclaimed, declared to the entire world—to make it possible for ALL to believe, repent, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Jesus preached where even the simple could understand. It is possible to listen to someone speak, listen to every word, but when the sermon is completed, not understand a thing of what he said. This was not the case with the Master Preacher. He had the awesome ability of taking the listener into a learning process by simply asking questions, giving illustrations, etc., and if pursued would take that one into a deeper knowledge of God's will, to the extent of changing that person's life. The Lord's teaching, though simple and plain, had the power to captivate His audience, appeal to their personal interests, and cause them to remember His instructions.

Scholars have informed us (after reading sections of the preaching/teaching of Christ) that He spoke on the third to sixth grade level. To illustrate this fact, read again the powerful sermon on the mount. Note the simple words, short sentence structure, simple approach to His preaching. The people present to hear that powerful lesson understood what He was saying. They did not leave wondering aloud “What did He say?” or “What did it mean?”

Those in the first century were able to understand the preaching of the Master Preacher. Note these examples: “And when the chief priests and

Pharisees had heard his parables, **they perceived** that he spake of them” (Mat. 21:45). “And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for **they perceived** [they understood] that he had spoken this parable against them” (Luke 20:19). If some of the preachers today had spoken concerning the things of which the Lord spoke, the chief priests likely would not have understood. They possibly would have left feeling good, thinking “I’m OK, You’re OK!” They probably would have had the right hand of fellowship extended to them by many today, having been told that if we merely share a common faith in Christ, we are brothers. No, friends, Jesus spoke the truth in a way His audience clearly understood.

Jesus preached with love and grace. He was not eager to destroy all sinful mankind. He sincerely desired that all would hear the saving message of the gospel and be saved eternally. Note the following passages, “For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Grace and truth, the same truth that can make one free from his sin is available from the truth spoken by Jesus Christ. It is the same truth we speak today when we proclaim the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THE LORD’S PREACHING

As people respond today with mixed reactions, so it was in the first century. Some eagerly followed His every Word (Luke 19:48), while others procrastinated. Some violently rebelled against the Lord’s teachings, while others wanted to hear more and more.

Some praised Him (to some degree) for His teaching. Others were intrigued and wondered out loud about Him. Note, “And when he was come into his own country, **he taught them** in their synagogue, insomuch that **they were astonished**, and said, **Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?**” (Mat. 13:54). “And the Jews marvelled, saying, **How knoweth this man** letters, having never learned?” (John 7:15). “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and **perceiving that he had answered them well**, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?” (Mark 12:28). “David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the **common people heard him gladly**” (Mark 12:37).

The Lord powerfully silenced those who sought to criticize or destroy Him. Various ones attacked Him with charges, questions, etc., and the Scriptures tell of His response and the results:

But when the Pharisees had heard that **he had put the Sadducees to silence**, they were gathered together...And **no man was able to answer him a word**, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions* (Mat. 22:34,46).

“And **they could not take hold of his words** before the people: and **they marvelled** at his answer, and **held their peace**” (Luke 20:26). Jesus was a meek man, but meekness does not mean timid, afraid, and unwilling to stand for that which is right.

SUBJECTS TAUGHT BY OUR LORD

The Lord Jesus Christ taught (preached) on many subjects. Walk through the pages of inspired Scripture that record His earthly ministry and see the vastness of His topics. The list would include: the church, children, obedience, forgiveness, judgment, family, the devil, the cross, resurrection, fellowship, godliness, unity, temptation, miracles, tongues, demons, angels, money, persecution, lying, humility, suffering, death and dying, fornication and adultery, repentance and baptism, idolatry, remarriage, hypocrisy, worship, legalism, materialism, fear of God, revenge, evangelism, discipleship, commitment, second coming, honesty, prayer, service, paying taxes, discipline, apostasy, elders, stewardship, denial of self, faith, works, grace, false teaching, worry, traditions of men, confession, blasphemy, division, giving, true greatness, hospitality, helping the poor, Lord’s Supper, Deity, after death, authority, unbelief, persistence, respect for the Word of God, love for God, and many, many more.

OUR EXAMPLE, THE MASTER PREACHER

So, if we follow the example of our Saviour (1 Pet. 2:21) as He effectively preached during His brief earthly ministry, we will preach the saving gospel, in love, exalting Deity, from the heart, with sincerity, properly balanced, seeking to aid our fellowman reach the eternal heavenly home, while practicing what we preach.

The What And How Of Preaching

Preach The Word	2 Timothy 4:2
Preach The Truth	John 8:32
Preach The Truth in Love	Ephesians 4:15
Preach The Gospel	Romans 1:16
Preach The Gospel to The Whole World	Matthew 28:19-20
Preach Without Adding To The Gospel	Revelation 22:18
Preach Without Taking From It	Revelation 22:19
Preach Without Self-Glory	1 Corinthians 9:16

Let Us Follow The Footprints Of Jesus

Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling,
 Come, follow me!
 And we see where Thy footprints falling,
 Lead us to thee.
 Tho' they lead o'er the cold, dark mountains,
 Seeking His sheep;
 Or along by Siloam's fountains,
 Helping the weak;
 If they lead thro' the temple holy,
 Preaching the word;
 Or in homes of the poor and lowly,
 Serving the Lord.
 By and by, thro' the shining portals,
 Turning our feet,
 We shall walk, with the glad immortals,
 Heav'n's golden street.

Chorus:

Footprints of Jesus
 that make the pathway glow;
 We will follow the steps of Jesus,
 where'er they go.

PETER AS A PREACHER

Harold Bigham



Harold Bigham was born in Anniston, Alabama, to Frank and Mary Lou Bigham. He is married to the former Rita Faye Holladay of DeFuniak Springs, Florida, and they have two children: Aaron Ross and Ashley Brooke.

He graduated from the Bellview Preacher Training School in Pensacola, Florida, in 1984; Beville State Community College in Fayette, Alabama, in 1990 with an A.S. degree in Data Processing; and from Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1994 with a B.B.A. (Bachelor in Business Administration). Harold began full-time preaching in 1984 and has preached in North Carolina, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama. He is presently working with the Liberty Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida. Harold's twin brother, Howell, is also a Gospel preacher.

PETER AS A MAN

He is Simon, son of Jonah and brother to Andrew. Both were natives of Bethsaida and Andrew brought Peter to the Lord (John 1:40-41,44). The Lord looked upon Peter and called him Cephas, which by interpretation is "Peter." Peter means rock and ultimately he would be characteristic of such but not at first. Peter and Andrew later lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:21). Being a fisherman by occupation, the Lord called him to be a fisher of men. He was married, and one of the miracles of Jesus was the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mat. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). He was given the privilege of preaching the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost based upon his confession of the Lord (Mat.16:13-19). Peter has often been noted as one of the inner three, along with James and John, and he enjoyed a close association with Jesus.

Many descriptive terms have been used in referring to Peter. Such adjectives as fearful, overconfident, hasty, impulsive, and impetuous have been adequately spoken in discussing Peter's weaknesses. On one occasion, he boldly asked the Lord to be allowed to walk to Him on the water, yet he begins to sink because of fear (Mat. 14:31). He is hasty to confess the Lord initially, only to later deny Him three

times (Mat. 16:16; 26:69-75). Before the Lord's betrayal, Peter is very confident that he will follow the Lord to death and impulsively he cut off the right ear of Malchus in defending the Lord, yet he fled after Jesus' arrest (Mat. 26:35; John 18:10; Mat. 26:56). In Peter, we see so much weakness at first! He was quick to act without weighing the consequences of his actions. Yet, when brought face to face with what he had done, he was ready to repent! He bitterly wept over his actions in denying the Lord (Mat. 26:75). Although he fled and ran from the Lord at His arrest, he outran John to the tomb when news of the Lord's resurrection surfaced (John 20:4-6)! He was rebuked for hypocrisy (Gal. 2:12-14), yet later wrote, "Wherefore, laying aside...hypocrisies" (2 Pet. 2:1). He overcame his obstacles and became a man that was molded by the Lord. He is seen in the book of Acts as a mature, full-grown man in Christ. He is seen as a leader and a man of action! He emerges as the prominent figure in the first part of the book of Acts, through the first twelve chapters, and reappears briefly in Acts 15. He exhibited his leadership during the Jerusalem conference. Luke records, "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us" (Acts 15:7-8).

PETER'S METHODS OF PREACHING

The methods that Peter employed in preaching the gospel centers around his **attitude** toward the Word of God. He believed that God's Word is final. Peter said to the Lord, "to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Additionally, Peter told the Sanhedrin, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). He later wrote, "If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). He believed that it is imperative for man to hearken unto God rather than to man (Acts 4:19). He penned, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3).

Peter's method of preaching was **bold** and **powerful**. This can be seen by noticing the sermons of Peter in the book of Acts. In Acts 2, he sets forth the terms of redemption. During this sermon, he said

unto the Jews that they “by wicked hands have crucified and slain” the sinless Son of God (Acts 2:23). When they heard the preaching of Peter they were pricked in their hearts (Acts 2:37).

In Acts 3, Peter preached that the Jews “denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted” unto them (Acts 3:14). He further stated that “through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers” (Acts 3:17).

In Acts 4, the Sanhedrin was angry because Peter and John preached that Jesus arose from the dead. Both apostles were arrested and on the next day they were brought before the Sanhedrin. The interrogation started and they were asked, “By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:7). Peter replied by preaching a sermon! He stated that they crucified Jesus of Nazareth, but God raised Him up (Acts 4:10). He concluded by saying, “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Perceiving that Peter and John were unlearned and ignorant men and seeing their boldness, the Sanhedrin marveled and recognized that they had been with Jesus! (Acts 4:13). The Sanhedrin further threatened them and commanded that they cease preaching Jesus. Notice the boldness of Peter and John! They said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

In Acts 5, he handled the problem of sin in the church by dealing with Ananias and Sapphira. Peter rebuked this couple for conspiring together against God and corrective action was taken. Still later in this chapter, Peter and the other apostles were imprisoned for preaching Christ. The high priest tried to further intimidate them and warned them by saying, “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us” (Acts 5:28). Peter and the other apostles replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). What boldness!!! What courage!!! After being beaten and threaten again, Peter and the other apostles were released. Notice their reaction! They rejoiced that they were beaten for the cause of Christ. They continue to preach Jesus and Him crucified (Acts 5:41-42).

In Acts 10, he preached to Cornelius and his family and commanded them to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 10:48). In

Acts 11, he defended himself among the Jewish brethren for the conversion of the Gentile family of Cornelius. In Acts 12, he is imprisoned and faced the possibility of death, yet without fear. Notice that earlier he was afraid of the water (Mat. 14:28-31), yet now he courageously faced death! In Acts 15, he plays a very important part in the Jerusalem Conference. Truly, Peter was a bold and courageous Apostle and preacher of the gospel!

Peter employed the method of **exhortation** in his preaching. During his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he was interrupted by his audience who desired to know what they must do to be saved! Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The sermon was finished and the plan of salvation was given, yet Peter was not finished! He exhorted them by saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). The response was tremendous in that about three thousand obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:41). On another occasion, Peter rebuked Simon the Sorcerer because his heart was not right with God (Acts 8:21). Notice how Peter exhorts Simon the Sorcerer! "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). Simon repented and asked Peter to "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (Acts 8:24).

Peter employed the method of preaching **to all mankind**. He preached to the Jews and later he preached to the Gentiles (Acts 2; 10). He preached to the poor and helped the sick (Acts 3:1-11; 5:12-16). He sympathized with those who mourned over the passing of loved ones (Acts 9:36-42). He reasoned and debated with those in religious error (Acts 4-5). He rebuked brethren who were unfaithful and exhorted them to repent (Acts 8:20-24). He preached to large assemblies of people, and yet he preached to very small assemblies of people (Acts 2; 10). He preached to families and later wrote concerning the role of the family (Acts 10; 1 Pet. 3). He encouraged brethren who faced trials and persecutions (1 Pet. 1:7).

PETER'S MESSAGE

Peter covered the **first principles** in his preaching. On the day of Pentecost, he proclaimed the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. He told the Jews what to do to be saved (Acts 2:38). Men were

added to the church as a result (Acts 2:47). Likewise, he instructed Cornelius and his family (who were Gentiles) that they must obey the gospel in order to be saved (Acts 10:48). During the Jerusalem conference, Peter preached that the Gentiles purified their hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). Peter stated that there is no salvation outside of Christ (Acts 4:12). He wrote about the blood of Christ by stating,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

He told sinful man how to get into Christ by adding, “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). He told us how to remain faithful by saying that we are to follow the model of the character of God (1 Pet.1:15-16) and the conduct of Jesus and walk therein (1 Pet. 2:21). He preached about the power of God’s Word. He penned:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

He furthered wrote, “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). He wrote concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures by stating, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Peter covered **Christian living** in his preaching. He wrote concerning the necessity of having a pure heart void of hypocrisy (1 Pet. 1:22-23). He penned that the Christian is to be “holy in all manner of conversation [or living]” (1 Pet. 1:15). He instructed the brethren to be “honest” in their manner of life (1 Pet. 2:12). He stated that we are to “live unto righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24). Likewise, he wrote that we are to refrain our tongue from evil in order to see good days (1 Pet. 3:10). Additionally, he penned that we are to be so-

ber-minded and vigilant in our living for Christ (1 Pet. 5:8-9), and that we are to abstain from the fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). Perhaps, some of the most impressive language concerning the Christian is found when Peter stated that we are a “royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). A certain kind of conduct is imperative because of who we are. Listen to Peter! “As obedient children” we are to obey (1 Pet. 1:14). “As newborn babes” we are to grow in righteousness (1 Pet. 2:2). “As lively stones” we are to be spiritual minded (1 Pet. 2:5). “As strangers and pilgrims” we are to live distinctive lives (1 Pet. 2:11). When we are “partakers of Christ’s sufferings” we should rejoice (1 Pet. 4:13). Peter described the graces of a faithful Christian by stating:

add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

Peter covered the subject of the **home** in his preaching. He wrote concerning the possibility of a divided home with the hope that one day it would not be such. He stated:

Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

Therefore, the wife who is a faithful Christian is illustrated as being married to a non-Christian. Her righteous conduct can have a winning influence on her husband and convert him to the Lord. He described her manner of life as having a:

chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Pet. 3:2-6).

