

## ***The Need for Distinctive Preaching***

The role of the teacher is to hold back nothing profitable, but to teach the *whole* purpose of God (Acts 20:20,27). That is the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist, i.e., that we hold back nothing that is *profitable* to the people. Preaching on the love of God is not going to help the young women of the congregation when they fail to hear a sermon directed toward their immodesty. Preaching on grace is good, but not if you fail to preach on how folks frequently absent themselves from worship in favor of their favorite sports or recreational activity. Preaching on mercy is wonderful, but sometimes people need to hear a lesson on social drinking or dancing (prom). Forgiveness is a grand theme, but sometimes brethren need to be warned of encroaching false doctrines and practices. I believe there is a justifiable cause for concern today, not just because of *what is preached* from some pulpits, but even more because of *what is not being preached!* One of my heroes in the faith once observed, "If we *don't* preach on certain subjects, it won't be long before we *can't* preach on those subjects because people will not put up with it." He was right and, in my opinion, we are seeing the fruit of that in our time. Again, the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist is to hold back nothing that is profitable. It is not always easy to properly assess and preach to the needs of the people, but by all means do it!

The "old Jerusalem gospel" has a distinctive ring about it. It is a message flooded with Scripture and practical application. It is not always popular, but it is always right when presented with the best interest of the hearers in your heart and on your lips (Eph.4:15).

- by Jim Deason

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## ***Beware Of Normal***

According to a humorous television commercial, one of the first signs of termite infection in your home is that "everything looks perfectly normal." It is their way of convincing us that a lot of damage can be done before you even notice it. The ad might serve to remind us of problems that can occur in our spiritual house if we do not take protective measures. The very foundation can be destroyed while everything on the outside seems to be normal by the standards of our day. When our lives are comfortably blended into the society we live in, when there is nothing unusual about our moral or religious principles, when our priorities are the same as the great majority of our neighbors, then things are dangerously "normal." The problem is that "normal" is a term that is determined by man's standards, and though measuring up to it may provide a degree of comfort here, it falls far short when it comes to laying up treasures in heaven.

Paul warned the Corinthians of some who "*measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding*" (2 Cor. 10:12). It is God's yardstick that matters, not that of the "mainstream of society." God has always required His people to be separate (Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1) not physically withdrawn, but distinct in conversation and conduct, not fashioned according to the world (Rom. 12:1,2). It is a sobering Biblical truth that few will be saved; the majority will enter the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13,14). It is strange, then, that we should be satisfied with attaining a status accepted by society. What value is it, if we lose our souls?

Friend, if your life seems "normal" enough by man's standards, it may be that your spiritual house is caving in. It will not be shored up by man's money or man's tools, but by the Word which framed the worlds (Heb. 11:3). The answer is some honest, objective study of it, for it is the standard which will judge us (John 12:48).

-- by Larry Walker

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## ***The Kingdom Is The Church***

The first preaching of Jesus is found in Matt. 4:17, "*From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*" The kingdom was near, in regard to time, not distance. He told His disciples, "*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power*" (Mk. 9:1). Some would see the kingdom arrive in their lifetime.

We learn the kingdom existed in the first century. Paul wrote in Col. 1:13, "*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*" When Paul said "*us*" he meant himself and the church at Colossae. Therefore, the kingdom and the church are one and the same.

Today many do not believe the kingdom has come and are awaiting its arrival. This would mean that none of the disciples, Paul, or the brethren at Colossae were in the kingdom. Yet, we have seen that they were. If you are waiting for something to arrive that is already here, you just might miss it all together.

**-- by Terry Sanders**

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### ***Help! No One Will Talk To Me!***

As a gospel preacher (and I think I speak for all preachers), I make this urgent appeal for assistance: "Help me, please! No one will talk to me!"

Let me explain. I do *NOT* mean that people will not have pleasant conversations with me. Many do. We frequently discuss the weather, or sports or politics. We often engage in such small talk before and after the public assemblies, and sometimes when we meet at the mall or a restaurant. It is not uncommon for brethren to invite me into their home, or for them to visit in mine. Of course, we always enjoy these impromptu chats.

When I say that no one will talk to me, I have something else in mind. With increasing frequency I learn of brethren who have heard me teach something publicly with which they do not agree. Instead of coming to me to seek clarification, or to correct me for what they believe was error, these folks keep it to themselves or perhaps complain privately to someone else. Others harbor bad feelings because of some personal hurt caused by me, either real or imagined. These things finally come to light months and years later. It is in this area that I plead for help -- *PLEASE* talk to me!

If folks will talk to me (and, again, I think I speak for all gospel preachers) then we can solve such problems. Often these things amount to a simple misunderstanding. I may have been unclear in my teaching, and you may have taken something in a way I did not intend. If my actions seemed hurtful to you, it might be that your impression was mistaken. If so, when you approach me we will be able to resolve this quickly.

Then, of course, there is the very real possibility that I was simply wrong. In such cases, I definitely need you to come to me so that I can repent and seek your forgiveness and God's. His plan works for gospel preachers just like it does for every other Christian.

Help me! Talk to me! If you believe I was wrong, don't hold back. Tell me so. It's the only way we can "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

**- by Greg Gwin**