

PREACHING

Recently, Brother Ron Scott from Indiana held a meeting at our congregation in Wedowee , Alabama . He spoke about the need for preachers to teach what the church needs to hear and how that often this does not happen. This got me to thinking about how many times teachers make the assumption that everyone already knows certain things. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

Remember the words of the apostle Peter who said, *"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance"* (II Peter 1:12-13). Is there any reason that people today do not need to be reminded just like those in Peter's day?

As a high school teacher, I can assure you that knowledge is a very fickle thing. Sometimes no matter how hard you teach, or how much the students assure you they have it, the test tells a very different tale. If someone taught a lesson two years ago on a certain topic in your congregation, does that mean that everyone in the congregation understands it completely and that it does not need to be taught again?

One thing that I have noticed, along with others I have talked to, is the lack of doctrinal preaching today. When it comes to issues such as Sunday school, one container, divorce and remarriage, second supper, instrumental music, located preachers, just to name a few, when was the last time you heard a deep lesson on each of these topics? How many preachers just assume that these issues are well known to the members in their congregation and that there is no need to teach them? Or more alarmingly, how many teachers are not knowledgeable enough on these topics to deliver an in-depth lesson to their congregation?

There was a time, just three or four generations ago, when these issues were dividing congregations and families on a continual basis. The lines have been drawn and divisions are less frequent

now although they still occur. The preachers who lived through those difficult times became well versed in these issues and taught on them regularly. The membership of that day also became very knowledgeable on these issues as well. Children were raised in the church hearing these things often. For the most part, these children did not fall prey to false doctrines in these areas, but they did learn to take the truth for granted. This is why, unfortunately, we seldom hear these things taught on today. Older teachers, who were raised in the church, do not typically feel a need to teach on these things because they simply do not see the need. Younger teachers, or those who are older but were not raised in the church, often do not know these issues well enough and have not studied them sufficiently to be comfortable teaching them.

We have now become very complacent on issues that not too long ago were grave threats to the survival of almost every congregation. Am I suggesting that our neglect is leading us to a time when we will once again see nearly every congregation facing division over one or more of the issues? While divisions will always be a fact of life in the Church, I do not foresee a return to the chaotic time witnessed in the first half of the twentieth century.

If, however, we underestimate the Devil, we will soon find him at our door step in a most unexpected guise, which we are not prepared to handle. He used these issues to divide churches in the past. Now the lines are drawn and those on each side of every argument are quite comfortable where they are. The problem with our complacency is with our children. Why does it seem today that the majority of our children in most places are leaving the Church? They will grow up probably hearing that there are various things that the denominations do that are unscriptural. They might even hear a lesson or two devoted to these topics here and there. It is simply not enough. The primary fault lies with parents, especially fathers, whose job it is to teach their children (Eph. 6:4). However, if the teaching in the Church was deeper and more doctrinally oriented, children and their parents would know much more about these issues and the dangers they represent.

Parents who occasionally tell their children that they should not drink, use drugs, smoke, have premarital sex, use profane language, etc. often end up with children who drink, get high, smoke, have sex, and curse. Parents who are really involved in their children's lives, who often have in-depth conversations with their children about these issues and their dangers, are much more likely to have children who are sober, chaste, and clean-mouthed. Telling them once and assuming your job is done is foolish. Teaching in the Church is no different. This is why Peter, not talking to children but adults, and members of the Church no less, said that he thought it imperative to constantly stir them up by putting them in remembrance. He even admitted that they already knew these things!

I speak here specifically to the teachers out there: how many of us will decide not to teach on a topic because the congregation already knows it? How much do any of us remember from the lesson we heard last Sunday? What about the week before that? Last month? Last year? Honestly, how much do you remember from all of the lessons you have heard during the past 12 months?

The typical lesson lasts anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. Due to wandering attention and distractions occurring inside or outside the building, the average listener may actually hear half of what is said in a thoughtful manner. Most of that is forgotten within hours. Within a few days or at most a few weeks, the rest may be forgotten as well. Sometimes we hear lessons that we feel to be outstanding and that cause us to reevaluate the way we think about or do certain things. But even then six months or a year later we may only remember two or three main ideas from the lesson. Do not be afraid to teach on a topic that has been covered recently. It will only serve to give needed reinforcement to the members. And members, we should not complain that we just heard a lesson on that topic six months ago. How much of it do we actually remember anyway?

