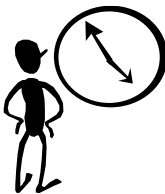


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.

Every other Sunday night:

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Dangerous Preaching

By Sewell Hall

A man who accepts the task of preaching the gospel accepts a dreadful responsibility. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Application of these words may not be limited to what we commonly term local preachers, but they apply in a special way to such men. The longer a man remains with a church, doing such work, the more responsible he becomes for the convictions and faithfulness of the members.

Brother, why do you preach? Is it a profession for you, simply a way of making a living? Is it a career that you wish to enhance by building up a large congregation? Is it an opportunity to exercise your artistic talents by producing a masterpiece of words each week? Is it the pride of having people praise your preaching for years without tiring of it? Preaching for these reasons may build reputations or even larger congregations but it will not produce godly, well-informed, and indoctrinated Christians. Preaching that is God approved is not for the advancement of the preacher but for the salvation and edification of the hearers.

Note three examples of dangerous preaching:

Preaching What is False

The Old Testament is filled with warnings. Remember the "man of God" who died because he believed a false prophet's lie (I Kings 13). Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Peter echoed these words, predicting, "... there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ..." (II Peter 2:1).

The danger of false teaching is recognized by most of us. But teaching does not have to be false to be dangerous.

We have seen how the media can distort the news by reporting only selected facts. Those facts may be true but if they do not give the whole picture, false impressions are left. A mother may not feed her child poison, but if she does not give it the balanced diet it needs she may contribute to its sickness or even death.

Preaching Only in Generalities

We may be pleased when someone says, “You have made me eager to obey God in everything.” Such words are encouraging, but we should not suppose that our job is done when this is said. Jeremiah’s countrymen said, “Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God . . .” (Jeremiah 42:6). But when Jeremiah told them what God wanted them to do, they totally rejected it and called him a liar. It is our job, as it was Jeremiah’s, to show our hearers what God says they should do and not do. We need to be teaching what is wrong with profanity, dancing, drinking, immodesty, and other worldliness; as well as with the social gospel, instrumental music, Calvinism, denominationalism, institutionalism, and other doctrinal errors.

Preachers, how long has it been since you have preached on these important subjects? Elders, how long has it been since the flock for which you are responsible have been taught on such subjects as these? We may think that the congregation knows about these things, but how do they know? Even if the older members know, what about young people who did not hear the old sermons of thirty years ago? It is a failure to continue preaching on such things that leaves a church open to worldliness and unscriptural innovations.

My brother, Bill, has observed that churches vary in their feeling about sound doctrinal preaching. The first church does not want sound teaching and will avoid preachers they fear might produce it. The second church will accept sound teaching and appreciate it, but they do not demand it. The third church not only accepts sound teaching but will accept nothing short of it. However, those churches that will accept it but do not get it for a period of ten years will cease to want it.

Preaching that is Limited to Attacks on Worldliness and Error

It can kill a church. Recently, someone reported to me their periodic visits to a very small congregation of older Christians, and observed that every time they visited, the preacher was warning about some kind of apostasy that really does not threaten those faithful veterans. All Christians, young and old, need encouragement. The gospel is good news; the promises it makes and the hope it gives should be often stressed.

The same passage (II Timothy 4:2) that calls upon evangelists to convince and rebuke also instructs them to exhort. Exhortation involves appeal, entreaty, encouragement, consolation and comfort (Vines). “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (I Thessalonians 5:14).

On the Other Hand ...

Great preaching has always come from the heart of one who was passionate about the needs of his hearers and confident that God's word is the solution to their needs. One of the temptations involved in preaching to the same congregation each Sunday is the feeling that one must come up with something that is either new, or a novel presentation of what is old. The needs of the hearers may be forgotten. One may use scripture — even limit himself to expository preaching — yet not deal with the current needs of his audience.

