

The Better Way

Volume XXXX, Issue 8

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

PREACHING THAT CONVICTS

Roy H. Lanier, Sr.

We have studied many of the words which describe the preaching of the apostles and early preachers of the gospel. We now propose to notice some of the characteristics of their preaching which preachers of today should imitate. Perhaps the one most needed today is the sin-convicting sermon. We are so afraid of offending people that we fail to convict them of sin. The devil has led many of us to believe that if we expose sin in the lives of people they will quit attending our services. And since we cannot reach people who do not attend our services, we keep on giving them little moral lectures and lessons on sociology. And if we can beg them to be baptized, they come into the membership of the church without ever being convicted of sin. They never know what it means to see themselves as the enemies of God, defiled in sin, helping the devil in his efforts to destroy the kingdom of Christ, and influencing their relatives and friends to live for the devil here and go to be with the devil in hell forever. We talk about the "good moral man" who needs only to be baptized, when we should make him see himself as the child of the devil, polluted by sin, and working for the destroyer of soul's here and hereafter. Let us see some examples of the preaching of men who were led by the Holy Spirit.

First, we see Peter in his first gospel sermon. Preaching to a great multitude of people he said, "**Ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay**" a man approved of God among you (Acts 2:22, 23). I am told today that preachers should not make general accusations of sin when talking to a large audience because there might be some in the audience who are not guilty of the sin under consideration. Don't you suppose it is possible there might have been some individuals in Peter's audience that day who had no personal responsibility for the death of Jesus? Yet Peter made the accusation and many who were guilty were convicted of their sin and repented. If he had never made the accusation, none would have been convicted. People must be accused of sin, and the accusation must be proved before they are convicted of sin. But the modern preacher rarely ever accuses his audiences of sin. He has been led to believe such is unkind and offensive. Again, Peter accused his hearers of delivering up and denying before Pilate the "**Holy and Righteous One,**" asked for a murderer to be set free, and "**killed the Prince of Life whom God raised from the dead**" (Acts 3:13-15). And again, he stood before the rulers and boldly accused them of crucifying Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4:10). The apostles never let the people forget that they had crucified the Son of God, hanging Him on a tree (Acts 5:30). They accused the people of that sin so often that the rulers complained "**Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us**" (Acts 5:28). Were the apostles afraid of losing their audience? Were they unkind to press the

accusation? Were they offensive when they accused people of sin and proved the accusation?

Stephen was another preacher who preached sin-convicting sermons. He was addressing an audience of considerable size when he said, **“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, do ye”** (Acts 7:51). As their fathers killed the prophets who foretold the coming of the **“Righteous One,”** so they have killed him of whom the prophets spoke. For this boldness Stephen lost his life, but he saved his soul. Is it possible that preachers today who refuse to convict people of sin save their life but lose their soul?

Paul is another example of preachers who convicted people of sin. He went to Athens, the intellectual center of his day, and accused them of ignorance (Acts 17:23). Was that good psychology? Was he using the right approach? I fear the majority of preachers among us, whom we call gospel preachers, would not dare to make such an accusation before the outstanding leaders of centers of learning today. Paul was invited by the leading men of Athens into the “City Auditorium” to speak to them. He was their invited guest. Was he not obligated to be “civil” in his treatment of them? Yet in his very first statement he accused them of worshipping in ignorance. And the thing which made some of them unhappy was that he proved his accusation. He convicted them of the sin of ignorant worship. Yet there are plenty of elders among us who would rebuke, maybe fire, their preacher if he should do such a thing when invited by the City Council to address an audience. It is not popular to accuse people of sin and prove it to them, yet there can be no conviction of sin without such accusation and proof.

Again, Paul stood before Governor Felix and his wife to speak **“concerning the faith in Christ Jesus”** (Acts 24:24, 25). The part of that faith which the governor needed was a lesson on **“righteousness, and self-control, and judgment to come.”** Was Paul bold enough to give him what he needed? He was; and he did. He convicted Felix of his sin so that Felix was terrified and asked him to go away for that time. Paul might have used the occasion to plead for and win his freedom, but he preferred to lose his freedom and save his soul, rather than gain his freedom and lose his soul.

