

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

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What is your attitude toward unbelief? When you, through the various places that the Lord has called you to move, have interaction with someone who doesn't know the Lord, what is going through your mind? May we say with confidence that when God calls us to interact with the lost of the world, that He would have us be motivated to point them to Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. As the gospel is our life and what has saved us and drives us, so too must we be motivated by the gospel as we interact with the lost of the world.

In Luke 9:51-56, our wonderful, merciful Savior provides for us an excellent example of God-honoring attitudes towards the lost. As we are to follow Jesus in all of our actions and attitudes, we do well to follow Him here. So let's look at this passage and develop Christ-like attitudes towards those that we have in our lives who desperately need Him.

This passage marks out a new section of the Gospel of Luke. Jesus has just wrapped up the Galilean ministry, marked by teaching and miracles and, as verse 51 states, *"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,..."*

In this travel section, starting here and ending at 19:27 right before the Triumphal Entry, Jesus continues to perform miracles of healing and really amps up His teaching ministry. Another very distinct aspect of this section is the constant run-ins the Lord has with the lost. And many of these individuals reject what Jesus has to say regarding His kingdom and what



it means to know the Lord. So this section provides for us some great pictures of the Lord's attitudes toward the lost.

Note that immediately after this declaration in verse 51 of the Lord's determination to finish the work that God sent Him to do, He heads off toward a village of the Samaritans.

The passage tells us that, due to the size of the group of disciples, the Lord sends messengers ahead to this village to let them know that He is coming and to prepare for a large contingent of people. And what is the result of this courteous warning? Rejection! Verse 53 states that the people of this Samaritan village did not receive Him or His disciples because Jesus' face was set to go to Jerusalem. So, the Lord is on His way to Jerusalem to accomplish the very deed that will allow for the salvation of these Samaritans, and they reject Him for it. What a rude welcome this was. Perhaps even soldiers were sent to guard the village gate to keep the group out? As Jesus sets out with determination to

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accomplish God's plan and glory, His first encounter on this road is marked by rejection.

Perhaps you've met with a similar response on your attempts to bring the gospel to some friends or colleagues? You are determined to bring the gospel to a certain place and your attempts are met with hostility. How should you respond in the face of such rejection? Note the response of the Lord here.

First of all, He wasn't surprised. We know that the Lord Jesus knew the heart of men and that this road and plan would be met constantly by rejection and rebuke. This is why Luke lets us know that Jesus was absolutely determined. It was going to be a hard road and the man Jesus needed to be committed to see it through. Thus,

we too, when faced with rejection because of the gospel, needn't be taken aback or surprised. Paul informs us that the message of the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Cor. 1:18). Thus, if our attempts at sharing the gospel are met with ridicule and rejection, don't be surprised.

Note also that this rejection didn't diminish His determination. Verse 56 states that upon this rejection and His rebuke of James and John, the group simply went on to another village. This section of Luke is marked by several statements of Jesus' determination and, as in this case, nothing knocked Him "off-task," so to speak. We do well to learn from this that nothing should knock us "off-task" either

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

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when it comes to proclaiming and pointing others to the cross. Just because we will experience rejection, sometimes very harsh rejection, should not distract us from the goal. This is a difficult lesson for all of us to learn because we so long for acceptance. With Jesus, the only acceptance that mattered to Him involved completing His Father's will and plan. Therefore, regardless of others' opinions of Him, He kept on going. When it comes to proclaiming the gospel we need to have this same attitude. Regardless of the response, telling others about the Lord and sharing the gospel brings glory to God. And it is for His glory that we live. So let us not lose our determination to share in the face of rejection.

