



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Doing Good to Those Lost in Sin

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Not all preaching is done in pulpits. In fact, since it is so difficult to get people to come to our assemblies or Bible classes, perhaps the most effective “preaching” takes place when one shares his or her faith with someone else.

The “live, and let live” philosophy so prevalent in our time makes it more difficult to confront those lost in sin. They don’t think it’s any of our business to teach them what they need to do to be saved. They don’t perceive our concern for them as “doing good” to them.

It’s easy for us to see that if their physical lives were in jeopardy, that we would be remiss not to warn them about it, but for some reason we hesitate when it comes to their eternal safety. Whether they realize it, or not, the most good we can do for “all men” is to direct them to the gospel of Christ, which is found only in God’s word—the Bible.

Jesus said His purpose in coming to earth was to “seek and to save that which is lost” (Lk. 19:10). As disciples and followers of Jesus, this also should be our “mission” in life. He told His disciples that He would make them “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).

Jesus gave what we call the “great commission” to His apostles just before His ascension. He said “All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matt. 28:18-19). Lest we think that this commission was given exclusively to the few men who heard it on that occasion, Jesus went on to say, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (v.20). That makes this commission applicable to all of us who have been “baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

It is quite clear that the gospel is not always received well by those who hear it. Christians in the first century, when faced

Fifth and last in a series on ‘Doing Good To All’

with extreme persecution for their faith, “went everywhere preaching the word” (Ac.8:4). I doubt that this aggressive evangelism was viewed by others as “good,” but indeed it was.

The apostle Peter describes us as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Pet. 2:9). This description is not to inflate our egos, but is our divine calling to “proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” In order to be effective proclaimers of Christ, Peter goes on to beg us to have honorable conduct so that when those in the world think we are evildoers, they may by our “good works which they observe, glorify God” in the end (vs. 11-12).

This same message was conveyed by the apostle Paul as he urged us to “become blameless and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine

as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...” (Phil. 2:15-16).

In teaching His disciples of the urgency of their mission, Jesus, in the parable of the great supper said: “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Lk. 14:23). Though we cannot actually “compel” people to obey the gospel, we must convey the message as compelling as it really is.

We must resist any temptation to make the gospel more attractive to men by appealing to the carnal man. We do people no favor by withholding truth from them, even though it may be unpleasant to them. The apostle Paul’s effort to “become all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:19-23) did not include compromise of truth. No matter how “acceptable” sin or false doctrine becomes in the world, we still have an obligation to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Who will do good to the lost? Solomon, in his wisdom, wrote: “He who wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). Think about it! If we don’t take the gospel to the lost, who will? Like the prophet Isaiah, our response to this calling should be, “Here am I! Send me” (Isa. 6:8).

*“How beautiful are the feet of
those who preach
the gospel of peace,
who bring glad
tidings of
good things!”*

Romans 10:15





Q&A About Church Socials

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** (1911-1995)

Two questions are asked of me: (1) Why doesn't the church have more socials? and (2) Why can't we have parties in the basement of the church building?

The New Testament authorizes every act and activity of the church. It provides us with all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It completely authorizes us in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In worship and work, all that God wants is made known by the "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). We must not add to, or take from the word of God (Rev. 22:18-19), and we must not "go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

Social activities are not included in the authorized acts of the church. It is very good to have social functions, but they are "home activities." If there are not enough of such, then the homes are failing. Let us not push upon the church that responsibility which belongs to the home. If it is advisable that Christians associate more, then let us not fail to provide such association, but let us keep it independent of church functions.

But some ask, "Since the church building is not sacred, and since our homes are not large enough to accommodate large groups, why can't we use the basement?"

Actually the church building is not sacred. On the other hand it is not a carnal, worldly place either. Money for the building was given to be used in spiritual work. Remember, we do not object to eating in the church building, but we do object to making the church building an "eating place." It is not wrong to laugh in the church building, but it is certainly wrong to make it a "house of laughter." The church house is not "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15), but it is God's house (Jn. 2:16).