Peter wrote concerning the husband who is a faithful Christian that he is to show consideration for his wife and cherish her. This will cause the couple's prayers to be heard and not hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).

Peter covered the role of the **eldership** in his preaching. Here is an elder talking to elders about elders. Peter wrote:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Peter stated that the eldership should exercise care for the flock of God. They are responsible for the feeding of the flock. They are to control the flock by taking the oversight thereof. This means that they have a duty to make sure that things are done in a scriptural manner. They are to be elders because of desire and not because of constraint. This will eliminate the lazy and slothful from the eldership. They are not to be serving in the eldership for the motive of money but rather for pure motives. They are not to be dictators or lords over the church. An elder is still under the eldership. Elders are to be examples of righteous living before the flock. Elders will receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not" (1 Pet. 5:4).

Peter cover the threat of **false teachers** in his preaching. He stated that the false teacher is dangerous (2 Pet. 2:1). He alerted the brethren by stating, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore, Peter gave a history lesson about false teachers in the past and a warning about such in the present and future. Peter presented the false teacher's plan. He stated that they are deceptive and that their preaching is damnable. Peter warned that "many shall follow their pernicious ways" (2 Pet. 2:2; Mat. 7:13-14). The motive of the false teacher is revealed as being covetousness and making merchandise out of the people whom they deceived (2 Pet. 2:3). Peter reveals that the punishment of the false teacher is sure and settled (2 Pet. 2:3).

Peter covered the threat of **worldliness** in his preaching. In Second Peter chapter two, Peter used certain terms and phrases as "pernicious, covetousness, uncleanness, presumptuous, self-willed, not

afraid, corruption, unrighteousness, adultery...cursed.” These terms denote a person who is filled with worldliness.

Peter covered the possibility of **apostasy** in his preaching. He wrote:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Peter desired to impress upon us the very real possibility of falling away from grace by using graphic language as described above!

Peter covered the **need of being prepared for eternity** in his preaching. He exhorted that we are to “*be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). He later wrote concerning the need to be ready when the Lord comes again. He stated:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

What manner of persons should we be? Prepared people! How can we be prepared? Peter stated, “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2 Pet. 3:1). Peter believed in the necessity of repetition. The idea resembles a fire that has burned down just to the point of going out, but the keeper of the fire takes his poker and stirs up the embers to keep the fire burning. Likewise, brethren, we are to stir up our minds the same way! Peter said that in order to be prepared we need to have **pure** minds! We need to remember and “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Pet. 3:2). In order to be prepared, we should be **informed** people. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8). We must be informed about sin, salvation, and the Saviour. We

must be informed people about the second coming of Christ. We must be informed about the temporal, material things of this life compared to the spiritual blessings in Christ so we will have the right priorities. We must be informed about the day of judgment and eternity. We must not be as Israel of old when it is said of them, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). In order to be a prepared people, we must be a **holy** and **godly** people (2 Pet. 3:11). In all of our manner of living we should be noted as such. To be a prepared people, we should be a **looking** people (2 Pet. 3:12). We should look for Him with great anticipation (Tit. 2:13). We will love His appearing because we are looking for Him (2 Tim. 4:7-8). In order to be a prepared people, we must be a **diligent** people (2 Pet. 3:14). We are to do our very best in living for Christ. We are to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). To be a prepared people, we must be a **steadfast** people (2 Pet. 3:17). We must be steadfast and unmoveable in the doctrine of Christ (1 Cor. 15:58). Finally, to be a prepared people, we must be a **growing** people (2 Pet. 3:18). Brethren, we must grow! Knowledge is one of the graces that the Christian is to add to his life (2 Pet. 1:6). We are not always to remain as babes but should grow to be of full age (Heb. 5:12-14). Growth is imperative for us to be a prepared people!

Peter covered the subject of **Hell** in his preaching. He penned, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Pet. 2:9). He stated that “mist of darkness is reserved for” the ungodly (2 Pet. 2:17). Notice that Peter describes Hell as a place of punishment and a place of darkness! Jude records that Hell is a place of black darkness (Jude 13).

Peter covered the subject of **Heaven** in his preaching. He stated:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

He penned, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). He stated:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an

entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

CONCLUSION

Peter was a great apostle of the Lord and a powerful gospel preacher. Jesus took a Galilean fisherman and turned him into a bold and courageous proclaimer of the gospel! His life reminds us that we can overcome our faults and become mature in the faith by faithful submission to our Lord. He reminds the faithful gospel preacher that he must boldly declare the whole gospel of Christ without fear or favor toward any man. By his example, he has shown the need for the gospel preacher to exhort and encourage sinners to obey the gospel and be saved. Peter has taught us that we must not discriminate against anyone in the proclamation of God's Word. The Gospel is for all! Let us not forget the need to preach on the basics or the first principles, as Peter did so well. Additionally, in our sermons may we preach on subjects such as Christian living, the home, eldership, false teachers, worldliness, apostasy, preparation, Hell and Heaven. What a great example of a gospel preacher we have in the Apostle Peter!

PAUL AS A PREACHER

Lindell Mitchell



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LIFE AND TIMES¹

Paul grew up in the great city of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3). He was not merely a resident, but a “citizen.” Little is directly known of his family. Jerome records a tradition suggesting that his parents originated in the Galilean town of Gischala, and that they fled to Tarsus during the Roman devastation of Palestine in the first century B.C. The family’s citizenship shows that they were not recent emigrants. They had been planted in Tarsus as part of a colony enjoying full municipal rights. Roman citizenship also indicates that Paul’s family possessed some wealth and social standing (Acts 16:37- 38; 22:25-29).

Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia, then part of the province of Syria, but it possessed the title of metropolis and was a free city. It was situated on the Cyndus River in a wide plain with hill country behind and the snow-capped Tarsus mountains in the distance. As a Roman city with a substantial Jewish colony, it was typical of Greco-Roman civilization.

Jewish law prescribed that a boy begin biblical studies at five and study of the legal traditions at ten (Pirke Aboth 5:21). Josephus says that both the Scriptures and the traditions were taught in every city to Jewish lads “from our first consciousness” (Contra Apion II.18).

Undoubtedly, Paul was thoroughly grounded in this curriculum as a boy, receiving instruction in the synagogue school and at home.

At thirteen, Jewish boys became a **bar mitzvah** (“son of the commandment”) taking upon themselves the full obligation of the law. The more promising students were directed into rabbinic schools under abler teachers. Paul’s youthful ability, and the high standing of his parents, is indicated by his selection for further rabbinic study. Additionally, he was sent to Jerusalem to study under one of the greatest first century rabbis—Gamaliel I (Acts 22:3). During the course of his studies young Paul excelled over most of his peers, becoming extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:14).

Jewish culture also asserted the nobility of physical work. They felt intellectual development and physical activity must go hand-in-hand. Consequently, Paul was also trained as a tentmaker. It was a menial occupation to some modern minds, but it was probably considered a clean non-laborious trade in Paul’s day. Thus, the Jewish educational system sought to produce a man who could think and act; one who was neither a conehead nor a clod. Paul’s life shows that he profited greatly from this training.

We must not forget Paul lived in a Greek city. Certainly the Greek traits of adaptability, curiosity, alertness, and the love of investigation marked his character. Tarsus afforded ample opportunities to acquire these traits. He learned to speak the vernacular (*koine*) like a native. He had a “poet’s mastery of language,” though with the passion of a soul on fire, rather than with the artificial rules of rhetoricians of the day.² Paul was a “Roman gentleman,” as seen in the dignity of his bearing before governors and kings. It was also shown in the respect accorded him by the Procounsul Sergius Paulis, the Procurator Porcius Festus, and the Centurion Julius, whose prisoner he was on the voyage to Rome. He was a highly-cultivated man.

Paul’s Judaism was pure (Phi. 3:5). He was of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Hebrew of the seed of Abraham (2 Cor. 11:22). He partook of all the covenant blessings of Israel (Rom. 9:1-5), whose crowning glory was that the Messiah came through them. Paul was proud of the piety of his ancestors (2 Tim. 1:3), and progressed in his studies of Judaism ahead of his peers

(Gal. 1:14). His name Saul showed loyalty to the tribe of Benjamin, and his cognomen Paul was evidence of his Roman citizenship.

Paul presents polar paradoxes: his frail ailing body and his enormous capacity for work, his humility and his self-confidence, his depressions and intoxication with victory, and his tenderness and sternness. He was loved fervently and hated fiercely; he was an ancient man of his time but is cosmopolitan and modern enough for our day. Paul was a man possessed of dialectal power and religious inspiration. He was keenly intellectual and profoundly mystical. He was a theologian and a man of public affairs. Paul was a man of vision with a supreme mission to which he was wholly committed. He was a man of heart, passion, imagination, courage, sensibility, will, sincerity, energy, subtlety, humor, tact, genius for organization, power for command, gift of expression, leadership. He could employ the stoic diatribe, the rabbinical diatribe, and the Alexandrian allegory. These qualities and powers made the Lord's apostle to the Gentiles a master builder of the universal church.

Though he remained a Jew, Paul became all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22). He gloried in his mission to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:8); yet, he always put the Jew first in opportunity (Rom. 2:9ff). He loved his countrymen almost to the point of death (Rom. 9:3). If he had not been a Roman citizen with Greek culture and rich intellectual power, he would not have been the "chosen vessel" to take the gospel to the Gentiles. If he had not been thoroughly Jewish, he could not have mediated Christianity from Jew to Greek.

There are no reliable descriptions of Paul's physical appearance. No less than Deissmann and Ramsay credit an alleged description which occurs in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*:

And he saw Paul coming, a man little of stature, thin haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel.³

The biblical record suggests only that Paul's appearance was not impressive (1 Cor. 2:3ff; 2 Cor. 10:10). At Lystris the natives took Barnabas for Jupiter and Paul for Hermes, "because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:12), showing that Barnabas had the more impressive appearance, while Paul was the spokesman. His Corinthian enemies sneered at the weakness of his bodily presence compared to the

strength of his letters (2 Cor. 10:9ff). The physical abuse he endured left marks that may have disfigured him (Gal. 6:17). One illness made him a trial to the Galatians to whom he preached, but they did not scorn him (Gal. 4:14).

Paul felt the frailty of his body as an earthen vessel and a tabernacle in which he groaned (2 Cor. 4:7; 5:4). The effect of fleshly weakness was to give him a renewed sense of dependence on the Lord and a surge of Divine spiritual power (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:9). Even if Paul was unimpressive in physical appearance and weakened by illness and injury, he was blessed with a tough constitution to have endured to a good old age.

METHOD

Paul focused on urban centers. He sought out receptive people and adapted his message to the audience. The work followed lines of commerce and travel. In each city the gospel was first presented to those sharing some commonality with the Christians: Jews and “God fearing Greeks.” Paul addressed people at synagogues and other places of prayer. Discussions followed with those who expressed interest in further study. If the message was rejected, Paul turned to the Gentiles. When complete rejection and persecution erupted, Paul moved to the next city and began the process anew. His preaching reflected concern for the knowledge of the audience. Sermons were delivered in Aramaic or Greek, depending upon the audience. Content would be characterized by extensive Bible quotation or by references to Pagan poets, depending upon the audience.

MESSAGE

Gentiles

Acts 17:22-31 provides an example of Paul’s preaching to Gentiles. He opened with an acknowledgement of their religiosity in verse twenty-two. This acknowledgement grew out of his personal observations in Athens (v. 23a). Although their idols had initially infuriated him (17:6), he could concede that they showed a religious spirit. In view of Paul’s habit of becoming all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22), it is not surprising to see him open his sermon in such fashion. Having gained their attention and possibly their approval, Paul goes directly to their problem. He announced that since they acknowledged ignorance of the divine nature, he would reveal this

truth to them. He said in effect, “That which you openly worship in ignorance, I proclaim to you!”

The apostle quickly declares the truth they have missed. First, he tells them about the true God who created the universe and all that it contains. He is Lord of heaven and earth. Paul described him as not inhabiting temples fashioned by human hands.

Though not as clear or forceful in style and content as Christians, many ancient intellectuals denounced the silly notion that Deity occupied man-made shrines (e.g., Lucian and Plutarch). Consequently, Paul’s message fell on sympathetic ears in this gathering of enlightened pagans. The very God could not be envisioned as requiring anything from His creatures. God needs nothing. Men cannot supply any need of God, it is God who supplies their needs. He gives “life and breath and all things.”

The Creator of all things generally is certainly the Creator of man in particular. Men are God’s offspring (Acts 17:26-28). All races of men stem from one person. Consequently, every nation of man owes its existence to the creative power of the hitherto unknown God. This eliminates all nationalistic racist attitudes, ideologies, and theologies.

Having made humanity, God gave them all the earth to dwell in. The “times before appointed,” denoted the seasons of the year by whose sequence annual provision is made for supplying mankind with food. “The boundaries of their habitation” refers to God’s universal sovereignty. The rise and fall of nations were in the arena of His influence (Deu. 32:8; Psa. 74:17a).

In verses 26 and 27 Paul cited two Divine purposes for humanity. First, man is to live on all the face of the earth. All creation is subject to His dominion and subjugation. Second, man is to seek God. Both mandates are recorded in Genesis and are rooted in humanity’s creation (Gen.1:26-31). Heathens are without excuse, because since creation His eternal power and deity has been clearly perceived. Even some of their own teachers realized the folly of trying to house divinity in material temples, worship it with material altars, or depict it with material images. They had perceived, though dimly, God’s nearness to those who seek Him.

