

“FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY...” (2)

By Keith Greer

Last week, we discussed the need for **Bible Study** in learning about the Lord's will. Now, we want to direct our attention to the subject of **public preaching** in the church.

In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, we have the very first gospel sermon. As the church was established, God's plan for our public worship of Him was also established. Included in God's plan is the preaching of the gospel.

Everyone has a theory about what a preacher should do and say. If you asked 100 people, you would get 100 different ideas about how a sermon should be; "It's too long or too short. It needs to be more entertaining. It's too negative. It needs to be positive..." The list goes on and on...

Honestly speaking, I'm no expert on how to preach, and I cannot speak for my colleagues. I can, however, offer some guidelines from the scriptures.

When the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin for teaching in the temple, the high priest said, "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:27-29)

Paul told Timothy to "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." (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

Truth comes from God, and man cannot stand against the power of the word of God. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

The "word" is powerful, simple, and easy to be understood. Why do men try to make it difficult to understand? Sadly, when seeking to make it more understandable it becomes diluted.

Some years ago a close friend once gave me some good advice about preaching. "If your lessons can be understood by your children, then they can be understood by all who hear them. If they can't understand and follow them, neither will anyone else." Such advice has been helpful in developing my style and contents of my sermons.

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake." (2 Corinthians 4:5) We preach the gospel in order to bring others to Christ and try to help one another go to heaven. Preachers who speak to make a "name for themselves" need to find another occupation! While there are those among us who have wonderful speaking abilities, it is the message not the messenger that needs to be elevated and is most important.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." (2 Corinthians 3:6,7)

The apostle Paul told the Christians at Rome that "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1: 16) Are you ashamed of the gospel? Do you cease not to "teach and preach Jesus Christ"?

God's apostles suffered many things in order to preach the gospel of Christ to the sinner. Why? Only the message of the cross aimed at the heart of a sinner can convict them of sin and convert them to Christ. Gospel preaching can only save the lost. Nothing else will get the job done! (cont.) ***