The house in which I live is not sacred, but some things are not appropriate there. A doctor's office is not sacred, but who would say it would be a good place to repair automobiles? A hospital and sheet metal shop don't belong in the same building. So the church and the world should not be housed from the same treasury.

A drinking fountain, a rest room or a nursery are made to expedite a spiritual service. But a social hall is to give vent to a social urge. Pews, classrooms, lights and fans are purposefully paid for by the church because of their usefulness in aiding us to do what God said for us to do, but for the congregation to provide recreational facilities does not contribute to the doing of

that which God directed. Paul wrote: "What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" (1 Cor. 11:22). He was condemning the practice of making a feast with the Lord's supper, but at the same time he gave us the necessary inference that there is a difference between homes and meeting places provided by the church.

Let us keep the church in the "church business." It is always safe to do that which we know is right, without addition or subtraction. Let us use every facility we have to expedite the Lord's work, and let us avoid anything that would minimize its nature, which is altogether spiritual.

This article first appeared in Truth Magazine, November, 1962

The Need for Doctrinal Sermons

By **RICK LIGGIN**

It is not uncommon in some churches (both in denominational churches and in those that supposedly belong to Christ) to hear folks complain about "doctrinal" sermons. "We don't want all that theological preaching!" they will say. "Just tell us what we're supposed to do!" Said differently: "We don't need to know all the right doctrines; just give us practical teaching."

Of course, this isn't altogether a bad thing! Sometimes "theology" has very little to do with what the Bible actually teaches. It often confuses, clouds, or even corrupts Bible doctrines, instead of accurately explaining them.

But in a very real sense, there can be no correct practical teaching without correct theology. In other words, there is no right practice without doctrinal accuracy.

"Why is that?" you may ask. Simply because all doctrinal teaching is practical; it all has some kind of application! Doctrine is supposed to affect a person's conduct—how he acts or behaves. And so, one cannot know what he's supposed to do until he correctly understands the doctrine of Christ revealed in the Bible. It is precisely that—the doctrine of Christ—that motivates and gives power to practical application. Without doctrine, there is no practical application! In fact, it is often a misunderstanding of Bible doctrines that leads men to disagree over what the correct practice ought to be. The point is that some people disagree about what they're supposed to do, because they

don't correctly understand the doctrine of Christ.

At the root of the problem is an artificial distinction that we sometimes make between "doctrine" and "teaching." What do we normally think of when we hear the expression, "doctrinal sermon"? I would venture to say that most folks probably think of some theological explanation of some Biblical topic that

has little or no real practical application. But folks, that, in and of itself, demonstrates a misunderstanding of the word, "doctrine" or "doctrinal." Let me be absolutely clear about this: there is no Biblical distinction between "doctrine" and "teaching." Doctrine is teaching! The truth is: all "teaching" is "doctrinal." And that means

that all of our sermons had better be "doctrinal" or else they are not correct.

What we really need are "doctrinal" sermons that accurately explain what the Lord wants us to know and how that information is supposed to practically affect our conduct. We need sermons that accurately explain God's Word and at the same time help us make the application to our lives. Doctrinal sermons will be practical...and practical sermons must be doctrinal!

So, don't you dare let yourself get bored with "doctrinal" sermons! Listen carefully to every sermon—to learn what the Bible teaches...listen for the doctrine! And then listen for practical application of the teaching...listen for that part of the doctrine too!

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Slogan ~~Politics~~ Religion

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

I listened to the radio as a political analyst lamented the fact that many people have made a decision concerning who they will vote for, yet almost every one of them he spoke to did not have any idea what the politician was advocating or what qualified him for governing.

He concluded that most Americans were being swayed by what he called “slogan politics.” The example he gave was one politician’s mantra: “Change.” It says a lot, but at the same time it says almost nothing. Change what? And how? It raises questions, but answers none.