At this point, Paul illustrated his argument by citing two of their own poets. The first was from the fourth line of a quatrain preserved

from a poem attributed to Epimenides the Cretan: “For in thee we live and move and have our being.” The second citation is part of the fifth line of the *Phainomena* of Paul’s fellow Cilician—Aratus. It is used to prove that even their own thinkers agreed that all men are God’s offspring. All came from Adam and Adam was God’s son (Luke 3:8); therefore, the tap-root of everyone’s family tree was God (cf., Eph. 3:14-15).

Immediately a call to repentance was issued (Acts 17:29-31). This teaching concerning a Divine origin did not assure the audience a pleasant relationship with God or excuse their heathen practices. It exposed their guilt! Since men are God’s offspring, they should not think in categories of heathen religion. Its insistence that Deity is a product of human art and imagination makes God inferior to man. The inferior cannot create the superior. The Supreme Creator cannot be constructed from elements like stone, silver, or gold, which are all inferior to man himself.

Having exposed man’s guilt, Paul considered the times of ignorance. They had confessed their ignorance with the altar to an unknown God. Hence they could ill afford to take offense at Paul’s judgment of that admitted ignorance. God had been patient and forbearing having overlooked their ignorance. They could no longer plead ignorance, or hide behind the Lord’s previous overlooking of their idolatry. Responsibility had come to them as the result of having heard God’s commands. Everyone everywhere must repent. God has appointed a day of Judgment to be executed by the risen Christ.

This sermon on Mars Hill was typical of what Paul preached to Gentiles everywhere he went. He moved quickly from where the audience was to where they needed to be. Paul felt himself a debtor to Greeks and Barbarians and was determined to share the gospel with them (Rom. 1:14-15). No special gospel was presented to the Greek race. There was one faith for all (Eph. 4:5). The wall of partition has been removed. All races are called to be one in Christ (Eph. 2:14-17).

Paul boldly challenged the Gentiles’ false philosophies and religions. He warned them lest anyone make spoil of them through false philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men (Col. 2:8). He never hesitated to brand their pagan worship as unto “dumb idols” (1 Cor. 12:2). His relentless efforts resulted in thousands turning to

God from idols (1 The. 1:9). He didn't propose any compromise. His message was, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for...what agreement hath a temple of God with idols?...Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

He required them to renounce their sins and was unbending as he led them to a new life in Christ. He taught them how to live and please God. This meant abstaining from fornication (1 The. 4:1,3), putting off the old man with his conduct, and putting on the new man, being renewed after the image of Him that created Him (Col. 3:9-10). Repeatedly, Paul catalogued sins common among them, warning them to forsake them all (Gal. 5:19-21). Paul never engaged in vague generalities or silly sugar-coated semantics.

Jews

Acts 13:16-41 records Paul's sermon to the Jews and God-fearers in Antioch of Pisida. It is typical of the sermons presented in synagogues throughout the Roman Empire. He begins on common ground, the God of Israel whom they held in common. In verses 16-22, Paul recites history that is second nature to the Jews, but with stress placed on God's actions in their history to richly bless them.

Having elicited their gratitude for abundant blessings in the past, Paul introduced God's greatest gift to Israel. In accord with his promises, the Lord had given Israel a Savior—Jesus. Paul connects to John's ministry, noting that he preached a baptism of repentance to all Israel. John was not the end of God's redemptive Word; another was to come after him.

He then presented insurmountable evidence of Jesus' deity. Jews would naturally be impressed with prophecy, and Paul uses it powerfully. He shows that even in their rejection of the risen Savior, they fulfilled prophecy (v. 27). Paul then interjects another powerful body of evidence—the testimony of eyewitnesses. God raised Him from death, "And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people" (v. 31). Two crucial points are pressed next. First, the resurrection is a testimony to the faithfulness of God. Second, this is yet another fulfillment of prophecy (Psa. 2:7; 16:10). The conclusion of the argument is that Jesus is the long promised Holy One, the risen Son of God (vv. 33, 35-37).

In view of this evidence, the Jews could know that Paul was preaching salvation from sin to them. Further, they should now know that justification is not in the Law of Moses. He had begun with the ultimate reality, the God of their fathers, and moved to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Having laid his case before them and offered the glad tidings of salvation, and having challenged them to believe, Paul warned of the consequences of disbelief (vv. 40-41).

Regardless of the ethnic, social, economic, and religious make up of his audience, Paul's approach was essentially the same. He sought common ground and quickly moved from the common ground to Christ. Having proven the Lord's divinity, he called on sinners to manifest their faith through obedience. Paul employed no gimmicks, no sophistry, and no deception. His message was sincerely felt, logically constructed, and earnestly delivered.

Paul's words were clear and plain. He scorned the sophistries and verbal refinements of mere philosophers and orators in First Corinthians 1 and 2; yet he reveals a profound respect for the significance of genuine knowledge. The profundity of his words was characterized by their simplicity. Paul studiously avoided obtuse rhetoric characteristic of those who considered themselves "somewhat." He was even criticized for an absence of rhetorical flair (2 Cor. 10:10). He valued clear understanding of his message above all else (1 Cor. 14:18ff). The stakes were too high to squander precious time and limited opportunities to preach. He had no need to exalt himself or to indulge in silly self-promotion. Paul's determination was to know one thing: Christ crucified the hope of glory (1 Cor. 2:2; Col. 1:27).

REACTION

Reaction to Paul's preaching was as varied as his audiences. We see that multitudes were moved to obey the gospel in the churches he planted and strengthened throughout the known world. At Iconium a great multitude of Jews and Greeks were converted (Acts 14:1). At Corinth the chief ruler of the synagogue and his family were converted along with many of the citizens of the city (Acts 18:8).

Certainly not everyone approved of Paul's work. Death stalked him throughout his ministry. Almost immediately after his conversion, Paul confounded the Jews in Damascus, proving Jesus to be the Christ. As the confrontation progressed for several days, Paul in-

creased in strength. Ultimately, his Jewish opponents were so incensed they determined to kill him. This required his being let down by the wall of the city in a basket (Acts 9:19-25). He immediately travelled to Jerusalem and engaged in essentially the same debate with the Grecians. Their reaction was identical to the Jews of Damascus; “they went about to slay him” (Acts 9:29).

Later, Paul was forced to respond to detractors troubling the church in Corinth. His defense included what he endured because of preaching Christ. Paul reported five instances of being forced to endure thirty-nine lashes at the hands of the Jews. He was beaten with clubs three times. He was stoned and left for dead on one occasion. Paul suffered shipwreck, spending a day and a night in the ocean. He journeyed often in peril of waters, robbers, his countrymen, heathens, and false brethren. He was at risk in cities, in the wildernesses, and on the sea. Paul knew extreme fatigue, pain, anxiety, hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:24-27). Yet, Paul never wavered in his determination and devotion to the Christ. He knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded that Christ was fully capable of keeping what he had committed to His care against the great day of Judgment (2 Tim. 1:12). Consequently, he faced death confidently affirming: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

ATTRIBUTES TO IMITATE

Paul’s unwavering commitment to the cause of Christ is worthy of our admiration and imitation. His support for truth and opposition to error was not diminished as long as the breath of life animated his flesh. He was commissioned to plant and sanctify the church, cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word (Eph. 5:26-27). Paul committed himself to that mission upon his sacred honor. He refused to abandon the Lord’s church to apostates intent on ravaging her with error. For Paul, no hardship was too tough; no sacrifice was too great; and no price was too high. All his goods and every ounce of his strength was at the Lord’s command. He considered it an honor to die in His service (Acts 21:13-14). Let us bravely stand armed

with the sword of the Spirit, unbowed and unbending before the forces of evil!

Paul's unflinching courage is awe-inspiring. He knew fear just like any sane man does (1 Cor. 2:3), but he never failed to face it. Whenever truth was challenged or the church threatened, Paul charged the forces of evil. Belligerent Jews, back-stabbing brethren, and corrupt politicians all felt the force of his opposition. Paul even found the courage to change when faced with his own error. It took incredible bravery for this up and coming young rabbi to embrace Christianity. The blistering opposition he faced from family, friends, and foes would have crushed a coward. May we, too, find the courage to contend for the faith and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 2:3).

Paul's compassion was as tender as it was touching. In spite of fierce opposition from fellow Jews, Paul would have gladly given his soul for them (Rom. 9:1-3). How the vile, vulgar Gentiles must have offended his moral sensibilities; still he used himself up sharing the gospel with them. He readily adapted to their communities that he might win them to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

Paul's steadfast commitment to the cause of Christ and unflinching courage in the face of fierce opposition was balanced by a conciliatory spirit. This spirit was manifested in his willingness to forgive and his unwillingness to jeopardize Christian fellowship because of foolish controversies.

Paul valued Christian fellowship so highly that he readily forgave a terrible rogue who repented. Paul was anxious to see the erring return to the Lord. His primary goal in such cases was the restoration of fellowship. He had no desire to exact a pound of flesh. Paul was not mean and vindictive. As one who had been forgiven much, he was himself forgiving. Further, he demanded that every Christian manifest the spirit of forgiveness.

When word came that a Corinthian brother was living with his father's wife, Paul responded decisively. Such an appalling spectacle was not even acceptable among Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). Immediate correction was ordered (1 Cor. 5:4-5). Further, the cessation of all social contact with wicked brethren was demanded (1 Cor. 5:11). Evil men were to be expelled (1 Cor. 5:13).

When the desired result was achieved, Paul pronounced their actions sufficient. He then required that they forgive, comfort, and confirm their love toward the penitent brother (2 Cor. 2:7-8). Paul's purpose had always been to regain the sinner, not destroy him. He had no perverse desire to see him overwhelmed by sorrow (2 Cor. 2:7).

We too must be forgiving toward penitent sinners. None of us is without sin (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10). If God anxiously receives them, who are we to refuse them. The church is a spiritual hospital where sick people are cured, not a beauty pageant where perfect people are displayed.

Paul's conciliatory spirit is also seen in his refusal to mar Christian fellowship through senseless controversies. Next to the Lord, no New Testament figure was more controversial than Paul. No leader in the ancient church was more vigorous in his defense of the faith. None was more tenacious in resisting error. He never retreated from false teachers, never backed down from troublesome charlatans, never compromised with evil. At no time did he debase his character through appeasement. Not once did he compromise his convictions because of cowardice. Paul upheld the truth and waged total war on error. He never squandered the precious resource of fellowship on senseless strife. His battles were strategic. They were necessary for the continued security of the church. His battles were required to preserve the faith delivered once and for all to the saints (Jude 3).

Paul did not relish controversy, nor was he spoiling for a fight. He understood that the war with evil would be quickly lost if the forces of light adopted a belligerent spirit and became embroiled in silly squabbles over stupid questions. In too many instances, Christians have plunged into silly arguments while the citadel of faith was destroyed! Paul ordered Titus to carefully maintain good works that were profitable (Tit. 3:8). He strictly forbade involvement with foolish questions, genealogies, and contentions about the law, because they were unprofitable (Tit. 3:9).

Cretan churches were threatened by and, possibly, known for foolish bickering; but they were certainly not alone. A similar situation at Ephesus showed that Paul had this concern in several places (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:23). Churches were more acutely threat-

ened by senseless controversies than by outside agitators or even government persecution.

Paul ordered the avoidance of such questions, not because there was no truthful answer. All such controversies were to be avoided because they were “unprofitable and vain.” Christians must employ “sanctified common-sense” to determine when to engage in a controversy and when to avoid one.

Paul’s inspired counsel in such circumstances was consistent—avoid vain controversies. Timothy, Paul’s much beloved son in the faith, was given the same counsel when squabbles erupted at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:14-18,23-26). He opened First Corinthians sternly rebuking brethren for creating divisions involving their favorite preachers (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Paul practiced what he preached in this regard. Whenever a matter of indifference was disputed, Paul deferred to the sensibilities of weaker brethren. He required that the faithful follow his lead (Rom. 14). He was unwilling to risk fellowship in order to have his way regarding inconsequential matters. Whenever Paul evangelized a community, he readily accommodated himself to local sensibilities that he might lead them to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

CONCLUSION

Paul was a preacher’s preacher. He was committed, bold and brave, compassionate and conciliatory. Because of his work, countless thousands will populate heaven. May his tribe increase and may we be among them!

ENDNOTES

¹The reader should know, that in addition to the Bible, I have consulted the standard dictionaries and encyclopedias in preparing this manuscript. The data supplied concerning Paul’s background and education is common knowledge among Bible students. Therefore, I have not provided extensive documentation. Many good books are in print on the life and work of Paul. I also recommend articles in works like the *New Bible Dictionary*, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, *The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, etc.

²Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 240, 241.

³E. E. Ellis, “Paul,” *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 943.

STEPHEN AS A PREACHER

H. A. “Buster” Dobbs



Buster was born and reared in Houston, Texas. He was educated in Houston, having studied at the University of Houston and South Texas College of Law. He is married to Martha DeWoody Dobbs whose mother was a Starnes from which family came a number of elders and preachers. Martha's father and grandfather served as elders. Buster and Martha have three children and eight grandchildren. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather served as elders. His great-great grandfather was a Gospel preacher. His most important training came from godly parents.

He has spent his entire preaching years in Houston, having begun to preach at the age of fourteen. During his teenage years, he preached for the West End, South Houston and Fairbanks (later West 34th Street) churches in Houston. As a full time preacher, he preached eight years at Lyons and Majestic, seventeen years at Memorial, and the past fourteen years, as, first, preacher, then elder, and then preacher, again, at Fleetwood. At present, he is preaching, on a temporary basis, for the Klein Area church in Houston. Buster is a debater and writer. He is Editor of the **Firm Foundation** and is giving full time to speaking at lectureships, Gospel meetings, writing and working with congregations that have special needs (problems).

INTRODUCTION

Stephen was the first of a long line of martyrs. When we speak of martyrs we think of that noble army of those “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Rev. 6:9). They would rather die than transgress in life or deny in teaching what God revealed to them through the Spirit. They did not become martyrs because they died, but they died because they **were** martyrs. Stephen was a martyr before he was stoned and therefore sealed his testimony with his blood.

