

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## SPEAK THE WORD WITH ALL AUTHORITY

### Part Three

by Lee Moses

The Lord's church has a Divine mandate **to** preach God's word and **how** to preach His word: *“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke **with all authority**. Let no man despise thee”* (Titus 2:15, emphasis LM). It is crucial that faithful brethren continue to speak the word with all authority, lest others are given place to despise not only proclaimers of God's word, but the word itself. In the past two issues of the *Fulton County Gospel News* we have considered four requisites to speaking the word with all authority: (1) Appeal to the authority of God's word; (2) Use Scriptures correctly and convincingly; (3) Limit appeals to the authority of men; and (4) Leave no Gospel truth unpreached. This month we will consider two final requisites to speaking the word with all authority.

#### Speak God's Word Urgently

Paul exhorted Timothy, *“Preach the word: be instant (‘urgent,’ American Standard Version) in season, out of season”* (2 Timothy 4:2). The need of preaching the Gospel is urgent, and the urgency of the Gospel must be impressed upon its hearers if they are to regard it as authoritative.

The outspoken infidel Robert G. Ingersoll once told a group of denominational clergymen that they did not believe what they preached. As one can well imagine, they were all insulted and denied the charge; to which Ingersoll replied, “If I believed that there was a lake of fire called hell, and men who did not believe in Jesus would actually spend eternity in that fire, then I would walk these streets and take hold of every man; I would not turn him loose until I warned him of the wrath to come.” Ingersoll had a point—those who are convinced of the truth of any message should act with urgency in proportion to the urgency of that message. Since the warning of judgment to come is so serious, a low level of urgency from the proclaimers of that warning detracts from the urgency of the Gospel. One preaching God's word is not merely giving advice or suggestions. So one denigrates the authority of God's word by presenting it in a manner that implies it is uncertain, or that it is merely one of several possible good choices.

Upon reading of the preaching of such men as Peter, Philip, and Paul as recorded in the book of Acts, one can immediately detect an

urgency to their preaching—and it lent credence to what they said. Having convicted the Pentecostians of sin, Peter did not relent in his urgency: *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40). These two words that describe Peter's actions bespeak dire urgency: (1) He “testified”; here a word meaning “To exhort with authority in matters of extraordinary importance, frequently with reference to higher powers and or suggestion of peril”<sup>1</sup>; and (2) He “exhorted”; meaning “To urge strongly.”<sup>2</sup> Those present could tell that Peter was not merely making a “dinner speech”; he was preaching an authoritative and urgent exhortation that demanded immediate and complete obedience: *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . .”* (verses 41-42).

The number of responses to Peter's preaching brings up another point. Often brethren lament the lack of responses to the Gospel invitation in modern days when compared with bygone years. Twenty to thirty baptisms at a Gospel meeting, with just as many restorations, was fairly commonplace. Now, having more than one baptism or restoration is exceptional. This is usually attributed to the apparent impene-

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trability of the twenty-first century heart. While not denying that the spiritual soil has become more obstinate in recent years, one must recognize that modern preachers' failure to preach the word with urgency is also a contributing factor. Departed brethren such as Walter Scott, "Raccoon" John Smith, Jacob Creath, Jr., and Marshall Keeble would preach like they **expected** people to obey the word they were preaching. They knew that what they preached was urgent business, and failure to comply would result in the damnation of the hearer's soul. They were like Paul, who said, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" (2 Corinthians 5:11; compare with Jude 22-23).

Today's preacher too often lacks that same urgency. When extending the invitation, he fails even to tell his hearers what they

need to do to be saved. He merely says, "If you have a need, you may respond at this time." Imagine that—a preacher of the Gospel, knowing that there are non-Christians present, and he says only, "**If** you have a need"! Of course they have a need—although they may not know it yet—they are lost and their souls are in eternal danger! They must be made aware of their need, and of the urgency of meeting that need. When Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus, a lost soul in need of salvation, he did not tell him, "If you have a need, you may respond at this time." He **implored** him, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be proclaimed apathetically or apologetically. It is to be proclaimed to every creature (Mark 16:15), with great plainness of speech (2 Corinthians 3:12), boldly (Ephesians 6:20), laboring to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28-29), not as pleasing men or seeking glory of men (1 Thessalonians 2:4, 6), and being affirmed constantly (Titus 3:8). All this underscores the urgency of preaching God's word. Although less people are responding in obedience to the Gospel today, this does not change the church's response—we must "*be urgent in season, out of season.*" The present time may be "out of season," but we must be as urgent as ever if God's word is to be spoken with authority.

