

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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What Does Preaching Accomplish?

The Old Testament prophet was the preacher of his day. He was inspired, but other than that, he served in the same role as preachers must serve today. There were all kinds: blunt Amos, noble Isaiah, austere Elijah. There were also different purposes served by the various prophets. Some of them made virtually no converts (Jeremiah). Some were very successful, even when they did not want to be (Jonah).

The prophets have messages which refresh us and encourage us. Sometimes they give us sober warning. Consider one of the lessons. Isaiah prophesied 740-700 B.C. He preached in Jerusalem but he saw the downfall of Israel to the north. He saw the terrible signs of decay in his own Judah. Although he had the sympathy and support of Hezekiah, the people of Judah gave little heed to his preaching. Also, some of the time, he dealt with a king such as Ahaz who had no sympathy for Isaiah's cause whatsoever. A situation like that makes us wonder, "If people will not listen, why preach? What good does it do?"

In Isaiah's commission (ch. 6), the Lord says, "I need someone to do a job." Isaiah volunteered. The job was: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes" (Isaiah 6:10). How was Isaiah to do this? By telling them what God said. Isaiah wanted to know how long he should do this. God answered, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste" (6:11).

God knew the heart of His people. He knew that they would reject His word. God wanted Isaiah to know that He knew they would respond this way. Yet He told Isaiah to preach to them anyway. Why? Isaiah was to preach with all his heart because he might convert his people. If he could not accomplish this, then he was to leave them no defense when judgment came. Let them drive the nails in their own coffin as it were.

The preacher today is to preach with all his heart to win sinners from the clutches of this sinful generation. Preach with love and concern. But even when it seems that the effort is a failure, realize that this is not the case. We get preoccupied with numbers sometimes

and forget that our objective is to do the bidding of God and leave the results in His almighty hand. God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). If, however, a generation turns away from God, then God wants them to have a witness against them that they were taught. He wants them taught again and again, so that their rejection of His will is complete. Whether they obey or whether they are lost, "yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezekiel 2:5).

This lesson is not to say that we should deaden our hearts to the fate of doomed men and women but to help us realize that when we have done our best to preach the word, and the world will not respond, we have not failed if we have faithfully taught the word.

- Bob Waldron (1941-2024)

They Say Close Only Counts in Horseshoes and Hand Grenades!

Chris Melore writing for the Daily Mail had an article on September 8 entitled, "Scientist claims life on Earth was not random... but engineered." In the article, Mr. Melore observes the following 3 items:

1. "Robert Endres, a scientist from Imperial College London, said that the building blocks of life on Earth might be too complex to have formed naturally, meaning they would have needed something (or someone) to help kickstart the process."
2. "The scientist added that the natural formation of life without any help was unlikely because the amount of chemical 'order' needed to form the first simple cells would have been too much to come together in just 500 million years."
3. "This theory could rewrite current science by challenging the traditional view that life emerged from a chemical soup through chance, suggesting instead an intentional act by an unknown intelligence."

Now, the scientist Robert Endes is correct in his observations: life is too complex to have been spontaneously generated, natural evolution cannot be explained scientifically as the time for such if possible could not allow for it, and that life as we know it was engineered. In other words, life as we know it was created and did not evolve from random processes. So, Mr. Endes is absolutely scientifically correct in his observations. His conclusion has drawn a lot of skepticism in that he believes aliens planted the seeds of life.

Funny how people look to science for answers that have been plainly revealed to us in the Bible thousands of years ago. Yes, life was "engineered" (created). Yes, life is too complicated to have been spontaneously generated. Yes, natural selection and the traditional model of evolution do not make scientific sense. The model just will not work. Yes, an intelligent, very intelligent, Being acted to bring about life as we know. However, unlike Mr. Endes who does not know who that intelligent Being is, we know. How do we know? Like the Children's song says, "The Bible tells me so."

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:26; May I recommend you read all of chapter 1.)

Please join us for Bible Study and worship each Sunday.

- Keith Hamilton

Clippings . . .

Are You Helping This Church To Grow?

It Is Difficult For The Church To Grow When We . . .

- * Are not concerned about lost souls.
- * Stay away from worship and Bible class.
- * Rarely read our Bibles.
- * Refuse to participate in church activities.
- * Complain and criticize others.
- * Live ungodly lives.
- * Never associate with the brethren outside of worship.
- * Cause discord and are contentious in the church.
- * Selfishly serve ourselves.
- * Never desire to improve ourselves.
- * Only serve God when we feel like it.
- * Only like "feel good" type of sermons.
- * Are pessimistic.

- Edd Sterchi

Priests Were Becoming Obedient to the Faith!

Luke, in writing about the spread of the gospel and the significant inroads it was making into the Jewish priesthood, declared, "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7).

This scripture not only clearly shows the power of the gospel working to strengthen faith in the lives of men (Romans 10:17), it shows the power of the gospel in the heart to transform behavior into righteousness (Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15). The gospel is God's power that saves people by producing faith (Romans 1:16). Remember that the Lord God spoke through the mouth of His prophet that His word ". . . will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11). Luke recorded in Acts 6:7 that a great many of the priests among God's Old Covenant people were being converted. They were being brought to faith in Christ, obedient faith. Their obedience is a recognition of the claims of God!

Recall that one of the indications that the Messiah had come was the cleansing of lepers (Luke 7:22). When a leper became clean, he had to be examined by the priests (cf. Matthew 8:2-4). We are told that Stephen was performing "great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8). Surely these priests were affected by these events and by hearing the divine explanation for them. When these conservative priests began to be converted, they began to respond to the preaching of the New Covenant and prepare the way for the old to be left behind.

The fact that a great number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith, yielding to its demands, indicates that there is something in the faith which must be obeyed (The ASV marginal reference in Romans 1:5 indicates the purpose of Paul's apostleship: "obedience to the faith among all nations." The same is true in Romans 16:26. Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9; 11:8). "Faith" (subjective) is required by the gospel. In some scriptures, as the one we are discussing, "faith" (objective) stands for the gospel itself (that pattern of teaching which provides deliverance from sin, Romans 6:17; cf. Jude 3). When did these priests come to the point of justification by faith? When they became obedient to the faith.

The truth (gospel) must be believed. The commands of truth must be obeyed. This happens before anyone is saved. This happens before anyone is assured of receiving any of the promises of God. Since the book of Acts emphasizes the things that must be obeyed before one can be forgiven of sins, our obedient response to them is imperative!

The gospel contains commands to be obeyed. True faith conforms. Saving faith complies. Reaction to hearing the gospel which leads to forgiveness begins with belief in Christ (Acts 8:12; 10:43; 16:31). Belief is followed by repentance (Acts 2:37-38). Verbal

confession is indicated in Acts 8:37 (cf. Romans 10:10). The last gospel command to be obeyed before one is forgiven is baptism (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12-13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33). The apostle Paul indicated that Lydia was "faithful to the Lord" following her baptism (Acts 16:14-15). When a person obeys the faith it results in forgiveness when raised from the burial of baptism, as the apostle affirmed to Lydia (cf. Romans 6:1-11). The Scripture cannot be broken!

Those who became obedient to the faith could also (synonymously) be described as: "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42) and abiding "in the teaching of Christ," (2 John 9). Friend, do you realize that "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)? Have you been obedient to the faith? "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16).

- Gary Smalley

- * "The truth is incontrovertible [not open to question]; malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, it stands eternally secure!"
 - * "He does not really believe who does not live according to his belief!"
 - * "A retentive memory may be a good thing, but there is something to be said for the ability to forget!"
 - * "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing!"
 - * "Deal with the faults of others as gently as with your own!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)