

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

IF WE HAD BUT ONE SERMON TO HEAR

It has well been said that preachers as dying men preach to dying men. Some people heard their last sermon last Sunday. Others will hear their last sermon this week. If we know that we had only one sermon to hear what would we like that sermon to be?

1. We should not want it to be a sermon to sooth our itching ears because this is not soul saving preaching. This kind consists of fables but not the word which will save our souls (II Timothy 4:1-4). The idea of everybody is all right, take your choice, or do what you think is right is no the preaching of the apostles.
2. We should not want to hear a dramatic lesson with theatrical effects to stir our emotions but have nothing for our intellect. The great swelling words of vanity are characteristics of false teachers but are really clouds without water (Jude 12-13).
3. We should want clear and plain preaching of the gospel without any effort made to spare our feelings but which will clearly show us our duty to the Lord. This preaching should include the plan of salvation as found in the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47). This preaching should rebuke sin and compliment righteousness.
4. We should want Christ exalted as Savior and Lord. This twofold teaching is what causes people to escape the pollutions of the world (II Peter 2:20). We should want to be challenged to receive Christ as Lord and to walk in him (Colossians 2:6).
5. We should want to be challenged by this last sermon to greater love (John 13:34-35), greater works (I Corinthians 15:58), closer prayer life (I Thessalonians 5:17), more meaningful worship (John 4:24), and to a dedicated life of purity (James 1:26-27).
6. We should want our shortcomings to be rebuked and our sins brought out so we would see the need of repentance (Numbers 32:23; Luke 12:2; Luke 13:3-5). We should want exposed the things that are contrary to the will of God such as the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). God holds us responsible if we do these things.
7. We should want all religious error exposed so we would not be guilty of practicing it. We should want Paul's statement that if any other gospel is preached than that he preached the one bringing the message would be accursed (Galatians 1:8). The idea of faith only saving should be shown by James 2:17-26 to be false. The doctrine of praying through should be shown by Matthew 7:21-23 to be false. Any other false way can be exposed in the searchlight of the word of God.
8. We should want chapter and verse preaching from the word of God. Peter's sermon on Pentecost day had quotations from Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 16:8-11; II Samuel 7:11-12; and Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:14-36). Every sermon preached by an apostle or one the apostles laid their hands upon was chocked full of scriptures. They showed that the New Testament was a fulfillment of the Old Testament. They gave an authoritative gospel because they were inspired and they proved beyond any shadow of doubt what they said by the scriptures. The only authoritative preaching today is the unbiased preaching of the word of God.
9. We should want that last sermon to have a tender appeal to obey the Lord. As Paul stated, "*knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men*" (II Corinthians 5:11). On Pentecost day Peter answered their inquiry with "*repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). Then he with many other words testified and exhorted

THE CHRISTIAN'S RALLYING CRY

Text: _____

I. The Cross of Christ _____ Us

Notes:

II. The Cross of Christ _____ Us

Notes:

III. The Cross of Christ _____ Us

Notes:

BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL

Text: _____

I. Understand _____

Notes:

II. Remember _____

Notes:

III. Know _____

Notes:

them to save themselves from that untoward (crooked) generation (Acts 2:40). The Lord instructs his servants to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come in (Luke 14:23). The closing chapter of the Bible states, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

In short, if we had but one sermon to hear we would want that sermon to include the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

-Clifford Dixon

THAT'S THE MAN THAT DIED FOR ME

Let me tell you a true story about a young fireman. In the midst of a blaze he stepped forward and volunteered to go rescue a little baby, even though the chief had said that the flames were too strong and the building too unstable. As soon as that young fireman was able to get that little girl out the window and into the rescue net, the building collapsed, and he perished in the flames. Twenty years later, at a graveside with a statue of a fireman, stood a young woman sobbing. A man stopped and asked politely, "Was that your father or brother?" "No," she replied, "That's the man who died for me."

Christ did something for humanity that no one else could do. While we struggle with the finality of death, we should be more concerned about the finality of everlasting life. Everyone is going somewhere...Christ has provided the way to live eternally with Him.

In Jesus we have the yearning God in pursuit of people. In Christ we find that God is not content to let people live and die beyond His circle of love. Saul of Tarsus was overwhelmed in the Syrian Desert by the Savior whose religion he had set out to destroy. The story may be apocryphal, but when Karl Barth was asked what was the most profound theological truth he knew, he replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know."

