

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.
Vol. 1 November 10, 2019 No. 45*

Needful Preaching

By Aaron Erhardt

The life of Paul stands as a blueprint for gospel preachers. He not only wrote that we are to "preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine," he lived it everyday! Paul set the example for those who do the work of an evangelist. Therefore, I would like to observe one important lesson from the preaching of Paul.

While in custody at Caesarea, Paul was visited by Felix, the procurator of Judea, and his wife Drusilla. The Bible says, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:24-25). Felix was a very powerful person. He had the authority to release Paul or to have him executed. Yet Paul preached a sermon to the procurator that was "terrifying" (ASV)!

Now why did Paul preach on righteousness, temperance (or self-control), and judgment to come? Have you ever thought about it? What was he thinking? Paul preached on those things because they were exactly what Felix needed to hear! According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, Felix had no right to Drusilla. They were living in an adulterous relationship. He records, "While Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty, and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician; and endeavored to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman" (The Works of Josephus, pp. 533, 534). Paul preached what was NEEDED!

When Paul traveled to Athens and other cities filled with idolatry he preached on the one true living God. Were they ear tickling sermons? No. Did his messages win him any popularity contests? Absolutely not. In fact, the craftsmen at Ephesus, who made their livelihood in idolatry, enraged the community to riot against Paul (Acts 19:23-41). Yet he never wavered in his preaching because it was what they needed to hear.

Can you imagine standing before former President Bill Clinton with an opportunity to preach the gospel? What would you say? Would you seek to impress the President? Would you avoid all issues of controversy? Think about it. Would you have the courage to speak on needful things (i.e., fornication, adultery, lying, abortion, homosexuality, the necessity of baptism, the one true church) to the President? I think it is safe to say Paul would.

We need men in the pulpit today who will call sin "sin." We need preachers who will preach against homosexuality, abortion, immodesty, drunkenness, fornication, divorce, and denominationalism. We need preachers with the courage and conviction to oppose even brethren who "bring in damnable heresies" and "overthrow the faith of some." Just because a man has been baptized in water does not give him a "license to mislead." We need preachers who will boldly oppose such men.

We need men who will preach on the one true church. Too many among us act as if they are ashamed about the church and its distinctive nature. They say we need to "preach more Christ, and less church." How can that be done? How can you preach the king and not the kingdom? How can you preach the groom and not the bride? How can you preach the foundation and not the house? How can you preach the savior and not the saved? How can you preach the head and not the body? Such is an impossible task. For instance, Saul was said to have persecuted the church (Gal 1:13). Yet the Lord asked, "Why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Therefore, we must conclude that to persecute the church is to persecute Christ himself! Furthermore, when Philip went to Samaria, the Bible says he "preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). We then see that he was preaching about the kingdom – or church (v. 12). Obviously Christ and his church cannot be separated. The two stand together. We need preachers who will speak out and tell folks about the one true church of our Lord.

This is not to say that preachers should be rude or impolite. Such behavior is counterproductive for the cause of Christ. We are told to "preach the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). However, there is no excuse for preachers to avoid issues of importance just because it might offend someone in the pew. Tell them what they NEED to hear!

Sadly, many preachers nowadays deliver sermons that are strictly positive in nature. They are men-pleasers who seek to "dazzle" the congregation with entertaining presentations rather than to convict the sinner of his sins. Such dazzling performances were not the concern of Paul (2 Cor. 4:5). He did not fill his lessons with irrelevant stories and pointless anecdotes intended to impress the audience. He was interested only in preaching the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ! Would Paul's bold preaching be welcomed where you worship?

Ever Changing Doctrines of Men

By Phil T. Arnold

While the truth of God's word does not change, the doctrines of men are ever undergoing evolution to suit the current thinking, adapt to cultural desires or, in short, make them most appealing (Matt. 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:24-25). We certainly should not be surprised by this for, after all, they are the doctrines of men and not of Christ. As an example consider the following two quotations:

1. *"No divorce, except for adultery, shall be regarded by the church as lawful; and no Minister shall solemnize marriage in any case where there is a divorced wife or husband living; but this rule shall not be applied to the innocent party to a divorce for the cause of adultery..."*

2. *"In view of the seriousness with which the Scriptures and the Church regard divorce, pastors may solemnize the marriage of a divorced person only when they are satisfied by careful counseling, that (1) the divorced person is sufficiently aware of the factors leading to the failure of the previous marriage, (2) the divorced person is sincerely preparing to make the proposed marriage truly Christian, and (3) sufficient time has elapsed between the divorce and the contemplated marriage for adequate preparation and counseling."*

Did you note a little difference? Both are quotations from the Methodist Discipline. The difference being that the first quotation is from the 1904 edition, and the last quotation is from the 1972 edition. Neither edition is the true standard for determining faith or practice – only God's word can do that - but at least the 1904 edition far more closely represents what God's Word says in Matthew 19:9.

Why the change? Because this creed (as with all other creeds) is merely the product of man and the basis of a church of man, and it is not confined to consistency. It can be altered, updated, rewritten and modified through the years. But it did not lead to salvation in 1904, 1972, or today, because it is not the Word of God, but the doctrine of men.

"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" (Matt. 15:7-9).