

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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Can the Church Survive Without Sound Preaching?

By Brian R. Kenyon

For various reasons people do not think that Gospel preaching is important. In fact, they consider it foolishness! To them, the days of a man standing before an assembly, opening a Bible, and proclaiming a distinctive Gospel message that requires every accountable person to believe and obey is way out of line! Unfortunately, there are increasingly more members of the church of Christ who have that same attitude. Yet, the God-inspired apostle Paul said that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21, KJV). Paul’s use of “foolishness” here is as the wisdom of the world sees it.

We must not take lightly the importance of sound preaching to the health and vitality of the church. In fact, the very survival of any local church of Christ, at least as God desires His church to be, is dependant on sound preaching. The word “sound,” as used here, refers to preaching that is Biblically based (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:11), preached in love (Eph. 4:15), and targeted toward the true needs of the assembly (cf. “profitable,” Acts 20:20; “all the counsel of God,” Acts 20:27), not just what the people gathered want to hear (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4). To understand the necessity of sound preaching to the survival of the local church, note what Paul wrote concerning his preaching mission,

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. ¹⁸For the preaching of the cross

is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:17-18)

From these verses, let us examine some reasons why the church cannot survive without sound preaching.

Can the Church Survive Without the Gospel?

To say that the church can survive without sound preaching is to say that the church can survive without the Gospel! Can the church really survive without the Gospel? Of course not! The Gospel includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4)—factual historical events without which there could not even be the slightest hope of salvation period! However, the Gospel must not be limited merely to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as some have done. Rather, the Gospel includes all of God’s teaching that applies to us today. To illustrate this truth, note Paul’s having to “withstand Peter to the face” as recorded in Galatians 2:10-14. Before “certain [Jews] came from James,” Peter gladly ate with the Gentiles, but when these Jews came, Peter all of a sudden refused fellowship to the Gentiles and led others into that

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sin, including Barnabas (Gal. 2:13). Incidentally, this shows the error of “caving in” to the unscriptural demands of brethren just to satisfy them! This partiality that Peter and the rest of them displayed showed that they “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14). Thus, in addition to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, “the gospel” also includes teaching on how we should fellowship one another in Christ! The fact is that all Biblical teaching applicable today is the Gospel, whether it be the plan of salvation, church organization, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, or godly living in this present world. Since the church cannot survive without the Gospel, it cannot survive without sound preaching!

Can the Church Survive Without the Cross of Christ?

To say that the church can survive without sound preaching is to say that the church can survive without the cross of Christ! However, the “preaching of the cross” was essential for spiritual survival in Paul’s day (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2), and it also is in our day! The remission of sins would be impossible without the cross of Christ. The cross is where Jesus shed His blood, and without the shed blood of Christ, we could not have forgiveness. Paul elsewhere said that God set forth Christ to “be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past” (Rom. 3:24). The necessary attributes of Christ’s blood were also revealed when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus came to “the cup,” He said, “This is my blood of the new testament,

which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt. 26:27-28). Without Christ’s willingness to go to the cross and die for us, we simply could not have even the possibility of the forgiveness of our sins (cf. Jn. 1:29; Heb. 2:9). The shedding of His blood makes possible the remission of sins at baptism (Rom. 6:3-4 cf. Acts 2:38), and it makes possible the continuous cleansing from sin that all Scripturally baptized people have as they continue to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7). Since the church cannot spiritually survive without the cross of Christ, it cannot survive without sound preaching!

Can the Church Survive Without the Power of God?

To say that the church can survive without sound preaching is to say that the church can survive without the power of God! However, since Paul [continued on page 4]

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Special Gifts: Atlantic Christian Fund.

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month’s financial statement.

Changes in the School

For some time the school has been operating with a budget shortfall. We have appealed for support through the pages of the *Harvester* as well as letters to our current supporters. We are thankful for the many one-time contributions and the congregations who have increased their monthly support. While these are very helpful, some congregations have had to decrease their support. As the board met several months ago, budget cutting options were considered. In the December 2010 meeting, the board had no choice but to cut back somewhere. After much discussion, the board made some difficult decisions, the most drastic of which was to discontinue paying salaries and mileage to our part-time and extension class instructors. In the coming months, the school will continue considering options to cut back and operate within a balanced budget, while at the same time still be able to effectively train men to preach and to prepare souls to better serve the Lord.

