

# 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 One

by Lee Moses

Listening to much of what passes for preaching today, one is hard-pressed to discern any real **authority** behind the preaching. There are many talented pop psychologists in the pulpits, along with inspiring motivational speakers, skilled trainers in steps to business success, educated theologians, and gifted orators and storytellers. Some of them are much like those of whom the Bible speaks, who “*speak great swelling words of vanity*” (2 Peter 2:19). That is, their words are pretty, but useless. When authority is lacking, preaching cannot be what God intends it to be; nor is it likely to do what God intends it to do.

As Paul addressed Titus, a Gospel preacher laboring on the island of Crete, he told him of a number of “*things which become sound doctrine*” (Titus 2:1 and following). And as Titus was in turn to preach those things to those on Crete, there was a specific manner in which he was to preach: “*These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee*” (2:15; emphasis LM). As the Lord’s church is entrusted with proclaiming the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:4; 2 Timothy 2:2), it is likewise

imperative that the church speak the things which become sound doctrine, and that the church speak them with all authority. We will consider six requisites to speaking the word with all authority.

#### Appeal to the Authority of God’s Word

Before authoritative preaching can occur, preaching must be backed by sufficient authority. Why should anyone give heed to a preacher who is merely expressing his opinions, regardless of how educated those opinions might be? A preacher is not authorized to preach his opinions; he is authorized to “*Preach the word*” (2 Timothy 4:2)—and what authority that is! “*For the word of God is quick (‘living,’ American Standard Version), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12).

Notice how the Old Testament prophets made clearly known that their word was actually God’s word, thus unquestionably authoritative. Micaiah implored

King Ahab, “*Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD*” (1 Kings 22:19). Elisha told the king of Israel and his men, “*Hear ye the word of the LORD*” (2 Kings 7:1). Other prophets similarly appealed to the authority of God as they spoke His word; including Moses (Exodus 5:1; 10:3; 11:4; 32:27), Joshua (7:13; 24:2), Samuel (1 Sam. 10:18; 15:1-2), Nathan (2 Sam. 7:5; 12:7), Elijah (1 Kings 17:14; 21:19; 2 Kings 1:4), Isaiah (1:10; 28:14; 39:5; 66:5), Jeremiah (7:2; 10:1; 29:4; 44:24), Ezekiel (6:3; 25:3; 36:1), and Amos (1:3; 3:1; 7:16).

Christ’s apostles continued to make known the origin and authority of the New Testament, which they received from God and delivered to man. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “*We have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16), and “*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*” (14:37). Paul commended the Thessalonians, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess. 2:13). Peter told his readers that he wrote “*That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*” (2 Pet. 3:2). John made clear that

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P.O. Box 251  
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Lee Moses .....EDITOR  
Phone .....(870) 625-3217  
E-Mail .....cocfgn@centurytel.net  
Website . . .www.fultoncountygospelnews.org  
Brian Dixon .....Webmaster  
E-Mail .....halopages@yahoo.com

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the final book of the New Testament was *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him”* (Revelation 1:1). Evidently the Lord **wants** people who are hearing His word to **know** that they are hearing His word.

However, merely saying, “This is the word of the Lord” is hardly sufficient. The Lord strongly condemns those who claim to be speaking His word when they are not (Deuteronomy 18:20; Jeremiah 14:14-15; 23:30-32; Acts 15:24; 1 Timothy 1:19-20). So one must ensure that what he is preaching is God’s word. No, one speaking today will not receive his message directly from God as did the prophets and the apostles, but one can still preach God’s word. He is as certainly and fully equipped as a first-century preacher, if he will apply himself honestly, sincerely, and whole-heartedly to his task (2

Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15). If one is to preach with authority, he will preach a Biblical sermon, not a speech lightly seasoned with Scriptures. He will show what the Scriptures say and teach. If one is to speak with “all authority,” he must remember where “all authority” lies—and it lies with Christ (Matthew 28:18; compare with 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Not only is the church to **speak** with all authority; but it is also to **exhort** and **rebuke** with all authority (Titus 2:15). What is to motivate one to heed any exhortation or rebuke unless there is convincing authority underlying that exhortation or rebuke? When an exhortation or rebuke can be shown to be based upon the authority of God’s word, those who are interested in doing what is right before God will be sufficiently compelled (Acts 2:40-41; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Revelation 2:29).

### Use Scriptures Correctly and Convincingly

Some preachers, while making it a point to use Scripture in their sermon, and thus to appeal to the authority of God’s word, fail to use their Scriptures correctly or convincingly. This writer recently heard a “televangelist” making a strange assertion regarding God’s statement, *“I am come down to deliver [Israel] out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land”* (Exodus 3:8). The speaker claimed that since God said He was going to bring Israel **up**, it meant He was going to **encourage** them before He brought them out of Egypt. This man then went on to “preach a sermon” about how we need to “lift ourselves up” before

God will “bring us out” of our affliction.

The above illustrates how one can use Scripture in a sermon, sometimes even quite a bit of Scripture, yet fail to deliver a Scriptural sermon. And what are hearers to do with a sermon that is filled with misapplied Scriptures? If they are “more noble” hearers, they will compare what the speaker says with what the Scripture says, realize that what the speaker says “ain’t so—and reject it (Acts 17:11).

