

"PREACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD"

Acts 20: 26 - 27

Sermon by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul, returning from his third journey, stopped at Miletus and sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus.
2. He gave a review of his work in Ephesus:
 - (1) His manner of life -- Acts 20:18.
 - (2) His humility -- Acts 20:19.
 - (3) His tears and trials -- Acts 20: 19, 33; 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18.
 - (4) In his preaching he kept back nothing that was profitable -- Acts 20:20.
 - (5) He had declared the whole counsel of God to them -- Acts 20: 26 - 27.
 - (6) He faced the afflictions which awaited him with unflinching courage -- Acts 20: 22 - 23.
 - (7) He was moved by nothing because of his unselfish devotion to the gospel -- Acts 20:24.
 - (8) Paul admonition to the Ephesian elders:
 1. To watch their person conduct -- Acts 20:28.
 2. To shepherd the church -- Acts 20:28; 14:23.
 3. To remind them of the dangers they faced from false teachers -- Acts 20:29 - 31; I Tim. 1:20; 1:3; Rev. 2:2.
 4. He commended them to God and His Word -- Acts 20:32.
 5. He encouraged them to unselfishness, recalling the example of himself -- Acts 20: 33 - 34, 35.
 6. He exhorted them to remember the poor -- Acts 20:35.
 7. The parting scene -- Acts 20: 36 - 38.
3. As the apostle Paul preached ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD, so must EVERY GOSPEL PREACHER TODAY!
4. Much of the preaching today is not the kind of preaching Paul did.

I. TODAY THERE IS THE TREND OF NEUTRALITY IN PREACHING

1. The preacher knows what is right, but he also knows that if he takes a stand it will lose him popularity, friendships, gospel meetings, and he may have to move from his present location.
2. So many preachers fail to deal with "loaded issues" and "popular sins".
3. The subjects of: marriage, divorce, and remarriage -- only for the cause of fornication; "The Kenotic Theory (that Christ emptied Himself of His divine attributes when He became flesh -- this theory denies His deity); The "grace-fellowship" theory; "continuous cleansing" theory; social drinking; dancing; gambling; lascivious dress; worldliness; the social gospel; materialism; discipline; attendance; giving; individualism (Charles Holt's doctrine that there is no local church); positive preaching, etc. are not dealt with in many places.
4. Jesus said a man could NOT be NEUTRAL -- Matt. 12:30; Matt. 6:24.
5. The neutral preacher is on the side of error.
6. The church faces problems today that can only be met by men who love the truth and who have an attitude toward preaching like the apostle Paul -- Acts 20:20; 20: 26 - 27; Gal. 2:5; Phil. 1:17.
7. We need men who will preach the truth and urge the principles of truth REGARDLESS of the CONSEQUENCES -- men like Paul, Stephen, and John the Baptist.

8. Men who preach the gospel are to MOLD SENTIMENT and AROUSE CONVICTIONS in the hearts of men by the GOSPEL.
9. Men of God, down through time, have never been men of neutrality:
 - (1) Jeremiah -- Jer. 1: 9 -10.
 - (2) John the Baptist -- Luke 1:17; Matt. 3: 1 - 3; 14: 3 -4
 - (3) Paul -- Gal. 2:5; Phil. 1:17.

II. THERE IS THE TREND TOWARD COMPROMISING THE TRUTH

1. Many churches today want to feed upon "Softism".
2. They want a "positive", "indistinctive", "ambiguous" message preached.
3. They want preaching that does not emphasize and underscore the distinctive characteristics that separate the church from denominationalism and from the world:
 - (1) Human in origin
 - (2) Worldly in character
 - (3) Unsound doctrinally
 - (4) Social in practice
4. They want NO preaching on:
 - (1) Immodest dress
 - (2) Marriage, divorce and remarriage for unscriptural reasons
 - (3) The social gospel
 - (4) Discipline
 - (5) Mixed swimming
 - (6) Dancing
 - (7) Petting
 - (8) Worldliness
 - (9) Denominationalism, etc.