The church today is full of martyrs. There are countless men and women who would rather die than deny Jesus or go against His revealed Word. Jesus tells us to be faithful even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10). When we hold to the revealed Word so firmly that we would rather die than violate it or repudiate it, we are martyrs—martyrs though we yet live—martyrs because we fear defecting from Christ more than we fear death.

Stephen was one of the seven selected to serve tables. He flashed into fame by the miracles the Holy Spirit did through him, by his masterful sermon, and by his stoning to death. His name means “a crown.” It is Greek in origin, which means that Stephen was probably a Grecian Jew, and likely a member of the Hellenist synagogue where he was called to account, savagely attacked, and from whence he was killed for Christ and the church.

Luke begins the book of Acts by a reference to his previous writing in which he records “all that Jesus began both to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1). The implication is that in the book of Acts, Luke tells of the things that Jesus continued to do and teach through his appointed ambassadors.

Paul speaks of filling “up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24). The word here translated “lacking” means “that which was to come after.” Paul is saying that the sufferings of Christ were not over. Every blow struck against the disciples of Jesus is a blow struck against Christ Himself. Every wound inflicted upon the church is an injury inflicted on the body of Jesus, which is His church, which is the people. Their suffering is His; His suffering is theirs.

FELLOWSHIP OF JESUS AND STEPHEN

The mangled body of Stephen in a bloodstained pit is in fraternity with the body of Jesus on a bloodstained cross. The suffering and death of one is in league with the suffering and death of the other.

Consider the harmony between the life of Jesus and that of Stephen. Both went about doing good and preaching the good news of the kingdom. Both worked wonders and signs in Jerusalem. Both were hatefully and wrongly opposed by Jewish leaders. Both died because neither would be untrue to the eternal purpose of God. On the cross Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), and “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). With his dying breath Stephen said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59), and “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

There is a perfect agreement between the two who preached, work-ed wonders, were rejected by their own people, and went to their deaths. We see in both lives teaching, denial, and death. Stephen is described

as a man “full of grace and power.” Luke said, “Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING

Stephen suffered because he preached the truth and would not turn from it. Jesus died because He spoke only the words given to Him by His Heavenly Father, and the world loved darkness rather than light. As a faithful teacher, Stephen rebuked the sin of murdering the Son of God. This provoked intense hatred. The bitterness of the Jewish leaders for Stephen caused them to induce witnesses to commit perjury and render a ruthless sentence. Jesus, too, had false witnesses brought against Him and was given an unjust, cruel punishment. The fellowship between Jesus and Stephen is remarkable and full.

This type persecution still exists. “All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). This law still operates. Physical violence is at an end, at least for us. Still, it is impossible to proclaim in life and word the whole counsel of God without being abused and beaten by an antagonistic world. The bias and hatred may come in the form of scoffing and ridicule, but it is inevitable, if we would serve Jesus. It may be easier to be killed for Jesus than it is to be laughed at for Him.

FELLOWSHIP OF VICTORY

Stephen was full of the Spirit and therefore felt pity for his foes. Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies and those that spitefully use us (Mat. 5:44). In the day of adversity we must “Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you” (Mat. 5:12). Rejoice! Your name is written in heaven. When we pity and pray for those who would misuse us, we triumph over them. Always remember Him who “when he was reviled, reviled not again” (1 Pet. 2:23).

When Stephen committed his eternal spirit to the Lord, he trampled death with his feet. When this first martyr died, in his final agony, he spoke of death as an experience in which he was able to commit his spirit to another, and gained a victory over the grave. Paul said the “hour of his departure” was a time when he “was being offered.” His death was a religious act—his last sacrifice. His earthly existence was a “living sacrifice;” his death was a religious ritual—a libation. He was “offered.”

Stephen saw Jesus—not sitting—but **standing** at the right hand of God. Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is the archetype of Melchizedek. Jesus stood, ministering as a priest, to Stephen in his hour of agony.

Paul points out that “whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). The head cannot say “to the feet, I have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12:21). When Stephen, a member of the great body on the earth, was in pain, the agony was felt in heaven, and the head of the body stood. Stephen, in his death, saw Christ standing at the right hand of God. When a child of God is in pain because of his fidelity to Jesus, the Lord stands.

THE APOLOGY OF STEPHEN

The word **apology** is one of the most misunderstood words in our language. We generally use it to mean we are wrong. An **apology** is really an argument to prove we are right. It is never wrong to argue the truth of the new covenant. “Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Stephen’s defense was before the Sanhedrin. The charges brought against him were a mixture of truth and falsehood. False witnesses said they heard Stephen “speak words against this holy place, and the law” (Acts 6:13), and, “we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:14).

The charge was true. Stephen no doubt said the mission of Jesus would result in the destruction of the temple and changing of the customs. They were wrong in thinking that meant that Jesus blasphemed Moses and God, and set Himself against the Jewish nation. Stephen was accused on a charge that was partly true and partially false. “A lie that is partly true is a hard matter to fight.” Stephen did a magnificent job in refuting the half-lies of his accusers.

Stephen speaks of the “God of glory” (Acts 7:2). The word **glory** means **weight** or **importance**. At mount Sinai, God’s glory appears as a cloud and as fire. The glory of God is His splendor and brightness and majesty. It is the flaming forth of God in all His radiance and beauty. The God of glory is a God of unlimited power, knowledge, and closeness. He is to be feared, venerated and obeyed. It is a dreadful thing to fall into His hands. He is a consuming fire.

Stephen speaks of Abraham (Acts 7:2-5). Abraham is the father of all the faithful. He is the bright light of what it means to fear God and keep His commandments. "Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). He was willing to offer Isaac.

Yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God *is* able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back (Heb. 11:17-19).

The ready obedience of Abraham rebuked the reluctance of Stephen's audience to submit to Jehovah by accepting Jesus, whom God sent and certified. God told Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Paul declared this pointed to Jesus (Gal. 3:16). Stephen must have meant the same.

Stephen speaks of Isaac, Jacob and the patriarchs. He calls to mind the Egyptian bondage and the deliverance through the great prophet Moses. Stephen pointed out that Moses said, "A prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me" (Acts 7:37). Moses pointed to Jesus. If you go to the Old Testament for instruction, it will send you back to the New Testament (Deu. 18:18). Stephen told the Jewish authorities that Moses said to "hear ye him [Jesus]."

Stephen's sermon contained an indictment against the liberated Jews in the wilderness at the time of the giving of the Old Law and the birth of the nation of Israel. The preacher mentioned the rebellion of the people at Sinai. He called to remembrance the shameful incident of the golden calf (Acts 7:39-43). The rebellious people would not listen to Moses, an angel, or Jehovah.

Stephen is bringing into focus the disobedient nature of their fathers at the time the nation was in formation. From the outset of their history, they had shown a disposition to set aside the living oracles given through Moses. He darkly hints that the hard hearts of the people foreshadowed a time of Babylonian exile. With one sweeping statement he calls to attention the long history of Jewish resistance to divine precepts and affinity for idolatry and its abominations. He confronts his hearers with the facts of history and forces them to admit their dishonorable past.

This did not sit well with his listeners. Stephen, however, was the kind of preacher who was more concerned about truth and right than pleasing people. He had no interest in applied psychology, but a burning interest in satisfying God by careful obedience to the moral code and positive divine precepts. He was not a preacher who thought his principle task was to make the people who heard him feel good, but knew it was his duty to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). He did not care to tickle itching ears. He cared about what was right.

Some say Stephen would not have died, if he had been more diplomatic. Well, there are worse things than dying. To go into eternity unprepared is the greatest evil that can come upon anyone. Stephen knew this and was true to his obligation to “tell it like it is.” This did not make him popular, but it did make him faithful.

It is not required of a soldier of the cross to be abrasive and rude. Christians do not go out of their way to offend and insult. It is not our calling to unnecessarily anger people. Still, if we are true to Jesus, those who will not trust God and obey His Word will be outraged. Their fury will be constant. The faithful disciple will be abused and insulted and snubbed. He will be branded with many hateful labels and scorned as the offscouring of all things, but God will love him and one day reward him. He will be disliked by an unbelieving world. If he makes it his main business to please men, he cannot be a servant of Jesus.

Moses was told to follow the pattern (Acts 7:44). God gave the prophet a model to copy and a set of statutes to obey. When the pattern was carefully followed, they were favored with prosperity. When the model was ignored, punishment came upon them. God demands that His rules be complied with in every detail. To flout God’s Word is to insult His person. To transgress His laws is to dishonor Him. It is no small matter for a mortal to trample under his feet God’s holy Word.

Stephen spoke of David and Solomon. He described the majesty and separateness of Jehovah and concluded that the living God cannot be contained in a house made with human hands (Acts 7:48-49). This was doubtless a reference to the prophecy of Jesus that the time would shortly come when the temple and the altar in Jerusalem would be cast down, and the long ago prophecy of Daniel that the continual burnt offering would cease would be fulfilled. This was a part of the half-true and half-false charges that were brought against Stephen. This man of

God did not hesitate nor dodge, but was unswerving in teaching the Word of God. He turned neither to the left hand nor to the right, but went straight on. This is how God's Word must be taught out of a proper respect for Him who gave it.

Stephen, standing arraigned before the high Jewish counsel, led them back over their history, and the supreme note and glory of his apology was its revelation of the doings of God. He forced them to see that the history of Israel—and of the whole human race—is an absolute unwillingness to cooperate with God.

The promise God made to Abraham was redeemed in Jesus. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon and all the prophets bore witness to Jesus and exalted Him as the world's Redeemer. Stephen allowed his listeners to draw their own conclusion, but it was an unavoidable one in the light of all he said about his people. The argument he made from their own history was that the stone which the builders rejected was made the head of the corner (Acts 4:11). They had denied Jesus and were being denied by Jehovah. The one whom they refused was enthroned at the center of the universe, upholding all things by the Word of His power, and receiving the adoration of angels and the homage of the just of all ages.

To this point in his sermon Stephen had carefully, logically constructed his presentation. He had not minimized truth nor sugarcoated facts of history, but the tenor of his teaching had been kind and the appeal was powerful. Something happened to cause this great preacher to flash out at his listeners and rebuke them severely. Having brought them gently to this point, he now gives this stinging rebuke:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it* (Acts 7:51-53).

His listeners were furious. They gnashed on him with their teeth. They drug him outside the city and stoned the life out of him. The intensity of their rage may be seen in the fact that capital punishment had been denied to the Jews by the Romans. To try an accused and then execute him without the Roman governor's permission and approval was to place themselves in danger and the city in peril. They were temporarily blinded by their great anger and committed an act that could have had disastrous consequences.

They killed Stephen mercilessly. The court became a mob and pursued relentlessly its lust for blood. The stones rained down on this helpless man who had done no harm and was only seeking to bring his people to a higher plane of respect for and obedience to the Creator.

Stephen looked up into the heavens and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). He was dying, but he yet lived. The body of dust was about to be crushed beneath the weight of many stones, but the spirit would never die. Stephen saw what his executors did not see—the reality of eternity and therefore the poverty of the material.

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him (Luke 12:4-5).

The courage of Stephen and all martyrs, past and present, springs from a realization that to be is eternal being. When a person is fully persuaded of the reality of eternity, his courage is undaunted. He will suffer all things and endure unbearable misery and insupportable pain because he knows that our present plight is but for a moment, but that city not made with hands is forever.

We may sing of the “faith of our fathers! Living still, in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword...How sweet would be their children’s fate, if they, like them, could die for thee,” but it is unlikely that anyone of us will be physically persecuted for our faith. We will be scoffed at and the truth will be scorned by unbelievers and doubters. God’s Word will be steadfastly opposed, but it will never cease. The advocates of right will, like Stephen, step one by one into eternity, for “it is appointed unto man once to die” (Heb. 9:27). We die. Truth lives on. One jot or tittle of the law will never fail. The rejection of ageless verities by shortsighted and ignorant men does not cause the Word of the Lord to fail.

For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

Not only will the gospel outlast earth, but it will confront us in the last great judgment, and by it we will be approved or condemned.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak (John 12:48-49).

How unspeakably foolish is the man or woman who is ignorant of God's Word and careless with their life. You may not be killed because of your faith in Jesus, but if you are **willing** to courageously die for Him, you are a martyr in the true sense of the word.

I call you to be a martyr.

PHILIP AS A PREACHER

Bobby Liddell



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INTRODUCTION

The more I study about Philip, the more impressed I am with his exemplary life as a Christian and with his tremendous example as a preacher. Nowhere do we read one bad thing about him. Always and everywhere, the Holy Record shows him ready to every good work, busy in the Father's service, and faithful in godly living. In our study, we shall consider Philip as a minister, as a messenger, and as a man.

PHILIP AS A MINISTER

As Luke, the inspired historian, introduces Philip to us, he shows him to be one chosen to minister or serve.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:1-5).

There arose a situation in Jerusalem which required service in caring for the needs of the widows in the daily ministrations. The twelve apostles rightly stated it was not reasonable for them to leave their work to serve tables; thus, they told the brethren to look out seven men from among themselves fit for the task. These seven men were to be men who were suited to serve. That is, they had to be workers and ready to the work. The qualifications given were these: “of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.”

Honest, or good, report refers to their reputation within the church as well as with the unbiased outside the church. Being full of the Holy Ghost indicates their lives were thus guided by the Word revealed by the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), and bore the fruits that thus come (Gal. 5:22-ff). Finally, their possessing wisdom would signal their ability to deal with just such a need with common sense, understanding and good judgment.

Philip was one of the seven chosen. That he was not Philip the apostle is evident from the contrast made between the twelve (which included Philip the apostle) and the seven (cf., Acts 8:1,5).

The Character of Philip

Philip was a man of honest report, whose manner of life was known to be free from deceit and hypocrisy. Notice, the report was not **from** Philip, but **of** Philip. He was not loudly proclaiming his worth, nor did he proudly boast of his work. As God revealed, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (Jam. 4:10). We may infer Philip was a godly man quietly working, honestly living, and humbly walking in fellowship with the faithful. Such a man, patiently serving the Lord, is indeed “full of wisdom,” when compared with those foolishly serving self and loudly clamoring through life seeking the fleeting and temporary glory and honor of men.

