

A MODERN PARABLE

In a large city, somewhere in the USA, a doctor of note discovers the cure for one of the most virulent forms of cancer known to mankind. It was a cancer that developed so fast, that time was of the essence from its first diagnosis. He, and he alone, knew how to administer this cure.

Many who had been suffering from this disease, came to him for the cure and were enjoying total remission. For this they were extremely grateful, and praised this man beyond measure.

However, people started to come to him who didn't have even the slightest hint that they might have this deadly disease. Whenever he would discover that a new patient had the disease, he would send them home without telling them about the diagnoses. Then, after bringing them in a few times to get to know them, he would finally announce that they had a deadly form of cancer.

The main disadvantage to this approach was that many of them either died or were so far advanced with their cancers that his treatment could not bring them to remission. But, he never caused any of them undue alarm, or had to deal with rejection when he finally told them what he had discovered.

What do you think about a doctor who practiced with this philosophy? Would you want to trust your life to a man like this? Surely not!

When a doctor discovers a disease in my body that threatens my physical life, I don't want to wait around to get to know him! I want treatment now – before the disease has a chance to spread and reaches a point where nothing can be done to save my life.

Now, what is the meaning of this parable? There are preachers among us today who are skilled in the truth of God's Word. Capable of saving precious souls.

When someone comes to them and acknowledges their sinful condition, and asks for the cure, they gladly present it to them. For this, such people are forever grateful, and often they sing the praises of such preachers.

However, when these same preachers discover a virulent sin among those to whom they are preaching, they often do not point out the sin and present the cure from God's Word. Instead, they preach benign sermons filled with generic principles, so they can gain the confidence of the people first. Then they gradually slip in the fact that these people are in sin, and their souls in danger of being lost.

If we would not put our physical lives in the hands of a doctor who practiced according to this philosophy, why would we put our souls in the hands of a preacher who used the same philosophy? Are not the souls of men far more precious than their physical lives? {Matthew 10:28; 16:26}

We need to give heed to the way the Holy Spirit inspired men in the first century to preach the word. Whenever Paul went up on Mars Hill in Athens, he saw that the people were engrossed in idolatry. According to some of the preachers of our day, he should have taken a few days to get to know these people, and gain their confidence, before hammering down on idolatry. But is this the way the Holy Spirit guided Paul to approach this situation?

Acts 17:22-31 [NKJV] “22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;23 “for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, **the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:24** “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples made with hands.**25 “Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.26 “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,27 “so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’29 “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we **ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.**30 “Truly, **these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,**31 “because He has **appointed a day on which He will**

judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

What Paul said here hit them right between the eyes, so to speak, by saying that *THE* God who made them should not be thought of like “gold or silver or stone, [or] something shaped by art and man’s devising.” Then he calls their idol worship “times of ignorance,” and commands them to repent. And to top it off, he tells them that God has appointed a day when He will judge the world in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, Whom He raised from the dead! This caused no little stir, but some who were honest and sincere responded and souls were saved as a result.

Do we even need to cite the preaching of Stephen in Acts Chapters six and seven? He called them “...stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!” And said that they “...always resist the Holy Spirit; as [their] fathers did, so [did they].” (Acts 7:51) Then he said their fathers had “52 “...killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One,” and that they had “become the betrayers and murderers” of the Just One! (Acts 7:52)

Surely he could have been more effective if he would only have taken time to get to know these people, and just preach kind things to them until he had gained their confidence. In fact, he might have been able to save his life, had he followed this modern-day philosophy. Could it be that there are some preachers who see the example of Stephen as more of a “not the way to do it” lesson? Could it be that there are some preachers who are not willing to take the heat, and stand in the breach where Satan threatens the souls of men?

I am well aware that there are many who will read this and simply see an ill-educated, “old fashioned” preacher who can’t see that preaching like Stephen and Paul just won’t cut it today. But frankly, when it comes time to give an account to my God for the work I have done in this life, I would much rather say that “I preached it just the way you inspired men to preach in the first century,” than to try and explain why I chose an approach that had its origin in the minds of men, and which is condemning countless precious souls in its execution.

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