Note thirdly that the Lord didn't get angry at this rejection. James and John invite the Lord Jesus, the Creator of the Universe, to rightfully turn this village into a parking lot. But the text states that Jesus willfully and clearly turns and rebukes these two for thinking this way. Why was it that Jesus didn't get angry? He clearly tells us why in John 3:17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the

world through Him might be saved." In Luke 19:10, we find similar words and attitudes declared by the Lord, "...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Because of His current commitment to provide the means of salvation for wicked sinners who reject Him, the Lord Jesus didn't get angry at these Samaritans. We know that God is angry at wickedness and sin everyday (Ps. 7:11) and that rejection of Jesus and the gospel will merit unyielding, terrible and perfect judgment from God (2 Thess. 1:6-9). But in this current dispensation, God has opened the door of salvation to all who will come. Even those who formally rejected the Lord with blasphemy and hateful attitudes are welcome to repent and believe in the Lord for forgiveness and eternal life. Several of you, myself included, once did blaspheme and reject the Lord. And, yet in love, He brought you and me to faith and welcomed us into His presense. Aren't you glad that the Lord God and His Son Jesus didn't deal with you in anger as your sins deserve? After the ascension of the Lord, Phillip goes into Samaria and proclaims the gospel. We are told that "...the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken

by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...And there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:6 and 8). So, as with the Lord Jesus, we needn't respond in anger when the message of the gospel we bring is rejected. Rather, accept the rejection and keep praying and seeking further opportunity to share the truth of the gospel.

So, what is your attitude toward unbelief? As we look at this account in Luke, here are some things that it shouldn't be: you shouldn't be surprised, undetermined or angry when confronted with unbelief and rejection of the gospel. Rather, with peaceful determination, share the truth as God provides opportunity. Let's close with Peter's great admonition to all of us, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:15-17). (NKJV)

Soli Deo Gloria!

Eric Ellis



Book Nook

Christ-Centered Preaching
by Bryan Chapell

While in college, I had many friends who were studying to be musicians. It was a curious thing at time to watch them hone and develop their craft. I

attended many concerts where I was astounded by the talent and beauty of their skill. However, it was universally true that if you asked any of them afterwards how they did they would tell you how poor and incomplete their performance was. All of them seemed possessed by a great desire for excellence and a sensitivity for how far they fell short. They all longed to shed their shortcomings and be free to play with excellence. The only other group that I have seen possessed with this same sort of neurosis is preachers. All teachers of the Word understand the importance of the

task of preaching the Word with excellence. We have seen and heard legendary preachers at work. However, when we consider our own teaching we feel a great sense of inadequacy and long to be able to preach with freedom. As Bryan Chapell says in his book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, "Probably no conscientious preacher has failed to question whether this lofty task is greater than the lowly servant who dares to step behind a pulpit" (26). The ultimate goal of Chapell's book is to help pastors find the liberty to succeed in this lofty task. The book in great detail disciples the reader in the overall distinctions and process of expository preaching.

Overview of Book's Teaching

The key distinction of expository preaching that makes it unique is the belief that the Word of God should be the main focus of the message. "As expository preachers, our ultimate goal is not to communicate the value of our opinions, other's philosophies, or speculative meditations

but rather to show how God’s Word discloses His will for those united to him through His son” (31). In essence, the meaning of the passage is the message and power of the sermon. According to Chapell this should take a great weight off the shoulders of the preacher who does not need to bear the burden of being powerful or clever enough to change the lives of people.

Chapell goes on to describe what the preacher should focus on by using Aristotle’s classic rhetorical distinctions of logos, pathos, and ethos. Each of these categories form a good summary of the biblical responsibilities of a preacher. Translated they equate to the craft of the speaker, his passion while teaching, and most importantly his character. “Preaching’s earthly glory may be eloquence, but its eternal heartbeat is faithfulness” (35). A person honest with himself may consider this requirement and wonder if he possesses the holiness needed for ministry. However, we are encouraged that “if the Spirit must leapfrog over human frailty to reach the heart of others with the sufficiency of the Word, then he can certainly do so. In the course of our ministries, it will often be necessary for Him to do so” (38).