Obviously, Philip had, in the past, prepared himself for the opportunity now before him. He was a man, a brother in Christ, known and respected by his brethren. His good character, recognized by the Lord’s people in Jerusalem, promoted their confidence in him. They deemed him trustworthy, as one they could choose and recommend wholeheartedly to the apostles “to appoint over this business.” How refreshing that he had no skeletons in the closet, whose rattling bones would disqualify him for the work, and discourage those who, formerly, had held him in high regard.

The Compassion of Philip

There is not even a hint that Philip was not concerned about the plight of the widows. Rather, it is quite obvious he was ready and glad to help. His love for them would motivate him to act, to do the best he could. Certainly, he was a man ready to every good work (2 Tim. 2:21; Tit. 2:14; 3:1). Therefore, he did not offer lame excuses, such as: “I am too busy,” “I really do not have the time,” “Maybe, next time I will be able to help,” “Just get someone else who can do a better job,” “I don’t see the need,” “I don’t agree that this is the way to do it,” “It is not my responsibility,” or, “I don’t believe this is a work in which we, as the church, can take part.” Nor, did brethren have to cajole, beg, shame, badger, or repeatedly ask him to take part in this much-needed work. The Lord, whom Philip served so capably, was motivated by compassion (Mat. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32), and Philip followed His perfect example (1 Pet. 2:21).

Philip had not the book of James, as do we, but he surely understood, as did these other brethren in Jerusalem, the responsibility to help widows in need (cf., Deu. 10:18; 14:29; 24:19; Job 22:9; Mal. 3:5). Later, the inspired James would pen: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). Philip surely had compassion for those in need, as demonstrated by his willingness to help them. Thus, he would not just have waved his hand and said, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,” and not work to help them (Jam. 2:16).

That being the case, can we picture this great man of God murmuring about having to serve “those old widows?” Would he mope around, long-faced, feeling sorry for himself? Would he do the work, but with obvious disdain, and make the poor women feel bad for inconveniencing him? Would he grumble and complain and seek every excuse not to do the job he had been given? Certainly not! Rather, from what Holy Scripture records of him, we envision his service characterized by zeal, energy, tenderness, and joy—great joy for the opportunity to do something good for someone in need, in the name of the Lord, and to glorify God (Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phi. 4:20; Col. 3:17).

When Philip went to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them, “there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). After his teaching the Ethiopian eunuch, who obeyed the Gospel, the eunuch “went on his

way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39). No doubt, when Philip busied himself helping serve the widows, he brought joy to their hearts also. Such was the compassion of this humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Cooperation of Philip

Philip was a good man, associated with good men, on the side of good, and ready to do good. He would not engage in partnership with evil men, as some erroneously think they may do in an effort to, as they assert, “accomplish some good result” (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). He would, though, join with good men, cooperating with them. From that, good would surely come.

Men with character and compassion have no trouble cooperating to accomplish good. Seven men were chosen to care for the widows. That means they brought with them seven backgrounds, seven personalities, seven ways of doing things, seven viewpoints, etc. How would they ever be able to do the work before them? Cooperation is the answer. Though there were seven, they were, all being in Christ, standing “fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phi. 1:27; cf., 1 Cor. 1:10).

Servants of Christ are ready to serve, or, very simply, they are not servants. Thus, no job is too small, no task is too menial, no work can be too unrecognized for the true servant of the Lord to do. God’s people, if they are His people, are ready to help whatever the need, and are not concerned about receiving the praise. Jesus said:

but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mat. 20:26-28).

Brethren with the spirit of cooperation have no trouble “playing second fiddle.” Imagine Philip saying to the apostles, “What right do you have to tell me what to do?” Instead, he respected the office of the apostles and happily submitted himself in humble service. The church needs an intensive infusion of a multitude of Philips—men of character, compassion, and cooperation—always doing their best wherever the need and whatever the task.

PHILIP AS A MESSENGER

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and

many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done (Acts 8:5-13).

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet (Acts 8:26-28).

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man (Acts 8:29-34)?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:35-40).

Philip Was A Determined Messenger

Even though the followers of the Lord were under great persecution and scattered, with Saul's making havoc of the church and committing men and women to prison (Acts 8:1-3), Philip did not give up. No doubt, he and the other brethren "that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word," with an even greater sense of urgency (Acts

8:4). How different were they from some who, at the first whiff of a hint of a sign of some trivial problem, quit the Lord, and run back to Satan? Thank God, Philip was not of such flimsy faith and cowardly composition.

Does he not appear determined? As when he was ready to serve the widows, now, he is ready to go, and, going, to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Was his family with him? We do not know, but we know they were later (Acts 21:8-9). We do know he was not so tied to this present world that he gave up the church and salvation therein when the way became difficult (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:10; Acts 2:47). His persistence, in the face of persecution, is commendable and should serve as an example to us.

Philip Was A Dependable Messenger

As Philip had proved himself dependable in earlier service (Acts 6), so he would bring the same characteristics to preaching. Again, he was the type brother who would do the best he could. No one had to constantly jump-start Philip! When the city of Samaria needed to hear the gospel, Philip was the one who would say, as it were, “Here *am* I, send me” (Isa. 6:8). Brethren, we need not think the man who has not been faithful as a member, and who has not shown himself dependable as a servant, will, without genuine repentance (and an adequate manifestation of the fruits thereof), become a faithful preacher.

Preaching is not the easy job some think it to be—with big pay, short hours, delicate living, fame and glory, and universal appreciation. Rather, preaching is the most demanding, taxing and exhausting endeavor in which one will ever engage. This writer has worked as a laborer and electrician in construction work and underground coal mining, often working six days a week, and that involving some double shifts. Temperatures below zero and above one hundred degrees, sun, rain, snow, ice, hazardous working conditions, dangerous assignments, long hours, and exhausting labor went with the job. Yet, the hardest work this writer has ever done, by far, has been doing the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). Furthermore, it is, without question, the most rewarding work any man can ever do. As, no doubt, many others will cite during this lectureship, God had only one Son, and he was a preacher (Mat. 4:17).

Was Philip dependable? Every time the Word of God mentions Philip, it depicts him as busy, working, going, doing, and serving faithfully and

dependably. Thus, he proved himself. Likewise, today, men need to prove themselves before they preach.

Philip Was A Deliverer Of The Message

Philip preached the message from God. He did not preach Philip, nor did he preach a message from man or “another gospel” (Mat. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-10). Notice what Philip did. He, “went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5), “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). When with the eunuch, “Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). After baptizing the eunuch, “Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:40). He preached everywhere he went, coming and going. Is there any wonder Luke calls him “Philip the evangelist”; that is, one who preaches the gospel (Acts 21:8)?

He was not a braggart, nor was he a showoff. If people had waited for Philip to tell them how great he was and what a fine job he had done preaching, they would never have heard it. Thus, he did not try to show himself to be some great one, nor to convert folks to himself so he could manipulate them later to do his bidding.

Philip preached the message men needed to hear, and still need to hear (Rom. 1:16; 10:17). He was not a cowardly, compromising, church-changing, wind-checking, sect-pleasing, ear-tickler (2 Tim. 4:1-5). He stood fast in the faith, and, lovingly, proclaimed the Good News (Eph. 4:15). No sermon of Philip’s has been recorded, but the results have. The people in Samaria heeded the message (Acts 8:6); there was great joy in the city (Acts 8:8); and men and women were baptized (8:12). The Ethiopian was baptized, having believed and confessed his faith, and went on his way rejoicing (8:38-39).

There are a lot of things about Philip we do not know, but we do know this: he was a faithful messenger of God who effectively proclaimed the message from God. It seems he could hardly wait to do so. When the angel of the Lord spoke to him, instructing him to, “Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert...he arose and went,” a distance of about fifty miles (Acts 8:26-27). When the “Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot...Philip ran thither” (Acts 8:29-30). He did not hesitate, quibble, question or offer excuses. He did not reason the

way was too difficult, dusty, dark or scary. He did not say, “Well, I tried that before, and it didn’t work.” Nor, did he say, “He won’t listen anyway. Why bother?” Philip did not slouch off, head down, lips stuck out, hands in his pockets, dragging his feet, kicking pebbles, and muttering under his breath. No doubt, he was thankful for the opportunity to evangelize, and was ready to go (Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:18-20).

We would do well to emulate his attitude and to understand his approach. Always and everywhere, he preached the Gospel—the message men must hear to be saved (Acts 16:30-32; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; Eph. 2:8). That was the message of the Christ (Acts 8:5), the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12), the name of Christ (Acts 8:12), the necessity of belief and baptism into Christ (Acts 8:12, 36), and the deity of Christ (Acts 8:37). He did not preach the creeds, dogmas, ideas, opinions, errors, and/or the ‘isms of men, but he did proclaim the Truth from God (John 17:17).

Specifically, in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip found out where the poor lost man was in knowledge (understanding), began there, and took him to where he needed to be (Acts 8:30ff). There was no question what the eunuch needed to hear. So, Philip preached the “Man” (Jesus, Savior of man), **and** the “Plan” (His revealed will to man; that is, His law for man including what to do to be saved and stay saved [John 8:32; 12:48; 17:17; 14:15; Gal. 6:2]).

To teach the eunuch, Philip sat with him (Acts 8:31). What if he had been aloof, or had looked down his nose at the man? What if he had pointed out the eunuch was dusty, dirty from his travel? Suppose he had said to the Ethiopian, “You know, you look different from me?” His love for souls precluded such. Jesus, our great example, ate with publicans and sinners—in order to teach them (Mat. 9:10; Luke 5:32; 15:1); therefore, He was called “a friend of publicans and sinners” (Mat. 11:19), and He was. No, He did not partake in their sin, but He did seek to save them from their sin, and that required contact with those in sin. How else could He be their friend? So, Philip had to have contact with the citizens of Samaria, even Simon the sorcerer, and with the eunuch from Ethiopia in order to teach them.

Also, please note, Philip was ready to answer the questions the eunuch posed (Acts 8:34; 1 Pet. 3:15). A breakdown in any one of these areas would have resulted in a missed opportunity and a man still lost.

PHILIP THE MAN

And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy (Acts 21:8-9).

Philip Was A Man Who Loved The Faithful

Luke records they came into the house of "Philip the evangelist." It was **NOT** the house of Philip the drunkard, or Philip the hypocrite, or Philip the adulterer, or Philip the liar, or Philip the idolater, or Philip the sower of discord, or Philip the thief, or Philip the gambler, or Philip the false teacher, etc. Here was a man recognized as an "evangelist," that is, one who was a proclaimer of the Good News (cf., Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5)!

Philip was a man who showed hospitality to his brethren (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9). He was ready to open his home to the weary travelers (nine all together, cf., Acts 20:4-5), and to extend to them the help he could offer, using his resources for their benefit (cf., Acts 16:15; Phi. 1:5). As such, he was an encourager of good men (cf., 2 John 9-11; 3 John 10). No doubt, that included the efforts of his family. The text shows he had four virgin daughters, implying, of course, he had a wife. A godly wife and obedient children are a great asset to a preacher, but a wife and children who do not share that love for faithful brethren and who are not interested in extending hospitality can be a great hindrance.

Philip Was A Man Who Loved His Family

One might ask where the text explicitly says so. Well, it does not, but it does show us a godly man who should, would, and, obviously, did love his family. As the record of his activities shows his concern, surely, above all, he was concerned about the souls of his family. He loved his daughters enough to train them correctly (cf., 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Pro. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Suppose he had neglected his responsibility, and had said, "I just can't do anything with those daughters of mine?" He loved his family enough to set before them the right example of Christian living.

Imagine this: Paul and the other eight brethren arrive at the door of Philip "the evangelist." At their knock, Philip peeks out the window, gasps, curses and begins frantically to scamper about hiding beer bottles, lottery tickets, dirty magazines, and gambling forms. While he looks for his copy of Scripture, and blows off the dust, he tells his

neighbor's wife to slip out the back door, quickly, quietly, and to let no one see her. No, Philip did not have to hide his true lifestyle when brethren came around. However, if he had, who do you think would have seen him for the hypocrite he would have been—his family! The result could well be their turning from the faith.

Philip loved his family too much to allow such to happen. He was not so busy trying to save others that he forgot about his own family. As he was a success in other areas, so he was a true success in his Christ-centered home. Truly, if one is not a success at home, no other accomplishment may substitute as an adequate replacement.

Philip Was A Man Who Loved Fellowship

Fellowship is an attractive, encouraging, and fulfilling aspect of the Christian life. Those who love God long for His fellowship, and those who love God's people, seek, cherish, and guard Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 5:11; 1 John 1:3, 6-10). Such was the case with Philip. As noted earlier, Philip had fellowship with Paul (and company), showing them hospitality as Paul was journeying to Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION

Philip as a preacher was a minister who was a man of character, who was compassionate and cooperative. As a messenger of the Lord, he was determined, dependable, and a deliverer of the true message of God. As a man, he loved the faithful, his family, and fellowship with God and His people. This faithful child of God, who carried the saving Gospel to Samaria, the Eunuch, and others, was a truly great man. No, he was not Philip the wealthy, the highly educated, the prominent, or the powerful, but he was Philip the servant of God who carried glad tidings of good things wherever he went (Rom. 10:13-17). What else could he have done that would have been better? Let us follow his good example and so live that we might meet him in Heaven one day.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AS A PREACHER

Tommy J. Hicks



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THE “BAPTIST” IN PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT

John (called “the Baptist”) and his work were foretold in prophecy. Applying Isaiah 4:3 to John, Matthew 3:3 states, “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Jesus confirmed that John fulfilled Malachi 3:1 when He said, “For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee” (Mat. 11:10). Concluding the Old Testament, the last two verses promise, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5-6). Christ stamped “Prophecy Fulfilled” on that passage when He declared John was the “Elias, which was for to come” (Mat. 11:14). Again, when the Lord proclaimed, “But I say unto you, That Elias is come already...the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist” (Mat. 17:12-13). Questioned relative to his identity, John responded, “He

said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias” (John 1:23). Indeed, John went before the Lord “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17).

