

Lakeville Christian Fellowship

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...”
II Timothy 2:3

Sunday July 20, 2008
Morning Worship at Williams Camp
Lakeville, Massachusetts
www.lcfbaptist.org

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Sermon by Daniel Casieri

Reading: II Timothy 4:1-5

Heaping up Teachers

v.3. **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...”** I have preached from this text before, perhaps several times. I have probably quoted from it many times. And whenever I have referred to it, it was usually to declare Paul’s charge to Timothy to *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”* That of course is the overarching thrust of this passage, that the word must be preached, that it must always be preached, that it must always take the form of arguments against falsehood - the apostle says *convince*. It must be a corrective exercise, and so the apostle says *rebuke* - as a corrective of

doctrine and therefore of world view, corrective of ethics and principles of godly virtue, and a corrective of sinful behaviors. And thirdly the apostle adds the charge of *exhort* to his disciple, the young pastor Timothy, so he does not become a mere taskmaster with arguments and condemnations, but rather he must beseech others with exhortations fulfilling the role as encourager to men, reminding them of their privilege in Christ always pointing to this better way. Yet at the same time remaining an impregnable wall against those who stealthily suppose to recreate the word of God, and by extension the church of God, and make it more suitable to their tastes, their fashions, and their own lusts and desires and not God’s.

A preacher must encourage the disciples under his care to recognize that a life of faith is a worthwhile life, a profitable life, a life that is hard at times - and so Paul exhorts him to *endure afflictions*, presumably the afflictions that inevitably accompany a life of vociferous authoritative proclamations. The life of a preacher is not an easy life. It is a life of continual spiritual warfare. And so a preacher of God’s word, the handlers of God’s own precious thoughts that in His supreme mercy He chose to share with men, must be diligent to preach of those *great and precious promises* and God’s ability to deliver on those things. And yet he must preach against many things, established behaviors, cultural acceptance of things sinful - even when such things are widely accepted - even when standing against such things puts the preacher in the place of standing alone, as so many of the ancient prophets stood alone, as John the Baptist stood alone, lived alone, and was killed alone in a dungeon cell for the very exercise of convincing, rebuking, and exhorting his fellow Israelites.

I have of late not so much been preaching for something, but rather against something. Preachers must do both. There is a dual responsibility of handlers of God’s own precious thoughts to exalt those thoughts as absolute truth, and to skillfully cast down arguments that pretend to put forth godly teaching. I have been sounding the alarm that a ‘new’ movement within the church threatens the purity of it and the understanding of truth within her ranks. The so called “Emergent” church movement has given us much to think about and much to be

wary of. The very idea that men who profess to be the teachers of God's word to the people of God will dare to question every article of faith, every established truth, every godly principle that has been essential in the building of God's own temple in this earth, is reason enough to sound an alarm to all those who love the church of God and rely on the gospel of God to declare the truth of God. We have made it part and parcel of our ministry to show continuity with the great and revered movements in church history and to proudly attach ourselves to them as to a long chain of godly professors of the faith and a unbroken cord of faith that comes down to us from the very beginning, since Cain challenged acceptable worship practices, since Abel died for his faith, since Adam searched for the way to the tree of life.

We do not wish to appear on the scene as something unique, something new, something that has not been seen before, something self-styled and popularly received. But we appear on the scene as God's own local church that finds our very identity in the traditions that have gone before us. We do not wish to begin again as though the church is something new, some new idea of God's for the twenty first century. But rather we wish to connect ourselves with something old. Not new and improved, but tried and true, and grounded in the faith, founded upon the Christ, walking and moving and having our being in the very palm of the Holy Spirit - not a new spirit, not the spirit of the age, not the spirit of the moment, but the Spirit that was from the very beginning, the Spirit whose face was hovering over the face of the waters of a world that was yet without form and void (Gen.1.2)."

For these last fourteen years I have made it my mission to proclaim the church of God as the dear child of God, and to exalt the church of God as the blessed bride of Christ, a refuge from the depraved desires of a dying world, to assure that it remain the safe haven for converted souls in the earth, a place of fellowship where believers may come gladly together to hear the word of God and to have the Word lifted to a place of highest honor and esteem, to show the preeminence of the Word, of Christ, and of our triune godhead, and to witness the power of the Word at every session to the easy pulling down of strongholds, the skillful casting down of arguments, and the proud tradition of denouncing every

high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (II Cor.10.4,5). It is our mission to revel in the ministry of the Word and to marvel at its power as a sharp two-edged sword piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and then to wonder at it as it fulfills its role as discerner of thoughts and intents of the human heart (Heb.4.12).

