

# **Preaching the Gospel**

**A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.**

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## **SO YOU WANT TO BE A PREACHER?**

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### **Preaching is a life of study**

*“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:14-16).*

It is obvious that Timothy’s mother and grandmother (1:5) had thoroughly taught God’s Word to this young man, and now he is being encouraged to continue in these things. Another familiar passage is 2:15: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* The KJV has *“Study to show thyself approved...”* “Study” is from the Greek “spoudazo,” which carries the idea of putting forth an effort, to be earnest in the project being discussed. While “study” does not have the same connotation it did in Shakespeare’s time, it is not inappropriate to associate it with the idea of one giving diligence to accurately handle the word of truth.

There is no greater responsibility than being responsible for the eternal souls of others. Therefore the instruction to Timothy to exercise due diligence in handling the word of truth, lest he lead people astray and cause them to lose their souls. It takes time to study. It takes time to prepare lessons. The people sitting before you can tell whether you have studied, or not. I know of a situation where the preacher would on occasion simply read a tract for a sermon. What a joke!

One problem in our modern age is the computer. While the computer is a wonderful tool for writing and research, it has become a thief of time and a major distraction. Some preachers spend hours in front of the screen. Perhaps they are doing worthwhile things, but sometimes frivolous things interfere, so they must use diligence in exercising self-control in control the use of the computer rather than allowing the computer control them. One can become addicted to computers just as much as to any other material possession.

In the midst of discussing persecution, Peter encourages his readers with these words: *“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”* (I Pet. 3:15). The preacher needs to have a range of knowledge of various subjects. It is not enough to have 100 sermons on baptism (as one preacher claimed). We have challenges that our forefathers did not have. In my grandfather’s day, most everyone believed in God. Humanism had not yet raised its head. Islam was not a threat to the peace of the world.

Preachers cannot be experts on every subject, but we need to know how to “make a defense” of the faith so we can “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints*” (Jude 3). Paul urged the young preacher to “*Fight the good fight of faith...*” (I Tim. 6:12). Just as a boxer must know how to fight to use his skills properly, so must the preacher know how to “fight the good fight.”

How can the preacher feed the congregation good, wholesome food if all he has is stale bread? How can he inspire them to greater service and enrich their knowledge of God’s holy word if he does not first fill himself? I have found it profitable to read through the Bible, making notes of any word or passage about which I wanted to know more, and then dig into learning more about it. That not only makes it interesting for me, but it makes my lessons more interesting for the audience.

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## Stupidity And Neutrality Crucified Christ - They Can Do It Again

Fanning Yater Tant (the late father of David Tant) **Bible Banner - May 1941**

One man could have saved him. As the fierce rays of the noon-day heat beat down mercilessly on the bowed head of that writhing figure on the cross, as the indifferent soldiers were throwing dice to while the time away until the end should come, as the awful tragedy of the ages slowly dragged its way on to the denouement, what must have been the feelings of that man? Did he wish he had been firmer? Did he revile himself for his weakness that had caused him to wash his hands of the entire affair, and so side-step his responsibility? Or was he somewhere in a drunken orgy trying to drown his memory of the humiliation that had been forced upon him by the bigotry of these fanatical Jews?

No one knows where Pilate was, or what he was doing. And no one particularly cares. His part had been played; as far as he was concerned the script called for no further appearance. But how terrible had been his role when he was the center of the stage! And how true to character he had acted! For Pilate's character called for exactly the sort of thing he did—the side-stepping of responsibility. He had noble impulses at first; he desired to release Christ; he even went out of his way to do so. But when the real pressure was put on him he called for water and washed his hands. This row wasn't of his making, and he would get out of it the easiest way he could!

There is bitter irony in the fact that Christ was done to death by the very sin which he had so often and so forcefully warned against. It was the sin of side-stepping responsibility. In the story of the good Samaritan (**Luke 10**) Christ had no words of condemnation for the thieves and robbers who beat the traveler. Anybody would denounce them; Christ saved his censure for the priest and the Levite-men who side-stepped their responsibility. In the parable of the talents (**Matthew 25**) Christ made no charge of embezzlement or dishonest use of money. Anybody would recognize those things as wrong; Christ saved his blame for the man who merely did nothing—who sidestepped his responsibility. And in that enigmatic miracle of the cursing of the fig tree (**Matthew 21**) there is no charge that the tree brought forth rotten or poisonous fruit. The trouble was simply that there was no fruit at all, the tree had "side-stepped" its moral obligation.

And Christ was crucified by a man who committed the identical sin.

But that isn't all. There was another evil working side by side with Pilate's failure. And that was the ignorance and stupidity of the people. They were wicked and sinful, to be sure. But they were also fools. They were enacting the most horrible chapter in human history, and weren't even aware of what was happening. Christ prayed, 'Father forgive them; **for they know not what they do.**' (**Luke 23:34**).

A close study of the words of Christ will reveal how often he was forced to speak out, not against open rebellion and deliberate transgression, but against folly, stupidity, ignorance. The man who heard his sayings and did them not was likened, not to a sinful or wicked man, but to a fool. (**Matt. 7:26**). The

people who make no preparation for the coming of Christ are likened unto **foolish** virgins. (**Matt. 25:2**). The rich man (**Luke 12**) who sought to lay up treasures for himself, but was not rich toward God is typical of a large class of humanity; and the word used to describe that class is "**fool**." Christ preached against sin; but how much of his teaching was directed against folly and stupidity—against blind, blundering ignorance!