Having received the Word of God in the wilderness (Luke 3:2), John was “sent from God” (John 1:6), Divinely commissioned to do his work. “To make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17), the general theme of John’s preaching was, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 3:2). More specifically, he preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). Those who rejected John’s baptism “rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:30). So successful was John in the eyes of the Lord that Jesus announced, “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist” (Mat. 11:11). What John preached and how he preached it (faithfully, with the right attitude toward God and his hearers) pleased the Father. Rather than studying the theories and methods of preaching employed by “successful” (in the world’s estimation) denominational preachers; gospel preachers should learn the important, practical lessons that can be learned from “God approved” preachers in the Bible. Many valuable lessons can be learned from John, the man called “the Baptist.”

AS A PREACHER JOHN JUDGED PEOPLE

There was a time when faithful gospel preachers exposed and refuted the errors taught by the denominationalists. Unable to defend their despicable doctrines, the sectarians cried out condemning all judging, saying, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Such use was an abuse of Matthew 7:1-2. If that view were true, what of the murderer? the thief? the homosexual? the pedophile? Does Matthew 7:1-2 forbid judging those who do such things? If these things and those who do them can be judged, who and what cannot be judged?

What men do not want judged are themselves and their false doctrines. Yet, “the apostle of love” said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). “Try the spirits” means to “judge the spirits.” Paul commanded that false teachers are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17). How is that command to be

obeyed if judgment of such matters is forbidden? Today, because they have left the Bible to accept, ape, and advocate many of the other false teachings of denominationalism, it is no surprise to hear silly, revisionistic, guisling, pusillanimous brethren singing the sect's old "judging" song. Evidently unaware that they condemn themselves, lemminlike liberals judge and condemn all who would judge. John would be an anathema to them.

John was well aware of how his contemporaries loosed what God had bound and how they bound what God had not. He knew they were pious hell-bound hypocrites "teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:3-9). Who can deny that John judged (i.e., condemned) the Pharisees and Sadducees when He called them "generation of vipers" and asked, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mat. 3:7). John did not accept them as they were. He did not worry, "If I offended them they might not come back." He did not reason, "I have sinned myself; therefore, it would be wrong for me to judge the Pharisees and Sadducees." He did not tell them, "I'm okay! You're okay!" He did not mislead them into believing that God was pleased with them by saying, "Smile, God loves you!" Instead, John commanded them, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Mat. 3:8).

Explaining how to identify false teachers, Jesus most definitely taught that a tree can be known by its fruits. He said:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Mat. 7:15-20).

According to Jesus, can false teachers be identified as (judged to be) such? Yes! Did Christ teach that the one who identifies a false teacher can know that, unless the false teacher repents, the false teacher is heading for hell on greased wheels? Yes! John did not sin when he judged. Neither do faithful Christians sin today when they "judge righteous judgment." It was no one less than Jesus Himself Who commanded "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

AS A PREACHER JOHN MET PEOPLE'S REAL NEEDS

Today, the drumbeat is for preachers to preach sermons that “meet the felt needs” of their hearers. True, there are things people want (feel they need) preached. Sometimes, what they want (feel they need) preached is exactly what they truly need to hear. However, there are things people genuinely need to hear preached—things of which they are not remotely aware—things they do not feel they need to hear. Regarding some, Titus was instructed, “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:13). Does anyone seriously suppose those, for whom that statement was meant, “felt the need” to be rebuked? After Paul gave Titus his “marching orders” on how to behave and what to preach, he said, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Tit. 2:15). On the receiving end, a “rebuke” is seldom (if ever) a “felt need” by anyone. Added to this, Paul said some were past feeling. These are they, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19). What are the “felt needs” of the “past feeling” souls? They have spiritual needs all right, but they do not “feel” them.

Every Christian needs to realize that people can and do harden their hearts against the Word and will of God. That is why the writer of Hebrews said, “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Heb 3:8). Hebrews 10:22 states, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Does this verse not show that people can and do have evil consciences? Of course it does. Even among members of the Lord’s church, Paul spoke of those who “speak lies” being “branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:2, ASV). After saying, “Unto the pure all things *are* pure,” Paul went on to say, “but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Tit. 1:15). So, some have minds and consciences that are defiled. Would a sermon filled with what they wanted to hear (their “felt needs”) be what those with “hard hearts,” “evil consciences,” “branded [seared, KJV] consciences,” “defiled minds,” and “defiled consciences” really **needed** to hear?

John told people what they needed to hear, whether they “felt the need” to hear it or not. Luke 3:10-14 states:

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages (Luke 3:10-14).

Did the publicans and the soldiers “feel” the need to hear what John told them? No, but he told them what they “needed” to hear regardless of how they felt about it. If Herod “felt the need” to hear John tell him, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife” (Mark 6:18), he had a peculiar way of showing it. Whether Herod wanted (felt the need) to hear it or not, John “reproved” him “for Herodias his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done” (Luke 3:19). He told Herod what he needed to hear!

AS A PREACHER JOHN DID NOT COMPROMISE

In Old Testament times, the people wanted God’s spokesmen to compromise. King Ahab attempted to intimidate Elijah by calling him a troublemaker. However, Elijah refused to be intimidated and laid Israel’s troubles squarely at Ahab’s feet. First Kings 18:17-18 recorded:

And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* And he answered, *I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.*

Like Elijah, John would not compromise when it came to telling immoral governmental authorities what they needed to hear. Unfortunately, those other than governmental leaders have attempted to get God’s men to compromise what they preached. Isaiah 30:10 mentions those, “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.” Evidently, many of the prophets did compromise. Jeremiah lamented, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it so*” (Jer. 5:31).

Concerning John, Jesus asked the multitudes, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?” (Mat. 11:7). With this rhetorical question, Christ made it clear that in what John taught, he never compromised God’s Word. He would not be swayed by the religious, political, and moral influences of his day. He could not be

bowed with imprisonment. Even in the face of death he did not cower. John was a reed not shaken (something the “Change Agents” of his day failed to appreciate). Satan hates to deal with an uncompromising servant of God!

God has never wanted His children to be reeds shaken in the wind, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). For that reason He inspired Paul to command:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

History repeatedly shows the fulfillment of this passage. Its truthfulness can be observed even now. Someone has written a revealing little poem entitled, “Ode To A Hireling Preacher.” It goes:

Preach a sermon, preacher,
But make it short and sweet;
Our stomachs strike at twelve o'clock
A hungering for to eat.

Preach a sermon, preacher,
We care not what you say,
As long as you leave us alone
And fire the other way.

Preach a sermon, preacher
Make it good and plain;
But don't you dare to get so close
As to call sin by its name.

Preach a sermon, preacher,
But don't get too specific;
As long as you will generalize
We'll think you are terrific.

Preach a sermon, preacher,
Make it what we love to hear;
We'll pat you on your spineless back
While you scratch our itching ear.

When it comes to winds of doctrine, if weather vanes could be put in the pulpits in churches of Christ, a vast number of them would be spinning like tops. Winds of doctrine tossing folks to and fro include: the doctrine of salvation by faith only, the doctrine of salvation by grace only, the doctrine that one cannot know and do God's will, the doctrine that the Bible does not provide a pattern for New Testament

Christianity (the “New Hermeneutics”), the doctrine that there are saved people in all denominations, the doctrine that one does not have to know he is being baptized for the remission of sins (just so long as he is doing it to obey God, it is okay), the doctrine of “unity in diversity,” the doctrine that the church is a sect, the doctrine that the church is just one denomination among many, the doctrine that every believer is a brother, **et cetera**. Space permits only this sampling of the doctrines that are now being taught in once faithful churches.

Besides the above-mentioned doctrines, compromises have been made in other areas that are most evident. These include: gymnasiums, children’s church, the ministerial alliance, solos/quartets/choirs in the worship, hand clapping (applause) in the worship, joint participation in “special services” with the denominations at “Easter” and “Christmas,” women in leadership roles in the worship, drama presentations in the place of preaching, **et cetera**. Again, this is just a sampling. It serves to show that a whole lot of compromising has happened. Unlike John, too many Christians have succumbed to worldly influences.

As never before in their lives, today’s preachers feel the pressures compromising brethren are bringing to bear. In moments of weakness when even small compromises are being contemplated (rationalized)—REMEMBER JOHN THE BAPTIST, A REED NOT SHAKEN. Every faithful preacher knows that his goal must be to please God, not man. Compromise in matters of faith is out of the question. Paul demonstrated this when he penned, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). To the Thessalonians, he wrote, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 The. 2:4). Seemingly, God’s faithful servants have always been in the minority (1 Kin. 19:18). Their road is usually difficult and lonely (2 Tim. 4:14-17). But brethren, heaven will be worth it all. Paul said, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Edgar A. Guest’s poem, “The Few,” is applicable here. It says:

The easy roads are crowded
And the level roads are jammed;
The pleasant little rivers
With the drifting folks are crammed.

But off yonder where it's rocky,
 Where you get a better view,
 You'll find the ranks are thinning
 And travelers are few.
 Where the going's smooth and pleasant
 You will always find the throng,
 For the many, more's the pity,
 Seem to like to drift along.
 But the steepes that call for courage
 And the task that's hard to do
 In the end result in glory
 For the never-wavering few.

Compromising, soft-soaping, men pleasers would do well to remember the words of Jesus found in Luke 6:26—"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

AS A PREACHER JOHN POINTED TO THE SAVIOR

John never preached himself, but he always pointed to the Savior. Sincerely humble, John did not consider himself worthy to bear the Savior's shoes (Mat. 3:11). He preached, "There cometh one mightier than I after me" (Mark 1:7). When men mistook him for the Messiah, John always pointed them to Christ. He emphatically stressed to all, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20). John 3:28-29 quotes John saying:

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Recognizing that his own work was temporary and that Christ's work was eternal, John said, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (John 3:30). Directing the people's attention to Jesus, John testified, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:30). Referring to Jesus, John's beautiful statement, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), expresses the clarion thrust of his magnificent mission. Without question, John did prepare the way of the Lord.

Early in Christ's earthly ministry, some of John's disciples left John to work with Him. At least two of John's former disciples became apostles of Christ's. This account is given in John 1:35,37,40:

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples...And the two disciples heard him speak [John], and they followed Jesus...One of the two

which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

Bible students generally agree that it is most likely that the unnamed disciple in this passage was none other than John (the apostle). Before his imprisonment by Herod, how many of John's disciples became Christ's disciples is unknown. After he was imprisoned, John sent two disciples to Jesus. They were to ask the Lord, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Mat. 11:3). Christ proved to them that he was the One for which they looked. It may be inferred from Matthew 14:12 that, following John's death, his disciples turned to Jesus. From the beginning to the end of his ministry, John pointed men to Jesus. Faithful gospel preachers must do the same.

Of a well-known, world-traveled preacher it was asked, "He is in such demand, how does he have time to prepare his lessons?" "Oh, that is no problem. He only preaches one thing—'How Great I Am,'" was the reply. Occasional personal references in a lesson are fine. But, how disappointing it is to hear a preacher preach a sermon filled with, "I did this" and "I did that," "I said this" and "I said that." What must be preached is **what Jesus did and said**. Every preacher and teacher of the gospel should "hide behind the cross." Paul said, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). John pointed men to Jesus and the coming kingdom; Paul did too. Luke concluded his inspired history with these words:

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him (Acts 28:30-31).

Men must be pointed to Christ for there is no other in whom salvation may be obtained. Once, when Jesus informed people of His demands for discipleship, many of His followers deserted Him. Seeing so many leave, Jesus asked the twelve:

Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:67-69).

Later, speaking specifically of Christ, Peter declared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Except for Judas Iscariot, every one of Christ's apostles remained faithful unto death. Like John (called "the Baptist"), all the apostles (save John) died

martyrs' deaths, faithfully pointing men to their Savior. This being so, they and all others who are faithful unto death will receive "a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

CONCLUSION

John knew that the world was lost in sin. He knew that was why a Savior's coming was necessary. He proclaimed:

I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable (Luke 3:16-17).

Baptism "with fire" and "fire unquenchable" are clear references to the eternal fires of hell (many would consider this "negative" preaching). Especially negative, to some, the "chaff" (the lost) will be cast into that "fire" (hell). On the positive side, John preached that Jesus gathers the wheat (the saved) into his garner (heaven). An integral part of John's preaching was to help men reach heaven. That, he did!

Whereas John was "sent" (commissioned) to preach to the Jews, Christians are "sent" (commissioned) to preach to the whole world. Christ commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Again, Jesus ordered, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:19-20). John never lost sight of his mission. Christians must not lose sight of theirs. John accomplished that which God gave him to do. Christians can accomplish that which God gives them to do. However, to do so they must follow John's example of faithfulness (by judging with "righteous judgment," by preaching to meet people's **real [spiritual]** needs, by never compromising in matters of faith, and by pointing men to Jesus). If men are lost after these things are done, the obedient servant of God can say with Paul:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light

of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:1-4).

And, when the labors of this life are ended for the loyal servant of God, the Lord will say to him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat. 25:21).

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MICAH AS A PREACHER

Clifford Newell, Jr.



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INTRODUCTION

The lectureship theme—**Preaching God Demands**—is certainly relevant and extremely important. In preaching the Word of God, we are engaged in the highest calling into which mortal man can enter. No other profession is half as important, challenging, or sacred. It is difficult for me to comprehend one more interested in the physical sciences than in the heavenly sciences, or more fascinated with animal and vegetable life than with the life of the Spirit, or more concerned with the academic developments of the human brain than with the culture of the soul, or more intrigued by mathematics than men, or more preoccupied with the laws of the land than with the laws of God, or more challenged by the diagnosis and cure of some physical disease than by the isolation and destruction of those deadly viruses that separate men from God and drag them into the pain and horrors of hell.

Yes, good people, God has placed a very high premium upon preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). He chose preaching (1 Cor. 1:18-21) as the instrument of His power in the salvation of the sinner, for the gospel of Christ is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16); and the same gospel is “able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21).