It is the call of every reformer past and present to recognize the signs of the times and the danger that our gospel is in. During the Great Reformation the great reformers called for the same alert in a similar situation where the gospel itself was in danger of being lost to us. Consider Calvin on this verse and his sixteenth century concern, saying: *"From the very depravity of men he shews how careful pastors ought to be; for soon shall the **gospel be extinguished, and perish** from the remembrance of men, if godly teachers do not labour with all their might to defend it. But he means that we must avail ourselves of the opportunity, while there is any reverence for Christ; as if one should say that, when a storm is at hand, we must not labour remissly, but must hasten with all diligence, because there will not afterwards be an equally fit season."*

Consider John Gill in the eighteenth century, also speaks of a gospel that is on the wane and in danger of disappearing: *"It is a blessing to have pastors and teachers after God's heart, and who **preach according to the word of God**; these feed men with knowledge and understanding, but it is a curse upon a people, when they are left to choose teachers after their ears lusts; having itching ears always desirous of new things, as the Athenians of old; or loving to have their ears scratched and tickled with smooth things; that are pleasing and agreeable to natural men, and carnal minds; as the purity of human nature, the power of man's free will, the excellency of his righteousness, and the merit of his works, and the like, Now, this being the case, should not discourage, but rather animate the ministers of the Gospel to preach it; for should they desist, in all likelihood **the Gospel would soon be gone.**"*

We have Isaiah of old who prophesied in a similar way (c.700b.c.) as these men, saying: *"That this is a rebellious people, Lying children,*

Children who will not hear the law of the Lord; Who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' And to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us (Is.30.9-11)."

Jeremiah said that same around 600b.c.: **"Return, O backsliding children,"** says the Lord; 'for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding (Jer.3.14,15)." And so from this passage we see that the prophet has already accepted that the people of God have chosen shepherds for themselves, preachers who tell them only what they want they to hear.

And so here in the first century as in all times Paul warns Timothy of this tendency in man to despise the sacred. And it always comes down to the same thing, i.e., men choose consensus over authority, the majority opinion over the clearly revealed declaration, and as always it is a depraved and sinful tendency, one that preachers have need to address - plainly, authoritatively, and without regard to the seasons of man, and the fashions of man's societies.

v.3. ".....they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth..." A wise man once said, "A sure sign of mass confusion is a growing number of experts." Show me a person who is zealously searching out teachers, and I will show you a man who is trying to justify himself. And it is the same in all generations. Men love the truth until it reveals them. The Amplified Bible renders the verse this way: *"For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold."*

James warned of this tendency in man but comes at it from a different angle, not the angle of men choosing their teachers, but of men (or

women) choosing to become the teachers of God's word to God's people, saying: *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment (Jas.3.1)."* Going astray from the word of God is sinful enough, and its punishment fearful enough. But to lead others to such a path is to heap sin upon sin in the sight of God.

Our society makes it an evil to tell a person they are headed the wrong way. God makes it evil not to tell. We read from Hebrews: *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today', lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb.3.12,13)."*

There is an ancient principle of responsibility upon men for the souls of their brethren. It seems it is a thing that is lost on many in our day but it was not lost on the Apostle Paul. Consider Ezekiel who writes of it saying: *"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand ((Eze.3.17,18)."*

And the flip side of the principle is also written, which says in the next verse: *"Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul."* Paul recalls this responsibility of the prophet, the man set by God to instruct His people, and when the Jews of Corinth oppose the gospel of Christ, Paul says to them: *"Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean, From now on I will go to the Gentiles (Acts 18.6)."*

So, the warning of Paul to Timothy is that they are approaching a time when men will no longer heed sound teaching, but that is no time to retreat into silence. It seems to me we also live in such a time when men will say to the preachers "do not prophesy right things to us, speak to us

smooth things.” Sadly, it seems to me there are all too many teachers heaped up upon the churches that are all too willing to speak according to the itching ears of a wayward society. If only the preachers of the world, great and small, would remember that no matter how many ears are present in the hall they only preach to an audience of One, and it is only that One that it is necessary to please.

This is not a call to harshness, or unnecessary roughness, it is merely a call to discernment to preach what a particular body of people need to hear to move them closer to righteous living before God and the world. We live in a society today, the churches included, that simply do not tolerate rebuke or correction even of established evils that persist openly among us. Where are the sermons against fornication and adultery, divorce and betrayal, all those things that are so prevalent in the churches today? Where are the sermons against the things that contribute to all these things? Cohabitation among professing Christians is well tolerated in the churches, as are many incidents of adultery, and rampant fornication especially among the young people. Homosexuality is all but completely accepted in many church venues and is even being redefined by some emerging church leaders. It is being said that the homosexuality of the Bible that God clearly condemns is not the same type of homosexuality that many practice today and so these ought to be exempt from being told they are in sin. What they contend is that the Bible only condemns pedophilia and promiscuous homosexuality, and that monogamous loving couples are acceptable to God.

The sad fact today is that we are well supplied with teachers who will never say what needs to be said, and are more than happy to say what yearns to be heard. And so the boldness of many preachers has gone so far as, not only to neglect dealing with the reality of sin, but to redefine clearly sinful behaviors as good and righteous ones. And so the prophecy becomes true that the apostle warns of, saying: *“and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”* Is the church of God to become merely a fable, a kind of spiritual Camelot, or a Brigadoon that appears for a season and then disappears for a time? I too bemoan the fact from time to time that there seems to be so many who will gladly accept the counterfeit church and a counterfeit Christ,

and are so reluctant to accept the genuine article in each case, reveling in the reality that the genuine Christ has no need to change His image, the genuine church no need to seek a new gospel with a new image and new rules. Paul himself bemoaned the defection of those whom he loved and trusted, but he never bemoaned his calling to remain faithful, preaching the un-compromised gospel to a few of the faithful. He closes his letter with this: *“Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica - Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come - and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he had greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!*

heap up teachers