And that brings us down to date: For just as surely as Christ was crucified physically by stupidity and irresponsibility working together two thousand years ago, just that surely can he be crucified spiritually by the same forces today.

Consider, for example, the working of the first of these twin evils, stupidity, in a certain case in point—the question of premillennialism. If the published and spoken statements of gospel preachers are to be believed, at least 95 per cent of them (to use the percentage figure made familiar by the famous questionnaire) are opposed to premillennialism in any form. They do not believe it; they do not preach it;

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they believe it is injurious to the cause of Christ; and they are categorically opposed to every phase and form of the whole doctrine. They agree absolutely and in toto, so far as the doctrine is concerned, with the position of the Bible Banner and that group of faithful gospel preachers who have taken the lead in exposing the errors of this heresy.

Then enters stupidity.

And a goodly number of this 95 per cent, because they disagree with the method used in the fight against premillennialism will oppose the men who teach what they believe, and defend the men who teach what they deny—thus giving their influence to tearing down what they say is true and building up what they say is false. Can there be any doubt that somewhere there is some muddled thinking? —or maybe it's just a muddle without any thinking.

If the body of Christ is not to be crucified again, there must, somehow, be developed that sort of Christian charity which is tolerant enough to permit a wide divergence in the **methods** of

work—an allowance for the individual differences which are not only inevitable but desirable.

Surely the church of our Lord is great enough to find a use and a place for every conceivable type of personality—**so long as there is no compromise of the truth**. Some men are temperamentally unfitted for the militant and aggressive fight which comes natural to others. Will they seek, therefore, to curtail all controversy with error, and try to conform all Christians to their own particular type of non-aggressive, non-militant, but mild and gentle preaching of the truth? To do so would be an act of stupidity on a par with that which once crucified God's son. They must recognize that while God can use their sympathetic and genial personalities for certain kinds of work, he has other and sterner tasks which call for more aggressive and less yielding types of men.!

And the militant, hard-hitting gospel preacher must realize that God has a place and a work for his milder brother. It is neither possible nor desirable that all come from the same mould. As long as there is no compromise of truth the differences in temperament must be subordinated to the need for unity. The folly of any other course should be apparent.

The Bible Banner stands, as all realize, in the forefront among those who are militant and aggressive in the propagation of the gospel and in its defense against error. Most of the men who write for it are men who are vigorous and unrelenting in their efforts to defeat false teaching either in the church or in the world. But so far as this writer knows there has never been the least hint or suggestion on the part of any of these men that every gospel preacher should copy **all** their **methods**. Let the mild-mannered individual oppose error and advance truth in his own way—**as long as he really opposes error and**

**advances truth.** For such a one the writers of the Bible Banner have nothing but the deepest respect. He is a faithful brother in Christ and is honored and loved as such.

The strictures in the Bible Banner against "soft" preaching and compromising are aimed more often than not against the man who side-steps his responsibility—the man who is guilty of the sin of Pilate. The stupidity of the people and the irresolution of Pilate brought tragedy on that far off day; the stupidity and irresolution of gospel preachers can achieve the same result today. Stupidity in attacking those who teach the truth and defending those who teach error, and in opposing their brothers in Christ because they disapprove of their methods of work cannot but bring disaster.

But, perhaps, an even greater danger than stupidity lies in irresolution—neutrality. How easily can Christ be crucified by his servants merely doing nothing! When responsibility comes knocking at the door, demanding action, instant, decisive, and uncompromising action, how tragic for one to stand irresolute and do nothing—like Pilate. Can there any longer be any doubt (if there ever was any) that thousands of churches throughout the northern part of our nation were swept into digression merely because some of the preachers in those sections stood halting and irresolute—holding their peace when they should have been firm and unyielding in their opposition to error? Is not the great cleavage between the church and the Disciples today traceable in large part to the fact that these brethren of a past generation side-stepped their responsibility? The situation wasn't of their making, they declared, and they would take neither side. And the result was sheer tragedy.

There are serious problems before the church today. They cannot be solved by being "let alone." That was the way Pilate tried to solve his problem. The result of such an attitude today will be the same as the result the crucifixion of the Savior. The questions facing us today call for tolerance, wisdom, and resolution on the part of every Christian. Petty likes and dislikes for style or method must be forgotten in the overwhelming need for unanimity of action. Those who believe the truth must stand together; there must be no compromise with error. To oppose a faithful and godly preacher of the gospel just because his style or method may be "distasteful" to one is folly of the rankest sort. This sort of attitude, coupled with a disposition to side-step responsibility and leave the settling of these questions to others can have one, and only one, result—a spiritual re-enactment of Cavalry. -



## [Online With Joel](#)

Bible.ca (The Interactive Bible) is a website by Steven Rudd who preaches in Canada. The website has a lot of information on it that is useful, especially when studying false doctrines. It is not the prettiest website, but the navigation is well organized and easy to follow. The copyright is nice in that it allows you to use anything on the website as long as you don't sell it.

The problem with The Interactive Bible is that some of the articles are too abrasive to be used directly in teaching someone who believes the false doctrines the articles are about. As always, use good discretion in using people's material.

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