Paul had the same problem as he stood before King Agrippa, who lived in sin with his sister Bernice. He spoke to them of repenting and turning to God, doing works worthy of repentance. Festus broke into the sermon by accusing Paul of being mad by reason of his much learning, but Paul addressed himself to Agrippa with an appeal to believe on the Lord. Whether Agrippa said he was almost persuaded to become a Christian, as *King James Version* states, or said, **“With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian,”** as the *American Standard Version* says, we know that Paul said he would like to see Agrippa become a Christian. Instead of pleading for his freedom, Paul tried to convict the King of sin and lead him to become a Christian.

In all these cases the first and primary effort was to convict hearers of sin. No person is interested in what he must do to be saved until he is convicted of sin and realizes he is lost. What is the reason for preaching the old sermon on “What Must I Do To Be Saved?” to people who do not know they are lost? In the first gospel sermon ever preached, Peter spent all his time convicting people of sin until they asked him what they must do to be saved. If people are convicted of sin, they will listen to us when we tell them what to do to be saved. John the Baptist refused to baptize people who were not convicted of sin (Mat. 3:7-9). Too many preachers today are trying to “ease” people into the baptistry and church membership without ever making them realize they are defiled, polluted, unclean in the sight of the Lord. Hell fire with all its terror is hardly mentioned by some preachers, but eternal hell is the only place fit for people who are defiled by sin and who prefer to give their lives to the devil rather than obey the gospel and give their lives in humble service to God.

Nothing is more needed today than preaching that convicts people of sin. People need to be made to realize that they are lost without Christ, that they will spend eternity with the devil and his angels and with all the wicked men who have disgraced this earth since time began. How can this be done? What scriptures shall we use to accomplish this purpose?

First, people who have not accepted Christ need to be made to realize that they are working against God. Jesus taught, **“He that is not with me is against me”** (Mat. 12:30). The “good moral man” often is told that he is such a fine

character that all in the world he needs is to be baptized. No wonder he fails to see the need for baptism! If he is good enough for heaven as he is, baptism is not going to make him any better; there is nothing about baptism to make him more fit for association in heaven. He needs to be made to realize that he is one of the finest cleanest tools the devil has to keep people out of heaven. He must be made to see that he is working against the Lord. There is no middle ground, no middle class. People are for the Lord, or they are against him! But by telling him that he is such a fine character we give him the idea that he belongs neither to the Lord nor the devil.

Next, this “good moral man” needs to be made to realize that he is defiled, polluted, unclean in the sight of the Lord. By talking about him as being such a fine character we give him the idea that he is clean, respectable, and honorable in God’s sight. He needs to know that rejecting Jesus Christ as his Master makes him filthy in the Lord’s sight. We leave the impression with him that as long as he refrains from murder, adultery, lying, and stealing, etc., he is clean and respectable before God. The truth is that he is continually rejecting Jesus and despising God’s provision for his salvation. He is even telling God that he does not need Jesus in his life; that he can be so good and fine in character that God would be unjust to send him to hell. Can a man be “good” when he is against Jesus? We need to quit calling people “good” when they are rejecting Jesus and despising the love of God who gave Jesus to die that we may be saved from our sins.

Another approach to this problem is to impress people with the truth that they are children of God or children of the devil. There are only two spiritual families in the world for responsible people. Little children not old enough to be responsible for what they do and people who do not have sufficient mental ability to be responsible are not included in this category, but every responsible person must be in the family of God or the family of the devil. But when we talk about the “good moral man,” I fear we leave the impression on him that he is too good to be in the family of the devil, and not quite good enough to be in God’s family. What he needs to realize is that he is about the brightest, cleverest, most effective child the devil has in his family. And those influenced by him to stay in the devil’s family will be as much

in hell and stay there as long as those who are led there by murderers and adulterers.

The Holy Spirit says, **“We know that we are of God, but the whole world lieth in the evil one”** (1 John 5:17). The “we” of this verse are those “begotten of God” in the preceding verse. So the whole human family is divided in two groups, those **“begotten of God”** and those **“in the evil one.”** The man who has not been born again, born of water and spirit, needs to be accused of being in the evil one, the devil. And he needs to be made to realize that as long as he is in this relationship he is unclean, filthy, defiled, and that he is working for the devil against the Lord.