While the sufficiency of the Word is the focus of an expository message, Chapell explains that it is not enough to merely repeat the facts of the Word. A sermon that discussed “The Gnostic heresy at Colossae contained elements of extreme hedonism and asceticism” would not be considered a great sermon (43). The Word actually teaches us that it was written to address our redemptive needs as people (2 Ti 3:16). Here Chapell introduces the concept of the Fallen Condition Focus or FCF. According to Chapell the main point of every text of Scripture and therefore every sermon should be to address a particular spiritual need we have. Chapell outlines a very helpful process for uncovering the FCF for our audience by first uncovering what was the FCF for the original audience of a passage of Scripture. Then by examining what FCFs our audience has in common with the original audience we can develop the main thrust of our message.

Chapell emphasizes the importance of having a simple and well-defined FCF. A quick way that we can test to see if we have a succinct and clear message is the 3am test. If someone woke us up in the middle of the night the day before the message, what would we tell them was the main point of our sermon? If you cannot give a quick answer then your sermon is not ready. Having a clear and concise FCF ensures that we have clearly developed what we want our audience to believe and do after hearing our message.

Another very important element of the expository sermon that Chapell focuses on is motivating people by grace. A

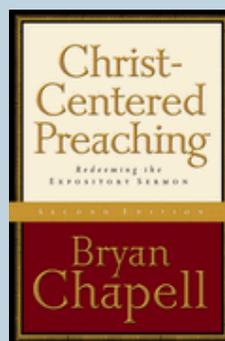
common mistake made by inexperienced preachers is to motivate people by guilt over sin or greed for blessing. “We need to consider the example of the Pharisees to recall that it is more than possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons...” (219). Grace is the one true method for ensuring obedience to God. Chapell tells a story of how John Bunyan’s fellow prisoners kept saying “You must not keep assuring people of God’s grace because they will do whatever they want.” Bunyan responded “That is not true for God’s people. If you keep assuring God’s people of His grace, then they will do whatever He wants” (313). Failure to motivate by grace can have grave consequences on a congregation. “What they do not see is the erosion of hope they cause weekly by preaching messages biblical in origin but not biblically complete” (289).

Chapell also equips his readers by giving them very concrete methods and practices to develop the art of communicating clearly. While some might object to having such formal methods to prepare a sermon, Chapell quotes George Sweazey, “A preacher does not find freedom by ignoring form and structure; these set him free to be a preacher...” (163). One of Chapell’s very helpful discussions on the structure of a sermon is to develop your ideas by first explaining the text, then illustrating the text and finally applying the text. This flow ensures that you will touch the heart, mind and soul of the audience.

Strengths of the Book

Christ-Centered Preaching is much more than a technical manual on preaching. Chapell pours out years of seasoned advice to mentor his readers. Knowing that every part of an expository sermon has been challenged at some point in history, Chapell goes to great lengths to biblically support and explain the balance that needs to be taken when considering each element of a sermon. Very cleverly he uses the same principles of teaching discussed in his book to teach you these principles. Thus, the book is not only full of examples of quality teaching but it is an example of quality teaching. The only weakness I can find is not so much with the book as with its reader. Having reviewed the contents I wish I had spent more time meditating on the principles outlined by Chapell. No doubt this will remain a faithful resource that I will refer back to time and time again for the rest of my teaching life.

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Finishing the Race



Paul's Final Words

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**Update on the Khazraee Family
January 2011**

After graduating from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the summer of 2009, my wife and I moved back to Tallahassee, Florida for me to take on a full-time position as the College/Career and Administrative Pastor at Grace Church of Tallahassee (the same church at which I did my XL internship). We have been here a year and a half and are enjoying serving with like-minded friends at Grace Church. College/Career ministry has provided Beth and me with great opportunities to disciple and counsel young men and women. It is exciting to have "front row seats" to see our great God at work in the lives of so many. We are constantly reminded of how gracious he is to us and those we minister to. On the administrative level, I have been excited to help draft and implement policies that help our board and congregation apply biblical truth and wisdom to areas of our church's life. This update would not be complete without mentioning God's goodness to us in blessing us with a son, David. He is now almost 8 months old, and we are grateful for him. We ask that you pray for us. Pray that we will have wisdom as parents. Also, ask that the Lord would grant us more boldness and courage to share the gospel on the college campuses in town and to proclaim his life-changing word and grace to those he brings our way.



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