Jeremiah rebuked the sins of his generation and warned them of future consequences until he was tempted to keep silent. “But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones. And I was weary of holding it back, and I could not” (Jeremiah 20:9). “Someone has said that there are three kinds of preachers. The first has to say something — he is a paid talker who has to fill a certain amount of time each week. The second has something to say, and that is a whole lot better. But best of all is the third — the man who has something to say and has to say it. That is the kind of preacher Jeremiah was” (L.A. Mott in *Thinking Through Jeremiah*).

Each of us who preach should ask, “What is the burning fire in my bones that I cannot hold back?” If we do not have such a burning fire, or if it is something other than “what is good for edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29), then we had best quit preaching.

God's Been Good to Me

By Clay Harrison

I'm mindful of the blessings that come my way each day.
My heart is overflowing each time I kneel to pray.
I'm thankful for the seasons; each one's a masterpiece.
I'm allowed to work the land, but God still holds the lease.
I'm grateful for the friendships that brighten sorrow's way,
Because my cup of happiness sustains me every day.
I'm thankful for the little things that fill my life with love.
The best things in life are free; they come from God above.

Satan's Devices

By Jefferson David Tant

The apostle John wrote some words concerning Satan in Revelation 12:9: “*And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*”

We are well aware of the devil's role as one who deceives and lures people to practice sin, but just how does he accomplish this? By looking at the record in Genesis 3:1-7, we can get a pretty well-defined picture of how he operates in luring us to sin.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5. For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

Let us take note of Satan's scheme in these verses, so that by having an insight into his methods, we may equip ourselves and be strengthened to not yield, but overcome his temptations.

First, Satan challenges what God said. Eve understood perfectly well that God said they would die if they ate the fruit. Satan challenged that and stated exactly the opposite.

Second, then he uses the lie to appeal to human pride. “If you eat the fruit, you will be like God.” Well, who wouldn't like to be like God? To have all wisdom and knowledge sounds like something good, doesn't it? But no human has ever attained that level of knowledge.

Third, having gotten Eve's attention, she then looks at the fruit and saw that it looked good and tasty. Thus Satan offered what was pleasing to the eye. It wasn't ugly. Are we enticed today by sight? Do we see the nice possessions of others and wish we had them? What does the word “covet” mean? “To desire what belongs to another inordinately or culpably.”

Does Satan ever show us the bad end that sin produces? Obviously not. He wouldn't get very far if the billboards advertising the good times of drinking alcohol

also showed the bodies lying in the road and a smashed-up car following a drunk driving accident.

The coveting of possessions can lead to stealing in order to obtain them, or it might lead us to put more emphasis on material things to the extent that we neglect spiritual things because we get caught up in making more and more money so we can have more and more possessions. But when we die, what can we take with us? We can only take our spiritual qualities if we have not lost them in our quest for things of this world that we will leave behind.

Satan knows us — our strengths and weaknesses and knows that he can appeal to us through our eyes. Job understood this and made a covenant. *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?”* (Job 31:1).

In this matter, our women need to see to it that they dress modestly. To argue that they can't help it if a man lusts after them is not reasonable. Well, a man may lust after a woman fully clothed, and she bears no responsibility in that. But if she invites his stares, then she has sinned by contributing to his sin.

Paul deals with this in his letter to Timothy: *“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness”* (I Timothy 2:9-10).

Paul is not saying that a woman cannot wear jewelry or dress nicely, but that she should be known more for her character than for her looks. Besides, would “modestly” describe thigh-high skirts or shorts, or attire showing cleavage? I don't think so.

John writes some about what is a “delight to the eyes” in I John 2:16: *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

Dear readers, at the very beginning of God's word, we are given insight into the devices of Satan. Let us learn from that, and make a covenant, even as Job did, that we will not be enticed. Heaven is our goal.

Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to behave in such a way *“so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes”* (II Corinthians 2:11). We are not ignorant of Satan's schemes. We have been informed and warned.

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

