

StraitWay



July 1999

The Preacher's Attitude Toward "Preach the word..." (1)

"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" (II Tim. 4:2-4). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine...These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. let no man despise thee" (Tit. 2:1,15).

What obligations do those verses put upon one who would stand before others and proclaim the "...unsearchable riches of Christ"? Much of the answer is to be found in First and Second Timothy and Titus: three letters written to young preachers. These three books need to be absorbed by any aspiring young preacher. Consider some things God expects of a "...good minister of Jesus Christ...": (1) "...charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (I Tim. 1:3), (2) exhort and instruct men in praying (I Tim. 2:1-8), (3) teach modesty and proper relationship between men and women (I Tim. 2:9-15), (4) instruct concerning the qualifications and work of elders and deacons (I Tim. 3; 5:17-20 and Titus 1:5-16), (5) warn about apostasy (I Tim. 4:1-6), (6) be a good example (I Tim. 4:12; I Tim. 6:11ff). A poor example destroys your effectiveness as a teacher, (7) study and meditation (I Tim. 4:13-16). Live with what you preach, meditate on it, think about it, (8) show proper consideration for others (I Tim. 5:1,2), (9) instruct concerning proper care of widows (I Tim. 5:3-16), (10) to do these things without respect of persons (I Tim. 5:21), (11) be godly and content (Tim. 6:6-10). You are not likely to get rich. And if getting rich is your goal, do not preach, (12) gratitude for godly parents and grandparents (II Tim. 1:5), (13) "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me..." (II Tim 1:13), (14) "...endure hardness..." and if you cannot do so, you better not preach. Just as there will be "fathers and mothers in Israel" there will be false brethren. You may not always be treated kindly, (15) teach the truth to faithful men (II Tim. 2:2).

To listen to some, you would never know their obligations involved passing on the fundamentals of the faith to each new generation. Study carefully.

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Word Studies

Soul

Does man have a soul, a spirit that survives death of the body? The publications of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society deny that he does. They frequently point to the language of the creation account in Genesis to support the view that man is a soul, but does not have a soul. In Genesis 2:7 Moses stated that "...man became a living soul." The word "soul" here is translated from the Hebrew word "nephesh." This word also appears in Genesis 1:24, where it is rendered "creatures," referring to the land animals created on the sixth day. If a man is a soul and an animal is a soul, the thinking goes, then a man no more has an existence beyond death than does an eel.

"Nephesh" and its Greek equivalent, "psuche," occur hundreds of times in the Bible, and sometimes they do refer merely to existence in this life. Lot was warned to escape from Sodom for his "nephesh" (Genesis 19:17), and God referred to Herod as one who sought to take the child Jesus's "psuche" (Matthew 2:20). Our English word "soul" has that meaning at times, as well. An "S.O.S." signal by persons in distress is a plea to "save our souls," but they mean by it "our lives."

However, these words, no matter what the language, have many different uses and shades of meaning because human existence is such a complex matter. The physical body has certain vital signs by which we determine whether life is present, but even mere earthly existence is much more than blood flow and brain waves! One's actions, habits, and relationships to others are also his "life," but there is certainly more than that.

Thayer's lexicon gives as one use of "psuche," "the soul as an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death (distinguished from 'to soma' [Greek for 'the body'--SDW] as the other part of human nature; the soul freed from the body, a disembodied soul.)" Matthew 10:28 is given as an example which draws a clear distinction between the body and the soul: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." If the soul is no more than the life and breath within the body, then whoever would kill the body would also kill the soul, and Jesus's admonition would be meaningless.

Peter preached on Pentecost that Jesus fulfilled David's prophecy in Psalm 16 that God would not leave his soul in Hades nor allow his flesh to see corruption (Acts 2:26, 31). When the body is dead and in the grave, the soul still exists in another place. The soul is not simply that life that moves the body. Note that this passage in Acts 2 relies upon both the Hebrew "nephesh" (Ps. 16:10) and the Greek "psuche" to tell the state of the soul of Jesus while His body was entombed.

As for references to man's "spirit," the Jehovah's Witnesses hold that Hebrew and Greek words thus translated are often used to mean the wind or man's breath, therefore any reference to the "spirit" of man should be taken to mean the breath that sustains life in the body. Thus, "the body without the spirit is dead" in James 2:26 would mean only that when the body stops breathing, death has come.

The Hebrew word "ruach" and the Greek "pneuma" also appear many times in scripture, sometimes being translated "breath;" others, "wind;" and many times, "spirit." Again, these have many uses, not just one. Thayer states that "pneuma" sometimes refers to "a human soul that has left the body," as in Hebrews 12:23, "the spirits of just men made perfect." These are spirits of men who had been alive on earth, but were no longer. They are personalities, not breath or wind.

Paul commanded that the Corinthians discipline a brother in sin "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This was not a desire to save the man's breath, but his soul for eternity.