The Divine Record (1 Kin. 2:7-28; 2 Chr. 18:6-27) tells us all we know, for certain, about this great man of God. The biblical account of Micaiah is relatively brief. Eight characters are wearing this name, including one woman. However, our subject at this time was a prophet in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, during the reign of Ahab, an evil king. Although we know less about Micaiah when compared with many of the prophets, what we do know concerning him can be profitable.

THE CONTEXT OF MICAIAH'S MESSAGE

In 722 B.C., under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileaser II, Assyria besieged Israel and carried her into captivity in three waves. Israel was at this time known as the Northern Kingdom consisting of ten tribes. During the 200 years of the Northern Kingdom there were nineteen kings as recorded in the pages of Holy Writ. Each of these nineteen were wicked and brought much evil upon the people of God. Micaiah came upon the scene during the evil influence and reign of Ahab, king of Israel. It was a time when corruption, debauchery, and decay reached its zenith. King Ahab reigned for twenty-two years and seemed determined to follow the idolatry established by Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. To depart from any moral standard farther, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of Sidon. According to the Divine Record, Ahab built a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria and established groves to the goddess Asherah (1 Kin. 16:31-33). Jehovah sums up the life and reign of Ahab thus, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him" (1 Kin. 16:30).

Micaiah: The Herald

"And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14). Micaiah delivered Jehovah's message under circumstances that might and probably would have intimidated him had he not been a true prophet. The prophet was a spokesman for God. He was charged with the obligation of proclaiming to mortal men the message that God put into his mouth. The only limitation placed upon a prophet was his obligation to speak only the words that God had given him, whether the words were of commendation, or condemnation, or information and instruction, or divine predictions of future events. Micaiah the herald was like Moses, in that,

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;...And the LORD said

unto me,...I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, **and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him** (Deu. 18:15-18).

Micaiah was like David, according to the Divine Record “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Micaiah was like the reluctant prophet Jonah, for God told Jonah, “Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and **preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee**” (Jon. 3:2). Micaiah was like the weeping prophet Jeremiah, when God spake unto him, “**To whom the word of the LORD came** in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign” (Jer. 1:2). The truth of the matter is that all the true prophets of God were known for their loyalty to “**what the Lord saith, that will I speak!**” (Num. 24:13). This is significantly significant, especially when applied to gospel preaching. We must stand as did the true prophets and proclaim or herald that which God has revealed. Our stance, our position should be as was the apostle Paul who declared,

And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Gal. 2:4-5).

These words should be written over every pulpit throughout the world. That is the only kind of preaching God demands!

An investigation of the distinction which existed between the false prophet and the true prophet is in the distinction found in the prophecy by Micaiah the son of Imlah. The prophecy is founded in the fact that Ahab the king of Israel had suggested to Jehoshaphat king of Judah that he go with him together in battle against Ramoth-Gilead to take it from the king of Syria. To this proposal Jehoshaphat gave his full assent.

Before proceeding to battle, however, Jehoshaphat desired that Ahab should inquire of the Word of the Lord. Ahab, therefore, gathered together the prophets, about four hundred men. It is reasonable to assume that these prophets were in the actual pay of Ahab, and that they were associated with the royal court. They seem at least to have been in his service and available at his call.

As far as these prophets themselves were concerned, they were not true prophets of Jehovah, nor were they bands of prophets such as those described in connection with Samuel and Elijah. These prophets were not prophets of Baal, but prophets of Jehovah who was worshiped as

standing upon the form of a calf. In response to the king's question as to whether he should go to war or not, they answered with one voice in the affirmative, giving just the message that the king wished to hear.

Interestingly enough, Jehoshaphat is not satisfied with this response. He seems to recognize that these prophets have not actually received their message from Jehovah, and so he asks whether there is not still another prophet of the Lord. We do not know for certainty all that was involved in the asking of this question. It may well have been that the king's conscience was troubling him. In his heart he must have known that he was doing wrong. He, the king of Judah, should have had nothing to do with the king of the apostate nation Israel. Perhaps he is seeking for further justification of his course. We do not know. We do know, however, that he was not satisfied with the words of Ahab's prophets.

In response to Jehoshaphat's question, Ahab informs him that there is yet one more prophet, namely, Micaiah the son of Imlah. The question is sometimes asked why Elijah was not called. In answer, however, we may note again the question of Jehoshaphat, "*Is there not here a prophet of the LORD?*" (2 Kin. 3:11). Elijah had gone into retirement, and at all events seems not to have been in the vicinity. Micaiah evidently dwelt near at hand, where he would readily be available. He is the only true prophet who is present, and for that reason Ahab mentions him rather than Elijah. Ahab, however, has no use for Micaiah. "I hate him," he says, "for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kin. 22:8).

The false prophets continue prophesying before the king. One of them, Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, made horns of iron, declaring that with them Ahab would push Syria until it was consumed. It is probable that Zedekiah was applying Deuteronomy 33:17, in which the horns of Joseph were said to be like the horns of a wild ox. The implication of Zedekiah's action was that the blessing which belonged to Joseph would also come to Ahab as he went against Ramoth-Gilead.

The messenger who had been sent by king Ahab to call Micaiah began coaching him in preparation for his meeting with the kings. This episode appears to have been far more instructive than one might think, for it shows that in the eyes of the messenger, at least, there were prophets who wanted to know in advance in what direction the wind was blowing. Without doubt the messenger believed that he was doing

Micaiah a favor. In his eyes, Micaiah was no different from the other four hundred prophets, and a word in advance could put him upon the right track so that he would prophesy what the king wanted to hear.

The messenger, however, underestimated his man. Micaiah was not in the least interested in knowing what the king wanted to hear. His reply to the messenger stands out as a great classic expression of fidelity to a high commission. Micaiah emphatically stated, "**As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak**" (1 Kin. 22:14). One cannot read these words without the conviction that Micaiah was deeply conscious of the seriousness of his vocation. Dear reader, does there not exist the same seriousness in preaching today as expressed by Micaiah? Indeed there is! That is why the Divine Record admonishes us to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). The emphasis is **PREACH THE WORD!** We are not to act out the message as would an actor in a play. We are not to give our feelings and opinions as the truth. Nor are we to hold back that which is profitable (Acts 20:20, 27; 2 Tim. 3:16).

When the king asked Micaiah what he should do, he received the reply, "Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king" (1 Kin. 22:15). It is a strange reply, and gives the impression that the prophet had gone back upon the word which he had just spoken to the messenger. Such, however, was not the case. There can be no doubt that we have words of devastating scorn.

Ahab recognized immediately the irony that lay in Micaiah's words. "How many times shall I adjure thee" he said, "that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the LORD?" (1 Kin. 22:16). Micaiah's action thus constituted a stern denunciation of the king and set Micaiah apart as one who would not preach to win the favor of a monarch but who would declare only the Word of the Lord. Then Micaiah answers, and with his answer there is a great change. There is now no mere repetition of words which the king wished to hear, but a depth of dignity and beauty such as characterized great and true prophecy. Micaiah said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace" (1 Kin. 22:17).

This did not please Ahab, and he remarked to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

(1 Kin. 22:18). Micaiah then proceeded to explain to Ahab what it was that lay in back of the messages of the false prophets.

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee (1 Kin. 22:19-23).

Micaiah sees the Lord upon His throne. It is a picture which reveals the absolute sovereignty of God in His providential dealings. It was His design that Ahab should perish at Ramoth-Gilead and that the means which would lead to his destruction were to be found in a deception of his mind, produced by the words of the false prophets. Is it any wonder why John encouraged his readers, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Or the words of James, “My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (Jam. 3:1).

The one who is ready to deceive Ahab is described as the spirit. There are some who are of the opinion that this has reference to Satan himself. However, this is a personification to the spirit of prophecy. Consider,

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, *that* I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land (Zec. 13:2).

John, the apostle said, “Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). Listen to the peerless Paul, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (2 The. 2:11). Micaiah sums up this matter, “Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee” (1 Kin. 22:23).

It is interesting to note the reaction of Zedekiah to the analysis of Micaiah. Enraged, he smites Micaiah upon the cheek and says, “Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?” (1 Kin. 22:24). The action of the angered prophet of Ahab reveals that he was

not inspired of God. The source of his inspiration was not the Spirit of God, but a lying spirit. Zedekiah evidently felt that Micaiah had exposed him, and hence he must strike the prophet. This should not cause us to marvel for we read, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you,” or “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!” (Mat. 5:12; 23:37).

Response To Micaiah

The way people respond to the message reveals a great deal more about a person than many would like for it to. James stated, “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted [implanted] word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). May we be more like the Bereans, who “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). How was the word/ message of Micaiah received?

In regards to the wicked king Ahab, Micaiah was hated because he told the truth. “I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (1 Kin. 22:8). At first sight this attitude of the king strikes one as being haughty and childish. It well may have been that Ahab subscribed to the notion that prophets would have power to control divinity, therefore, Ahab lived in hatred of Micaiah. However, Jehoshaphat rebukes the king’s words by saying, “Let not the king say so.”

Micaiah was despised by Zedekiah because he exposed him as a false prophet/teacher. Zedekiah smote Micaiah upon the cheek and asked, “Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?” (1 Kin. 22:24). This is the course that the false teacher will take, i.e., he turns with a vengeance upon the messenger. This is the course of action taken against our Savior, Isaiah 53; after Paul’s conversion to Christianity he experienced this same attitude, namely, being despised. Paul asked, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). Zedekiah’s true nature thus manifests itself!

Micaiah was insulted by both the king of Israel as well as by the false prophets.

And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is good* (1 Kin. 22:13).

The literal idea is to tickle the king's ear by telling him what he wants to hear. Micaiah knew that truth is objective and not subjective, and they only sought to insult him by seeking to persuade him to "be like one of them!" This reminds us of the incident between John the Baptist and Herod (Mat. 14:1-11), or the words of Paul when he stated, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

He was punished by the wicked king, i.e., he would be carried back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace (1 Kin. 22:26-27).

Good people, did not Jesus emphasize this very point in the sermon on the mount, when He said,

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mat. 5:10-12).

Attributes Of Micaiah

Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?" Ahab answered, "*There is* yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah" (1 Kin. 22:7-8). There was yet one man who was righteous. Micaiah was hated by Ahab because the king believed he (Micaiah) "doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." The case is, the righteous are always hated by the wicked. This is seen in Genesis 4, between Cain and Abel. The principle is true as found in Matthew 23:29-31. Ultimately, Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

There was yet one man who would not follow the multitude into evil. Micaiah had already made up his mind. He was not going to follow the crowd—"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment*" (Exo. 23:2). The question of the hour is not what is the popular side, but what is the Lord's side? Whenever the Lord is with you, you are in the majority.

Paul said, “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?” (Rom. 8:31). There was yet one man to whom God’s Word was important. We read, “what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak” (1 Kin. 22:14). Micaiah was God’s man! The reason was, God’s Word was the most important thing in the world to him. There is no doubt this is why Paul stated,

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:14-16).

Perhaps we are reminded of Peter and John,

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:18-20).

There was yet one man to whom kings meant nothing. Ahab said unto Micaiah, “How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the LORD?” (1 Kin. 22:16). Hence, he said, “I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd” (1 Kin. 22:17). The others were afraid of Ahab and so they spoke to please him. We have to love this man of God to whom kings meant nothing (cf., Mat. 2:7-12). Most of us will never stand before a king or head of a government to speak the unsearchable riches of Christ, therefore, we must not compromise the faith, the Word, for any man or group of men!

There was yet one man who was not afraid of persecution (1 Kin. 22:26-27). No sane man relishes persecution. However, we do realize that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Micaiah received bread and water for speaking the truth! John the Baptist lost his head when he said unto Herod, “It is not lawful for thee to have her” (Mat. 14:2-10). If we are afraid and yield, it could never be said of us, there is yet one man! Would 400 make you yield?

There was yet one man that was confident that God’s Word was truth (1 Kin. 22:28). Micaiah was confident that Ahab would not return, that he was not coming back. The number (of prophets) did not matter for truth was at stake. We need to stand with God and on God’s Word. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue

in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

There was yet one man who believed the wicked would reap what they sowed (1 Kin. 22:28). This reminds us of Paul’s statement,

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-9).

Ahab had sown death! (1 Kin. 21:1-29), and Ahab had reaped death himself!

CONCLUSION

Preaching God demands, was relevant in Micaiah’s day and it is relevant in our day! Micaiah was “**Yet One Man**” and God is looking for “**Yet One Man!**” This one must be righteous; who will not follow others in wickedness; who believes God’s Word is the most important thing in the world; who will not compromise the faith for anyone, not even kings; who is not afraid of persecution; who is confident that God’s Word is truth; and, who knows the wicked will reap what they sow.

May there be more Micaiahs who will stand and proclaim, “As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak” (1 Kin. 22:14). Are you, my friend, **YET ONE MAN FOR GOD?**

AMOS AS A PREACHER

Eddie Whitten



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INTRODUCTION

A study of the so-called Minor Prophets is a fascinating undertaking. The quality and significance of their writing is by no means Minor. Men have designated this section of Scriptures as the “Minor Prophets” only because of the brevity of the writing of most of the prophets in this part of the Bible. They are among the most interesting and profitable books of the Old Testament.

Brother Homer Hailey, an excellent student of the Minor Prophets, states:

A study of the prophets will enrich the life of anyone who applies himself to learn their teaching: it can only confuse those who would use their teaching as a basis on which to speculate about the future. An understanding of their teaching concerning the Messiah who was to come, will strengthen the faith of anyone who sees those predictions fulfilled in the New Covenant. An understanding of the political, social, moral and religious corruptions will give courage to the Lord’s faithful today. The consequences of Israel’s disobedience and an understanding of the principles on which God dealt with that disobedience, will help one better to read the signs of the times. The reading of one’s newspaper, secular magazines, and listening to the news reports of present-day world events will take on new significance to him.

