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GOSPEL MEETING

SUNDAY 9:45 A.M. & 10:45 A.M.

NIGHTLY 7:30 P.M.

David Hartselle

Spirit Of New Testament Preaching

By O. C. Lambert

Brethren sometimes lament that the gospel does not seem to be as effective as in ancient times, but I am sure the gospel has the same power and human nature is the same. The cause of failure is in us. Brethren are too anxious to be popular. Business and social matters neutralize the spirit of conquest peculiar to the early church. Now the quest of church leaders is for "good mixers." A preacher's success is measured by his ability to get along smoothly with the denominations, or his "super-salesmanship" in enticing attendance and so adroitly applying "the proper method of approach" that the unsuspecting "victim" soon wakes up and finds to his great joy that he has been made a Christian unawares. Regardless of the fancy, finely spun theories of psychology I am certain that the only way to learn how to preach the gospel is to go to the book that "thoroughly furnishes us to every good work" and see what was preached and how it was preached.

It was not a matter of the best psychology or the most up-to-date method of approach with Elijah, but simply a matter of loyalty to God. Computed by men's standards Elijah was a consummate failure, and there are thousands of small souls who never made any impression on the world who can very confidently point out the blunders in his methods.

God's method of approach for Gideon was to go out and tear down the sacred grove of his own father and his neighbors. It is true their anger was aroused and they sought to kill him. We know that he converted his father from heathenism (and probably some of his neighbors) and this was worth more than all the world. If the approach was wrong or

the psychology bad, our "salesmanship" brethren will have to charge it up to God!

Josiah burned the sacred things of his father and mother and stamped them to powder. Ezekiel was commanded to "prophesy against" the errors of the people (Ezra 13:2, 17).

There never has been more blistering and withering verbal chastising than was delivered repeatedly by John the Baptist and Jesus to the Scribes and Pharisees of that day (Matt. 3:7; Matt. 23). Contrasted with this the New Testament speaks of false teachers as follows: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16: 17, 18).

Paul's instructions to a young preacher reads thus: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:9-11). Psychology or no psychology, that is the proper method of approach! Paraphrasing Thayer's definition of the Greek word here translated "convince" we have: refute, confute, convict, bring to light, expose, find fault with, correct, reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove, to call to account, show one his faults, demand an explanation, to chasten, to punish. Other Scriptures of similar

import should be noted here.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5: 11).

"Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Tit. 1: 13).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Tit. 2:15).

"Them that sin rebuke before all that others may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20).

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4: 1 -4).

Many now speak of religious discussions as "dog fights." Those who engage in religious discussions are lambasted, roasted, and flayed, and these implications, insinuations, and innuendoes condemn Jesus and the Apostles just as much as they do any man now living! When Jesus meant Pharisees and Sadducees, he said, "Pharisees and Sadducees," but the sweet-spirited ones who venomously criticize the critics would not think of doing such an "unchristian" thing! All this silly sentimentalism is merely an effort of the Devil to dehorn the gospel. The gospel "is the power (Greek: *dunamis*, from which we get the word dynamite) of God." It is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

Sometimes it is said that the Old Testament said, "Thou shalt not," but that it is bad psychology and that the New Testament does not say, "Thou shalt not." If that were true, it would only mean that God made a mistake for fifteen hundred years! But it is not true. Read the 13th and 14th chapters of Romans for a sample of the "Thou shalt not" method of the New Testament! To reprove and rebuke is to say in substance, "Thou shalt not." I will produce just about as many commands of the New Testament that are stated negatively as can be found in the same number of pages of the Old Testament. But if only one negative statement could be found in the New Testament, away goes the absurd assertion. Paul was chosen to do two things: "to turn them from darkness to light." To turn men from darkness is just as much the duty of a preacher of the gospel as to turn them to light.

Without all modern inventions of communication and travel, and being compelled to do everything the most expensive and laborious way, Paul could exclaim after a few years that the gospel had been preached "to every creature that is under heaven" (Col. 1:29). By controversy in their own places of worship (Acts 15 and Gal. 2), in the public places (Acts 17: 17), and in the other fellow's place of worship (Acts 6:9; 7:60; 9:20; 13:5, 14, 41-51; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 18; 19:9), they "persuaded and turned away much people" from the false to the true, and, so their enemies said, "turned the world upside down." A contest of any kind focuses interest, and this is especially true of the contest between false religion and true religion. After a discussion that lasted for two years and three months, in the city of Ephesus (the longest discussion on record) it is said, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus." It would have the same effect today. What could Paul have done with amplifiers, radios, and newspapers?

Invariably false teachers, who are feverishly endeavoring to avoid exposure, seek refuge in a perversion of Romans 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 12:20. There, they piously tell us, debating is condemned as one of the

worst of sins. Is it not a little strange that they did not find this out until they tried a few times to uphold their doctrines in public discussion? They pervert these passages who make the word "debate" mean "discussing religious questions in public," for that sort of definition makes malefactors of Elijah, Gideon, John the Baptist, Jesus, Stephen and Paul. "Debating" is condemned but "disputing" was freely indulged in by all the preachers of the Bible; therefore I am very much in favor of disputes! Bigger ones and more of them! Let all Christians learn how to lead their neighbors out of darkness into light, and not confine this matter of teaching to a part of the church sometimes called "preachers." Why not make every Christian a preacher as in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 8:1-4)? I once helped to tear a big hole in my neighbor's roof, not because I wanted to harm my neighbor, but because I wanted to do him good. His house was on fire! When a Christian endeavors to discredit his neighbor's religion, he is attempting to do him a favor, just as if he were rescuing him from a burning building or a sinking ship. A Christian's love will not allow him to stand idly by and see his neighbor drink poison by mistake.