Man is a living soul, and man also has a soul.

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First Principles Why Be A Christian?

Posing this question makes for such a broad topic that many articles could be written in answer to it. There are so many good reasons that can be given for being a Christian that a faithful Christian wonders why one would elect to live outside God's family. Many surely do not understand the benefits, or perhaps do not understand the consequences of not being a Christian. Perhaps the reasons we give here will serve to both refresh the mind of the Christian and encourage any non-Christian reader to desire this noble estate.

GOD LOVES YOU. It is because of His power to create life that we came into this world. Thus we owe our very existence to Him, and His providence affords every blessing we enjoy. Jesus said of the Father, "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mat. 5:45). To the idolatrous Lystrians Paul proclaimed, "the living God, who...did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15-17). The words of Psalm 23 have comforted many a heart, declaring "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over" (vs. 5).

God's love has also provided for our spiritual needs. (Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 3:1). It is His love that makes spiritual sonship possible. All can be children of God. The invitation is broad and all encompassing (Mat. 11:28-30). The very poorest and vilest may be His heirs in Christ (Rom. 8:16-17; Eph. 1:11-14). It is in Christ, accessed by baptism (Gal. 3:26-27) that one who has been separated from God by sin is reconciled to God (Col. 1:20-21; 2 Cor. 5:17-18). His goodness and love should move one into heartfelt obedience (Rom. 2:4; 6:17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; I Jn. 4:19).

CHRIST DIED FOR YOU. Of all that God has done for man, none surpasses the gift of His Son (Rom. 5:8). "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15). Jesus, Immanuel (Mat. 1:21,23), though He was rich, became poor to provide our riches (2 Cor. 8:9). He emptied Himself of the "form of God" "by taking the form of a servant" and thus humbling Himself "became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). Through His death, the demands of justice were met with mercy (2 Pet. 3:9; cf. Rom. 3:21-26). He who came to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10) lived sinlessly, going about doing good; and He preached peace to those afar off and to those who were near (I Pet. 2:22-23; Acts 10:38; Eph. 2:17-18).

HEAVEN IS WAITING FOR YOU. There is a place prepared for those who will prepare for its habitation (Mat. 25:34; Jn. 14:1-2; Rev. 21:1-22:5). Be impressed with this fact, only the faithful will be saved, not "everyone who says "Lord, Lord...but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21ff). God set before the Jew life and death (Deut. 30:15), and the choice was theirs. He has set before us two ways, one leading to life, the other to destruction (Mat. 7:13-14). The choice is ours to make. Know this also, dear reader, that the Lord is "not desiring that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT IS A PROMISE. In Jn. 10:10 Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Jesus likely refers to the eternal joy, peace, and the society of the blessed in the world of glory; and that is certainly a compelling reason for one to be a Christian and live for the will of God (I Pet. 4:2). But here is a truth that is faithful and worthy of all acceptance, that godliness is profitable for both this life and that which is to come (I Tim. 4:8-9). Consider the stabilizing effect of hope possessed by the child of God (Tit. 1:2; Rom. 8:24; Heb. 6:19). Relish the privilege of communion with God in prayer (Heb. 4:16) and the beauty and fellowship with brethren in Christ and the comfort that affords (I Jn. 1:3-7).

Dear reader, these are only a few of many reasons why you should be a Christian. Are you?

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Personal Work

Understanding and practice of personal work is necessary to the numerical and spiritual growth of congregations, to salvation of alien sinner, and that of Christians. This ought to be the aim of every child of God. I am afraid that many Christians are deceiving themselves into thinking that they are faithful because they are faithful in attendance. There is more to Christianity than being faithful in attendance. We must be workers for the Master.

The church as a body has a work to do. Even this is impossible without various individuals doing their part. The group activity of the church necessarily involves arrangements for the accomplishment of certain aims. The church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). In order to evangelize, the group, acting through its treasury and through persons acting at the requirement of the group, might use the pulpit in regular assemblies, classes, gospel meetings, tracts, bulletins, radio, television, etc. All of these are authorized under the generic command to “teach”.

The action of the church as a group does not rule out the duty of individual Christians to act in the matter of evangelism. There are some duties we have, not just because we are part of a group, but because of our personal relationship to God. Any attempt to shift upon a collectivity a duty that is private is displeasing to God.

In James 1:22 James said, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Isn’t that what many members are doing. They know that the lost must be taught, but never try to teach anyone. Someone says, “I don’t know who to teach.” Teach everyone you know that is not a member of the church. They are lost and need to hear the truth so that their souls can be saved. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17). Many churches are dying because members are not teaching the lost. Every member has this responsibility. Someone taught you and now you need to be teaching others. Can one disobey this responsibility and still go the heaven? Think about it brethren, the eternal destiny of your soul depends upon being doers of the Lord’s will.

