



The Voice Of Truth

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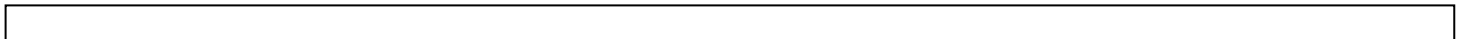
Declaring the Whole Counsel of God!

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Preaching is part of worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7). A preacher is one who speaks with authority and delivers a message from God's Word. "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). Paul preached everything that was profitable, keeping nothing back (Acts 20:20). There was a straightforward, frank, full and complete declaration of God's saving message for lost and dying men. Oh, how we need that kind of preaching! For God's servant, the question is never whether the audience wants it, will like it, etc. The one question in the mind of God's preacher is, "Is it the truth?" "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 Timothy 4:1-2).

In his efforts "to declare the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) the faithful preacher will naturally discuss the subject of sin and do so in a distinctive way. He will preach lesson that will bring repentance, a subject John the Baptist's preached (Matt. 3:2; Luke 3:3); a subject Christ preached (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15); a subject the apostles preached (Mark 6:12). A preacher

will devote considerable time to exposing various sins which men commonly commit, such as forsaking the assemblies, lukewarmness, gossiping, busy bodies, adultery, denominationalism, instrumental music in worship, infant baptism, etc. The preacher will aim to be very pointed as he attempts to apply the lesson to the listeners as did John the Baptist. "At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14: 1-5). Herod knows he has Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, yet John tells him of his sin! The Bible repeatedly intimates that the human mind is in frequent need of correction and discipline - that which is negative. The inspired preacher Jeremiah was told that his task consisted of six activities: to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build and plant (Jeremiah 1:10). Notice that four out of six are negative behaviors. When queried by the rich young



man concerning eternal life, Jesus outlined six commands, four of which were negative (Matthew 19:16-19). When Paul told Timothy what the New Testament preacher's task entailed, he summarized: "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2). Two of the three are negative. Sin will not be the only subject which the preacher will address, but since it is the cause of man's separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and ultimately the reason that he will be eternally lost (Romans 6:23), then the preacher must focus upon it with some regularity. Only by straightforward, bold, and sincere declaration of the whole counsel of God could preachers say as Paul stated that he was pure from the blood of all men. The conclusion is hard for man to accept: biblical preaching is divisive, offensive, and often negative. God's proclaimed truth is like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces (Jeremiah 23:29). To many, it is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18). Their hard hearts are offended by it (Matthew 15:12-14). But we must recognize that its divisive, negative qualities are featured only in the mind of the disobedient (Acts 7:51). To those who will receive it with humility, it will save their souls (James 1:21)!

But, after a concrete lesson is given on a particular sin, (let's say on attendance) some often act hurt or appear to be offended and complain, "I do believe the preacher was talking about me." My question is "What's wrong with that?" Who is he supposed to talk about? Donald Duck or Superman, or some imaginary character that lives in Never, Never Land? "But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8). Micah was full of God's spirit, and he faithfully conveys God's message, "to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." "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" (Isaiah 58:1). It was God's order that his people be shown their rebellion and sins. One of the greatest sins among preachers today is that of

silence. It is the sin of withholding the life-giving message from men who are spiritually dead. There is a "famine in the land" today. It is one of "hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). The attitude is: speak distinctly and loudly; spare none; be sure that all hear the charges. God as so fashioned the Bible that it applies to every accountable person living on the earth (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 17:30-31), and that involves you and me. If the preacher is preaching from the Bible, he will no doubt, be talking about you and me. Does anyone really think that the preacher's lesson should not apply to them? Or would never apply to them? Surely none of us are so self-righteous as to think that our toes should never be stepped on (1 John 1:8-10; Romans 3:10).

If the man doing the preaching has spoken the truth (Ephesians 4:15) and in the process steps on your toes, stamps on your feet and even bangs you in the shin, then GOOD! Instead of acting as if you feelings were unduly hurt, you should be pricked in your heart and turn from your iniquity (repent) and be thankful (Acts 2:36-41; 8:17-24; 17:16-34). The message was intended to open your eyes, not offend you. It is a sorry watchman indeed who does not warn the people of impending danger (Ezekiel 3:17-21). Yes, the preacher was talking about us, and may God bless him to continue. We must contend earnestly for the faith, and declare the whole counsel of God!

POINTS TO PONDER

*Winds are like parachutes,
they only function when
they are open.*

*He that lives only for this
Life shall live only in this
life.*

*"The Bread of life never becomes
stale!*