

PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN ITS ACCURACY

BY DR. LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER
PRESIDENT, DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DALLAS, TEXAS

THE TERM *gospel*, WHILE IT MEANS *good news*, IS IN THIS CONNECTION USED ONLY OF THAT SPECIFIC WAY OF SALVATION WHICH GOD PUBLISHES IN HIS WORD BY WHICH A MERITLESS SINNER MAY BE PERFECTLY AND ETERNALLY SAVED ON NO OTHER TERMS THAN THAT HE *believe* ON CHRIST AS HIS SAVIOR. THE PREACHER IS APPOINTED THE DEMANDING TASK OF AN ACCURATE PRESENTATION OF THAT GOSPEL. ON THE BASIS OF THE FACT THAT GOD HAS MADE HIS GREATEST EFFORT- THE GIFT OF HIS SON- THAT SINNERS MIGHT BE SAVED, IT IS REASONABLE TO CONCLUDE THAT ANY INACCURACY IN PREACHING WHICH MISREPRESENTS THE TRUTH AND THUS MISLEADS THE UNSAVED WILL BE SUBJECT TO DIVINE CENSURE. THIS IS PRECISELY THE UNREVOKED WARNING GIVEN IN GALATIANS 1:8,9. "BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED. AS WE SAID BEFORE, SO SAY I NOW AGAIN, IF ANY *man* PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT YE HAVE RECEIVED, LET HIM BE ACCURSED." THIS ANATHEMA, WHICH IS WHOLLY JUSTIFIED, SHOULD CAUSE EVERY PREACHER TO TREMBLE WITH FEAR. OVER AGAINST THE NOTION THAT ANY PERSON WITH ZEAL- WHETHER THEY HAVE KNOWLEDGE OR NOT- CAN PREACH THE GOSPEL, IS THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE GREATEST ORTHODOX SCHOLARS OF THE WORLD HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES TO THE TASK OF A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THAT WHICH ENTERS FUNDAMENTALLY INTO THE GOSPEL. SOME COMMON ERRORS IN GOSPEL PREACHING ARE LISTED HERE:

1. *A failure to emphasize the difference which obtains between the saved and the unsaved.* WHEN EXHORTING THE BELIEVERS TO A WORTHY MANNER OF LIFE AND SERVICE, THERE IS NO STATEMENT MADE THAT SUCH TRUTHS HAVE NO APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED, THE RESULT IS THAT THE UNSAVED ARE ENCOURAGED TO BELIEVE THAT THEY NEED ONLY TO ADOPT THE OUTWARD MANNER OF LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN. THERE IS BUT ONE MESSAGE TO THE UNSAVED AND THAT DOES NOT CONCERN HIS DAILY LIFE, BUT RATHER HIS RELATION TO JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR.

2. *By careless language, giving the unsaved the impression that God is love and rich in mercy and that He forgives sin directly as an act of kindness, generosity, or leniency.* GOD DOES FORGIVE, BUT IT IS ONLY ON THE RIGHTEOUS GROUND THAT THE REQUIRED PENALTY FOR SIN IS BORN BY THE SAVIOR. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE SINNER MUST COME TO GOD BY JESUS CHRIST AND THAT SALVATION IS CONDITIONED ON FAITH IN CHRIST. THERE IS NO NEED FOR CHRIST TO DIE IF GOD IS FREE TO MAKE LIGHT OF THE SINNER'S SIN BY A MERE ATTITUDE OF GRACIOUSNESS APART FROM SATISFACTION BECAUSE OF OUTRAGED HOLINESS.

3. *By demanding repentance as a separate act in addition to believing on Christ.* THIS DESTRUCTIVE ERROR WILL NOT BE COMMITTED BY THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN REASONABLE STUDY TO ALL THAT IS INVOLVED. IN THE FIRST PLACE, REPENTANCE, ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, IS *a change of mind*, WHICH MAY, OR MAY NOT, BE ACCOMPANIED WITH HEART ANGUISH. IN THE SECOND PLACE, THE REPENTANCE REQUIRED- AND IT IS REQUIRED- FOR THE SALVATION OF A SOUL IS *included* IN BELIEVING. THE SINNER CANNOT TURN TO CHRIST IN CONFIDENCE FROM ANY OTHER DEPENDENCE

