

The Old Paths

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“Keep It Simple”

Jarrold Jacobs

The above statement is the “mantra” of a friend of mine. When it comes to the preaching and teaching of God’s word, he tells me often, “Keep it simple.” This sentiment was impressed upon my mind even further when a lady told me last week, “The main problem that high school students have today is not which church to go to, but whether or not to believe in God in the first place.” Think about it: We live in a society that has so pushed God aside that the lady who talked with me said she knows high school students who need to be convinced about the very existence of God!

This sister’s observation told me that, yes, my friend is right in telling me to “keep it simple” as I preach. It also tells me that I need to be preaching and teaching these “simple” sermons not only to the teenagers, but also to the PARENTS of those teenagers! After all, children are the students of their parents. Therefore, if parents do not expose their children to God, the Bible, to truth, etc., then how can we expect them to know these things? God has placed the responsibility of teaching with parents (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6-9, 11:18-21; Eph. 6:4; II Tim. 1:5; etc.).

Furthermore, when I think about the statement, “Keep it simple,” I find that this does not mean make things simplistic, or speak down to people. Rather, it places responsibility on the

teacher to make sure things are said in such a way that folks can understand. Brethren have said for many years that one does not need to be a “Greek scholar” to go to Heaven. At the same time, we do not need to have Ph.D.’s in order to understand the Bible! The apostle Paul said, “*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*” (Eph. 3:4). Jesus encouraged the reading and searching (studying) of Scriptures, for He knew that by so doing, mankind can understand the truth and can follow it (Jn. 5:39, 17:17; Rev. 1:3). Not only did He state this truth, but He lived it (Acts 1:1)! Bear in mind, that when Jesus spoke, “*the common people heard him gladly*” (Mk. 12:37). Those who listened to Jesus were often the “unknowns,” the “rejected,” “the general population.” In contrast, the social “elites,” and their ilk did not like Jesus. In fact, they conspired against Him to keep Him from preaching (Jn. 11:47-53). After Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the apostles continued preaching His simple message (Acts 2, etc.). When they preached that simple message, the “elites,” and “educated” people marveled, at their words, noting, “*...they had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13).

Therefore, to “keep it simple” means to preach like Jesus and the apostles did. Can we think of any better examples to follow than Christ and His apostles when one today wants to communicate God’s will in the best way? I can’t! When

we determine to preach and teach as Christ, then we will “keep it simple” for all people who are searching for the truth. Let no man get so caught up in his own ability and talents that he forgets to “hide behind the cross” when preaching! Keep it simple so that the “common people” can hear the truth, believe it, and obey it! Start at home!!

Preach Christ and Him Crucified

Mike Davis, Bloomington, IN

An elder once asked a visiting preacher during a gospel meeting, “What do you mean when you say, “Preach Christ and Him crucified?” The young preacher was taken aback by the question. Did the elder mean to chastise him for *not* preaching Christ and Him crucified? (I Cor. 1:23; 2:2) He knew he had specifically addressed that matter several times in the week’s preaching. Did the elder mean something else? He knew he had preached concerning God’s plan of salvation (Rom. 6:1-6) and the importance of an obedient, faithful life in Christ (Rev. 2:10; 14:13; Col. 3:1-17; II Pet. 1:5-11). He also addressed the subject of the Lord’s church as the Body, Bride, and Kingdom: all singular and meaning the same as the one church of Christ. He proved plainly one cannot enter the church without being immersed into Christ (Acts 2:38) and simultaneously being immersed into the body of Christ, the church (I Cor. 12:13). The young preacher was satisfied he had done his best in preaching Christ and Him crucified in every sermon, though the sermons varied some in topical subject.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

What could the elder have meant by his question?

Knowing the elder desired an answer, the preacher responded, "I mean there is nothing more important than His sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 10:1-10). Without Christ and Him crucified, there is no means of our salvation (II Cor. 5:21; John 3:15-21), there is no church purchased with His shed blood, (Acts 20:28) and there is no promise of eternity with God (Jn. 14:6; I Jn. 2:25). That's why in every sermon, I try to include the fact Jesus died, was buried and God raised Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31; I Cor. 15:1-4) Isn't this preaching Christ and Him crucified?"

The elder smiled approvingly and assured the young preacher he answered correctly. He further calmed the preacher by saying, "This wasn't a 'test,' brother. You stated your answer correctly and proved it in every sermon you preached. I simply asked you in order to lead into this thought for your lifelong consideration: **There is no subject of scripture** that is not tied to the gospel and therefore to Christ and Him crucified. While we need sermons preached directly on the subject of His death and burial, and the glories of His resurrection, we must realize as well, every scripture is for our profit in doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness: that those of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. (II Tim. 3:16-17) It is good to know you already realize this fact. That's why by God's design, regardless of the 'announced subject', in order for the subject to be righteous and scriptural, it must be tied to Christ and Him crucified."

Yea, verily, the elder's statement remains truthful! Regardless of the announced "topic/subject" of the sermon, it **must** be tied to Christ and Him crucified! Paul, by inspiration, declared we must not preach another **gospel** (Gal. 1:6-10). To the Corinthians he said it is the **gospel**, which saves us (I Cor. 15:1-4). To Timothy he said, "*Preach the word,*" (II Tim. 4:2), which we know is Christ, (Jn. 1:14; 14:6; 17:17). Specifically, Paul declared the **gospel** is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4). It is by His blood we are redeemed (I Pet. 1:18-25) and "*this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*" (Ibid)

Since it is by God's divine power we are granted all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 1:3) and since we know all spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3), there simply is **no** subject of spiritual nature one can preach (i.e. no scriptural sermon intended to benefit our souls) that is found separate and apart from Christ and Him crucified! Consequently, there is no subject matter of any spiritual value for our souls that can depart from telling God's plan of salvation for our souls! It was Christ and Him crucified that purchased our redemption and the church (I Pet.

1:18; Acts 20:28). It is in the *likeness* of His death, burial and resurrection that obedient souls enter Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27) and simultaneously enter the church (I Cor. 12:13). Further, no righteous soul can depart from His perfect example of obedience (Phil. 2:5-11; I Pet. 2:21-25) and still exemplify Christ living in them (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1-4).

The truth of Christ and Him crucified is the focus of every event God has allowed throughout time. The very first prophecy includes Christ and Him crucified (Gen. 3:14-15). It has always been God's desire to save mankind from sin, and bring him to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4). What old preachers called, "shadow and image" sermons always expressed Christ and Him crucified in God's ultimate deliverance of man's soul from the depths of sin. Even today, we need reminded again and again of the **purpose, design, and cost of our SALVATION!** Whether speaking of various concerns that affect our brethren, or the local church as a whole, or examining the current events that often interfere with correct interpretation of scripture, or preaching to bolster the righteous conduct of us all in faithful service to Christ, **there is no subject of scripture** that is not tied to the gospel and therefore Christ and Him crucified. May we all preach it boldly and simply and without shame (Rom. 1:16-17.)

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