My point is not to criticize the politician, but to point out that people they interviewed on the radio who favored this politician all spoke of “change” and how he was the one who would bring change and how wonderful change would be. When asked for details of the what the changes would be, how they would be accomplished, or whether the politician was qualified to bring them about—every one that was interviewed admitted they had no idea—they just liked him and his idea of “change.”

The analyst pointed out that this was a dangerous national mindset—that the politician with the best marketed slogan would win without having to prove himself to be best qualified and possessing a workable plan. He strongly urged investigating if there is anything behind the slogan before voting.

I am *not* writing about the election. All the above sounded very familiar to me. That’s because “slogan politics” is also used in “slogan religion.” People make decisions about religion based on who has the best sounding lines, or what is most appealing to them, not on a studied comparison with the truth of God as revealed in His word.

As in politics, many if not most, people have strong ideas about religion (for or against)—yet most cannot give the facts as presented in Scripture. They may be attracted to a warm “God is love” slogan, but have little idea what that means. Others cling to the “bad things shouldn’t happen if God is good” motto, but many have never really investigated whether God really is good or if evil is His fault.

People often choose churches to worship with based on externals—buildings, choirs, music, entertainment, childcare, social programs, eloquence of the preacher, etc.—rather than if the church is the church Christ built (in organization, worship, teaching, and service).

The same is true for morality. “Right to life” and “pro choice” are mottos to rally

around—but they don’t prove anything. “I was born this way” and “safe sex” are debated, but we need to set aside the slogans and emotion and simply ask what God in His word says about it.

See, slogans and mottos appeal to us because they tell us what we want to hear and we can interpret them to suit our situations. “Change” is nice in politics—I want change in healthcare, you want change about the war, your neighbor wants tax changes, while another wants change in social security. We are all divided—but one word makes it look like we are together. In religion words like “love,” “faith,” and “forgiveness” are used, but interpreted and applied in widely diverse ways. The religious world is terribly divided, but some wrongly assume these misused words bring us together.

Slogans are generally easy to understand on the surface. They are nicely packaged and repeated a lot. We are comfortable with them because they don’t require a lot of thinking or effort, and they become very familiar. This is exactly what the advertising industry is banking on. But the religious world has tapped into this as well.

A nicely professionally packaged church attracts a lot of people. I was recently told

that there is now a shortage of music and play directors in communities because denominational churches are hiring them for their professional productions. And the preachers’ sermons are filled more with pop psychology and self-help than Scripture. One very successful denominational “pastor” makes no apologies for not using the Bible in his lessons. But the messages are simple, catchy, all positive, nicely packaged, and repeated a lot.

Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to preach His gospel to everyone. He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt. 18:19-20).

True disciples are not made with slogans and mottos. Disciples, real followers of Jesus, come from being taught “all things” that have been commanded by Jesus. It requires the listeners to look beyond the surface to learn what God says and what He really means in His word. Only then will we be ready to cast our vote: “Jesus Christ is Lord!”

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‘Do you have any enemies?’

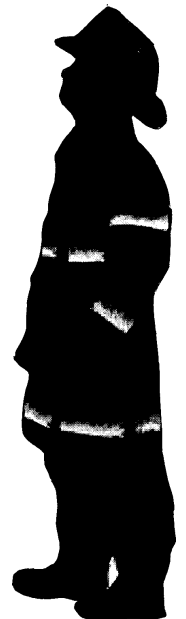
By AL DIESTELKAMP

In a call from the local fire department in the middle of the night, I was told that the storage shed at our church building was on fire. When I arrived there was nothing left but a few smoldering remains. When the fire chief examined the site, the most likely cause was that the fire was intentionally set. One of his first questions to me was, “Do you have any enemies?”