WITHOUT A CHANGE OF MIND WHICH IS REPENTANCE (CF. I THESS. 1:9,10), NO MEASUREMENT WILL EVER BE MADE IN THIS WORLD OF THE HARM TO SOULS THAT HAS BEEN WROUGHT BY THEIR HAVING BEEN TOLD THAT THEY MUST FIRST REPENT AND THEN BELIEVE. THE PREACHER WILL DO WELL TO PONDER THREE FACTS: (A) THE GOSPEL BY JOHN, WHICH IS WRITTEN THAT MEN MAY BELIEVE AND BE SAVED (JOHN 20:31), NEVER EMPLOYS THE WORD *repentance*; (B) THAT THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, WRITTEN TO PROVIDE THE COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF SALVATION BY GRACE, DOES NOT USE THE WORD *repentance*, EXCEPT 2:4, IN RELATION TO LOST MEN; AND (C) UPWARDS OF 115 TIMES THE SALVATION OF A SOUL IS MADE TO DEPEND UPON *believing*, AND 35 TIMES ON ITS SYNONYM *faith* APART FROM ANY OTHER REQUIREMENT WHATSOEVER. THE ONE WHO INSISTS THAT REPENTANCE IS A SEPARATE ACT MUST FACE THE QUESTION THUS CREATED AS TO WHETHER THE WORDS OF CHRIST AND PAUL, WHICH RESTRICT SALVATION TO BELIEVING, ARE MISLEADING BECAUSE OF THEIR INADEQUACY (CF. JOHN 3:16; ACTS 16:31). SINCE REPENTANCE IS A PART OF BELIEVING, THE TERM MIGHT BE USED AS A SYNONYM OF BELIEVING, OR IT MAY BE MENTIONED SEPARATELY- AS IT IS IN A VERY FEW PASSAGES; BUT ALWAYS AS A SUBDIVISION OF THE ONE ALL-IMPORTANT THEME OF BELIEVING.

4. *By the grace-shattering error of insisting that a public confession of Christ is required in addition to saving faith.* BUT ONE PASSAGE IS INVOLVED IN THIS DISCUSSION: "THAT IF THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS AND SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE HEART THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED. FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND WITH THE MOUTH CONFSSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION" (ROM. 10:9,10). A THOUGHTLESS USE OF THIS PASSAGE IMPLIES THAT THE CONFSSION REFERRED TO IS A CONFSSION TO MEN; NOT REMEMBERING THAT A VERY CONSIDERABLE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO ARE SAVED ACCEPT CHRIST AT A TIME AND PLACE WHERE NO PUBLIC CONFSSION IS POSSIBLE. THE CONFSSION IS THAT OF THE SOUL ELECTING CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND IS TO GOD ALONE. AS ABRAHAM SAID *Amen* TO THE PROMISE OF GOD AND WAS BY FAITH COUNTED RIGHTEOUS, SO, IN LIKE MANNER, FROM HIS OWN HEART AND AS THE EXPRESSION OF HIS OWN CONFIDENCE, THE SINNER ACKNOWLEDGES TO GOD THAT CHRIST IS HIS SAVIOR. A SINNER, HAVING ACCEPTED CHRIST, MAY CONFESS HIM AS A TESTIMONY; BUT THAT IS FAR REMOVED FROM THE NOTION THAT TO BE SAVED ONE MUST BOTH BELIEVE AND CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN. IF THIS DOUBLE REQUIREMENT WERE REALLY GOD'S WILL, HE COULD NOT HAVE LEFT OUT THE IDEA OF CONFSSION FROM ANY ONE OF THE 150 PASSAGES WHICH CONDITION SALVATION OF FAITH ALONE.

