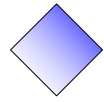


The Voice of Truth



May 5, 2013

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*

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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! ♦

"Our Influence"

By Jarrod Jacobs

I am not sure of the exact number, but am positive that thousands are aware of me suffering a theft while I was in Africa recently. I know that people on at least three continents were aware of this event and were praying for me during those final days I spent in Freetown. I am thankful for the many prayers offered, and for my safe travel and return home. In thinking about the events surrounding the theft, I couldn't help but think about how the actions of one man on one occasion affected so many people! In fact, it effected people that may never meet one another on earth!

In thinking about this event, I also began considering what God has said about influence. The Lord was very clear that our influence is a powerful thing, and that it can effect people for many generations to come. Please consider the following passages, and then let us make some applications.

Some Passages Which Reveal The Power Of One's Influence

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6).

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

"The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden" (1 Tim. 5:24-25).

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" (Rev. 14:13)

As we meditate on these words **(Ps. 1:2)**, let us understand that our influence in this world is powerful! A word said or unsaid, a deed done or undone, can have a great effect on others. Yes, we can affect the lives of those we know and those we do not know by our influence!

How can I be sure of this? Consider for a moment the events from **Genesis 3:1-6.** Can we fathom the fact that when Adam and Eve sinned, their decisions effected the God of Heaven!! Yet, this is what happened. How do we know this? Read **Genesis 3:15** and read the very first prophecy of a Messiah to come. Why was the Messiah

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necessary? Because man had sinned! Thus, in an effort to save mankind from sin, Christ had to come to die as a sacrifice for all man (**Jn. 1:29, 3:16, 18:37**). Yes, my friends, the decisions of man affected Heaven itself!!

As we continue to read through the Bible, we see how the decisions of the kings either helped or harmed the people. When we read of David, Solomon, Ahab, Manasseh, and Josiah, we read how the nations followed their lead. Yes, the influence of men can be felt for many years. Need we also mention the deeds and words of the apostles? Think of how the work of these men continues to affect us today. Though 2000 years removed from the time of the apostles, the Bible's record lets us feel their influence daily (ex: **I Cor. 11:1**)!

Further, think about the influence of parents on their children (**Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21**). If the Lord wills, our children will go out into the world and meet people that we parents might never meet. How will they act toward them? What will they say? Will they have an influence for good or for evil on their friends and enemies? Too, is not this influence in ways also a reflection upon their training (the parent's influence) at home? (**Prov. 22:6**)

While in Africa, there was another time when this subject of influence really hit home for me. In this case, rather than the negative influence of a thief, it was the positive influence of some Christians now dead. You see, if it was not for Walter Dillman, and Charles and Nina Neal, my grandparents might not have become Christians. Had they not become Christians, then my father (who was 5 when

they were baptized) might not have become a Christian when he did, and might not have shown himself to be a good example to my mother and his children (**Eph. 5:22-33, 6:4**). However, because of these folks, my grandparents became Christians, as did my father and aunt, as did my brother and I, as have my children. Through God's providence, I have also been able to preach the gospel to lost souls for some 20 years, now, and recently was able to take the gospel to people in Africa.

I do not imagine Walter Dillman, and Charles and Nina Neal were thinking about 2013 and a grandson preaching in Kentucky, or Africa, or anywhere else when they taught the truth to a young Henry and Myrtle Jacobs with two small children (**Mk. 16:16; II Tim. 2:2**). Yet, this is what happened! Is this not yet another example of how influence plays a powerful role in the lives of people born and unborn?

In the Bible, we read of the work of Andrew (**Jn. 1:45**), Ananias (**Acts 9, 22, 26**), Dorcas (**Acts 9**), Lois and Eunice (**II Tim. 1:5**), and many others. These folks spoke and acted at pivotal times, and we today are the beneficiaries of their lives, as will future generations be. Friends, who will be the beneficiaries of our influence?

The longer I live, it becomes more and more clear that our influence is felt by others (**Matt. 5:13-16**). The question is will our influence on others be for good (**Rev. 14:13**) or for evil (**I Tim. 5:24-25**)? Consider this well! How will future generations be effected by our influence? (**II Cor. 13:5**) *Credit: The Old Paths - 4/14/13* ♦

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

BETWEEN the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord's church?

BETWEEN the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?

BETWEEN those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?

BETWEEN the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord's church and the Christian who finds fault with others, but does nothing himself?

BETWEEN a man of the world, and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?

BETWEEN a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no difference until they are different. Again, **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?** ♦

Can You Imagine?

1. Paul saying: "You don't have to obey the gospel to be saved?" Read **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**.

2. Paul saying: "We are sprinkled with him in baptism?" Read **Romans 6:4**.

3. Jude saying: "I don't think it is right to argue the scriptures?" Read **Jude 3**. ♦



How Well Do We Relate?

By Jonathan L. Perz

How well do you relate to God and His word? There is a correct answer to this question and there is the honest answer. **(Jas. 3:13-18)?**

Your actions dictate how well you relate. Within God's word we can find precepts and promises. Most of those precepts are in the form of commands given by the Lord and many of the promises found in Scripture are conditional promises extended to us by God. Are you obeying the commands set forth by God **(John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 2:3-4)**? Are you meeting the conditions God has set forth to obtain the promises He offers **(1 John 1:8-9; Rom. 10:9)**?

Your words dictate how well you relate. Our words manifest, to a great degree, what it is we believe God teaches through His inspired word. Does our doctrine glorify God or does it glorify men **(2 John 9; Tit. 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:16)**? Do we speak as the oracles of God or do we tend to speak as the oracles of this world **(1 Pet. 4:11)**? Do our words show a reverential awe for the wisdom and will of God or are we more interested in the wisdom of this world

Your priorities dictate how well you relate. What do we put first in our lives? What takes precedence in our day-to-day activities? What we are we passionate about and to what are we committed? The answers to these questions speak to our priorities. Can we truly say we are seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in our lives **(Matt. 6:33)**?

Your desires dictate how well you relate. As we grow in love for Christ and His church, we should naturally find our appetites for this world and sin diminish. Do we love this world and the things in it **(1 John 2:15-17)**? Are we truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness **(Matt. 5:6)**? What have we given up for the Lord **(Luke 14:26, 33; Matt. 16:24-26)**?

What kind of relationship do you have with God and His word **(Psa. 119:97)**? Is it casual or are you genuinely committed? Examine your faith **(2 Cor. 13:5)**.

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

POINTS TO PONDER

Minds 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!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com