

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 29

2018

RESPONSE TO PREACHING

One does not have to read far into God's word until he realizes that all people do not respond in the same way to the teaching of the word of God. In fact, the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15) teaches us that the word does not meet with the same reception by all.

There seems to be an attitude that prevails in the religious world today that "good preaching" is that which I like and "bad preaching" is the preaching of that which I do not like. We who are members of the family of God must constantly be on guard against developing this same attitude.

As we read the book of John we find many who believed on Jesus after hearing his teaching and seeing the deeds he performed. One author has called his commentary on this book, "*John--The Gospel of Belief*." However, we find that many others did not believe on Him (John 12:37). Why did these refuse to believe? They had heard the same teaching as those who did believe. They had seen the same miracles performed as those who believed. What made the difference? As we look at the parable of the sower we learn that men are different, however I believe we can answer the question in one statement. These people simply did not want to believe and they WOULD NOT believe. When someone has made up his mind that he is not going to believe it matters not how much evidence you may present, he will not accept it.

We see the contrast between those who want the truth and those who want to hear only that which pleases them vividly illustrated in

the second and seventh chapters of the book of Acts. In Acts 2 Peter preached the gospel to the Jews assembled on that occasion. When they heard the preaching of Peter they were pricked in the heart (v. 37) and wanted to know what they should do. When Peter told them what to do three thousand gladly received his word and obeyed (v. 41). In Acts 7 we find Stephen preaching the same message to the Jewish council. These were also cut to the heart when they heard his preaching (v. 54), however their response was not the same as that of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. Instead of "*gladly receiving his word*" they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death (v. 58).

Which of these two groups best illustrates your attitude toward the preaching of the truth? How do you respond when you hear something that is different to what you presently believe or something that may suggest that what you are doing and like to do is not right? Some become upset when they hear such lessons. These need to realize the truth cannot be changed to suit the desires of men.

When we hear any lesson our first concern should be to determine if it is truth (Acts 17:11). If it is not true then we owe it to the one preaching to point out where he has erred. If it is the truth then I need to examine my life in the light of the truth presented. If there is something amiss in my life then I should make whatever changes need to be made. We must make sure that we change the right thing. Some want to change the message preached to conform to what they believe or to what they want to do. We should seek to change our lives to conform to the truth of God's word. This is the only way we can be right.

Some will also do the same as those in Acts 7. They will become angry at the preacher and seem to have the attitude that they can disregard what he says just by rejecting him. Friends, we need to recognize that the truth is not changed by any action or reaction on our part toward any man. You may even go so far as killing the preacher (as those in Acts 7 did) but this will not change the truth.

The next time you become upset over a lesson you hear be fair with yourself and the one presenting the lesson. Ask yourself, "Why am I upset?" If it is because the lesson is not true then point out

where it is wrong so the one teaching can make correction in his life and in his teaching. However, if I am upset simply because I do not like what is taught then I need to make changes in my own life.

✍ James Hahn



Imputed Righteousness

PRESENT TRUTH is a publication with Australian and California bases of operation, which proposes to teach us Bible and Reformation truths re. justification, sanctification, etc. Their material is attractive and well presented, and some preachers and brethren who should know better are being taken in by their appeal. In a recent tract: Justification, Catholicism Vs Protestantism; Mr. Brinsmead says the reformers rediscovered Paul's doctrine of Justification by faith... that the sinner is not justified by an infused righteousness but by an imputed righteousness — meaning a righteousness that is found wholly in Another. He says there are two aspects of redemption: Christ's work for us, and the Holy Spirit's work in us. Of Christ's work he says Jesus lived a perfect life for us, and He died for our sins. For some strange reason, he only cites scriptures for the second part.

To be justified one must be free of guilt. Once we have sinned (and all sin) no amount of doing good can remove previous guilt; so, there is no justifying merit in our obedience, such as it is. But this does not warrant the fanciful doctrine that Christ's righteous life had to be imputed to us. Every passage given in support of such an idea actually pointed to forgiveness of man's sin, made possible through the death of Christ (Romans 3:21-28; 4:4-11; Galatians 2:20; etc.). All references to justification without works were such as Romans 4:1-8, where the contrast is between perfect (meritorious) obedience, with forgiveness provided; and the system of faith, which looks to Christ and His blood for forgiveness. The Old Testament types and shadows point to atonement and propitiation for sin — the payment of its price. And the New Testament pictures Christ as the Lamb of

God, that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Neither type nor antitype call for justifying meritorious works — on our part or on Christ's part. Christ's perfect life made Him the acceptable offering (Hebrews 7:26-28), who ever liveth to make intercession for us. For these imputed righteousness saved by his life people, Paul wasted his ink when he wrote, Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (i.e., perfect, rt) saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.. . (Romans 4:6-8)

What difference does it make how God saves the faithful? The modus operandi of God would be only a theological question, of passing interest, were it not for consequences of this matter. These fellows are really leading their readers into a denial of man's capacity or ability to come to God in obedience to invitation. Their theology demands a sovereignty of God that can not tolerate genuine free agency on the part of man, and sees today's man as having a totally depraved nature that is helpless before any command of God. This theology demands some form of individual election, and some form of direct operation of God's Spirit upon the heart of the elected individual. This is no more PRESENT TRUTH than it was when the Hebrew writer said Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. (Hebrews 5:9)

✍ Robert F. Turner

Belleville church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

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