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PRESENTS

My Personal Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

IS THERE A PROPHET AMONG US?

In the second chapter of the book of Ezekiel, beginning in verse three, the record says, “Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day. And the children are impudent and stiffhearted: I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.” (Ezekiel 2:3-5 ESV)

Contrary to the belief of many, a prophet is one “who speaks for God.” Although he sometimes, with the help of God, sees what is to come in the future, in this capacity, he is called a “seer.” (1 Chronicles 9:22; 1 Chronicles 21:9 and others.)

Today, only God knows how far we have fallen, in America the church is in about the same trouble that Israel was in at the time of this event. Perhaps Israel was worse off than we are today because they had already been carried away into Babylonian captivity. It was the “fifth day of the month” in the fifty year of their captivity. (Ezekiel 1:2) (They also had sixty-five years to go to fulfill the prophecy of their seventy years there).

I know, I know, you don’t think something similar can happen to us, but as you ponder that, you might think of some of the recent events that have taken place in this country.

When you think about it, the Lord really doesn’t ask much of us. He asked the same of Ezekiel and I believe he lived in a time when the dangers were much greater. Perhaps not, we have so much more to lose than the people of Israel did at that time. They were already in captivity, literally, and he was still

sending them a strong message. Time and again in the book he declared them to be “a rebellious house, impudent and stubborn.”

Too many times today, in our pulpits and in our “conference rooms,” it appears we are saying, “Things are not so bad. If we upset them they may not give as we need or they may get upset enough to leave altogether.” But God told Ezekiel that it did not matter if they heard him or not, in order to deliver his own soul, he must still tell them the words of Jehovah.

I know what it is like to want to please people. I preached in the pulpit of local congregations for many years. I know what it is like to be apprehensive about the reception of lessons that are designed to make people come to grips with their shortcomings. It is not an easy job. But someone once said, “If it were an easy job, everyone would be doing it.”

The Hebrew writer states, “For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.” (Hebrews 5:13 ASV) We have far too many “babes” in the church today and someone needs to tell them they need some “solid food.”

Why do you think the apostle Paul said to Timothy, “ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound* teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.” (2 Timothy 4:1-3 ESV)

There is a tendency for people who are living and working in the world, to pick up on things of the world and let it influence their living and their lives. Some of them are likely to want their preachers to say what they would like to hear, “and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (Verse 4, ESV)

When people are not found to be within the confines of the scriptures, it is because they have not studied them closely enough themselves to be able to discern “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Or they have become so involved in the world and its methods, they have willingly left the Lord. I have observed the

conditions of the church now for many years. I have found that as a general rule, when a church goes south, it is usually because someone has led them, and that someone is usually the preacher.

Generally speaking, if a church rebels against the word of God, it is the man in the pulpit that is responsible. Oh, surely sometimes the elders of the church are involved, usually supporting a renegade preacher.

God was very specific in His word to Ezekiel and he is just as specific for us today. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ **and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.** Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.” (Ezekiel 3:17-21 ESV Emphasis mine)

The other day I heard someone say, “Getting old is not for sissies.” While that is certainly true in many instances, the statement can be made about other things as well.

Preaching, real preaching, Bible preaching, especially to a rebellious people, is not for sissies either. But if preachers are to obey their Lord and fulfill the work assigned them, they must be strong and faithful.

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

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