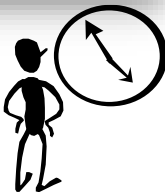


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

On Casting Your Pearls Before Swine!

By George McNulty

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces" (Matt. 7:6).

Way too much time is wasted doing this. As soon as you discern scoffing, mocking or a need to convince you of what 'they' believe--it's more profitable to exit the conversation. We are to share the truth, but, when it becomes apparent that the truth is not welcome--that the conversation will be unfruitful--we are to move on [Lk. 9:5]. We are responsible to share the truth; but we are not responsible for people's response to it. If they reject it, that's on them. If they accept only part of the truth and reject other parts, that's on them.

"And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them" (Lk. 9:5).

Pigs don't appreciate pearls, and some people don't appreciate what Christ has done for them or His truth. They persecute his ministers from without and even from within. Please note just because someone is in church does not make them a true Christian. The wolf can hang out with the sheep, but it is still a wolf [Lk. 10:3]! It is so sad but they were told; what's even sadder is when surface Christian's seek to gag the minister from preaching in case it might possibly offend someone somewhere. How much do you have to hate someone not to tell them the truth? You worry about offending your neighbors; I'll worry about offending God!

Our job is not to force conversions or cram the truth down people's throats; there's no sense in preaching the value of pearls to swine. Jesus' instruction to His ministers on how to handle rejection was to simply go elsewhere. There are other people who need to hear the gospel, and they are ready to hear it. On to the next one!

So, What's a Good Sermon?

By Jefferson David Tant

Out of all the thousands of sermons preachers have delivered and to which people have listened, how would we determine which sermons are good, which are bad, or which are so-so? I would suppose that even preachers evaluate themselves from time to time, and on occasion might conclude, "Well, I'll never preach that sermon again!"

In answering the question, it would be good to go to the "Preacher's Manual," which we would agree would be God's Word. I doubt that any preacher would suppose that he could measure up to the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, but there are various Scriptures that do mention preaching that is connected to the apostles and others in the New Testament writings.

For some helpful advice, let's consider the words of one chosen by God to be a teacher, as he instructs a young preacher. Of course, we're writing about the apostle Paul and the young man Timothy.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (II Timothy 4:1-2).

Preach the Word

What is "the Word?" Obviously, it is the teaching of Jesus Christ. A good sermon is based on God's Word, not the opinions or doctrines of men. And if preachers are to "preach the Word," they need to spend some time studying and meditating on the Word. There may be various things that occupy a preacher's time and thoughts, but there must be a priority set on the matter of spending time with the Bible. Within it are the "words of life."

Oh, there may be times when a preacher says, "Let me give you my thoughts on that." But be sure that your thoughts are in agreement with what the passage says, rather than giving a different view.

Be Ready in Season and Out of Season

What does Paul mean by this? To preach in both summer and winter? Obviously, that's not what Paul meant, but it certainly would apply to preaching in good times and hard times. Yes, there are good times for preaching. The hearers are at peace with one another and there is harmony, and the audience/church is working together to further the Lord's work. But Satan is still at work in the world, and sometimes brethren are distracted by his devices, and there may be some difficulties the preacher faces. Some preachers don't want to get involved, and just ignore problems when they arise, hoping they will go away. But that's not how either Christ or Paul dealt with problems. They

confronted them.

Reprove, Rebuke

These words are very similar in their meanings, and carry the idea of “to admonish, convict, convince.” I suppose this would not always be the most pleasant duty of a preacher, but if the body of Christ is to be whole and pure, it must be done. We certainly know that a medical doctor sometimes has to take measures to remove disease from our bodies. It may not always be pleasant for us, but we know that good health makes it necessary. Is the body of Christ, the church, any less important?

Some readers are familiar with the well-known denominational preacher in the United States named Joel O’Steen. In an interview on TV, he stated, “I don’t preach on sin. I want my people to feel good.” I guess that’s how he could build a church of some 40,000 members and become a millionaire.

The greatest preacher of all time, Jesus Christ, certainly did not hesitate to rebuke the Pharisees and others for their hypocrisy and sinful deeds in his preaching. And Paul did the same, even confronting a fellow apostle, Peter, for his bad behavior when he separated himself from the Gentiles in Galatians 3:11-12.

And what is our attitude and behavior when we have to confront those who are in error? What should be the tone of our voice in this matter? Paul tells us in Galatians 6:1: “*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*”

I’m afraid that I know of too many situations where people may have been driven away by the harsh attitude of the preacher either in private or in public. How would we want others to deal with us if we have been in the wrong? Thus Paul said we should “look to ourselves.”