Another approach to this matter is that this man out of Christ, in the evil one, is there because he prefers to be there; he chooses to be there. God gave His Son to die a cruel shameful death to make it possible for this man to be delivered from the devil, and the message of God’s love and the sacrifice of Jesus has been preserved for and preached to this man. He has been persuaded to leave the devil and live for Jesus. His refusal to do so has been a deliberate manifestation of his choice, his preference, to live for the devil rather than for the Lord. He needs to be reminded of the program of the devil in this world. Satan intends to rob every boy of his honor as soon as he becomes responsible for his actions. And he intends to rob every girl of her purity and chastity as soon as she crosses the threshold of responsibility. He plans to lead every person to waste his mental and physical powers in sin and shame, working against God to destroy the kingdom of Christ on earth. While the program of Jesus on earth is just the opposite of the program of the devil, He wishes to keep every boy in the path of honor and uprightness, every girl in the path of purity and chastity. He wants every person to use his mental and physical powers to honor and glorify His Maker. The man who rejects Jesus, refuses to be baptized into Christ, deliberately stays on the devil’s side encouraging and assisting the devil to make a success of his program.

At this point the “good moral man” begins to protest. He wants all men to understand that he has no sympathy for the devil and his program of destruction. But his “feet should be held to the fire” until he is willing to leave the devil and join forces with the Lord. He is not convicted of sin until he leaves the devil and gets on the

Lord's side. And this is the reason why little soft moral lectures and lessons on sociology are not going to get the job done. Men must be accused of preferring to live with and for the devil, and the lesson has to be driven home until they cry for mercy. Sure, you are going to lose a few. The Lord lost a lot of hearers one day. The disciples told him He had preached a hard sermon which caused the people to leave. He asked them if they also would go away. They said they would stay because He had the words of eternal life (John 6:66-69). If the Lord could not convict all His hearers of sin, we need not be surprised or disappointed if we fail on some. But it is better to drive the hard-hearted away while convicting those who are capable of being convicted than to preach little pointless lessons which convict nobody of sin. At least that is the way the Lord felt about it when He preached the lesson in John 6.

Another verse which teaches this lesson is: **"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other"** (Mat. 6:24). If a man holds to the devil, he will despise God. Since there is no such thing as serving neither God nor the devil, the man who does not serve God serves the devil. He loves and holds to the one he serves; he hates and despises the one he does not serve. And since God has made it possible for a man to leave the devil, God delivers one from the devil if he wants deliverance, it follows that the one who does not seek deliverance from the devil loves and holds to the devil because he prefers to do so, and he hates and despises God because he prefers to do so. When these things are pressed upon a man's conscience in love and tenderness, but firmly, allowing no honorable escape, that man will either be convicted of sin or he will resort to open rebellion and show his true colors. If every pulpit in the land would ring with such soul-convicting sermons, giving the devil and his servants no quarter, the church would be stronger and more consecrated to God.~

Deceased

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2025

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Announcements | Ken Cohn |
| Scripture Reading | Ken Cohn <i>Genesis 8:1-12</i> |
| Song Leader | Gary Blasingame |
| Prayer | David Brown/Stephen Cohn (AM) TBA—Singing Service (PM) |
| Speaker | Eric Paluka |
| | Lord's Table (AM) <i>(Luke 22:17-20)</i> |
| Steven Johnson | Bret Bailey |
| Andrew Paluka | Eric Paluka |
| | Lord's Table (PM) |
| Joshua West | Stephen Cohn |
| Audio/Video Monitor | Steven Johnson |
| Camera/Door Monitor | J.D. Gunter |

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025

(via Zoom Meeting)

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| Announcements | J.D. Gunter |
| Speaker | Joshua West |
| Bible Class Teacher | David Brown |

FOR FEBRUARY

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| Prepare Communion | Mercier |
| Lock Buildings | Blasingame |
| Prepare Bulletin Board | West |

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Edith Young, Cynthia Jackson, Zack Nero, Glenn Kryszak, Barbara Perkins, April McCain, Gayle Barnett, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Tania Turcios, Robbie Kirby, Debbie Brannon, Charles & Ann Nero, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orlinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Where was the Passover first observed in Canaan?

Answer to last week's question:
Wilderness of Sinai; Numbers 9:1-5

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Today, February 23rd:** Monthly meal and afternoon singing service
- **Tuesday, March 25th:** Ladies' Bible Class.
- **July 14th-16th:** Spring VBS