

General Topics :: Tempering our Zeal to Produce Repentance

Tempering our Zeal to Produce Repentance - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/7/14 12:52

These days it is super-easy to pass around sermons, articles, and other forms of spiritual content via the Net. Just a few clicks – and poof! Off it goes into cyberspace to whomever - hopefully to help them. And I am taking full advantage of this window of opportunity. Yet...

This morning, the Spirit impressed a caution on me. Just moments after I forwarded a Jonathan Edwards sermon, I came upon Robert W.'s article called, *Preaching that Produces Results* where he cautions about the temptation to copy other preacher's style - hoping to provoke repentance. He's talking about preaching per se, but in a sense this principle could apply to the distribution of various sermons. We must temper our zeal with prayer and tenderness. After all, there is a real human being on the other end, and, as Robert emphasizes, a preaching method (or sermon) of one person may not be suitable in every case.

Thankfully I had prayed, and the Lord indeed had led me to the sermon. I was not "preaching" indiscriminately. Nevertheless, the caution is appropriate. Perhaps Ravenhill, Washer, and Wilkerson are not for everyone. Not everyone benefits from the "big guns". It is the Spirit that really brings conviction, and he knows best how to touch the wounded core of one's heart. We merely flow with him.

I repost Robert W.'s article that I refer to here, because I feel that it contains words of wisdom. (by the way, Robert has a treasure of timely material in his series – convicting too):

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id11024&forum40) The Glory Departed

PREACHING THAT PRODUCES RESULTS

It is common for preachers to employ 'methods' in their preaching to the intent of achieving desired results. This is true across the whole spectrum of most preaching and teaching including false teaching. If I wish for the hearer to do 'X' then I must do 'Y' and 'Z'. This is a suspect concept from the beginning because it ignores the individual need of individual persons at a given time. There is no 'one size fits all' method. This is where the infinite wisdom and power of God have to be front and center in ministry.

Repentance preachers in our times are in great danger in my opinion of moving into a 'one size fits all' mode that utilizes a certain 'method' of preaching to achieve the desired result of repentance. It is generally believed that preaching on righteousness and judgment to come will achieve the desired end. This is likely due to a misunderstanding of former repentance preachers who have preached on these topics and God moved. Many have forgotten that it is the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance just as sure as righteousness and judgment preaching.

I wish to look at two ministers briefly; chiefly Jonathan Edwards and Charles G. Finney. If we extrapolate the most 'potent' messages of Edwards and Finney and launch into ministry with those highly caustic messages we run the risk of causing more harm than good in the long run. Reason being is that in an attempt to 'correct' the errors of easy-believism and false assurance we might well create asymmetric converts. We note from Edwards, "Not that the symmetry of the virtues, and gracious affections of the saints, in this life is perfect: it oftentimes is in many things defective, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instructions, through errors in judgment, or some particular unhappiness of natural temper, or defects in education, and many other disadvantages that might be mentioned. But yet there is, in no wise, that monstrous disproportion in gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, that is very commonly to be observed, in the false religion, and counterfeit graces, of hypocrites."

What Edwards is talking about is having a symmetric balance that is in accordance with the person of Jesus Christ. I am not called to be Elijah, I am to be conformed to the image of the Father's Dear Son. What profit is there in modeling my life after Ezekiel? These were certainly godly men, but I am not called to be conformed to Ezekiel or Isaiah or Moses or John the Baptist. We are called to continue until Christ be formed in us. This is a most important fact. Although it may seem advantageous to select sermons of Edwards and Finney that achieve great conviction of sin, a careful examination of their lives reveal more symmetry in ministry than they are often portrayed as having.

What do I mean? First of all if you are under the delusion that the content of their sermons was the secret of the great power towards God you are wrong. It was not the 'words' that Christ and Paul used to cast out devils that was at issue, it w

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as their relationship to God and the power they had with Him. The sons of Sceva found out how just 'mouthing words' (even those of Paul and Jesus) has no real effect on folk in rebellion. You may be sowing 'seed' but that is not what I'm referring to. Sometimes all it does is incite anger and rage. The POWER was in the multiplied hours of prayer and seeking of the face of God. Finney preached with such an unction that he could not raise his voice at times or the whole place would have erupted into some sort of furor.

As a repentance preacher myself I can say that the tendency is often to want to challenge folk and hit at them. This is questionable at best. I have found that the most solemn messages I have ever preached or heard preached, the voices were not much above a whisper. Finney also talks about this happening in meeting houses. When the unction of God is present the power is not in voice inflection or harsh guttural words, but it is in the unction.

May we never present a Gospel that does not rightly lead folk into a personal relationship with God. May we never get the idea that it is our place to emulate the prophets. May we ever realize our need to have unction. God can do more with two words with unction than a thousand spoken carefully and craftily or with a harsh tone. You cannot do with threatening what God cannot do with unction. If folk don't respond to the message do not resort to rhetoric and criticism. Let God deal with them. Don't allow the rejection of the rightly presented message lead to your interjection of ill devised comments. Maintain your symmetry as a Christian. Rightly represent Jesus Christ and let the prophets be the prophets.

Re: Tempering our Zeal to Produce Repentance - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2006/7/14 14:48

Thank you Diane and Robert for the wisdom presented here. This is particularly timely for me because I have been given the opportunity to preach at a street outreach on Saturday the 22nd.

I must admit that I have fallen into this tendency Robert spoke of about focusing on content and of wanting to challenge and hit them with truths from many challenging sermons that I've heard. Instead my need is in waiting on God and seeking His will and unction.

For any who read this, please join me in prayer for this matter as the Spirit leads you.

In Christ,

Ron

Re: prayer - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/7/15 7:18

Thank you Ron for sharing your thoughts. And regarding your preaching engagement on the 22nd, I pray that God, in gentle mercy, will whittle away any confidence in self, in methods, and in preconceived expectations. May your audience be drawn by the voice of the Master.

And may the Lord use the upcoming days as spiritual preparation.

Many blessings!

Diane