We also should not assume that the average Church member studies their Bible deeply several hours each week. Some actually read their Bible on a regular basis but very few ever study at all. Most preachers study for lessons but do little beyond that. In terms of knowledge, the modern Church is a shadow of what it was

just 100 years ago. Those people did not have television, cars, computers, radios, or so many of the other devices that occupy our time today. As a result, many studied the Bible. I knew an old preacher many years ago that spoke to me about his days as a young man. When he was out plowing the fields with his mule, he kept a Bible in his back pocket. When he would stop to rest, he pulled out the Bible. How many of us today find ourselves stuck in traffic, waiting to catch a plane, waiting in the doctor's office, or have idle time for some other reason? How often do we think about pulling out a Bible at these times? How can we ever explain to God that we never had time to study, yet we often look for ways to "kill time?"

Are we in danger of becoming like the Jews Paul spoke of? *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"* (Rom 10:1-3). Oh no, that would be the denominations who are like that. Are we always so different? Oh, but we have the truth don't we? A truth that most members do not know and cannot defend. A truth most preachers cannot effectively teach.

We all need to be avid and earnest Bible students. Preachers need to be challenging their audience and giving them something to think about and on which to do further study. Most lessons taught in our Churches today could be taught in any mainstream denomination without raising a single eyebrow. That, in and of itself, should raise all of our eyebrows.

TONY WHIDDON
(Roanoke, AL)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: I was discussing the Bible with a co-worker, and I was trying to convince her that you need to be baptized. I brought up what Jesus said in Mark 16:16, and what Peter said in Acts 2:38, *"Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."* Then she responded to me

with Romans 10:9, and it says the same thing in Romans 10:13, that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord you will be saved. I didn't know what to say to that.

ANSWER: To array one passage against another has the effect of saying that the Scriptures contradict themselves. If the Scriptures do indeed contradict themselves, then God could be said to be "the Author of confusion," which 1 Corinthians 14:33 plainly states God "IS NOT." The simple and realistic solution to this supposed dilemma is to understand that rather than clash, these passages actually harmonize.

The previous verses in Romans 10 show that Paul was speaking of the non-believing Israelites. What stood in their way was the need to believe in and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. They could not be saved until these things had been done, but these were only part of the conversion process. As in Paul's own personal experience, more than these two actions were required.

Acts 9 records Paul's conversion. Being struck-down by the light from heaven and the voice of Jesus, Paul asked, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). Jesus answered, "*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST do.*" Note that Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord (Acts 9:10), but there remained something more to be done.

Upon reaching the city and being instructed by Ananias, Paul "*arose, and was BAPTIZED*" (Acts 9:18). In another record of Paul's conversion (Acts 22:16), Paul was told by Ananias, "*Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be BAPTIZED, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" Note that Paul's sins had not been "washed away" when he first acknowledged Jesus, but his cleansing took place when he was BAPTIZED. Baptism was simply the finalizing act of obedience preceded by faith and confession. In all eleven records of conversion where the details are given, each and every one included and was completed in baptism.

Calling "*upon the name of the Lord*" (Romans 10:13) becomes clear when we again review Paul's own personal conversion. Acts 22:16 states that he was to call upon the name of the Lord in his

obedience through baptism. Our calling upon God is not a verbal expression, but rather an act of obedience.

Proceeding on down in Romans 10 we are told that calling upon the Lord follows belief, which follows hearing the word , and which is climaxed by obeying the gospel (verse 16). Note the contrast in John 12:42 where we are informed that many of the chief rulers *"believed...but did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."* Although they believed on Him they failed to follow-through on their belief, and failed to call upon the Lord in obedience.

HARRY COBB
(Wedowee, AL)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
May 1 - 3	Pleasant Ridge Congregation Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass Auburn, AL
May 4 - 8	Van Lear Congregation Van Lear, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 11 - 15	Estesburg Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
May 18 - 22	Hopkinsville Congregation Hopkinsville, OH	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 21 - 24	Deane Congregation Deane, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
May 21 - 24	Willow Oaks Congregation Russell Springs, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 21 - 24	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
May 29 - 31	Verona Congregation Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What does the Bible say Manna tasted like?
2. According to Psalms 112, what will be in the house of the man who fears the Lord?
3. In Isaiah's prophecy against Jerusalem , what did Isaiah refer to Jerusalem as?
4. According to Acts, who was the first apostle to die as a martyr?
5. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, What are the three types of evil persons who have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...