As we are faced with these financial challenges, we are especially thankful for the Orange Street church of Christ in Auburndale, Florida, who underwrote the entire cost of producing our 2011 lectureship book, "Do You Understand the Biblical Value of Women?" Without their help, we may not have had a lectureship book this year. What about a 2012 lectureship book? Perhaps the congregation of which you are a member would consider underwriting our next lectureship book. It would be a great opportunity to preserve in book form a history of that congregation in the dedication pages as was done for the Orange Street church of Christ in our 2011 book.

Over the years, contributors have done very well in supporting students. Have you ever considered, though, that unless there is a school, there can be no students? A school necessarily involves students and some kind of organizational structure, both of which need financial support. Currently, the Florida School of Preaching employs only three full-time staff (the director, Gene Burgett, and bettye bolding, our office secretary). Do not the principles concerning a laborer being worthy of his hire (Lk. 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:7-11) also apply to the full-time staff of the Florida School of Preaching? Are not the full-time staff a vital part in

spreading the Gospel by working directly in teaching students and raising brotherhood awareness and support so the school can continue training men to preach, or, in betty's case, making sure the office runs smoothly to better enable the school to train Gospel preachers? Have you ever considered specifically supporting one of our full-time staff?

Since 1969, the Florida School of Preaching has been faithfully training men to preach and preparing souls to better serve the Lord. The school has always operated on a "the Lord will provide" basis. Thankfully, the Lord always has, and we trust He will continue. Of course, as challenges arise, whether economic or not, the Lord expects us to meet the challenges responsibly. Do you see the value of the school enough to help us meet the present challenges?

Changes in the Board

Denny Smitherman, who has served on FSOP's board of directors since 1999, resigned from the board, stating in part, "There comes a time in one's life when it is best to step away from some things....I have enjoyed my time as a member of the board. I have decided that now is the time for me to resign as a member of the board of directors for the FSOP." We appreciate Denny's service as vice-chairman and the sacrifices he made, especially as he traveled to Lakeland from Jacksonville, where he also served as an elder with the Wesconnett church of Christ. In order for the school to function more effectively following the resignation of brother Smitherman, **Brian Kenyon** will serve as vice-chairman; **Chad Tagtow** will serve as treasurer; and **Gene Burgett** will serve as vice-secretary.

No Change in Purpose

While circumstances may force us to make changes in expedient matters, rest assured the school's purpose remains the same: to faithfully train men to preach and to prepare souls to better serve the Lord! As long as the present leadership is in place, the school will remain faithful and true to its purpose. Many have stood with us through many challenges over the years, while others have only recently started supporting the school. We continue soliciting your prayers and appreciating any assistance you can render. Thanks! —*Brian*

said that to preach “the gospel” was the same as preaching “the cross of Christ,” which was the same as “the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:17-18), it stands to reason that the church cannot survive without sound preaching! Paul said that the Gospel of Christ was “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). It is the Gospel itself, not the preacher that is the “power of God.” Paul said that he and his coworkers “have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7). The “earthen vessels” to which Paul referred were clay jars. These fragile containers would not be the expected place to put valuable treasure. In the case of the Gospel, the figure of “earthen vessels” shows the impossibility of the power being in the messenger. It has to be, and obviously is, in the Gospel message itself. Elsewhere, Paul pointed out his refusal to attempt to convince people through “excellency of speech or of wisdom” or “with enticing words of man’s wisdom” (2 Cor. 2:1-4). Why? “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). Since the church cannot

spiritually survive without the “power of God,” it cannot survive without sound preaching!

Conclusion

Contrary to what some think, sound preaching is essential to the survival of every local church! Because preaching is essential, every faithful effort to train preachers and better prepare souls to serve the Lord is worthy of support. The Florida School of Preaching continues to hold up the Gospel, the cross of Christ, and the “power of God unto salvation”! Will you help us? Remember, “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”! 



As announced at Amber’s December 4th funeral, the PowerPoint slides and video tribute that played during visitation and the funeral service are posted on the school’s website (www.fsop.net). Thanks again for all your prayers, cards, and phone calls! You definitely made the burden a little bit lighter —Brian



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