

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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"The Kind Of Preaching God Wants" #3

By Brian Meade

As we continue our study of the kind and class of preaching that should be done in every pulpit, in every place— let us look to God's word to help us understand the preaching needed in every age. We need....

VI. Preaching That Edifies And Builds Us Up.

In Paul's last address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he talks of his time preaching and teaching with them (Acts 20:20). Paul Tells them, "*And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.*" (vs. 25) Paul had lived among the Ephesian brethren for three years, but as verse 22 tells us, he would be leaving them to go on his way to Jerusalem. The brethren would no longer have Paul preaching to them personally, therefore he says,

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)



The word "*commend*" in verse 32, means to entrust and put into the care or protection of someone. They would have the word of God, which as Paul says, "*is able to build you up.*" And that is precisely what we need today to edify and build us up spiritually.

The Greek word in the text is *oikodomeo*, "literally "to build a house" (*oikos*, "a house," *domeo*, "to build"), hence, to build anything," (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words Vol. 2, p. 82).

And when we apply this to our preaching the gospel, we need lessons from God's word that helps us to grow up to maturity in Christ. Notice what Paul says to the same Ephesian brethren, "*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:11-13)

As we know, we don't have living prophets and apostles today—but we do have the work of overseers (pastors or elders), teachers, and evangelists in the body of Christ. The work of the evangelist or preacher is to prepare lessons that edify the congregation. Well, what does that look like? It's when the preacher spends his time wisely on what topics and texts of the Scriptures that actually helps the growth of the members. Lessons that are a bit deeper than the superficial, positive "pep-talks" of popular sermons of today that sound good, but do very little to help Christians grow in their faith.

After hearing those kinds of lessons one may rightly ask after services, "What did we really learn about today?" "How much Bible was actually opened and explained to us?" "Were we edified and built up? Or just entertained?"

Having said that, what builds up and edifies Christians? When we do like Ezra did for Israel in the book of Nehemiah, "*So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.*" (Nehemiah 8:2-3)

Not only did Ezra read the Law to the people, but he explained its meaning to them so they could understand it in 8:8,
"So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading."

This is what edifies—when we do the same!

VII. Preaching That Applies Practically To The Congregation.

We define practical as, "Of or concerned with the actual doing or use of something rather than with theory and ideas." (Oxford Dictionary)

That basically tells us that when something is practical, it is something to put in practice or do. Preaching needs to be practical to help people in their daily lives as Christians, and if it is not—it's not helpful!

Our job as preachers is to communicate to people WHAT to put into practice from God's word. We need to give them something to take home and even say, "This is what I should be doing!" Some have even termed it a "take away" from the lesson. And that just means that there should be something from each sermon that is practical.

You may or may not be surprised about many of the sermons of today and how they lack a practical side to them. Some preachers and theologians love to simply theorize and talk about the Bible, but never get to something the audience can really use personally. And that is a shame because the Bible is the most practical book in the world! It has so many lessons that apply directly to everyday experiences of life and how we need handle them using God's ways.

We, as preachers, need to be conscious when we prepare lessons to be thinking how to make this apply to the hearers. In James 1:22, notice James tells us, *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."* For that to be a reality, the preacher or Bible class teacher needs to demand (as God does) for us to do the word. One possible motivation for those not to preach practical lessons is simply that they want to make it easy for the congregation to "feel good." They don't want anyone to feel bad for not doing anything! But that is not the reality of being a Christian.

But we need lessons on faith: how to be faithful, keeping faith through trials, what it means to believe and trust in God (Hebrews 11; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 1 John 5:4).

We need sermons on being a good husband or wife (Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:4-5). Our children need to be taught to honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). We need to be taught to obey God fully (1 Samuel 15:20-23; Acts 5:29; 2 Thessalonians 1:8), and not with lip service only (Matthew 15:8).

We need to hear that the church is God-designed and God-established, and that we cannot improve or alter what God has already given us in the word (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22; 3:9-12; Hebrews 8:2). Practically speaking, denominationalism and cults, and false religion is to be avoided and to help people in those to see why it is wrong to be in ways other than Christ's (Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11). We need lessons on why we do the things we do and don't do in worship and service to God (John 4:23-24; Leviticus 10:1-3; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9). Why instrumental music is not New Testament worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). We need to know why the work of the church is not entertainment, recreation, or social activities (1 Peter 4:11).

We need to know our place and role in the church as servants (Romans 6:22), followers of Jesus (John 12:26), "fishers of men" in evangelism (Mark 1:17), laborers in God's vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) and those who are "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). We are to prepare and wait for the Lord to return (2 Peter 3:10-14), to live a life of purity before God (Ephesians 5:3-8; 2 Corinthians 7:1), and be a good example to others (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Timothy 4:12).

More could be said, but this will suffice for now. May we be doers of the word!

VIII. Preaching That Is Specific, Not In Generalities Only.

One major indictment against the soft, flowery preaching of today is that too much of it is so general that the message of the gospel is lost. When men preach using only glaring generalities, which is basically non-specific language.

To give a few examples of this type of preaching:

(1) To Preach On SIN And Not Tell Specifically What Sin Is. They may say that sin is bad, ugly, and undesirable behavior—but fail to say what we should not practice: fornication, adultery, lying, stealing, covetousness, immodest dress, or homosexuality. If we never define the terms and explain specifically what not to do—that's not helpful to the hearers to avoid sin!

(2) To Preach On FALSE TEACHERS & Never Mention Specifically Who Any Are. To say that false teaching is bad and should be avoided is not enough! False teachers don't like to be exposed for who they really are—wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:14)—but they need to be (Ephesians 5:11).

Paul warned the brethren against such false teachers (Romans 16:17-18) and even specifically named a few like Alexander the coppersmith in 2 Timothy 4:14-17, and Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:17-18. (See also Revelation 2:6)

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Hazel Corner, Clay Ford, Clois Wright, and Dan & Linda Hunt. Martha Cottrell (Dan's Mom).

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Sam Johnson
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: "The Christian And His Friends/Associations"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service: Fred Johnson
The Book of Romans (Kyle Pope)
Page 13 Question #12

Announcements: Sam Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Russell Briggs
John 13:34-35
Song Leader: Lee Busby
Lord's Supper: Fred Johnson
Assisting: Lee Busby & Jerry Kennemur
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #2: "Loving Other Like Jesus"
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Jr.

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

November 6th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Busby
The Book of Job (Mike Willis)
Page 62, Question #14
Invitation: Russell Briggs
Song Leader: Dan Cottrell
Closing Prayer: Doug George