

PREACHING THE WORD (2)

By Keith Greer

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” {Acts 8:4}

Please consider the early church and the results it achieved by preaching when and where there was opportunity. In the 50s and 60s, the Lord’s church was the fastest-growing religious body in our country. Today, we’re not even in the top 100! Why is that?

Preaching only the truth. *“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. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” {2 Timothy 4:2-5}* Paul gave this solemn charge to the young preacher, Timothy. Paul knew he was about to die, and he was passing the mantle to his young companion in the faith. Only the gospel truth can persuade sinners to leave their sin and recognize the need for Christ’s blood and convince them they are lost and bound to spend eternity with the devil.

But the desire to hear the old Jerusalem gospel and fire-and-brimstone preaching is fading – not just among those in the world, but also our own brethren. We need lessons that have Biblical content and clarity, and that point the lost to the words of life. We need to show people how the sermons apply to their lives. Instead, due to fear of turning people off, we’re hearing sermons with less Bible, more stories and feel-good illustrations, and less rebuke and correction. It’s positive preaching that excludes difficult and controversial subjects. Of course, we need spiritually balanced preaching, and it must be done with love {*Ephesians 4:15*}. Sometimes, one sits in the pew during worship services (and Bible classes) and wonders what the preacher does during the week! Not long ago, I attended a meeting where the preacher spoke for 20 minutes before he quoted a Scripture. My wife attended a meeting during which the preacher told more stories than he gave Scriptures. I’m afraid some brethren are beginning to believe that preaching should be entertaining!

Recently, I attended a meeting where the preacher told us that one of the church members was offended by his graphic description of hell. What he said was, *“Where Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” {Mark 9:46}* After reading this Scripture, he described the maggot’s work – eating dead flesh. God painted a graphic picture to encourage and put into us the fear of hell – a very undesirable place. The complainer said the preacher’s description made him sick at his stomach – exactly the effect that God intended.

Have we lost confidence in God’s ways and methods? *“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” {Isaiah 55:11}* In His infinite wisdom, God chose preaching as the means for getting His message into sinners’ hearts. Do we trust God’s wisdom or the wisdom of men?

May God help us to remember that the lost are dying everyday unprepared for judgment. Souls need to hear all – not less – of the truth. The real question that needs to be pondered, do we love them enough to want the gospel to allow all of it to be preached to them? ***