

Teaching Sound Doctrine

The Church and its Preaching

To truly understand the preaching of the church one needs look no further than the New Testament. Before the church was established John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, until that time preaching and teaching pertained to the Old Testament the Law. John's preaching was different it was the beginning of the preaching of the kingdom. John preached that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 3: 1-3). After Christ's death and His ascending into heaven it was on the day of Pentecost that Peter stood up with the eleven and delivered the first sermon. His preaching was plain and simple, they had killed the Christ, God raised Him from the dead, and He was now sitting at God's right hand and now they needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts: 2, 14-38). From that time forward the apostles would preach the Gospel (Good News) everywhere they went. These preachers led by the Holy Spirit laid the foundation for those to come. They would teach Christ crucified, they would rebuke, reprove, and exhort with longsuffering just as Paul instructed Timothy in (2 Tim: 4, 1-4). The Apostles were charged with the spread of the Gospel (Mark 16: 15 -16) states... "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". Since we are to be imitators of both Christ and the Apostles we have this same charge.

The Gospel gives purpose and meaning to preaching. Some still believe the "Gospel" is to be preached only so that the alien sinner can come to Christ, and that doctrinal teaching is for those who have been saved. I know of no one that would deny the Gospel of Christ is for the sinner, however, we must ask why would it stop there. Paul stated that he had not shunned to declare the whole council of God (Acts 20: 27). So we see that the Gospel is embodied in the complete teachings of Christ and His apostles. There is no distinction between the two. Paul wrote, "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 . . . For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . ." (Rom. 1:16-18).

Preaching **must** be sound and every Christian must demand that it be. The purpose of preaching is to bring others to Christ, saving souls from hell. It is to correct those who go astray and bring them back to their first love. It must also be done in a manner that will clearly instruct not just the sinner but, the

Christian also in living a righteous life. Paul instructed the young preacher Timothy to "hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me" ... (2 Tim. 1:13). Titus was told "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:"(Titus 2:1); He was also instructed "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers". We also read these words in (Titus 2:8) "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". Knowing that the church is made up of all who believe and have obeyed the Gospel it is the duty of all Christians to preach and teach sound doctrine.

The preaching of the church can not be contaminated by the opinions of man. We are instructed not to add too nor take away from God's word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32) see also (Rev. 22:18-19). The opinions of man or his own interpretation of God's word is a failure to teach and preach the truth. Sound preaching seeks to bring men to God and give God the glory, not ourselves. The churches preaching teaches men how to live lives that will be pleasing to God securing us a home in heaven when the time comes. Preaching must be balanced it can not be all rebuke and reproof it must also exhort and comfort when needed.

Satan has had a field day creating all manner of different religions, if you do not like what you hear simply pick up and go somewhere that teaches what you agree with. The sound preaching of the church is looked upon today as UN-Christlike because it will not bend and twist God's word to suite men. The social Gospel of so-called love, peace and good will has come to dominate this world. When in all actuality it leads people straight to hell. This is why our preaching must continue to be sound based only of the word as it is written. We must continue to preach both the positive and the negative aspects of God's word that is what sets us apart from the world. In (Gal.1: 6-7) Paul states the following "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". Paul went on to say in verses eight and nine "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". Again this teaches us that true preaching sets us apart from the denominational world.

Perhaps now more than ever we need to heed the words of Paul when he instructed 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; 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. 4:1–4).

The cry for progress expresses itself in new trends of preaching. Preach a kinder, gentler Gospel we don't want to here about hell and be rebuked for wrong doing. This has led not only to the fall of sound churches but our society also. The preacher who becomes tired of teaching the first principles that Christ and the apostle's set forth is tired of the only doctrine that can bring men to God. I remember reading somewhere that Ben Franklin said that "progress" is a good word, but he expressed a fear that brethren misunderstood it. Franklin went on to say that these who cried for "progress" showed an extreme dislike for a "Thus saith the Lord" and for a "It is written," said Franklin.

Each generation has faced its own form of apostasy, the preacher that puts forth both the good and the bad equally from scripture is called legalistic or even anti in some cases. But the preacher today that waters down the teaching of the bible is called enlightened (truly progressive) and understanding. I think Cled E. Wallace put it best when he wrote "The Right Kind of Preaching" he said the following.... Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of "hard" and "soft" are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be difficult to determine the kind of both that should be done. . . . Men who say the most about "the right method of approach," "constructive articles," etc. betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources, rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach.