This does not mean that one is to see God foretelling any specific event of today, or that He has in mind certain individuals of today. It means that one will come to see the principles upon which God dealt with the conditions of

that day, and, on the ground of faith in God's immutability, he may conclude that God will act accordingly today.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROPHET'S PREACHING

The time of the writing of the prophets extended some four hundred years from about 850-800 B.C. to about 400 B.C. This was a time of trial and turmoil for Israel and Judah. Israel, the northern kingdom, had departed from God with the reign of Jeroboam I and had made no attempts to return to His favor. Judah, the southern kingdom, had four kings who, to some extent, tried to bring the nation back to God. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah all had a good influence on the people and God spared them for one hundred thirty-six years after the fall of Israel to Assyria. It was during this time the prophets wrote the messages they received from God.

Profitable Bible study involves three basic rules: (1) The time in which an event occurred, (2) the time the event is recorded and, (3) the application to be made to the present time. Romans 15:4 is an example of this rule. Paul states a principle in the first century that applies to every succeeding century, of events that took place in the past. First Corinthians 10:11 is another example similar to Romans 15:4. It was written to the church at Corinth by Paul in the first century bringing to mind events that happened beforehand but which apply in principle to all future generations. The great benefit of the study of the Minor Prophets is manifested in the principles derived from the events in the past, but which are applicable to all periods of time succeeding.

THE PROPHET AMOS

Amos was one of the earlier literary prophets, and perhaps the first one, to use the emphatic "Thus saith the Lord" to authorize his message. He was a native of Judah, from the village of Tekoa about twelve miles south of Jerusalem and about six miles south of Bethlehem. He was not a prophet by training, not trained in the regular prophetic schools. He said to Amaziah the renegade priest of Israel, that while he was not a professional prophet, and not the son of a prophet; he was, nevertheless, divinely called to the prophetic office to deliver the message of Jehovah.

It was during the reign of Jeroboam II that he was called to prophesy. Uzziah was then on the throne of Judah. His call occurred a few years after that of Joel, probably about 765 B.C. Under these two kings Judah and Israel enjoyed unusual prosperity. They were able rulers and men

of administrative ability. Under these conditions the predictions of Amos would meet with skeptical regard. He would be looked upon as an alarmist and a pessimist, but in less than fifty years his announcement of the doom of Israel was fulfilled.¹

Amos was one of the most forceful preachers of repentance and judgment of all the prophets of the Old Testament. Cornill observed, "Amos is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit." His name signifies "burden" or "burden-bearer." Stern, fearless, self-contained, a man of granite-make, he possessed a powerful well-knit mind and a vivid imagination and is one of the most arresting figures ever on the stage of Hebrew history. He was not only the first of the prophets who wrote down what he preached, but the pioneer of a new era.²

Amos was reared on the edge of the desert, "among the herdsmen of Tekoa" (Amos 1:1), he was a rustic like Micah; and because his father's name is nowhere mentioned, it is inferred that he probably sprang from a poor and obscure family. Someone has said, "He was a shepherd, and therefore, a natural-born preacher!" He raised a peculiar breed of stunted, fine-wooled sheep; a breed small in size and ugly in appearance, but highly esteemed on account of their wool. He was also a dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14).³ A dresser of sycamore trees is not, as we would suspect, one who pruned and cared for what we know as a sycamore tree. This was the "Fiscus Sycamorus" or Hebrew *shiqmah*, the sycamore fig tree. A tree bearing fruit, like the ordinary fig, directly on the stem, but being of inferior quality.⁴ This is the same kind of tree spoken of in Luke 19:1-4, which Zacchaeus climbed in order to see the Lord. For the fruit to ripen, it had to be bruised by pinching, and this was the task of one who "dressed" the tree. Thus, Amos lived close to nature.

HIS CALL TO PREACH

As a prophet of judgment, Amos was called from his flocks to proclaim a stern message of punishment upon Israel for her luxurious and self-indulgent ways. As a condemnation upon her sins, she would be overthrown by a foreign foe. National sin merits national judgment. Therefore, the key verse of the book speaks of punishment (Amos 4:12). He believed God is the ruler of this world, and that all nations are responsible to Him, and that their responsibility is determined by the light each nation has. For Israel, this could be no excuse. For surround-

ing heathen nations (Amos 1-3), punishment is suited to respective crimes against moral codes, and no final hope is held out for them. But for Israel when truly adjusted to God's will and purpose there is the promise of full deliverance and prosperity under the House of David.⁵

His mission was particularly to the northern kingdom of Israel. Accordingly, he repaired to Bethel, twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and there under the very shadow of the royal palace lifted up his voice in a vigorous and impassioned cry for justice.⁶

THE MESSAGE OF AMOS

"Samaria must be destroyed!" This is the essence of his book. The nation is ripe for judgment. Amos is the first of the prophets to declare the doom of the northern kingdom of Israel. On a high feast day at Bethel he opened his lamentation, crying, "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise" (Amos 5:2). That was the funeral dirge of the nation! The day of Israel's doom was come: The Day of Jehovah! He took up this idea where Joel had left off: beginning, "Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (Amos 1:2).⁷ We do not know how long he remained in the city, though we are told that he refused to leave when commanded to do so by Amaziah the idolatrous priest. Using a clever approach to secure attention, he began by denouncing the surrounding nations for their sins. In his denunciation he came ever nearer to Israel, even denouncing their neighbor, Judah. With every person in the great crowd now alert to hear his word he poured forth the judgment of God upon Israel for their sins.⁸

The burden of his message is that of national accountability which he delivered in a series of declamations against the nations as such: in set addresses to the chosen people; in a series of visions which deal with the coming judgment; and in a brief final word, prophetic of ultimate restoration.

The book falls naturally into these divisions: Declamation (Amos 1-2); Proclamation (Amos 3-6); Revelation (Amos 7-9:10); Restoration (Amos 9:11-15).⁹

1. **The Declamations.** These were a series of judgments that were to fall upon the surrounding nations. Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, The Children of Amon, Moab, Judah, and finally Israel. In each of these nations transgressions were named for which they would be punished. Also, in each of these judgments, there appeared the awesome authority, "Thus saith the Lord."

2. **The Proclamations.** With the divine admonition “hear this word,” Amos proceeded to deliver his special message to Israel in a series of three discourses. The first consists of a statement of Jehovah’s verdict and sentence. It opens with a simple declaration that the privileged people were to be punished—their privileges were named, and their punishment announced. The second discourse consists of Jehovah’s summons to the people. It commences with a severe and terrible indictment of the women. He addressed them as “Ye kind of Bashan,” which description reveals the fact of the degradation of womanhood to mere animalism. A final summons to the people is uttered in which the call was made to revise their sacrificial offerings every morning rather than every year, and their tithe every third day instead of every third year. All this culminated in a great call, “Prepare to meet thy God.” The third discourse was a description of Jehovah’s judgment. This was a lamentation for “the fallen virgin of Israel,” and its causes. He addressed two classes of sinning people. Those who desired “the day of the Lord,” but who really did not—they were hypocrites. The second were the indifferent, those “that are at ease in Zion.”

3. **The Revelation.** In this division the prophet gave a fivefold vision of judgment, introduced in the first four cases by the words, “The Lord God showed me.” The last vision was that of Jehovah Himself. They were the visions of the locusts and their devastation, yet God arrested His judgment; the vision of the plumbline, a test of the uprightness of the people. No intercession was made and doom was determined; the vision of the basket of summer fruit, indicating the imminence of the judgment. Jehovah declared that the end was come, that He would not pass by them any more. The final vision was that of judgment executed. In this there was no symbol, no sign. This message is in two phases. First, an announcement of judgment, irrevocable and irresistible; second, a declaration of the procedure. Jehovah is seen standing by the altar, declaring the stroke of destruction to be inevitable, and all attempts at escape futile, because He has proceeded to action.

4. **The Restoration.** It is now declared that the reason of the Divine judgment is not revenge, but that it is the only way in which it is possible to usher in the restored order upon which the heart of God is set. The threefold process of restoration: First, preliminary, “I will raise up...that they may possess” (Amos 9:11-12). Second, progress, “I will bring back the captivity...they shall build the waste cities...plant

vineyards...make gardens” (Amos 9:14). Finally, the permanent, “I will plant them...they shall no more be plucked up” (Amos 9:15).

RESPONSE TO THE PREACHING OF AMOS

It should not be surprising to us to observe the response of the people to the preaching of Amos. The prophets in general received the same rejection. The demise of Israel came within about fifty years of the preaching of Amos. After Amos had reviewed the sins of the nations round about Israel and had pronounced God’s judgment upon them, he secured the attention of the people by indicating God’s displeasure and judgment upon Judah for their sins. This would be pleasing to Israel because of their hatred of Judah. In spite of the dramatic presentation of revelation, the people still rebelled.

Amos reminded the people of all the debilitating things that had happened to Israel (Amos 4). He prophesied that the women of Samaria would be led into captivity “with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks” (Amos 4:2). God had caused hardship to come upon “all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah” (Amos 4:6). He had withheld the rain in some places which affected their harvest but they had not returned unto God (Amos 4:7-8). He had “smitten you with blasting and mildew” (Amos 4:9). He had sent the pestilence upon them and had taken away their horses (Amos 4:10), and He had overthrown some of them as He had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah, and they were all alone without the blessing of God, but they had not returned to Him.

As a result of all of God’s efforts to discipline the nation, they had still rejected Him. Amos pronounces God’s judgment upon them: “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12).

Secular history reveals that in 721 B.C., when Sargon II of Assyria overpowered Israel, he led the captives away with hooks through their lips.¹⁰

The history of the nation of Israel, i.e., the Jewish people, has always reflected a rebellious attitude. All during the period of the Judges: Israel would depart from God, be overwhelmed by enemies who would place them in servitude, plea for deliverance, and God would send a judge to deliver them. They would remain faithful for a season then fall into the same cycle again. Under the leadership of the kings both Israel and Judah departed from God even in spite of God’s pleading through the

prophets. Even today, with all the evidence available in irrefutable testimony, people still rebel at the thought of compliance with a code of law by which they must live.

LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE FROM AMOS

In these brief sermons of the prophet may be found certain great fundamental truths of special eternal worth, for example:

1. Amos vindicates the moral personality of God. He emphasizes the essence of the divine nature is absolute righteousness.

2. Amos also taught that the most elaborate worship, if insincere, is but an insult to God: “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies” (Amos 5:21); and, “Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols” (Amos 5:23). Amos taught Israel that religion means much more than mere worship, and that it is not the smoke of the burnt offering that is acceptable to God, but the incense of a true and loyal heart.

3. He further taught that there must be social justice between man and man. “But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24). His whole message serves as a most fitting prelude to James’ definition of religion: “Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27).

4. Another great truth taught by Amos is the fact that privilege involves responsibility. Election to privilege is consequently only another name for election to duty!

5. Another great truth is the meaning and purpose of calamity. “I also have given you...want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah” (Amos 4:6ff). Every disaster is but a new call to repentance (Luke 13:1-5).

6. Warning is never obsolete. This great truth is taught throughout the entire book.

7. The necessity of personal conviction. Religion is a personal matter: likewise conviction; **it cannot be inherited.**¹¹ This fundamental truth points up the need for every generation of the Lord’s faithful to teach their own children to be faithful.

Never has been better set forth the sure consequences of dishonesty in disregarding the claims of others, and of ignoring God in all human relationships. None have shown better than Amos the inevitable result

of acting contrary to these divine principles in personal or political life, that in the end judgment will fall upon all unrighteousness.¹²

THE NEED FOR MODERN DAY AMOSES

The northern kingdom of Israel needed the preaching of Amos in those tragic times. The people, under weak spiritual leadership of many wicked kings, had completely rejected the only source of spiritual strength upon which they could call. God and His worthy principles had been completely rejected by generations of His people. His message, through Amos, was Doom upon the nations unless they repent! His premise is expressed in Amos 3:3, "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" This has primary reference to the relationship which must exist between man and God. If man does not walk together with God, there cannot be agreement between them. Amos was bold to declare the vengeance of God upon a rebellious and disobedient people.

Today, there is a desperate need for strong leadership in the Lord's church. Elders without biblical knowledge and conviction have let modern day Jeroboams lead good people into spiritual apostasy. Lack of spiritual strength and conviction has led to the splitting of churches across our land and across the world. Charlatans operating under the guise of Christian principles have seduced unsuspecting brethren into partaking of the forbidden fruit of liberalism and worldliness while elders and influential leaders in the church have "fiddled while Rome burned." We need an Amos to declare, "Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD" (Amos 7:16). We need an Amos who will stand in the forefront of battle and declare, "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). We need an Amos who will stand up to the renegade Amaziahs and proclaim the truth of God's Word in spite of opposition and persecution.

The future of the church, as we know it, is going to depend in great measure on the courage of the few; the conviction of the faithful, and commitment to "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2) because the time has already come that they will not endure the sound doctrine, but have heaped to themselves teachers having itching ears, and have been led away from the truth unto fables.

CONCLUSION

May God help us to recognize the similarity of the circumstances of today with those of the days of Amos, and learn from the consequences they suffered at the hand of God. They were conquered by Assyria, taken into captivity, intermarried with the Assyrians and ultimately became the hated Samaritans. He destroyed them as His people. They would no more be recognized as the people of God, nor receive His blessings.

If we follow the example of the Israelites rather than the principles preached by this great prophet Amos, we, too, will suffer similar consequences.

ENDNOTES

¹*Dickson Analytical Bible* (Chicago, IL: John A. Dickson Publishing Co., 1964), p. 1027.

²George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1926), p. 47.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁴Merrill C. Tenney, *Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 668.

⁵Herbert Lockyer, *All the Books and Chapters of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), p. 200.

⁶Robinson, p. 49.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.52.

⁸H. I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History* (Liberty, MO: The Quality Press, Inc., 1962), p. 282.

⁹G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analyzed Bible* (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), pp. 289-295.

¹⁰Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 24th ed., 1965), p. 359.

¹¹Robinson, pp. 55-57.

¹²Dickson, p. 1034.