

Warning About the Kind of Preaching We Want

A number of years ago, I "tried out" at a congregation looking for a preacher. At the end of Sunday night's services, an older lady came and shook my hand. Her words were both encouraging and alarming. Her father was an "old time" Gospel preacher. By "old time" I mean he preached mainly during the late 1950's to the early 1970's before his death. I had read a number of his articles but never heard him preach. She complimented me by saying, "that's the way my father would have preached it, but they don't want that here." I want to break down that statement and examine what she was saying.

I found her father to be a logical and sound writer. He sought to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2.15). He used scriptural references as the foundation of his articles as he sought to teach on a subject. In fact, he had a way of plainly stating and applying those passages to what we should or should not be doing. Such is the goal of any Gospel preacher. None of us are trying to be original in our message. After all, the Gospel was preached almost two thousand years ago and the message has not changed since then. I did not hear many "old time" Gospel preachers but I am certain their message would be the same as mine today. We are preaching out of the same book.

Our point of application or illustrations or particular style may differ just as our personalities are different but the Gospel must remain the same. It will be the same truth as revealed by the Apostles. "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8) The thing about truth is it remains the same, never changing.

Her second point truly got my attention, "but they don't want that here." I have had people criticize my style of preaching, my dialect, and point out errors in my manner of speaking. I realize I am not the most polished speaker. However, she was not referring to any of that. She was talking about the message of the Gospel being preached!

There are people that do not want the whole counsel of God as Paul preached at Ephesus. "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) Some have used the term "watered down" in describing some lessons today. We should want our preaching to be straight and without human editing. The only water we should be talking about is the water of baptism. Watered down preaching does not necessarily mean teaching a false doctrine for someone can teach the truth but not teach the "whole counsel of God." They simply by pass subjects which tends to be unpopular.

I am not sure of Paul's speaking style or his manner of presentation but I do know he kept the focus on Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:2-5)

Paul warned Timothy about the kind of preaching people would desire in the first century. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:2-5) What we want to hear and what we need to hear might be different. What we often want is that which will tickle our ears and make us feel good. We need to hear that which will get us to heaven when we obey the message.

I don't know if this lady's assessment of the brethren at that place was accurate but I do know they have a capable and scripturally sound preacher working with them. Such should be our desire for every group of the Lord's people. – Dennis Tucker