Exhort

This is an encouraging word, and Strong’s Greek Dictionary says: “parakaleo, par-ak-al-eh'-o -- to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation):--besech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), entreat, pray.”

I don’t think I need to add to that, as Strong gives a pretty good definition of what it means to “exhort.” And of course, this corresponds to what Paul said in Galatians 6:1 about a “*spirit of gentleness.*”

With Great Patience

Just what does it mean to be “patient?” Would this not carry the idea that we are not to be quick to anger, not use harsh words, but rather to have a spirit of love and kindness when we seek to correct others, whether from the pulpit or in person?

Brethren, if we seek to apply Paul’s instructions to a young preacher to our own work, then obviously God’s Word will work its purpose, and the hearers of our ser-

mons/lessons will be edified and strengthened and the church will grow.

The Psalmist closes the 107th Psalm with the following words: *“Whoso is wise will give heed to these things; And they will consider the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah”* (Psalms 107:43)

And Paul’s words to the church in Rome also have an application to those who preach the gospel: *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor”* (Romans 12:12).

Jesus, the Stone of Stumbling

By Doy Moyer

“But the LORD (Yahweh) of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.” (Isaiah 8:13-15).

Paul quotes this passage and applies it to Jesus:

“They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame” (Romans 9:32-33).

Paul also pulls in Isaiah 28:16: *“and the one who believes in him will not be put to shame”* (NETS, LXX). In Isaiah 8, Yahweh is said to be the One who will become a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling. In Isaiah 28, *“believes in him”* refers to trusting in Yahweh. Jesus fulfills these passages as Yahweh incarnate. Peter, likewise, combines Isaiah 8 with Isaiah 28 and applies it to Christ:

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” (I Peter 2:4-8).

These sentiments are echoed by Simeon when Jesus was presented at the temple as an infant. To Mary he said, *“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”* (Luke 2:34-35). Later, Jesus, citing a similar passage in Psalm 118:22-23, says:

“Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

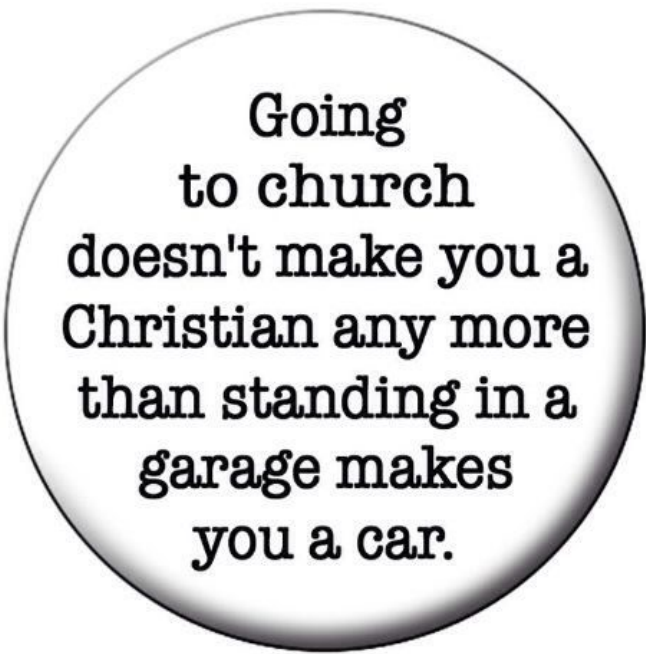
Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him” (Matthew 21:42-44).

These passages show us that Jesus, God manifested in the flesh, is the stumbling stone and rock of offense. He is the cornerstone, the stone that is rejected, the stone on which people fall and are broken and crushed. He is God the Son. He is the Son of Man. He is the Stone of stumbling but also the rock in whom we can trust. He is the crucified and risen Savior. If you believe in Him you will not be put to shame. If you do not believe in Him, you will stumble over Him and be broken.

Now going back to I Peter 2, Peter says that we ought to come to Him who is the living stone, *“rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.”* Yet we must not miss the next statement: *“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (I Peter 2:5).* As Jesus is the living stone over whom people stumble, those who believe come to him as living stones themselves. The imagery here is the temple, God’s house, and we are not only stones in the structure, we are also the priests who attend to the temple and offer up sacrifices through Christ.

Peter says that while many *“stumble because they disobey the word” (I Peter 2:8),* Christians *“are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9).*

We either stumble over Christ or become living stones in His temple proclaiming His glory. We are not given the option of being neutral. As Paul wrote, *“we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (I Corinthians 1:23-24).* Is Jesus the stumbling block or is He God’s power to salvation in your life? Will you be a living stone in His house?



**Going
to church
doesn't make you a
Christian any more
than standing in a
garage makes
you a car.**