And this is a danger not only for false teachers, but also for those who are essentially preaching the Truth, yet misapplying Scriptures to get there. Some common misapplications of Scripture include saying Proverbs 22:6 teaches the impossibility of apostasy for a properly-reared child (*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”*); saying 1 Corinthians 2:9 is about heaven (*“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”*); and saying Revelation 2:10 merely means one must be faithful until he dies (*“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”*). One must be sure to use Scriptures with their intended meaning, and show the hearers why any extended application follows. Remember, even the devil can quote Scripture correctly with false application (Matthew 4:6).

Correct use of the Scriptures is not limited to each individual reference. Sometimes individual Scriptures may be taught correctly, yet the sermon as a whole may fail to teach what the Bible teaches. If preaching topically, one must ensure that his approach is what the New Testament teaches on that

topic. If preaching expositoryly, one must ensure that he teaches what that passage teaches.

For one to preach authoritatively, he must not only use Scriptures correctly, he must also use them **convincingly**. Once Apollos correctly learned the doctrine of Christ, *“He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ”* (Acts 18:28). Shortly after Saul’s (Paul’s) conversion, *“Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ”* (9:22); and he continued to reason convincingly from the Scriptures through his missionary journeys (13:16-42; 17:2-4; 19:8-10). God intends for His word to be preached convincingly; and the cynical people of today certainly need to be convinced, perhaps more than ever.

To be convincing, Scriptures must usually be set in their context. There may be times when a speaker familiar with his hearers can skip some background information, knowing they have heard it before. But it is important that they know the context in which a Scripture is given. If hearers can know the background behind a saying of Christ, or behind an inspired verse from an apostle, they will be better able to see how that passage teaches what the speaker says it does. It is unfortunate and unnecessary when a hearer responds, “How do I know this Scripture means what this preacher is telling me?”

And to be convincing, preaching must be logical. Jesus was the Master Logician. Consider how He dealt with those advocating religious error (Matthew 22:15-33, 41-45). At the conclusion of His refutations, *“No man was able to*

*answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions”* (verse 46). One must consider the Scriptures, realize they teach by implication, and draw those conclusions which are warranted by the evidence. Then he must show his hearers why they should arrive at the same conclusions.

*[To be continued next issue].*

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## THE BATTLE IS OF THE LORD

by Alton W. Fonville

Being discouraged seems to be the normal reaction of weak and sinful man, while living among and trying to teach his fellowman the truth of God’s word. So many times, we have seen men become distraught, down and out and ready to quit the battle when things were going rough for them. And, just so many times, the Lord has shown His power to the people and it would give courage and renewed strength to the ones in the battle. Several good examples of this come to mind from the Old Testament as well as the New. The battles we as Christians are involved with are not carnal as those with the Israelites. But, the examples are still the same. God wants His people to obey His instructions in fighting the battle for truth. We have to lend our support to the Lord and be “present and accounted for,” as the military services ask.

The prophet Elijah is a typical example, as recorded in 1 Kings 19. He was already down and out, hiding in a cave when the Lord

asked him “what he was doing there.” He had been fighting in battles and things looked bleak to him. The very people of God’s choice, the Israelites, had broken covenant with the Lord and had slain the Lord’s prophets with the sword and were trying to kill him. He told the Lord, *“I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”* The Lord told him that there were seven thousand yet who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and to get up and continue the battle and see the results. Great victories were won when Elijah obeyed the Lord and demonstrated his trust in Him. And that faith and trust is very important to the Lord. He demonstrated His power to fight the battle through a few of his people in the story of Gideon in Judges 7. Instead of thousands which showed up for battle, only three hundred faithful and dedicated men were chosen, and the battle was won, because it was “of the Lord.” Jonathan made a very important statement in this regard: *“It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few”* (1 Samuel 14:6).

The young “shepherd boy” David, just before he killed the giant Goliath of the Philistines for defying the people of God, wanted all the world to know *“that there is a God in Israel”* and *“that the Lord saveth not with the sword and spear, because the battle is of the Lord”* (1 Samuel 17:46-47). This is the very thing which Christian people today need to learn. When we are on the Lord’s side, having made that all-important decision of whom we will serve, we need to demonstrate that faith in Him to keep His word and let Him use us as His instruments. After all, He told Moses long before

this “who made your mouth?” The battle for truth is done by individuals in the hand of the Lord, not only speaking for God, but, being the examples in the world, as “leaven in bread dough.” It must be “active” to be of any value. Lukewarm Christians are still sickening to the Lord and He will vomit them out. If one is “too timid” or “afraid” to let the Lord use him, victories for the truth of God will be hindered, but not defeated. At one time, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah made this statement: *“O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?”* (2 Chronicles 20:6). Hosea makes it clear that the Lord has respect for His people who are faithful and will save them; but it will not be by bow, by sword or by fast horses and riders (Hosea 1).

As Elijah learned long ago, we too, need to have that deep faith in our Lord and keep the charge which we were given by our Lord Jesus: *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”*; *“Preach the gospel to every creature.”* *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”* *“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf”*—count it a blessing to suffer as a Christian. When the Lord is fighting the battle, we can’t lose in the end.

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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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