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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

HOW WE HAVE FAILED NO. 3

WE HAVE FAILED IN THAT WE HAVE LOST OUR FOCUS.

Lets go back to where it all began. Jesus had been crucified and risen on the first day of the week. When he appeared to the eleven, who, by the way, did not believe that he had risen from the dead, he told them, “[Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.](#)” (Mark 16:15-16) Thus Jesus gave to his disciples who had been with him, and generations to come, their marching orders, their mission in this world.

The church was established on Pentecost, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, in a magnificent demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostles preached the gospel. That is what they had been given to preach by the Lord himself. These who had just a few days before failed to believe in the resurrection, were now preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead, to show the world there was life after death. What a glorious day that was. They were doing exactly what Jesus had told them to do.

As we read the book of Acts we are impressed with the number of times, in circumstances most difficult and even under threat of death at times, these same men and those who followed them preached that same gospel of Mark 16. Conversions of Jews and then the Gentiles being brought into the kingdom must have been a sight to behold.

In the preaching of the gospel there arose a problem. Grecian widows were being passed over in the distribution of the necessities of life and it

was brought to the attention of the apostles of the church. They called the church together to see about this problem and this is what they said, “**And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.**” (Acts 6:2-4 Emphasis mine)

(Let me ask you preachers a question, “How many hours do you spend in prayer for the hours you spend in preaching?) Just a thought!

If such an event happened in the church today, what would the elders do? Do you think they just might say, “We are so busy taking care of the needs of the widows that we don’t have time to work in the word and prayer. We probably ought to find a preacher who can take care of that while we work on these other things.” I don’t think there is an elder in the land that would ADMIT that is what he would do, but by their example that is really what is happening.

The focus in the first century was to preach the gospel that is able to save souls. Romans 1:16

Read the book of Acts. To me there are two things that stand out in the accounts of conversion and doing “mission” work.

First, in each instance, when the opportunity arose, those preachers preached the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They were singular in their purpose and message. The resurrection of Christ showed the people that life after death was a distinct possibility, to those whose faith would cause them to obey Jesus and be baptized for the remission of sins.

Second, they went where the people were. At public gatherings, on the Sabbath, in the Synagogues where people were studying the Old Testament scriptures, they began there to show them they spoke of Him who was to come for the salvation of the world.

Too many preachers today are looking for a “hook.” By that I mean they are looking for something, other than plain preaching, to get the attention of people then surreptitiously try to bring them into contact with the gospel.

Preachers of the first century needed no “hook.” They presented the gospel in a straightforward way, like it should be presented today. I sometimes wonder if we are not concentrating more on method than we are on the message.

We have so many “extra” things going on in the church we have lost our focus. We are majoring in minors. In the last forty years there have been innumerable para church organizations to arise in the brotherhood, all, nipping at the heels of the treasury of local churches for their support. They try to convince the church they are “doing the work of the church.” I have yet to understand how an organization that is not the church can do its work. Few of those approached for funds and support even think about whether such is authorized in scripture.

The Bible says that “**all things that pertain to life and godliness**” is furnished to us through knowledge of the word. “**seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue**” (2 Peter 1:3 Emphasis mine) Paul also spoke of this in the Ephesian letter, “**...to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.**” (Ephesians 3:10 Emphasis mine)

So our focus is to preach the gospel, first, last and always. Are there other things to do or could be done along the way. Certainly! We are to “remember the poor,” according to Paul in Galatians 2:10. The church is also to be edified and fed. Several passages testify to this fact. There is no indication or inclination or suggestion in scripture that would make us think of or authorize the establishment of other organizations to accomplish any of these purposes. One reason we have always opposed the “missionary society” is because that is an outside organization trying to do the work of the church. Even some brethren have discarded a long held belief in this by establishing institutions to do these things.

More later...

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

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