

# Attitudes toward Preaching Truth

Preaching is publicly proclaiming the gospel message to both lost and saved. Reception of the gospel message by the hearers is dependant upon one's own disposition toward truth and desire for heaven. The messenger is to do all that he possibly can to help his audience receive the truth. One thing is certain: no matter what approach the preacher may take, there will always be those who reject the message (cf. Acts 18:5ff) and those who gladly receive it (Acts 2:41). Let us consider for a moment attitudes toward preaching.

## The Preacher

The Lord needs those who are willing to go into the world and convict sinners of their error while promoting repentance (cf. Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19). All those who preach must do so with a spirit of love (Eph. 4:15). To love another is to tell them what they need to hear as opposed to what some want to hear. The preacher must, therefore, preach without fear or favor of men. Jesus was such a preacher. On one occasion, He asked His disciples who men said that He is. The disciples replied, "*Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets*" (Matt. 16:14). The style of Jesus' preaching reminded the world of those stalwart men of faith that had gone before Him. Today's preachers would do well to emulate the Lord's style of preaching. The preacher will do nothing to gain a following or promote partyism. He is entrusted with a message to preach, and so he must fulfill his duty (II Tim. 4:1ff).

## The Audience

Jehovah gave Ezekiel a job to do so that the world may "*know that I am the Lord.*" While Ezekiel went about preaching, Jehovah warned him that some would give him looks of hatred while others would speak against him (Ezek. 2:6-7). On other occasions, people would crowd together to hear what he had to say, yet, when they heard the truth, it went in one ear and out the other (Ezek. 33:30-33). After Jesus had fed the multitudes with bread, He fed them with truth in John 6. Jesus explained to His audience that they must eat of the truth if they expected to live eternally. "*Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*" (Jn. 6:66). What should the preacher do on these occasions? Should he throw up his hands and give up? Should he change his message to appease the multitudes? Should he seek for unity in people's diversity of religious beliefs? What did Jesus do? The Lord (in the John 6 passage) turned to the twelve disciples and asked, "*Would ye also go away?*" (Jn. 6:67). The fact of the matter was that the consequences of sin do not change though the audience's attitude toward sin is not plumb with God's view of sin.

Consider an example of man's ways not being as God's ways. The Lord revealed to Ezekiel at chapter 33:12-16 that years of faithful service would not save a man in the end if he had fallen away. Likewise, a man that had lived a life of unrighteousness yet repented shall be saved. The captives in Mesopotamia responded to such preaching by saying, "*The way of the Lord is not equal*" (Ezek. 33:17, 20). God's people considered such a judgment "unfair." Many brethren are like that today. Their attitude toward preaching is poor. Some are angry

when a false teacher's name is called out from the pulpit. They opine that the beloved false teacher has put many faithful years of service in preaching. Consider what Ed Harrell said in an article titled, "Homer Hailey: False Teacher?" Harrell stated, "**through sixty years of service** (bold emphasis mine / jcr) Hailey has proven himself to be a tireless student, a profound preacher, and a selfless builder of the cause of Christ. He has left behind a trail of praiseworthy achievements. I suspect that most people who invite Homer Hailey to preach do so because they admire his life and have been enriched by his preaching, in spite of his views on divorce and remarriage. He is a great and a good man, and brethren have sought to use him and to honor him. At this late date, he deserves nothing less." Such an appeal may appear to be logical and trustworthy; however, upon closer review the argument is faulty and filled with emotionalism. Logic refers to such as a red herring (someone introduces irrelevant material to the issue being discussed to divert the audiences attention away from the real issue). Homer Hailey's years of service have nothing to do with the issue of his then current false teaching. Such cases as these reveal that men love the messenger more than the message!

### **Concluding Thoughts**

True disciples are known by their attitude toward truth. Jesus said that His true disciples are those who "*abide in my word*" (Jn. 5:38; 8:31) and "*bear much fruit*" (Jn. 15:8). My attitude toward truth and those who uphold it will determine where I spend eternity. Let us not get caught up with worldly concepts by popularizing the man preaching but rather by being intensely interested in truth. If a beloved preacher begins preaching error, let us not coddle but rather expose, admonish, and rebuke lest his soul be lost forever (Eph. 5:11; II Tim. 4:2). The truth must be guarded that its power to save be not corrupted by human invention (cf. Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:6ff; I Tim. 6:20-21; II Jn. 9ff).