

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,*

*holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Balance in Preaching and Teaching

Doy Moyer

**P**reaching is not the easiest task in the world. The preacher knows that he must address subjects that are difficult and, sometimes, offensive to some. His job is to preach the word, in season and out, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with great patience and instruction (2 Tim. 4:2). He knows that there will be those who do not want to hear the truth, but would rather heap up teachers who will say those things they want to hear. And there are plenty of ear-ticklers available.

The preacher must be bold, uncompromising of truth, and plain-spoken so as to be understood. He knows that he cannot water the message down so that it loses its power and focus. He realizes that he has a great responsibility toward himself and those who hear what he has to say (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16). When he confronts sin, he must rebuke it. When he faces false teaching, he must be courageous. In all things, the true preacher knows that he answers to God first, and is not in the business of pleasing men (cf. Gal. 1:10).

But there's another side to this. Sometimes, in our fervor to "preach it like it is," we overstep our God-given boundaries. In the name of hard preaching, it is easy to "go past Jerusalem" and start getting downright mean. In order to win arguments and make ourselves look good, it is tempting to ridicule those who are in opposition to us. We can become rude, unkind, and abusive. Sarcasm (or better, irony), may have a proper place, but not when it is at the expense of gentleness, love, and respect. We can become careless in how we speak to others, and about others with whom we disagree. We may even begin to thrive on being offensive. We boast about our little debating techniques: "Did you see how I got him?" But this is a manifestation of self-righteousness and, ironically, shows a disregard for God and His Word.

How so? Because, while in stressing certain commands and steadfastly exercising our duty to reprove and rebuke, we may ignore other commands. We are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Our speech is to be "with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). We are to be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving, and devoid of bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor (Eph. 4:31-32). With those in opposition, we are to correct with gentleness (2 Tim. 2:25). These are just as much commands of God as any other! To ignore these in the name of "sound" preaching is not only Pharisaical, it is just plain sinful. Contending for the faith does not equal being contentious and ugly.

Just remember, there is a difference between kind and mushy, between graceful speech and that which compromises truth. We need to learn these differences if we will really be faithful servants of

God. The spirit in which we do something is every bit a part of the doctrine of Christ as those more difficult issues that we so often struggle with. Teach the truth, but let's do it in the way God has told us to do it. Keep the balance.

## Honest Study

Doy Moyer

**M**ost people are familiar with the parable generally referred to as the "good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-36). We usually refer to it to show what true compassion is, and how we should be willing to respond to the needs of others. The parable certainly does show this. However, the parable, together with its context, teaches more than just how to be compassionate. It teaches us how to be honest in our Bible study.

A lawyer tested Jesus, asking, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). A lawyer, in the Scriptures, was one who was skilled in, and taught, the law of Moses. The man knew the answer to the question. Jesus responded with a question: "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (vs. 26). Whenever we are searching for the truth, the only way to find it is by reading the Scriptures! Today, we might ask, "What does the Bible say?" What better question can be asked when one is searching for truth? Just open the Bible and see what it says.

The lawyer answered correctly by stating the foundation of God's will: Love God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, and your neighbor as yourself (vs. 27). Jesus responded, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live" (vs. 28). Again, the man knew the answer. He quoted what the law said. And Jesus told him, "That's right. Now go and do it." This is the essence of doing God's will. Find out what God says in His word and do it. It's just that simple! There is no complicated process involved. You don't need any specialized clergy to tell you what God says. Just read the Bible and do what He says to do.

But here is where the lawyer began to have problems. He knew what God said, but if he did not know how to apply what was said, then he didn't need to do it. "But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (vs. 29). This is too much of a problem today. Instead of taking what God says and doing it, we want to find ways to justify not doing what He says. The trouble, in these cases, is not that we cannot understand the will of God. The trouble is that we do not want to bring our own will into submission to God's will. So we find a convenient way to justify our inaction.

It is in response to the lawyer's effort to justify himself that Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus' intention was not so much to issue a statement on compassion as it was to illustrate the lawyer's need to be honest with himself and simply do what God says. The parable illustrated the need for honesty when looking into the will of God.

After telling the parable, Jesus asked who the neighbor was. The man said, "He who showed mercy on him." To this Jesus responded, "Go and do likewise" (vs. 37). Again, Jesus was basically saying, "That's right. Now go and do it." He was showing that it is not all that difficult to apply God's will to our lives. We can understand it, and we can do it. It just takes diligence and honesty.

If we are not honest when we study the Bible, then we will not be able to properly do God's will. There have been studies where people refused to open the Bible to a particular verse (such as Acts 2:38). They knew what it said, but they simply did not want to face what it said. In order to justify not

being baptized, many will come up with a hypothetical situation to justify their own disobedience. "What about the man who is on his way to be baptized and a rock falls on him and kills him?" This is supposed to negate the fact that they must be baptized. All such efforts are only efforts at self-justification. Wouldn't it be much easier to find out what the Bible teaches and just do it?

Simplified, Luke 10:25-37 teaches us that we need to look into the will of God, find out exactly what is said, and do just that. It takes honest Bible study, as well as honest self-examination (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5). When we know what the Bible says, we need to abandon any efforts at self-justification and submit ourselves completely to the will of God. As we study the Scriptures, we need to hear these words of Jesus: "do this and you will live."