5. *By requiring one to believe and be baptized.* AGAIN BUT ONE TEXT IS IN EVIDENCE (MARK 16:16), AND BUT HALF OF THAT, FOR, WHEN THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE DECLARATION IS PRESENTED, THE WORD *baptize* IS OMITTED. IN THIS CONSIDERATION, THE SAME ARRESTING FACT REMAINS THAT, IF WATER BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION, EVERY OTHER NEW TESTAMENT DECLARATION IS WORFULLY INADEQUATE AND TO THAT EXTENT MISLEADING, AND THE THIEF ON THE CROSS-SAVED DIRECTLY BY THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST-WAS A NOTABLE EXCEPTION. CERTAINLY, ACCORDING TO HUMAN EXPERIENCE, THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE ARE SAVED BEFORE THEY ARE BAPTIZED WITH WATER AND MULTITUDES HAVE NEVER BEEN THUS BAPTIZED AT ALL. THERE IS MUCH, INDEED, TO COMMEND THE CONTENTION THAT THE BAPTISM REFERRED

TO IN MARK 16:16 IS NOT WATER BAPTISM BUT IS THE BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT.

6. *By requiring that one accept Christ and agree to a certain manner of life.* THE PRACTICE OF CONFUSING THE GOSPLE WITH THE MANNER OF LIFE A PERSON SHOULD LIVE AFTER HE IS SAVED, IS CALCULATED NOT ONLY TO DISTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE UNSAVED FROM THE GOSPEL, BUT TO DEFEAT THE VERY POWER AND EFFECT OF IT. I CANNOT BE TOO STRONGLY URGED THAT GOD IS NOT CALLING ON THE UNSAVED TO ADOPT A MANNER OF LIFE, BUT HE IS OFFERING TO THEM HIS GIFT WHICH IS ETERNAL LIFE. NOR SHOULD THE TRUTH BE OVERLOOKED THAT THE UNSAVED HAVE NO SPIRITUAL CAPACITY BY WHICH THEY CAN FACE THE PROBLEMS OF A CHRISTIAN'S DAILY LIFE. THOSE PROBLEMS BELONG TO A SPIRIT-GUIDED MIND AND DEMAND FOR THEIR SOLUTION THE PRESENCE OF THOSE NEW DESIRES WHICH COME WITH REGENERATION.

7. *By demanding that one believe and ask for salvation.* SINCE GOD IS PROPITIUS (1 JOHN 2:2), IT IS WHOLLY OUT OF ORDER TO ASK HIM TO SAVE, AS THOUGH HE MUST BE PERSUADED TO DO WHAT HE, AT INFINITE COST, HAS PREPARED TO DO. THE INCIDENT OF THE PUBLICAN IN THE TEMPLE IS TOO OFTEN ASSUMED TO BE THE NORM FOR THE SINNER WHO WOULD BE SAVED UNDER GRACE. THE SETTING IS BEFORE THE DEATH OF CHRIST AND REFLECTS THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT EXISTED IN THE JEWISH ERA. THOUGH THE ENGLISH VERSION MAKES THE PUBLICAN TO SAY "GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER," HE REALLY SAID, *God be propitiated to me a sinner.* AT NO TIME, EITHER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT OR THE NEW, MAY ONE REACH GOD ON THE GROUND OF MERE MERCY AS SUCH APART FROM NEEDFUL SACRIFICE. THE PUBLICAN ASKED FOR PROPITIATION WHICH WAS A JUSTIFIABLE REQUEST BEFORE THE CROSS, BUT WHOLLY UNJUSTIFIED NOW. TO ASK FOR MERCY AS SUCH IS TO ASSUME THAT GOD MAY DEAL WITH SIN APART FROM ADEQUATE SACRIFICE. TO ASK FOR PROPITIATION IS TO DISCARD WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE AND TO ASK THAT SOMETHING MORE EFFECTIVE BE PROVIDED. MEN ARE NOT SAVED BY GETTING GOD TO DO SOMETHING; THEY ARE SAVED WHEN THEY DARE TO *believe* THAT GOD HAS DONE SOMETHING.

THIS MESSAGE WAS PREACHED BY DR. CHAFER IN WINONA LAKE, INDIANA, IN THE 1940's.

IT IS THE DESIRE OF BEACON BIBLE CHURCH THAT THESE NOTES WOULD BE OF SERVICE TO THE READER IN HELPING HIM TO BE A BETTER SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST.

COMPLIMENTS OF BEACON BIBLE CHURCH,

McKINLEY, MINNESOTA 55761

PASTOR L. A. RADTKE