After I answered, “No, not any that I’m aware of,” I soon felt somewhat embarrassed having to admit that. Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (Jn. 15:18), and the apostle Paul wrote, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

Is it possible that our lack of enemies is because we aren’t godly enough? Or are we just too timid to count as “accursed” those who would preach “any other gospel”? (Gal. 1:8-9). A few years ago I wrote a tract with the title, *Is Your Preacher Telling You the Truth?* In it I pointed out that preachers who are telling people that they were born sinners, or that baptism is not required for salvation, or that once they are saved they cannot fall from grace, are not telling the truth. More than one Christian criticized the message as too blunt. Perhaps we have succumbed to our pluralistic culture.

After the fire was out, and I reflected on the chief’s question, I was actually relieved that he didn’t ask if we have any disgruntled members. Though I’m sure that we don’t have any who would stoop to arson, I couldn’t have honestly answered that question without risking an investigation.



INDIVIDUALS, RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

By **STEVE FONTENOT**

Duties are based on relationships. “Love your neighbor” is a duty we have, not because we are Christians, but because we are “neighbors” (Lk. 10:27,29,36—“Which...proved to be a neighbor...?”). All men, whether believers or unbelievers, sustain this “neighbor” relationship and therefore have this duty.

Only those who sustain a relationship to a wife have the duty to “love your wife” (Eph. 5:25—lit., “men love your women”) Which one? The one you sustain a relationship to as a husband. Christians, though they are Christians, who sustain no relationship to a wife do not have this duty.

Citizens are to “be in subjection to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1). Which one—U.S. or Canada? The one to whom

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they sustain the relationship to as citizens. The relationship begets and circumscribes the duty.

Christians, *because they sustain a relationship to Christ*, partake of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16,17). They may happen to be neighbors, parents, and citizens, but that is not why they have this duty. It is because they are “in Christ.” So with singing in the name of Christ (Eph. 5:19,20), praying through Christ (1 Tim. 2:5), growing in the knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), and giving to have fellowship in the gospel of Christ and to relieve those who are saints in Christ (Phil. 1:5; 4:15; 2 Cor. 8:4,5).

As individual duties are based on relationships, so are the organizations these individuals form. As the relationship begets and circumscribes the individual’s duty, so with the organizations these individuals formed based on those relationships.

A group of *neighbors* may form an organization to provide for duties that arise out of that relationship, e.g. the Cancer Society. While Christians may be part of this organization, so may atheists. The organization grows out of the “neighbor” relationship, is composed of people who—whether Christians, Jews, or atheists—are members of this organization because they are “neighbors,” and is designed to provide for duties that grow out of that relationship.

A group of *citizens* may form an organization to provide for duties related to their government, e.g., the Democratic Party, or Republican Party. While Christians may be members of that organization, the organization does not grow out of their relationship to Christ but their relationship to a government. One would not expect that organiza-

tion to use its funds to preach the gospel of Christ, but that would not mean the individuals in that organization were opposed to gospel preaching. That duty is based on a different relationship.

Now, if *Christians* band together to form a group to provide for responsibilities they share—not because they are citizens, parents, or neighbors—but because they are “in Christ,” the New Testament calls that a church “of Christ.” I would no more expect it be engaged in cancer research or political activism than I would the Cancer Society or the Democratic Party to preach the gospel. It would be foolish to accuse the individuals who compose such a group as unloving toward those who have cancer or anti-government just because none of the group funds and activities further cancer research or a political agenda.

If this reasoning is correct, it should be supported by the historical facts of what churches under apostolic direction did and were told to do. Not one statement, example, or implication can be cited where churches of Christ in the New Testament engaged in any activities but those “in Christ”—preaching the gospel of *Christ*, acts of edification *in Christ*, and benevolence to those *in Christ* (needy *saints*).

Duties individuals have are based on relationships they sustain, and the organizations they form are designed to provide for the peculiar duties growing out of these respective relationships. This helps us to understand why a church “of Christ” exists and to understand its unique “in Christ” activities.

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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