

## I Don't Like His Preaching

The condition of the pulpit in many places today is sad enough to bring waterfalls of tears to the eyes of the host of heaven. Much preaching is generalized vagueness and the brethren have become so conditioned to it that when someone actually interjects a mite of specificity into the sermon the cry is sure to arise, "I don't like his preaching." Recently, this preacher delivered a sermon entitled, "Some Questions about Worship." Naturally, no sermon with that title would be complete without some questions raised regarding Heb. 10:25. Among the comments on that verse, I pointed out that many parents lament the fact that their grown children have abandoned Christ and the church, and the parents say they can't understand why. We simply raised the issue that many of these children were not taken to services regularly when they were growing up, so if one wants an answer as to why they are unfaithful now, one can go look in the mirror and they will have it looking right back at them. The old saying is, "the guilty dog barks first," and unbeknownst to this preacher, one sister in the congregation had this very problem. On the basis of this one point, she decided she did not like my preaching.

How sad it is that when our preachers stray off the reservation of vague ambiguity onto the range of specificity and precision, our pabulum-fed brethren, expose themselves as people who also would have disdained the preaching of Jesus, Paul, and Peter. Just for example is the point made by Peter in the great sermon in Acts 2: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). What jumps out at the reader of this statement is the word "ye" and the phrase, "wicked hands!" Be assured that many of our brethren who have grown up used to milk-toast preaching over the past thirty years would have strongly objected to such preaching by the apostle. How dare that negative preacher!

An accurate depiction of today's preaching might be on this wise, "Sin is bad, sin cuts one off from God. Brethren, don't sin, because the wages of sin is death. Sin is evil, it carries with it consequences in this life and the one that is to come." The brethren leave the assembly feeling good about themselves. They marvel at the eloquence with which sin was thoroughly exposed for the tragedy it is. Meanwhile, their lives are filled with sin, but they don't know it, because brother preacher lacked enough backbone to tell them what sin is!

When the Pharisees condemned Jesus' disciples for transgressing the tradition of the elders by eating with unwashed hands (Matt. 15:1), Jesus immediately said to them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions" ((v. 2). Jesus did not stop there, He went on with great specificity and reminded them of one of the exact traditions He had in mind. Wouldn't those who are at ease in Zion be stirred from their pseudo-contentment by the preaching of the son of God!

In Paul's sermon at Mar's hill, (Acts 17) so long as he spoke generally about the God of heaven, the crowd seemed to listen politely enough, but when Paul brought up the subject of the resurrection of the dead, some (apparently most) of the people began to mock him. The same thing frequently happens today when the preacher raises specific truths the people do not choose to accept.

Let's place the blame for this deplorable reality where it most fittingly belongs; the feet of thirty years of hireling preachers. The people didn't want the truth, they wanted their itching ears scratched, but instead of reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, a lot of preachers accommodated the pew. They filled their sermons with concepts and doctrinal facts with which the brethren already agreed. They refused to preach the things brethren needed to hear, thereby becoming

complicit in producing a crowd of brethren who as brother Johnny Ramsey used to say, "are willing to go to Hell in a good humor."

Compared to the words of Peter in Acts 2, and those of Jesus in Matt.15, what this preacher said in the sermon on worship, was extremely mild. The truth is I had no idea that the point even applied to the sister who decided on the basis of this one instance that she doesn't like the preacher's style. However, I have an idea, though, that what she really didn't like was the quilt she had to carry away because she was told a truth that applied to her. That is exactly what the pulpit needs more of today, conscience pricking preaching.

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