(Cled E. Wallace, "The Right Kind of Preaching," Bible Banner I:11 (June 1939).

It has been a long time since brother Wallace wrote those words but they still apply today. The church today faces many more and different challenges than back in 1939. Yet, it must continue to preach that form of sound doctrine espoused by the apostles and in the written word. When the church preaches the whole counsel of God “babes” in Christ will be led to observe all things Christ commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). The preaching of the church should always be designed to lead the alien sinner to believe and obey. The basic principles taught

by the church should lead men to desire to become useful members of the church such as elders, preachers, teachers. The scriptures tell us that the church is the house or family of God (Eph. 3:15; 1 Tim. 3:15) and each of us should be seeking to be the best member we can be. It should be understood that the preaching of the whole counsel of God directly relates to the growth and spiritual strength of its members. Those at Ephesus were told that the church, manifests the many sided wisdom of God, that it is here according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10–11). The world must be taught to understand that all believers are members of the same body (church), making us fellow heirs and partakers of Christ's promise through the gospel. Paul wrote about the church and the promise in Christ to saints who are builded together in this temple which is for a habitation of God (Eph. 2:14-3:12). We will do well to continue in that promise (if) we will continue to preach and teach only what God authorizes us too.

It is the weak preaching on the part of many that has been the reason for denominational concepts sneaking into the church. This digression and apostasy has caused much damage in the Lord's church, so much so that many who wear the name church of Christ are nothing more than impostors. Once the church allows such apostasy they become nothing more than a denomination that meets in a building once occupied by the Lord's church. The church must continue to make every effort to assure that what is being taught is the truth and only the truth. I was once part of a congregation where the preacher was really loved by those who attended where he preached. It didn't take long to figure out why, his priority was to teach only the gospels. I do not remember ever hearing anything preached from Acts or the epistles. There is no doubt we must teach the gospels but **not** to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible. No one can deny we need to preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2), yet today this "Christ-centered" preaching as many call it has been taken to the extreme. What we see today is a liberal doctrine parading around under this banner of "Christ-centered preaching," and it is actually an insidious doctrine put forth by Satan and we must stand against it at every opportunity.

The lord's church stands apart from all others in that we never take a neutral stand when it comes to the word of God. For many years churches have been led astray by the liberal mindset of neutrality. Jesus taught in (Matt. 12:30) against neutrality He said "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad". Neutrality has no place in the Lord's church, Jesus said in (Mat 5:37) "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." The church that embraces a neutral attitude opens itself up to all kinds of error. The true church takes the same stand that Paul took when he said "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. 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.” (Act 20: 26-28).

For many years there has been a trend toward compromising the truth in the church. One of the big compromises is what we call "softism." in other words these churches say preach only the positive truths of scripture give us an ambiguous message. Do not deal with “sin” has been the call for too long. The true church established by Christ will not fail to preach on the hard subjects such as immodest dress; marriage, divorce, remarriage for unscriptural reasons; church discipline; fellowship, homosexuality; the social gospel, or denominationalism. These compromisers do not preach the distinctive characteristics that separate the church from the denominations. Many preachers and churches are more like professional politicians than children of God. They listen to find out what the people want, then give them what they want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3,4).

The Lord's church today preaches the truth the good the bad and the ugly, it has remained faithful to the once delivered for all message just as Jude taught (Jude 3) “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The faithful church will always stand upon the principles of speaking only where the Bible speaks staying silent where it is silent and calling Bible things by Bible names. To do any less would be shameful.

In conclusion always remember, The church and preacher who preaches the Whole Counsel of God will deal with sin as a reality always showing from the Scriptures that sin exists as a fact in the lives of men and women because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8) those sins bring spiritual death (Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2; Ezek. 18:4). The church is to preach so that men seeking forgiveness will turn to the Son of God who died and shed his blood on the cross of Calvary (Matt. 1:21; 26:28; Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18), and that it is only through mans obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ that he receives that salvation offered (Heb. 5:9).

The church and its preaching will be specific just as Peter was specific on Pentecost when he said to the Jews in his audience: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Just as John the baptist was specific when he told Herod he was living in adultery, John was specific in telling him

about his sin (Lk. 3:19).

Finally the church and what it preaches will never be accused of being like the Pharisees in Christ's day. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Every church should be following what Paul said to the brethren at Colossae: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).