-Calvin Miller

SHOULD PROBABLY COME MORE OFTEN...

A little child in church for the first time watched as the offering was collected. When they neared his pew, the youngster piped up so that everyone could hear, "Don't pay for me Daddy; I'm under five."

Serious Question: How often are your children in worship?

SINKING IN THE DEPTHS OF DOUBT

They had just seen Jesus perform but one of the marvelous, miraculous works of His life. With a mere five barley loaves and two small fish, five thousand men plus women and children had eaten to their fill. It was immediately afterward that Jesus told His apostles to enter a ship and go ahead of Him to the other side of the sea. Hours later, the evening had come, a storm had developed, and as far as they knew Jesus was still up on the mountain praying. However, all of a sudden in the middle of the vastness of the water they looked up and saw the figure of a man walking toward them. How could this be possible? It had to be a spirit, for surely no man had the power to work such a marvel. In fear they cried out not knowing what to do. Suddenly, though, a voice that had comforted them and directed them for the previous three years called to them and said, "*Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid*" (Matthew 14:27). We know nothing of what the other apostles thought or felt, but Peter is recorded as speaking up and seeking evidence. If it truly was Jesus then Peter sought permission to come out and walk to Him. Inherently Peter's request was innocent and admirable. Realizing the many ways that souls could be easily led astray, Peter simply seeks proof for the claim. It is, however, the case that his request for proof would also prove to be in vain, because even with the presence of proof, Peter still would sink in the depths of doubt.

Doubt is a dangerous state of life. It stands in the middle of belief and disbelief. It does not represent full faith, but neither does it fall into the category of absolute disbelief. Either one of those states of life is one with which work can be done. A life of belief can be encouraged and cultivated and used to bring forth fruit. A life of disbelief can be taught and encouraged and directed toward the paths of righteousness. A life of doubt, though, is much like the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans; worthy only being spewed out. Peter's life, as are the lives of many, is categorized as a continued jump between faith and doubt. On this occasion the former would be abandoned and the latter would be embraced, and the result would be fear and distress. As Peter began to walk out on the water toward His Lord, he began walking in full faith. Soon, though, the winds were noticed and the waves were seen, and he began to doubt. And as he began to doubt, he began to sink. What, though, is the ultimate reason that Peter sank in the depths of doubt? He took his eyes off of God.

We are not all that different from Peter. Generally, we live lives of belief and full of faith, but there are times, as there were with Peter, when we take our eyes off God and we begin to doubt. And when we doubt, we sink into the depths of a lost and dying world. If Peter had closer guarded his faith, perhaps such doubt would not have plagued him through life. But to guard our faith, we must be prepared for it to face the challenges of life. What are some of these challenges?

When suffering occurs, doubt can creep in. Job, the great sufferer, had as much happen to him in a short amount of time as perhaps anybody who has ever lived. And while his biographical book clearly suggests that Job was faithful in all things through his ordeal, it is also somewhat evident that Job began to doubt God's justice. He knew he had not sinned to deserve what had taken place, but his friends had convinced him mightily that God was behind his suffering. In fact, so sure was Job of all this that he stated, "*If I walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity*" (Job 31:5-6). Such doubt is common when man is confronted with suffering. God is often the first to receive blame. But by preparing ourselves for the surety of suffering and knowing the source and reasons for suffering, we will more likely avoid the doubt that accompanies it.

When sorrow occurs, doubt can begin to take root. "Why, oh why must we feel the pain of sorrow? Surely if God was truly God then sorrow would not be felt, by His people especially." Such are often the sentiments felt when death visits or some other calamity occurs. How could God possibly allow us to feel such hurt? If unprepared, when sorrow arrives it is easy for doubt to begin to take root within our lives. As David felt the sorrow that accompanied his sins and the consequences of his sins with Bathsheba, David realized that his sorrow was not initiated by God, but rather because of sin (Psalm 51:13-15). When sorrow strikes, prepare your heart to withstand the doubt that can easily follow.

There are so many things that can cause us to, like Peter, sink into the depths of doubt. What is significant about this account, though, is that before being rebuked with the famous words, "*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*", the text says that "*immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him*" (Matthew 14:31). We should do all we can to avoid the doubt that too easily can develop at certain times in our lives; but in those times that we, like Peter, fail, we can take comfort in knowing the Jesus is still there with an open hand and an outstretched arm ready to help. Are you fearful in the throes of doubt? Have no fear, Jesus is near.

-Andy Brewer