Someone says, I don’t know how to teach someone. If you will make arrangements for a home Bible study with someone lost (alien sinner or erring member) then, ask the preacher or an elder or some member that has a good knowledge of the word. I am sure that they will be glad to go with you. Then, you need to study and prepare yourself for personal work. Most people that are lost do not know what is required of them to be saved. Every member of the church should be able to show them in the Bible what they need to do to be saved. If you can’t remember where to find it, then write it down and after you do it a few times you will remember where to find such passages.

Brethren, do you want to go to heaven? Do you *really* want to go. If you want to go and your desire is strong enough, then you will begin doing all that the Lord requires of you. That includes teaching the gospel to a lost and dying world.

EVIDENCE FAULTY EVIDENCE

Aesop said, "Appearances are deceiving." Jesus commented on this truism in Matthew 7:15 by saying that false teachers *"come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."* I have before me a sheet labeled "CHALLENGE PAGE." The geological column is pictured which, the directions say, is a time chart of life on earth. Rock strata of the geologic eras and ages are listed along with figures indicating the "millions of years ago" when they were formed. The Pliocene age, 5 million years ago, saw "ape-people," 2 million years ago "early humans" showed up. Some 0.01 million years ago "modern humans" appeared. I suppose Adam was among them. It doesn't say.

This sheet isn't from the public schools. No, the question posed to students indicates where it was used: "Can you match the fossil record with the Genesis record?" Blanks appear to the right for convenience in recording chapter and verse. Blanks are found opposite "early humans" and roughly between "ape people" and grazing animals. Descending the page (into the past) are blanks opposite "birds, snakes and lizards," "vertebrates with jaws" and "blue-green algae."

This is faulty evidence and is particularly disturbing because the report is that the material was used in a Bible study with youngsters of elementary school age. The evidence is faulty because no such "column" appears in nature. It is constructed not from actual fossil beds, but rather according to evolutionary theory which demands that "simple" life precede "complex" forms, roughly stated: "From ancestral viral, bacteria and protozoan forms to colonials to aquatic and to complex marine and terrestrial forms including man." Actually fossil beds contain a plethora of animal and plant life forms. Some geologists admit that fossil bed evidence supports instantaneous creation not development of life forms through ages of evolution.

It is faulty evidence because the record of creation in Genesis cannot be matched to the neatly structured column. Reading the chart from bottom to top the labels clearly show that one is seeing the unfolding of earth's biological history from early to present time. In Genesis 1:9-13 on the third day God formed the seas and created land plants. On the fifth day of Genesis 1:20-23, after the creation of terrestrial plants, sea life and birds were created. The column has land plants appearing during the Ordovician age some 500 million years ago after sea life and 70 million years after marine forms. Terrestrial animal life and man were created on the sixth day. Grazing animals appear on the column a mere 22 million years ago!

One can write scriptures opposite the creatures named indicating that God created them. The point to be made here is that the order of creation in the Bible is suggested to be the same as the column. The Bible order is: land plants, marine creatures, birds and man. The column is marine life, land plants, birds and man. Also the column shows life appearing at widely dispersed points in time.

I'm told that the teacher constantly quoted 2 Peter 3:8, "*—one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" This has nothing to do with the six days in which God instantly created fully functioning systems both physical and biological. But if one made a literal application seven days would not be unreasonable which would be 7,000 years which falls far short of the geological eras. Peter was letting us know that God does not dwell in time as does mortal man. God given us truth to be believed, not a puzzle to be solved. We seem to be in a mode of thinking that would have us be more acceptable to society at large. "*—Let God be true, but every man a liar—.*"

Issues Among Brethren HAS GOD GIVEN US A PATTERN ?

Some are boldly proclaiming that the New Testament is not a God-given blueprint, or pattern, for Christians of all ages to follow. They argue loudly that the cultures of today's generation are so different from the cultures of the first century-when the books of the New Testament were written- that the words of the New Testament cannot possibly mean now what they meant then. Their plea is, "Since we have no pattern, we must restructure the church or she will die." As a result of such thinking changes are being introduced into the church on a grand scale.

Think about this idea, seriously. If the New Testament does not serve as our pattern in religion today, man is left free to follow his own feelings, desires and ambitions. Because of the failure to accept the New Testament as a religious guide man is hopelessly divided. The competing churches of our time are testimony to this fact.

To deny that the New Testament serves as our religious pattern is to deny the inspiration of the Bible. Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim.3:16-17. These words are just as true today as they were when written. God leads man, guides man, by His word.

This has always been the case. When Noah found grace in the eyes of God, the Lord gave Noah a pattern for building the ark. God specified the kind of wood, the dimensions, a window, a door and other needs for the ark. God told Noah, "This is the fashion which thou shalt make it of," Gen.6:15. When Noah followed God's pattern and "did according to all that God commanded him," Gen.6:22, Noah was saved from the flood.

