

Monday, June 26, 2017 - The Heart of the Problem

Preachers deal with a heart wrenching proposition each time the invitation of the Lord is offered and no one responds. It is not an ego issue, for God's servant knows we are just the vessel which imparts His word to those who are listening. However, self analysis must play a part to determine if you contributed to the lack of response.

I have been accused of being an "angry preacher." I can certainly understand the turn off if you think the one preaching is accusatory in their choice of words but I have rarely found that to be the case. I would suggest to you that the preacher is preaching with a sense of urgency in regards to the message being delivered.

I cannot preach without James 4:13-17 hanging in the back of my mind:

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will[a] go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

I do not know that the sermon I'm preaching won't be the last one I deliver or the last one you ever hear. My desire is for you to understand everything I can pack into a 30-45 minute sermon so that you will know God's will and desire for you. I have no choice but to be "...declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." Members and elders alike have, through the years, confronted me over topics I have preached on. Not because I misrepresented the Word of God or I spoke in an unloving fashion but because it was not POPULAR!

Might I humbly suggest that a sermon delivered in love and truthfulness should not be complained about regarding the popularity of the message? You will have your chance to express your displeasure with God's teaching in the day of judgment. Good luck with that!

Is the deliverer of the message less than stellar as an orator? I can identify with that. I stumble over words and sometimes knock leaves off the greenery located in the pulpit area. Is that really a reason to deny the soul saving words of Jehovah from pricking your heart?

In 2 Corinthians 11:5-6, the apostle Paul states, "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made this manifest unto you in all things.

Paul never claimed to be a great orator. The false apostles were excellent speakers after the manner of Greek oratory. Rude in this sense means unskilled. Therefore, Paul says, he may be unskilled in speaking, but not in knowledge. The knowledge of which Paul speaks is his knowledge of God and God's message to man. Paul reminds the Corinthian church he had demonstrated his knowledge when he was with them. We today need to measure the man in the pulpit by his knowledge of God's word and not whether he tickles our ear.

I would suggest that at the heart of the problem, when it comes to responses to the Lord's invitation, is the heart. There are several questions we must ask ourselves:

1) Do we honestly not believe we have sin in our life? Romans 3:23 - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

2) Do you believe that what you are doing is not sin in spite of what the scriptures teach? Drinking is a HUGE problem in Christianity because most who partake justify it because "I don't get drunk...it doesn't hurt anyone..."

Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way that seems right to a man,  
But its end is the way of death."

Justify sin in your mind any way you want, but that does NOT change the plain teaching of God's word.

3) I have plenty of time to get "right" with God. Seriously? In my life I have seen friends of 9, 16, 18, an uncle of 27 all die in what we would classify as "before their time." What makes any of us believe we are so special that we can pick when our last breath is taken?

In 1995 while traveling for work 350 miles from my home, Sunday through Friday, I would drive back to my hotel drunk almost every night. All it would have taken is one swerve into the other lane, one miss of a curve on the interstate I drove or failing to see a vehicle stopping in front of me. Would because it was "before my time" make a difference as they pried my body from the rubble of my car? No, I would be just as dead and on the wrong side of eternity.

God's message is plain, God's message is simple, and God's message is to be obeyed. The conversion stories in Acts showed individuals moved by the same message that is preached today the first time they heard. That is the heart we need to strive for.