

DISTINCTIVE PREACHING

For some time I, and others, have expressed concern about the kind of preaching that is being done in many places today. In expressing this concern I have frequently said that much of the preaching that is being done today could be done in any denominational church without any change and it would be accepted.

Some have interpreted this concern as saying that our "difference from denominations" is the measuring stick for our preaching. No one that I know who has expressed this concern over the lack of distinctive preaching has suggested that this is the measuring stick for our preaching nor have they lamented over the lack of "church of Christ" doctrine in the preaching being done. In fact, the men I have heard expressing concern over the kind of preaching being done have been the ones who have spoken out against the denominational concept of the church and are the ones who emphasize the distinctive message of God's word. They are the ones insisting that the word of God is the only standard of authority and that we must respect that authority. When this kind of preaching is done on a regular basis you will be teaching men and women what they must do to be saved; that Christ is THE way and that He is the Saviour of THE church (Acts 2:38; John 14:6; Eph. 5:25). We are not talking about lessons from time to time that may deal with some Bible character or lessons from his life. We are talking about a compromising spirit on the part of far too many who will not preach what the word of God teaches on the plan of salvation, the church, the work of the church, the worship of the church, the organization of the church or the truth on many other moral and doctrinal issues.

I am ready to affirm that when we preach the gospel in its purity and completeness that teaching will not be accepted by denominationalists, not because we have sought to "offend the denominations", but because it is the truth. Brethren, don't be deceived into thinking that the willingness of denominations to accept certain lessons you may preach is an indication of their "closeness to the truth." That acceptance is based on the fact that the particular lesson may be something with which they agree. For example, I could go to a Baptist Church and preach a lesson showing from the scriptures that baptism is an immersion and every word I say be true and be accepted by them but that would not mean they were "close to the truth" on what the Bible teaches concerning baptism. They still deny the truth on baptism and its purpose.

We need to realize that when we seem to be closer to the denominations than we used to be it is not due to the denominations coming closer to the truth; it is due to our leaving the truth. It is a shame when men are criticized and misrepresented when they make an appeal to get back to preaching that will convict men and women of their sins and teach them what they must do to be saved. This kind of preaching will not be accepted by the denominations but it will be pleasing to God and that's what is of real importance.

✍ James Hahn