

The Foolishness of Preaching

The apostle Paul wrote: "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21—NKJV). Why did Paul refer to preaching as *foolishness*?

From the viewpoint of many in the world and perhaps some in the church the following may be part of the reason.

Preaching is not entertaining enough. Many today want to be entertained. The Bible tells of a certain reverence and awe that occurred during the Word being proclaimed. One of the Old Testament Minor Prophets, Habakkuk describes the attitude during worship: "But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). A worshipper today might declare: "**How boring!**" Yet we cannot equate preaching with entertainment. They are two entirely different areas. The purpose of preaching is not to entertain. The job of the preacher is to proclaim the Word of God. David wrote: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest" (Psa. 40:9). The first words Jesus preached were: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). Peter stated, "If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). John F. McArthur Jr., in his book *Ashamed of the Gospel* states "Nothing in Scripture indicates the church should lure people to Christ by presenting Christianity as an attractive option. Nothing about the gospel is optional" (72). He further declares: "There seems almost no limit to what modern church leaders will do to entice people who aren't interested in worship and preaching. Too many have bought the notion that the church must win people by offering an alternative form of entertainment" (70).

Preaching causes me to make a change. Throughout the Bible many were changed by preaching. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 thousands were pricked to their hearts and gladly received the message and were baptized. The jailer in Acts 16 heard the spoken Word and was baptized (Acts 16:30-31). Felix however did not want to change and when Paul preached to him he stated "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). There is no doubt about it, preaching can change a person. Many unfortunately simply do not want to make a change. If a person hears preaching long enough, there is a likelihood something in that person's life will change. The Gospel may not be obeyed, but change might come. It is easier for some to stay where they are than to make a change.

Preaching gives a message that means responsibility. In a day and time when everyone seems to be a *victim* taking responsibility for actions is not a popular message. Whenever evil occurs, excuses are made for the person's actions. Perhaps they were mistreated as a child. Maybe they simply did not get enough attention. There may have been discrimination of some kind in life, and that person reacted in a negative way. Sin today is condoned because many do not want to take responsibility. When Jesus said "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), He was preaching a message that was hard for some to obey. If a person repents, that person must admit wrong in life. There must be an acknowledgment of sin and wrong doing. In our day where negativism, truth, and responsibility are wrong, that is something few want to do.

For the above reasons, we can understand why preaching seems foolish to some. To the child of God however it is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). If a person tells me "I enjoyed your sermon" it usually means, I said something they found of benefit.

Whenever the Word of God is preached, great benefit can come. If the heart of the listener is right, faith and obedience can result (Acts 2:41). Thanks be to God for the foolishness of preaching!

Bill Brandstatter, Vienna, IL

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

Volume 7

Number 18

April 30, 2006

A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST

535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

(Greater Augusta, GA area)

Changing My Life Into The Likeness of Christ

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Christ was—

1. Humble (Phil 2:3-11)
2. Forgiving (Luke 23:24)
3. Zealous (John 9:4; 2:17)
4. Prayerful (Mark 1:35)
5. Compassionate (John 11:35)
6. Unretaliatory (Mt 26:59ff)
7. Submissive (Luke 22:42)
8. Serving (Matt 20:28)
9. Passionate (Luke 19:41)
10. Giving (Matt 20:28)

I must be—

1. Humble (James 4:6)
2. Forgiving (Mar 11:25)
3. Zealous (Titus 2:14)
4. Prayerful (1 Thess 5:17)
5. Compassionate (Romans 12:15)
6. Unretaliatory (Romans 12:17-21)
7. Submissive (Matt 6:10)
8. Serving (Matt 20:26-27)
9. Passionate (Romans 9:1-3)
10. Giving (Luke 6:38)

With Paul may we affirm, "*So now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:20,21). Then, we can sing, and really mean it, "I want to be more like Jesus."

Wendell Winkler,
deceased

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

- Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11.00 a.m.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

- Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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WILL "RECONCILIATION" ATTEMPTS BRING TRUE UNITY?

At the beginning of April the Associated Press ran an article under the title, "Churches Mulling Healing Schism." This article speaks of reports of a "possible reconciliation" between what it calls churches of Christ (acapella) and Independent Christian Churches (instrumental). That the Associated Press is reporting such is not surprising since this year marks the centennial of the recognition of two separate religious groups by the United States Census. Further, there have been, and are plans for meetings, this

year between some churches known as Churches of Christ and members of same together with some from the Independent Christian Church (two of these being the Abilene Christian University Lectures and the Tulsa Workshop). Many of these meetings include speakers from both groups of churches in efforts that are claimed to be for the purpose of seeking "reconciliation." A book has been published under the title "*Together Again Restoring Unity in Christ after a Century of Separation*." On the website of the publishers, Leafwood Publishers (incidentally, the publishers are clearly associated with Abilene Christian University as checking the "element properties of the web site shows - <http://bibleacu.com/leafwood/catalog.asp>). On that web site, the publishers state, "Time for a Family Reunion. 2006 is the centennial of the official separation of Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. Rick Atchley and Bob Russell mark this milestone with a resounding call to renew our unity in Christ. After a century of division, it's time for a Family Reunion. Time to put aside differences and work as one to accomplish Christ's mission to save a lost world." Rick Atchley is the preacher for the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, TX and Bob Russell is the preacher for the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY.