This, my friends, is the spirit of the New Testament preaching. (O.C. Lambert wrote this material on Nov. 11, 1937, as the introduction to Foy E. Wallace, Jr.'s book of sermons on *The Certified Gospel*.) - *Via Guardian of Truth*

(Editor's Note: Generally speaking, a wholesale departure from the New Testament order is preceded by a period when brethren will not "put up with sound doctrine" [cf. 2 Tim. 4:3 NIV]. This lament of brother Whiteside's was written just a few years before the institutional storm that swept away a majority of churches during the 50's and 60's. This scares me. Because I am now seeing more and more "conservative" churches manifesting the same attitudes toward gospel preaching that brother Whiteside justly criticized. I am also seeing more and more preachers willing to accommodate them. Brethren need to wake up.)

REPETITION

By Fred A. Shewmaker

Everything we preach or teach must be a repetition of the revealed will of God. If it is not a repetition of His revealed will, it is a failure to "abide in the doctrine of Christ" and the speaker "does not have God" (2 Jno. 9).

More than a quarter of a century ago I heard the late and beloved Floyd Thompson tell that when he was a young man just beginning to preach, he visited a preacher who was growing old and had worked with the same local church for many years. During the course of the conversation, brother Thompson asked, "Don't you have a problem finding new sermon subjects?" (or similar wording). The reply was "No!" The older brother continued by asking, "They sing the same songs over and over, don't they?"

A few years later, I visited some folks, who before I moved there, had attended the services of the church with which I was working. They complained to me that a former preacher's sermons were repetitious. However, they were not complaining that he preached on the same subjects time and again, but that he would repeat a point several times in the same sermon. Well I have done that, myself. Still, their complaint reminded me of the question the older brother asked brother Thompson. Many songs we sing are very repetitious, aren't they?

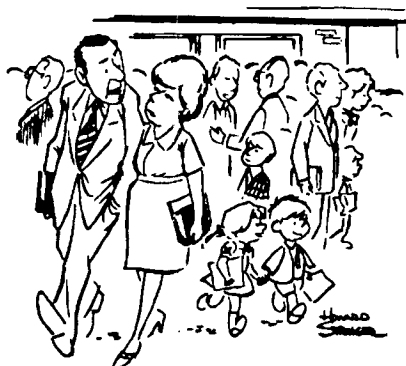
Someone once said, "The three rules of learning are 1. Repetition! 2. Repetition! 3. REPETITION!!" Verse 4 of the song "I Love To Tell The Story" expresses a gospel preacher's point of view about as well as it has ever been expressed: "I love to tell the story, For those who know it best Seem hungering and thirsting To hear it like the rest,..." Indeed, devoted children of God are like our physical children. They have a favorite story and they never tire of hearing it over and over and over again.

An elder, who had preached by appointment for 40 years, before beginning to serve as an elder in the local church where he was identified as a member, once told me, "We have to preach the same thing over and over because no matter how many times the same persons are present, when we preach it, there will be some of them who are going to hear it for the first time when it is preached again." Then he told about one Sunday morning, during the winter, that he was driving 40 miles to fill one of his appointments and as he drove, the weather seemed to grow worse and worse. He began to ask himself why he was driving so far in such bad weather to preach to people who had heard him preach many times. On such a bad day only those always there would be present. As he thought about turning around and driving back home, he realized that he was more than half way to where he was to go and decided to go on. When he arrived, only the folks he expected were there. After the sermon, when the invitation was extended, a man who had attended the services there for several years, but was not a member of the church, made his way to the side aisle, walked to the back of the auditorium and then across the back aisle to the door. The preacher thought the man was leaving as soon as possible because of the bad weather. However, having reached the center aisle he turned and walked to the front, shook hands with the preacher, made his confession of faith in Jesus Christ and that day was baptized into Christ. That preacher/elder told me, "I never again asked myself why I was going anywhere to preach the gospel." He continued by saying, "Then there are the children who are growing up. There comes a day when they will hear for the first time. They may have been attending with their parents all their lives and sat through numerous sermons, but the next sermon may be the first one they actually will hear."

No gospel preacher desires to bore those who listen to him. However, every gospel preacher,

worth his salt, knows that repetition is necessary and uses it to impress essential truths upon the minds of those to whom he preaches. Peter made this very plain when he wrote, "Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off this tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Pet. 1:12-15).

When a person who has been a member of the church for many years complains that the preaching is always the same, that is a sure sign of immaturity. It shows a lack of concern for the unconverted. It expresses a craving for variety. It is motivated by a selfish desire to have the wish to be entertained gratified. God wants us to be familiar with His word, not entertained by it. - Via
PAUSE-PONDER-PROFIT



"I THINK THERE'S ENOUGH SIN OUT IN THE WORLD FOR THE PREACHER TO PREACH ABOUT WITHOUT GETTING SO PERSONAL IN HIS SERMONS."

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