It has always been God's policy, in dealing with man, to give him a pattern to follow-to tell man what to do and how to do it. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices unto God, Gen.4:3-4. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel but rejected the sacrifice of Cain. Why? Abel followed God's pattern and did what God commanded. Cain did not. The Bible says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," Heb.11:4. Abel simply believed what God said and obeyed.

It's unreasonable to suppose that God will hold us accountable for the kinds of lives we live and not give us a pattern to live our lives by. If God had treated man so unfairly, man would have been hopelessly lost. No pattern to follow, no eternal salvation to gain. Jeremiah recognized this and wrote, "Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps," Jer.10:23.

Men today fail to acknowledge this. Unwilling to follow God's pattern they set out to blaze religious trails of their own. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," Rom.1:22. They have "changed the truth of God into a lie," Rom.1:25. It is strange that men will deliberately turn from the truth to a lie but that is what anyone does when he turns from God to human wisdom.

Away with the idea that God has given us no religious pattern! Let us say with the psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," Ps.119:105. May we all turn to the word of God, His pattern, for all that we teach and practice in religion. Truly, God's "divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," 2 Pet.1:3.

How A Church May Use Its Money (1)

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...” (Col. 3:17). How a church obtains and uses its money are matters of Divine legislation. In I Cor. 16:2, we are told how a church obtains its money: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” The Lord’s Day contribution is the primary way for a church to obtain money. Cake sales, car washes, and begging the citizens of the community for money are not scriptural ways of obtaining money. If a church has more needy saints than it can care for, other churches may help it (II Cor. 8:1-9:15; Rom. 15:25-27; Acts 11:27-30). However, one church cannot scripturally send money to another church to preach the gospel. Why? No authority for so doing.

The treasury of the church must be used only for those works God has authorized the church to do (Col. 3:17). The Holy Spirit-inspired word of God furnishes a man to every good work: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

It is evident that the first century churches (1) supported preachers (Phil. 4:15-18; II Cor. 11:8,9), (2) relieved the needs of their own needy saints (Acts 2:43-45; 4:34-37; 6:1-7), (3) relieved the needs of churches which had more needy saints than they could relieve (Acts 11:27-30; II Cor. 8:1-9:15; Rom. 15:25-27), and (4) had a place to meet for worship (Acts 20:7,8). The church acted in three areas: (1) Edification, (2) evangelism, and (c) benevolence. Consider how the church is to use its money in these fields.

EDIFICATION: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:11,12,16). Elders oversee the work of the church (I Pet. 5:1-3). They are responsible for the edification of each member of the church where they are overseers.

Congregations assemble for worship (Heb. 10:25). Assembly demands a time and place. Acts 20:7 (Lord’s Supper) and I Cor. 16:1,2 (laying by in store) set a special day for these activities -- the first day of the week. Singing, praying, and teaching can be done any day of the week (Acts 2:42,46; Acts 3:1; I Cor. 14:26). When it comes to time, any time on the Lord’s day for breaking bread and laying by in store, but not on any other day of the week. The place can be in the open, under a tree, in a private house, in an rented building, in a purchased building, or one given or loaned. When a church rents or buys, there are judgments to be made regarding location, cost, size, usability, esthetics, and comforts. These things are authorized by the command to assemble. A meeting place expedites the command to assemble.

Most congregations have several services and Bible Classes. In many of these, study materials are used which cost money, whether the material is purchased or made by the members. What to use and how much to spend are matters of judgment. Such materials help the elders edify the church.

Equipment is another major expense. Should the church have a public address system, an overhead projector and screen, copy machine, computer, cassette recorder, tape duplicator, or equipment to make TV broadcasts? Such equipment is authorized because it expedites the work of edification. Discretion is always needed in deciding what equipment is needed and how much to spend on it.

The church is not authorized to build or maintain human organizations to do the work of the church, nor so-called fellowship halls, family life centers, kitchens, special choirs, and drama. Food, fun, and frolic take away from the spirituality of the work and worship of God’s people. Study Carefully.

Religious Debate

July 26, 27, 1999 (Monday & Tuesday) 7:00 PM
North Loop Missionary Baptist Church, Crockett, Texas

July 29, 30, 1999 (Thursday & Friday) 7:00 PM
South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, Texas

Proposition One: “The Scriptures teach that salvation is at the point of faith before and without water baptism.”

Affirm: Mr. Bobby L. Sparks of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church, Greenville, TX

Deny: Mr. Carl A. Allen of South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, TX

Proposition Two: “The Scriptures teach that water baptism to the alien sinner is for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins.”

Affirm: Mr. Carl A. Allen of South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, TX

Deny: Mr. Bobby L. Sparks of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church, Greenville, TX

EVERYONE WELCOME

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