**Live in Harmony  
with God's Word**

Sometimes preachers lose their urgency, boldness, and plainness, instead apologizing for the truth,

because of their own shortcomings as revealed by God's word. People will indeed lose respect for a preacher whose actions are inconsistent with his message, and they may also lose respect for the message itself. If a preacher's conduct is not according to the word of God, he is responsible for bringing his conduct into harmony with the word of God—among other reasons, so that his preaching can be properly authoritative: "*In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you*" (Titus 2:7-8). This exemplary conduct goes beyond speech; as Paul exhorted Timothy, "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Children often lose respect for their parents because they fail to "practice what they preach." People will do the same with anyone who exalts a standard of authority in word, but flouts that standard in practice. They will look more to such a person's actions than his words. The priests Hophni and Phinehas may have had good things to say about the Law, but their self-serving actions with regard to the offerings caused others to have disregard for the Law, much to the displeasure of God: "*Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD*" (1 Samuel 2:17).

However, one who can **demonstrate** how to live godly in Christ Jesus can use his life as a

precious ornament of the Gospel, not as a detriment to it (Titus 2:10). While Paul told the Ephesian Christians all things they needed (Acts 20:20-21, 27), he also **showed** them all things they needed: “*I have **shewed** you all things, how that **so** laboring ye ought to . . .*” (verse 35, emphases LM). To the Thessalonians Paul was able to say, “*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*” (1 Thessalonians 2:10). Everywhere Paul had been, people knew that he preached with genuine compassion and concern for the hearers, living what he preached.

This writer recalls attending the meetings of the church of Christ in Denton, Texas before he became a Christian, wondering whether anyone could really live according to what was being proclaimed from the pulpit. Upon spending time with the saints of that congregation, this writer learned that it **could** be done; that the Christian life could be lived. Indeed, the best sermons are often lived and not spoken. As the poem exclaims,

I'd rather see a sermon than to hear  
one any day.

I'd rather one would walk with me  
than merely show the way.

The eye's the better pupil, more  
willing than the ear;

Fine counsel is confusing but  
example is always clear.

The best of all the preachers are the  
men who live their creed,

For to see the good in action is what  
everybody needs.

If you let me watch you do it I can  
see just how it's done;

I can see your hands in action, but  
your tongue too fast may run.

And the sermons you deliver may be  
very wise and true,

But I'd rather get my lesson from  
observing what you do.

For I may misunderstand you and  
the high advice you give,

But there is no misunderstanding  
how you act and how you live.

Of course, one's failure to live up to God's word does not ultimately detract from the authority of God's word, only from others' perception of it. God's word is the perfect standard, and will remain at the Day of Judgment. While the failure of others to live in harmony with God's word does not excuse anyone from his own obligation to live in harmony with God's word, there will be those who will have to answer for their inconsistent living—living that detracted from the authority of God's word, and eventually led people astray (Luke 17:1-2).

### Conclusion

In this modern era, there is plenty of milquetoast and softsoap preaching; there are plenty of almost secular motivational speeches that are called sermons; and there is plenty of error-filled preaching based on shallow reasoning. There is more than enough to detract from the authority of God's word. What the world needs is Biblical, authoritative preaching. The Holy Spirit could not have expressed it any clearer when He inspired Paul to instruct us to speak the word “**with all authority.**” Let the church do all that it can to exalt the authority of God's word—let us speak the word with all authority.

<sup>1</sup> *Diamaturomai*, in Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Parakaleō*, Bauer, et al., p. 765.

## YOU CAN STILL FIND THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

by G. K. Wallace (1903-1988)

In 1942 when I was in Kansas City, someone stole my car. I had a new 1942 model NASH automobile. My car was gone! I did not know which way to turn. So I called the police. When they came they began to ask questions. They asked, “What kind of car is it? What is the name of the car?”

Suppose I said, “It doesn't make any difference about a name. Just go find me a car.” They asked, “What model is it? When was it made?” Suppose I said, “It doesn't make any difference when it was made. Just get me a car. The model is immaterial.” Suppose that they had come back with an old 1914 model. I would have decided it did make a difference, would I not? I suspect that if I had talked to those policemen like that, they would have said, “He is drunk; we had better lock him up.” Yet I can talk to the world about the church and say, “It does not make any difference about the name, makes no difference when it was started, no difference what it does,” and the world says I'm a scholar. If I had talked that way to the police, they would have said I was a drunk!

Yes, they have destroyed every identification mark of the church. But let me tell you, you can find the church that Jesus built, if you will get out and look for it in as sensible a manner as those police looked for my car.

# LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

The church of Christ in your area has a number of **free** Bible Study services to offer you. If you have a desire to study the Scriptures to come to an understanding of God's will for you, or to make certain that you know what to do to be saved and remain saved, we will be delighted to sit down with you in your own home and study the Bible with you. If you would like to study through a Bible Correspondence Course, we will gladly lead you through such a course by mail. If you desire a Bible tract on a particular subject, we will do our best to locate material on the subject you request and get that to you. If you have questions about any of the articles that appear in **Fulton County Gospel News** or any other Bible topic, we will do our best to give you an answer from the Bible. Of course, there are no charges for any of these services offered by churches of Christ.

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### GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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