

A Squeak in The Pulpit

Recently I read of an entry found in an old church record of a business meeting. It stated: A committee was appointed to investigate the squeak in the pulpit. Upon reading this, I couldn't help but think that today's world, even today's church, desperately needs more than a "squeak" coming from the pulpit. Now, as much as ever, we need the clear tones of the gospel resounding from our pulpits.

We are hearing far too much about churches who are selling out to the culture. The distinctive preaching of New Testament Christianity is seldom if ever heard in some pulpits. Sermons that challenge our morals, expound our doctrine, question our ethics, and rebuke our mediocrity are exchanged for sermons that have an air of religiosity, but are lacking in substance.

In 1 Chronicles 12:32, it was said of some of God's children that they "understood the times." There remains a multitude of God's children who understand the times. They understand that now is not the time for a squeak in the pulpit. There are many godly elders, and godly Christians who are demanding to hear more than a squeak from the pulpit. They have not bought into the idea that distinctive preaching has harmed the church. They want substance over style and flair. They want truth over entertainment. They want biblical authority over pragmatism. And they would rather have the sometimes bitter truth over a watered-down gospel. To put it in the words of John MacArthur, they realize that "the weakness of the pulpit today does not stem from frantic cranks who harangue about hell; it is the result of men who compromise and who fear to speak God's Word powerfully, with conviction."

There are many challenges that face the church today. If we are to rise up to the occasion and defeat our adversary, we must have a strong pulpit; Pulpits that will speak the truth in season and out of season, with all the love it can muster; Pulpits that will not compromise the truth; Pulpits that do more than just squeak!

- by Steve Higginbotham

Q&A About Church Socials

Two questions have been asked: (1) Why doesn't the church have more socials? and (2) Why can't we have parties in the basement of the church building?

The New Testament authorizes every act and activity of the church. It provides us with all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It completely authorizes us in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In worship and work, all that God wants is made known by the "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). We must not add to, or take from the word of God (Rev. 22:18-19), and we must not "go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

Social activities are not included in the authorized acts of the church. It is very good to have social functions, but they are "home activities." If there are not enough of such, then the homes are failing. Let us not push upon the church that responsibility which belongs to the home. If it is advisable that Christians associate more, then let us not fail to provide such association, but let us keep it independent of church functions.

But some ask, "Since the church building is not sacred, and since our homes are not large enough to accommodate large groups, why can't we use the basement?"

True, the church building is not sacred. But, on the other hand, it is not a carnal, worldly place either. Money for the building was given to be used in spiritual work. Remember, we do not object to eating in the church building (babies often do it, workers sometimes do it, the preacher frequently does so in his office, etc.), but we do object to making the church building an "eating place." It is not wrong to laugh in the church building, but it is certainly wrong to make it a "house of laughter." The church house is not "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15), but it IS God's house (Jn. 2:16).

The house in which I live is not sacred, but some things are not appropriate there. A doctor's office is not sacred, but who would say it would be a good place to repair automobiles? A hospital and sheet metal shop don't belong in the same building. So the church and the world should not be housed from the same treasury.

A drinking fountain, a rest room, or a nursery are made to expedite a spiritual service. But a social hall is to give vent to a social urge. Pews, classrooms, lights and fans are purposefully paid

for by the church because of their usefulness in aiding us to do what God said for us to do, but for the congregation to provide recreational facilities does not contribute to the doing of that which God directed. Paul wrote: "What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" (1 Cor. 11:22). He was condemning the practice of making a feast with the Lord's Supper, but at the same time he gave us the necessary inference that there is a difference between homes and meeting places provided by the church.

Let us keep the church in the "church business." It is always safe to do that which we know is right, without addition or subtraction. Let us use every facility we have to expedite the Lord's work, and let us avoid anything that would minimize its nature, which is altogether spiritual.

- by Leslie Diestelkamp

Undeserved Credibility

The flow of information is more efficient today than ever in history. Those who write – on any given subject – can have their thoughts and opinions disseminated far and wide with a simple key stroke on a computer. While it was once a difficult challenge to get a book published, it is now relatively easy to 'self publish' all sorts of literature. And the Internet has made it even easier to get a message out to the masses. Start a blog page, get a handful of people to 'like' and 'share' your posts on social media, and suddenly your views are spread exponentially to the world.

Sadly, there are some folks who give instant credibility to anything written in a book or entered on a blog. The very fact that someone has his/her writings 'published' - in one form or another - has a way of convincing certain others that he/she is an expert, and the views expressed are surely right. No where is this more evident than in the religious realm.

The problem, of course, becomes fully exposed when the blogger's latest rant differs with the sound doctrine being preached in a local church. Never mind that the brother in the pulpit has studied God's Word diligently for a lifetime. His understanding of the Scriptures is quickly discarded in favor of the currently popular Internet author. After all, the preacher has no 'letters' or degrees. He is old fashioned and out of touch. It is wrongly assumed that he is just reciting the 'old party line' and that he has never seriously searched things out for himself. The blog poster, on the other hand, is praised for 'thinking outside the box' and for challenging long held traditions.

This disturbing trend is being observed in many congregations. Brethren are being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). They are "unlearned and unstable" and the Scriptures are being perverted "unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).

While the stream of information is at an all time high, don't forget that it is still our job to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 Jn. 4:1). Think!

- by Greg Gwin