I am not opposed to unity among brethren, indeed, no faithful member of the Lord's church can be opposed to unity. Our Lord prayed for it (John 17:20-23), Paul pleaded for it (Ephesians 4:1-6). In the long ago, the Psalmist said, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalm. 133:1). However, when it comes to "reconciliation," as is promoted by those involved in these current efforts, by the putting "aside of differences, I must oppose such efforts for they are not the unity for which our Lord prayed and for which Paul pleaded. They are simply efforts to compromise the truth. Note, they desire to "put aside differences." How can that be accomplished? Their response is basically "agreeing to disagree" over the issues that divide. What are those issues? The issues that caused division in the years leading up to 1906 were the formation of the Missionary Society to do the work of the church and the use of instrumental music in worship. Both of these are **WITHOUT** biblical authority. Thus for there to be unity, it can only come about when those who introduced these unauthorized elements into the church to repent and cease using them. Only then can biblical unity be restored.

However, when it comes to 2006, there are more innovations that have been accepted by those in the Independent Christian Church without biblical authority. Also, there are those among them that denied the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins and that hold to the thousand year reign theories of premillennialism which teaches that the kingdom is still to be established contrary to the teaching that the kingdom is already in existence (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9). Further, the church and the kingdom are used interchangeably in Scripture to refer to the same thing. Can those that deny that baptism is for the remission of sins or who deny that we can be in the kingdom today really be our brethren when they do not teach the truth concerning these matters?

As many may know, in the mid 1960's I was a member of the Associated Churches of Christ in Australia, as the Christian Church is known there. The churches with which I was associated had much in common with the Independent Christian Churches in the United States. Further, I have kept up with the Independent Christian Church since that time. As a result, I don't support, in any way, such efforts of "reconciliation," as proposed because they ignore the real problems. There is a way for unity to be brought about and that is by those who teach and practice that which does not have biblical authority to repent and abandon their unauthorized practices and return to the truth that their forefathers left when they brought in those practices. True unity can only be had when all submit to the authority of the Lord (Matthew 28:18). That kind of unity we should pray for and la-

bor in efforts to accomplish it.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Let us continue to keep in our prayers Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Kathy Treadway's mother, Lanny Niver's father, Tim Arnold's father.

Tim Arnold's father is hospitalized in Ohio.

Sister Peebles had a mixed week and, unfortunately, was not able to be out Sunday.

Kathy Treadway was out with a stomach virus Sunday but was able to be out Wednesday.

Ted Rush, preacher for the Mauldin, SC church had heart by-pass surgery Monday and is doing well. He will, hopefully, be home by Monday, if not before.

Glann Aaron's mother had eye surgery Monday. She is doing well and can now see clearly.

Glenn had better watch the kind of job he does now when he does things for her!!!!

The Wilson's neighbor, Mr. Heath, who had been ill for some time passed away this week.

Lanny Niver was unable to be out Wednesday evening as a result of problems related to his diabetes.

LISTEN TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST RADIO PROGRAM

1050 AM -- WFAM

Sundays 8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m

The Book of Revelation

Revelation 14:6-7 says: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Several years ago a so called *religious* broadcast network put out a brochure trying to sell subscriptions to their programming. An interesting part of that brochure was the bold headline, which read: "A Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy." The brochure claimed that what John saw in the above passage was not an angel but his best description of a modern communication satellite with huge outstretched solar wings. Is this really an example of serious Bible scholarship from these televangelists? Revelation is certainly one of the most misunderstood and misused books of the Bible. Would the persecuted Christians of John's day really be comforted by the fact that one day there would be satellites in space so that so-called preachers could tell fanciful tales such as this one? Halsay and others talk about finding helicopters out of locust, tire rationing, and nuclear weapons in the book of Revelation. Again, I ask what comfort would that be to those persecuted Christians? Revelation must be looked at through first-century glasses. What did it mean to the people of John's day? What message did Jesus have for those persecuted Christians? It was not satellites and tire rationing. It was relief **soon** (Rev. 1:1); and ultimate, final **victory** for the faithful, obedient Christian. (Rev. 2:10). Do not be lead astray by false teachers. The angel is symbolic of God's messengers, His saints, preaching the Gospel to the world. The message is: "fear God," "give Him glory," and "worship Him." This is the message we bring to you. We are not trying to sell subscriptions or tell you fanciful tales just the simple message above as presented in the Bible.

*Curtis L. Graves
Chesapeake, VA.*