III. THERE IS THE TREND TOWARD "PROFESSIONAL" PREACHING

1. Professional preachers are much like professional politicians -- they don't lead, they follow the crowd.
2. They listen to find out what the people want, and then they give them what they want to hear -- 2 Tim. 4: 3 - 4.
3. A professional preacher is NOT going to rise up with Courage, Persistence, and Fearlessness, and try to change things that are wrong.
4. Professional preachers are not interested in doing the most good, they are interested in making the most money.
5. The professional preacher feels toward his work the same as a doctor or lawyer feels toward their profession.
6. He feels he must promote his own welfare and position to the highest possible plane from the viewpoint of influence, popularity, demand, and earnings.
7. The professional preacher is a hireling -- paid so much to do what the brethren "want" done. When he *"sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them"* -- John 10:12 (NKJV)

8. The professional preacher will "guard his influence and usefulness"; he will never involve himself in controversy of any kind.
9. The God-fearing preacher, who preaches the gospel because he loves God and lost men, will preach the gospel regardless of circumstances.
10. The God-fearing preacher has the attitude of Paul, "*Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*" -- I Cor. 9:16.

IV. THE PREACHER WHO PREACHES THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WILL DEAL WITH SIN AS A REALITY.

1. Sin exists as a fact -- Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3: 9 - 10; 3:23; I John 1:8.
2. Sin brings spiritual death -- Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1 -2; Ezek. 18:4.
3. That man might have the forgiveness of sins, the Son of God had to die on the cross -- John 3:16; Matt. 1:21; Matt. 26: 28; I Pet. 3:18.

V. THE PREACHER WHO PREACHES THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WILL DEAL WITH SIN IN PARTICULAR -- BE SPECIFIC

1. Peter was specific on Pentecost -- Acts 2:23.
2. Paul was specific before Felix -- Acts 24: 25.
3. John before Herod -- Matt. 14:4.
4. Preachers today must get SPECIFIC about the sins of the people they preach to.

VI. THE PREACHER THAT PREACHES THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WILL REBUKE THE SINS THAT MEN "WINK AT" AND PASS BY:

1. Evil speaking -- I Pet. 2:1.
2. Evil thinking -- Matt. 5:28; Mk. 7: 20 - 23.
3. Hatred -- Matt. 5: 43 - 44.
4. Gambling -- Eph. 5:5.
5. Carnality -- I Cor. 3: 1- 3.
6. Lascivious behavior:
 - (1) Shorts
 - (2) Mixed Swimming
 - (3) Petting
 - (4) Dresses cut too low and too short
 - (5) Watching Lascivious movies and television, etc.

VII. THE PREACHER THAT PREACHES THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WILL REBUKE AND CONDEMN THE DOCTRINES AND COMMANDMENTS OF MEN:

1. Paul did -- Col. 2:8.
2. John did -- 2 John 9 - 11.
3. Jesus did -- Matt. 15:9.
4. Manmade doctrines today:
 - (1) Denominationalism
 - (2) Institutionalism
 - (3) Instrumental music

- (4) Protestantism's influence on religious thought today in the church.
- (5) The Boston Movement.
- (6) Individualism-- Charles Holt doctrine that there is no local church.
- (7) The "Kenotic theory"-- that Christ emptied Himself of His divine attributes when he became flesh -- denying His deity; "Emptied Theory".

CONCLUSION

1. We need men in the pulpit today who have great faith in God and the Word of God, who will preach the WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.
2. When there is a lack of faith in the pulpit, and the whole counsel of God is not preached, it is disastrous to the cause of Christ.
 - (1) A lack of faith caused Peter to sink into the water -- Matt. 14:30.
 - (2) The church at Laodicea, because of a lack of faith, was indifferent and became lukewarm -- Rev. 3: 14 - 19.
 - (3) It caused Demas to forsake the Lord and Paul -- 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - (4) Many churches today are losing their love and zeal for the Lord and His work because the whole counsel of God is not being preached.
3. When the pulpits of churches of Christ have men in them preaching the whole counsel of God without fear or favor, we will see many of our doctrinal problems solved and sinners converted to Christ.
4. Let us preach the whole counsel of God!

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