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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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3218 Timberland Trail, Euless Texas 76040-7727 – 817.247.6630

Ed Smithson, Editor

HOW WE HAVE FAILED NO. !

I know, I know, we are not supposed to talk about failure. It is sort of amazing to me that a whole country is caught up in this idea of, “speak no negatives.” If there is a positive there has to be a negative. However, in our time no one seems to want anything but positives.

When I was a young preacher there was a lot of talk about growth in the church. We were coming out from under the stigma of being “that little white church across the tracks.” We were baptizing people and some of them were “professionals.” I remember a man who owned a grocery store in a small town. In another town a highly trained Chemical Engineer was the song leader in the church.

We wanted a better designation in our community. We were baptizing a number of people, consequently we wanted a better building in a better place. We became convinced that “location” was a priority so we looked for property in a better place in town. Sometimes brethren who were more conservative not just in doctrine but also in finances, would rebuild on the same site.

Over the years since a lot has changed. Attitudes, approaches and thinking all have changed. And in some ways we have failed and badly.

No. 1, We have failed to teach our children the fundamentals.

In the Old Testament God told the Hebrew people exactly what to do to keep the children in the knowledge of His word. “...and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy

heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

The Lord’s attitude did not change from the Old to the New. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Somehow we lost our way, we have failed. Most of our children do not even know the books of the Bible, let alone the apostles of the Lord. Time was when our members knew enough Bible to tell where and when the church was established. Now perhaps ten percent can accurately tell that story. Somehow preachers have been convinced that folks do not want to hear the “old truths” but want something “new and exciting.” Consequently we have raised a generation that “knows not God.”

The plan of salvation is important because one cannot be saved unless he follows it. But there are many in the church today that cannot cite the steps and give the scriptures to back it up. Lessons on faith, repentance, confession and baptism have long taken a back seat to “feel good” ideas expressed in short sermonettes.

There is no question that ignorance will fail. Long ago God said through the prophet Hosea, “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children.**” (Hosea 4:6) Yesterday morning I had breakfast with my friend Jeff Jenkins who preaches for the Lewisville church of Christ in Lewisville, Texas. He had with him, as he does from time to time, a young man who was spending the summer with him as an “intern.” They do this each summer. The young man asked me a question that few young men have asked me. “What kind of advice would you give a young preacher.” I said, “keep your head down and your power dry.” When he asked what that meant I told him I had been given the same

advice years ago. Then I told him, “the best advice I can give you is stay close to the Word. Spend a lot of time studying the Bible for in it you will find the answers to all the problems you will face in life.” I sincerely believe that to be true.

Without the Word of God a preacher cannot do the work God intends for him to do. It is more difficult today for there are so many demands on a preacher. It takes a young man with a lot of courage and stamina to follow such advice.

And somehow we must also instill in each member the desire and determination to acquaint themselves with the Word as well. When a person says they don't much about the Bible they confess they do not spend time with it. I am not talking about “dialing reaching schedules.” While they can certainly be important, ones desire to know the Word much go beyond that.

We have not taught our people, and that means especially our children, what it means to be a member of the church Christ built (Matthew 16:28; Acts 2) perhaps because our lives are too filled with the “cares of this world.” “If any man love **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15) “Whosoever therefore would be a friend of **the world** maketh himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

Therefore we have a church today, that by in large do not know biblical church history and its organization, let alone know the passages that tell us how to live “in Christ.”

We have failed to teach the basics!

(to be continued)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Ed Smithson

ed@oldpathspulpit.org

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