



"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matt 9:38)

PLANO CHURCH OF CHRIST

406 Lew Street Plano, IL 60545

Facebook Plano IL Church of Christ

SUNDAY

Bible Study 10:00 am

Worship - 10:50 am

Worship - 4:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study - 7:00 pm

Evangelist & Editor:

Bryan Bickford

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Difficult Sermons

Those who believe preaching is simply “public speaking” have no idea of the challenges involved in this worthy endeavor. Beside the study involved, the development of organized thoughts with proof from God’s Word alone (and not merely verses pulled from context that have a word or two that imply proof — we’re talking **unequivocal proof of truth!**) and seeking out acceptable words (*Eccl. 12:10*) that are acceptable to **God**, regardless of the reception of the ears that physically listen, there is the concern for the souls that hear — are they understanding, applying and gaining from these teachings? While much of these concerns are the inherent work of the eldership (*Acts 20:28*), the preacher also has a grave responsibility of “preaching the word”, realizing he shall receive the greater condemnation (*James 3:1*).

No speaker of the gospel of Christ with a loving, caring and compassionate heart desires to chastise his audience. Nonetheless, there is a time and a place for such — and fearing to preach with all boldness does not negate the responsibility! God chastises His children (*Heb. 12: 1– 17*) because He loves us. And if we truly love our brethren, chastisement must be a part of the preaching. Difficult? Indeed! Necessary? Absolutely!

Such difficult sermons are two-fold. Not only are they difficult to present for obvious reasons, they are difficult to comprise. At least for me, sermons must effect my own heart before I can be convinced they will effect others in some positive fashion. Will they always convert the sinner or convict the gainsayer? No; unfortunately, most sermons today fall into the realm of the old adage of “The first sermon persuaded about 3,000 to

obedience. Now it seems to take 3,000 sermons to persuade just one soul.” But if the sermon helps just one soul — even me as the preacher — it has been helpful! The time of study, preparation and presentation are not wasted hours; there is no such thing as “wasted study” if knowledge and encouragement result from such efforts.

For me, the most difficult sermons to study, prepare and present are the ones that strike me more personally: they more acutely critique my own character, habits, thoughts, etc. Like the brethren we so often address, it’s much easier and often more “comfortable” to examine the faults of others and fire the passages at their shortcomings with rapid speed and often some sort of “self accomplishment” of “we sure let them know what’s wrong!” However, serious minded Christians realize the honesty of *Galatians 6:1* ... the necessity of “considering thyself” in these matters! You see, preachers are also accountable for their actions; and by *James 3:1*, we’re **more** accountable because we’re duty bound to not only “talk the talk” but “walk the walk!”

All Christians must take seriously the necessity of self-examination (*2 Cor. 13:5*). So many of us (including preachers) have grown “blind” to our shortcomings because of a greater wrong that remains the most difficult to correct: **self-esteem!** We simply wish to justify our sins as being “not that bad.” God spoke to this truth at *Isaiah 5:21*: “*Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*” To ourselves, we look pretty good most of the time. But from God’s eyes — have we taken the time to examine ourselves via HIS mirror? (*James 1:21–25*)

For years, it has been my conviction as a gospel

preacher that the most difficult sermons to compose and present are those sermons we preach daily via our lives. They don't permit much time for study, composition or delivery. They are in fact on the spur of the moment; impromptu. We're "caught off guard" for an answer, or during times of frustration, unaware of our audience that is within ear-short or sight, but hidden from our immediate notice. Our reactions to various matters are sermons we can't retract and find often find ourselves shamed when having to admit our error and repent! Yes, that phrase, "Well that's the way to be preacher!" haunts me every time I hear it as a well deserved rebuke for a wrong action or word!

Difficult sermons — they are many, but they are always needed for perfecting holiness in our lives (2 Cor. 7:1). As Christians, we each need to "preach to ourselves" regarding our journey toward eternity. We must remind ourselves to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3) but rather condescend to men of low estate (Rom. 12:16) and keep ourselves humbled by the admission of "we count not ourselves to have apprehended" (Phil. 3:12—13) as we journey toward perfection!

Mike Davis Orleans IN, church of Christ

Preacher's Point

"I would rather have thousands to say to me at judgment, 'We heard you preach and you hurt our feelings,' than to have just one lost soul to say, 'I heard you preach, but you did not tell me the truth'" **John T. Lewis**

"Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

C.S. Lewis

■ **If peacemakers are called "sons of God" (Matt 5:9), what would troublemakers be called?**

■ **You can't get rid of a bad temper by losing it.**

The Way of Life or The Way of Death (Jer 21)

Jeremiah delivers three messages in *Jer 21*, to king Zedekiah (v:1-7), to the people (v:8-10), and to the members of the house of David (v:11-14). I want to look at the message sent to the people, *Jer 21:8-10* "You shall also say to this people, Thus says the LORD, **"Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. 9 "He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty. 10 "For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good," declares the LORD. "It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire."** Jeremiah tells them the **way of life** is giving your life into the hands of your enemies. Those who did so would have their own life given back to them, but those who did not would die!

At approximately the same time Habakkuk is asking God why are His people getting away with being so wicked! God's answer will test Habakkuk's faith at first, but God tells him **"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith."** (*Hab 2:4*). We see this verse quoted 3 times in the NT, but this verse has a direct application for the hearers of Jeremiah. After Habakkuk understands God's plan for the Babylonians to come and punish Judah, he then basically says the same thing in *Hab 2:2-4* as Jeremiah does in *chapter 21*. The idea is that the Babylonians will come... just wait, then the proud one, will think God will come to my rescue, God is on my side, but this man thinks too much of himself, he does not obey God's Word spoken by Jeremiah.

But the righteous man will live because he will do what Jeremiah says to do... give up his life to the Babylonians, leave the city of Jerusalem, and he will live. **This same message is taught to us in Christ, we must take up our cross and follow Him (*Heb 13:12-13; Lk 9:22-24*).**

If we disobey there is certain death, but if we give up our lives, He delivers us. But only to those who have enough faith to leave, and it would be difficult for them to do or even consider walking straight into the hands of Chaldeans, *"that fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth , To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. "They are dreaded and feared...They collect captives like sand (*Hab 1:6-9*). Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it." (*Lk 9:24*). **Jeremiah was not a popular preacher, but his message was faithful!** BB & Dan Peters*